Title of Session: Action Research
Moderator: Diane Painter
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Room: Action Research Group

DianeDP: Hi Jeff- before we begin, I need to tell you that beginning in Jan I teach Mon, Tues and Thurs nights so I can not do this on those nights.

DianeDP: Hi BJ

BjB: Diane, just choose a night that does work for you

DianeDP: Wed should be ok

BjB: I'll post whatever is best for you.

BjB: 2nd Wednesday?

JeffC: I was thinking of applying for a part time job (elementary reading teacher)... and thinking about Action Research as part of my way in. In a sense it's a support position... and of course you know which directions I'd like to go with support (tech, online in addition to the half day)... and wanted to know what you thought.

BjB . o O (January 13, 7pm ET?)

DianeDP: Absolutely AR helps anyone look at their own teaching and student's learning, and that is what reading specialists should be doing.

DianeDP: Jan 13 it is

BjB . o O (all teachers should be doing!)

BjB: thanks, Diane

DianeDP: Jeff- do you have any puzzlements in mind concerning how children process language and develop reading skills?

JeffC: I was wondering if there's a template (kinda like QuestGarden for WebQuests) to design mine.

DianeDP: design what exactly?

JeffC: an AR "approach" to the position.

JeffC: here's the job description: http://snurl.com/fgsdjob

JeffC: now... one of the things I'd want to do is get kids actively engaged in sites like tikatok... where they could read books written by other students and create their own.

JeffC: of course they have a set curriculum... but I would like to go in with "virtual guns blazing"... including setting up virtual office hours with parents, teachers, etc.

JeffC: and wrap it all inside an AR "design package."

JeffC: all the district has cared about has been test scores

JeffC: so you can bet that the focus will be on raising them (from their vantage point)

JeffC: I want to prove that if you get kids and parents (siblings) actively engaged in reading/writing utilizing a number of tech tools, that indeed that will become one of the ultimate outcomes.

DianeDP: ok- so your initial question might be "What happens when students use technology to engage in peer-reflective feedback when creating and sharing their own writings?

JeffC: sounds good

DianeDP: do you know what I mean by peer-reflective feedback?

JeffC: yup... unless you have a great url to share with me about it!

JeffC: not to mention collaborative book writing of their own

DianeDP: no, it's just a term we used at GMU when children were in writing circles and shared one another's work for student input and feedback

DianeDP: yes- collaborative writing is another term to use

JeffC: right... I was talking about another step

DianeDP: what tools do you have in mind?

JeffC: tapped in, www.tikatok.com for starters

JeffC: there are other "peer book reading/writing" sites like Shelfari

JeffC: I'd want to work with the teachers and students and parents and admin to find the right combination/approaches based on needs of everyone.

JeffC: have you ever seen tikatok? take a look at it if you get a chance.

DianeDP: That is something I don't know about- need to check it out. I will take a look at it- but you should also look at www.softchalk.com. I think it is a fantastic tool to create web-based lessons and I think kids could use to create their own on-line books with interactive activities- which are easy to create.

JeffC: softchalk costs though

DianeDP: Yes, that is true.

JeffC: and I don't think they'll have the tools that some of the book writing sites do... like templates for story starters. That doesn't mean it can't be used, but any time you talk money to school districts...

DianeDP: Esp. in this economy

BjB: what about using digital storytelling tools, Jeff?

JeffC: yup

BjB . o O (iMovie, PhotoStory)

JeffC: absolutely Bj

JeffC: I'm having a hard enough time convincing myself I can convince the district to use tikatok... but yes... getting kids to tell stories (maybe with/from their parents) and bringing them into iMovie... creating books from them... all of that would be possible.

JeffC . o O (with the right support!)

DianeDP: in my doctoral work I studied the interactions of students in writing groups and how peer's input helped students expand and clarify their writing personal narratives. Back then we only had word processing programs and simple programs such as Storybook Weaver

BjB: even just powerpoint would work...scan illustrations the children create

JeffC wonders if Diane can email me her thesis!

