Week 2 - Discussion EDUC 6661

Doing Things Differently and Doing Different Things

In Video Program Two, Dr. Thornburg discussed the importance of distinguishing between using technology to do things differently and to do different things. He pointed out that while there is nothing wrong with using technology to do things differently the real power—and the value to education—is in doing different things that would otherwise be impossible. In order to clarify the difference between these two concepts, we were charged with considering how technology affects our personal lives in relation to as many aspects of life we could think of: from online banking to electric vehicles. Additionally, we were asked to consider advantages made possible by technology. Next we considered how technology is used in our classrooms to do something differently than may have been possible before, with the understanding that technology can refer to more than just computers.

K.L. opened a discussion about Pedometers:

"The technology I have used in the classroom to do something differently would be utilizing pedometers with my middle school program. Initially when my special needs students started the walking program I would have them walk around the gym to three different songs. Later I decided to utilize pedometers during the walking program. This method was better for my students in order for them to be able to visually see their progress and document it each week. This method was also used for a motivation tool. The thing that I did to us technology to do different things was utilizing the computer to produce monthly newsletters. I was able to inform parents on the upcoming events, lessons, and the students pictures during activities. My students enjoyed seeing themselves on the monthly newsletter."

To which I responded:

K: - I used a pedometer last year in Math class. As you may recall, a "fast food" giant was offering pedometers as the "toy" in their "Adult Happy Meal" (salad) package. I visited several sites and gave them the spiel ("I'm a teacher of students with special s needs...blah..blah..blah") and got a pocket full of these things rather inexpensively. I had my students each clip one on and wear it for a whole day: end of class one day until beginning of class the next. We made a data table and then graphed the information. They got into setting up various criteria: boys v. girls, 6th graders v. 7th graders v. 8th graders, students who walk to school v. students who ride the bus. It was quite interesting the comparisons they "created." This little exercise went a long way towards showing me how much technology there is available and how readily available it can be. Which, in turn, prompted S.B. to say: “Rocklin, I love your style! Keep sharing.”

E.G. offered the following comments:

“I had the opportunity to use the computer-T.V. and Internet access in one of my lesson plans implementing technology. Instead of using one computer and have the students gather around to learn the lesson, I was able to share with the classroom a visual example on the Teacher computer connected to the T.V. They learned how to create vocabulary bubble maps with Inspiration and to connect a www.hyperdictionary.com hyperlink in one bubble. They then clicked on the hyperlink and searched for the vocabulary words, copy and pasted the definitions within minutes. They enjoyed the lesson and were intrigued by the technology using Inspiration, Internet and the T.V. Later in the year we completed an Animal Book Research assignment using Microsoft word and Inspiration. I was surprised and impressed at how many of the students remembered and were confident using the Inspiration program when they planned their outline using a web maps for their research paper.”

I responded with the following comments:

E: - I'll be home most of this week. Monday I start scoring again for National Board for Professional Teacher Standards. That will tie me up 8-5 M-F thru July. I do have access to Evers Elementary on a limited basis, but their labs do not have all the toots and whistles we need - just the honcho chairs and CIT desk. John Hayes made it sound as though we could use NLC labs during "normal working hours." I'm not sure what their summer schedule is like - some C/O staff have weird summer flex time schedules. You might go to NISD webpage, CLICK on departments, and check out Technology for John's knocks and whistles. I haven't looked at D/W & F/W stuff since our training last Spring! Also the Robin Williams books John suggested are "not available" at local book stores.

My Discussion thread follows:

Our district outlined various resources to be used by different departments. Math classes were supposed to use Excel in their TIPPA (technology integration) projects. A simple exercise I had my special needs students do was convert a recipe of their choosing to various multiples of the original recipe. For example, if a brownie recipe would make servings for eight people, I would have the student half the recipe, double the recipe, and then choose a multiple that would feed the class. Ingredients were listed by row and multiples by column. Students were encouraged to use built-in formula options to perform the various multiples. It is always interesting to see what “non-cooks” do with temperature and time; it makes for fun discussions. Another TIPPA exercise involved the use of calendars to study patterns and relationships between numbers. This was good in reinforcing basic addition, subtraction, and simple multiplication (1-7), as well as looking at patterns of numbers horizontally, vertically, and diagonally across any given calendar page. After the basics were “mastered,” students predicted what a given month looked like in

terms of days of the week for their birth year, and then used the internet to find the actual calendar and compare it with their prediction.

Most classrooms have a TV monitor with hookups to VCR and/or CD/DVD. I have used these to reinforce, or at times replace overhead projector and whiteboard instruction. One of my favorite multimedia math presentations is a DVD by Standard Deviants, a group of very talented young actors and comedians who will quickly engage, amuse, and instruct even your most difficult student. See http://www.standarddeviants.com for a complete listing of their interactive products. This site also has lots of downloadable freebies for everything from ABCs to Zoology, even teacher preparation staff development material. I have used "Learning Basic Math" to reinforce order of operations, basic number line concept, rounding and estimating, and fractions and decimals. Their approach to math is fun, multi-sensory, and innovative. The pace tends to be rather quick, so you cannot really substitute the video for “normal” classroom instruction, but it is great as a reinforcement tool and preview/review. It also is a great source of mnemonics and graphic organizers you can readily adopt for your own use. Additionally, it is good as a catch up tool for students who may have joined your class after you have already presented material.

A.C. replied: “Rocky, I realized we had put into effect the TIPPA, I just didn't realize very many people we actually documenting their using of it. That is great. Your class discussion was probably very funny when talking about cooking at degrees like 700 or 2100 or not cooking at degrees like 175. Your website sounds interesting. I am going to have a look at it. I don't teach content math anymore but I did for 11 years. I'm sure there is something I could apply.”

E.G.offered information concerning readily available software. My response was:

E: - Inspiration works well with the population you deal with. One of the neat features is the little upper left hand button that allows you to trigger from mindmap to outline or vice versa. Right

brain kids like the scattered pictures and bubbles, but the concrete sequential crowd may find the outline more user friendly. I really liked the idea of a hyperlink bubble to an on-line dictionary; clever. It helps to have a bank of computers readily at your disposal. Thankfully, this week's lessons have provided clues for the one-computer classroom. To which, she replied:

“Rocky, have you begun working on your actual website using Dreamweaver and Fireworks program? V.L-J. and I wanted to get together and work on our websites sometime this week. I was planning on going to the Computer Labs on Grissom, Leon Valley. Do you know if they are open to PAVE II students? Also can I have your phone number so we can call each other if we are in need of assistance? Mine is ###-####, Cell ###-####. Thanks for the information about Inspiration, E.”