BjB likes the collaboration idea, Diane

DianeDP: when students use a program to record their text the work on reading fluency skills

DianeDP: I would have to do a search to see if you can get it online. I don't have it in electronic format- done too long ago

JeffC: it would be great if Dragon Naturally Speaking worked well for younger kids... as it is unless they're teens the timber of their voice doesn't record so well... maybe it's been improved.

JeffC: you mean you didn't even save it on a floppy on WordStar!?!?

DianeDP: I did, but I no longer have a computer that reads disks used in 1994

JeffC: hehe

BjB: what about podcasts, Jeff? Collaboration between younger and older students?

JeffC: absolutely

JeffC: like I said... I've got tons of ideas... but then again... knowing how to synthesize and condense and convince the powers that be to hire me.

DianeDP: I did podcasts with my freshman this term. Wow, talk about wonderful digital stories that were created. Are you familiar with DigiTales?

DianeDP: let me see if I can find the site

JeffC: yup... heard of them

BjB: Diane's original suggestion to compose a research question is the best start, Jeff

JeffC: yup... and she did it for me!

BjB: then make an outline all the ideas you have...

JeffC: now all I need is to get a bunch of other teachers to do all the other work for me!

BjB: and then flesh out how it will work

JeffC: it's proactive help... but the more ideas... the more overwhelmed the teachers will/may be if I present too many.

DianeDP: Here is the site http://www.digitales.us/

JeffC: but speaking in broad strokes I guess... just hard to know how specific to get when discussing collaborative book reading/writing, podcasts, etc.

JeffC: anyhow... you've helped a lot... and now I have to go and feed child #2

BjB . o O (Jeff only feeds one child a day)

JeffC: I fed child #3 earlier... and now child #2 is jealous of that fact.

JeffC . o O (usually only once a week)

BjB rolls her eyes

DianeDP: OK- here is the deal. You come up with an umbrella question and then try for no more than 3 related sub questions. For each question, think about what you do in your teaching with your students that will enable you to collect data on actions that you take to address the questions

JeffC: fortunately child #1 is over at a friend's house, a teenager, and can feed himself.

JeffC: sounds good... I guess one of the questions will be "how high will I make their test scores jump?"

JeffC: ttyl... I'll stay logged in but am going afk

BjB nods

DianeDP: So back to my original 'what happens when' question, think how you want students involved in writing and sharing their stories. Will you take a writing workshop approach?

BjB: does action research need to have any backup research to support it?

BjB . o O (for example, reading improves thinking)

DianeDP: what test scores and how would the "test" relate to students writing and sharing stories? Are you looking for how well students will do in state or county writing tests?

BjB: Jeff is probably referring to the NCLB testing.

DianeDP: It is called framing the issue with what the literature says about best practice. What does the literature say (ie. research) that is related to your questions.

BjB: and I think he was being sarcastic about improving scores

BjB: so the more 'framing' you can do, the more effective your research will be?

DianeDP: Oh- you know what? I have grad students who would say that and be serious because that is all they hear- about making data-driven decisions

BjB nods sadly. And those are the teachers of tomorrow!

DianeDP: Yes, BJ that is correct- it grounds your research

BjB: so the more grounding Jeff can do, the better. He better get busy!

BjB: I don't suppose Twitter posts count as serious research?

BjB . o O (I'm kidding ;-))

DianeDP: I suggest he go into an interview with "best practice" information under his belt..

BjB: do you think that teacher reflection and action research are closely related?

BjB . o O (still trying to figure out a way to get more educators to use TI and write reflections on their learning experience)

DianeDP: Oh yes, teachers reflect on what they do- and they should analyze the how and why of what happens in their teaching. The step that should be taken next is deciding on what it all means and what actions should be taken - called implications for practice. That is what ARers do as they conduct their research. Keeping a journal to document what happens, analyze what happens, and determining next steps is critical.

DianeDP: did I tell you that I will be teaching an action research class in Jan?

BjB: no...great!

BjB . o O (assign the class to log in to your AR sessions ;-))

DianeDP: I am hoping we might be able to connect with others via this site to talk about what they may want to investigate

BjB: or bring the class online and meet here to hold class...

DianeDP: yes, that would be great

BjB: had a prof in Massachusetts hold about a third of his classes online in his TI office...

BjB: because another prof scheduled the university space before he did

BjB: he was very pleased with the results

BjB . o O (and it really worked for snow days!)

DianeDP: I was thinking the same thing. Actually, I will be teaching an online methods class, too, and was thinking of using my k-12 class I have here on TI

BjB: very cool!

BjB: you can either invite the students when they get a username...

BjB: or have them log in with a student username to see what the students would experience

BjB . o O (or a combo)

BjB: I'd also love to see some research on how writing across the curriculum improves reading skills

BjB . o O (I don't have a class to play with any more :-( )

DianeDP: Back to Jeff's interest- any ideas about how you might go about collecting data as students write and share their books?

BjB: how is the editing/rewriting handled?

BjB: what are the topics of the books?

BjB: do the illustrations go with the story?

BjB: do students use illustrations as prompts for literacy?

BjB: do the students peer edit?

BjB . o O (how am I doing?)

DianeDP: I took extensive notes and taped student interactions to determine how student reactions and suggestions were actually incorporated into their peers later writings- I found that some students were intimidated by having peers provide such input, others loved it. What I found in the end was that students who used structured writing prompts and guides to help guide them through the writing process made the most gains.

DianeDP: those are all good ideas

BjB: so structure is important....yes, I can see that

BjB: a lot depends on the students and their prior knowledge too

BjB: and should they work in pairs of two, groups of three?

DianeDP: my students worked in groups of four

BjB: does the team write the story as a team?

BjB . o O (with assigned tasks?)

BjB: or is the story a round robin kind of construction?

BjB: that would be fun to compare the two

DianeDP: each student wrote a personal narrative from a prompt that I gave the group

BjB listens

DianeDP: students in the afternoon group worked independently from others and only shared their stories with instructors. Morning kids worked in groups. That is how I found that independent learners who followed the guides did the best.

BjB smiles...very cool!

BjB: I was wondering if the stories from the kids that worked in groups tended to all sound the same

BjB: and what if you had an illustrator, a recorder, a formatter as a team? What would each child learn from the others?

DianeDP: Actually, no, they were all different. I cannot recall the question, but it was one we used from an old VA writing test. Something like the most memorable time spent with family or friends...

JeffC: back

BjB waves. We wrote your paper for you, Jeff :-)

BjB . o O (but the text got deleted somehow...must be cybergremlins)

JeffC: only semi-sarcastic... indeed... I have to go in with a straight face because I know that is the district's priority... and yes... I can do it.

DianeDP: someone else took your project and ran with it

JeffC: dang

BjB: Jeff, sounds like you need to do a LOT of organizing of thoughts

JeffC: I knew I wasn't the only one out there

JeffC: isn't that what excel is for?

BjB feeds Jeff ginko

JeffC: oh... ginko is now for thought organizing? I was still stuck with inspiration

JeffC: I think the district computers have kidspiration

BjB: that's a fun way to organize an idea

JeffC: yup

BjB: Diane and I did discuss some interesting ideas

DianeDP: I love that program. We used it to help plan stories. Great for storyboarding.

JeffC: yup

JeffC: plus there are also numerous comic book generating sites/programs

BjB agrees

JeffC: I'll just forward the transcript of this session to the powers that be.

JeffC: after editing out the naughty bits of course

BjB chuckles.

DianeDP: we used CSPACE as the organizing structure to help them plan the story. I used Kidspiration to help them plan characters-setting- problem/purpose- actions-emotions (how characters feel in the story and how you want readers to feel when reading the story)

BjB: lots of prep work for you there, Jeff

DianeDP: when you get your project paper written, I would like to see it posted here in AR

BjB seconds that

BjB: you could even post as you go to the discussion board so we can see the process, Jeff

JeffC: will do

DianeDP: Yes, good idea

JeffC: for now though... I am out the door again

BjB . o O (I know I would learn a lot!)

BjB: we're about at the end of the hour...that time flew!

JeffC: my hope is to get the teachers and students to learn a lot... and to learn about what/where/why they want to do it!

JeffC: thanks to both of you for this

JeffC: ttyl

DianeDP: best wishes everyone for a nice holiday!

BjB: Thanks, Diane. See you January. Happy holidays

BjB waves goodnight and heads for sped

DianeDP: bye