

Title of Session: Special Education Forum - Tech in the SPED Classroom

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Room: Special Education Forum Group

BJB2: Hi, Neema. Welcome

PaulDB: Hello Neema

NeemaP: hello

BJB2: here for the special ed discussion?

NeemaP: yup

BJB2: great! We'll start in another few minutes

NeemaP: okay

RomanP joined the room.

PaulDB: Is this your first time here Neema?

PaulDB: Hello Roman

NeemaP: yes

RomanP: Hi, do we have discussion here tonight about AT?

PaulDB: How did you learn about us?

RomanP: Tapped in calendar

NeemaP: same

PaulDB: Okay, can we start with introductions now?

RomanP: Thanks. I use some serious AT in my class, so it is in my interest to join

BJB2: thanks, Paul...good idea

BJB2: Welcome to today's SPED Forum

BJB2: please tell us where you are located, what you teach and what brings you to the discussion

RomanP: I work with special education students who are orthopedically impaired (physical and cognitive disabilities) at Vincent H.S in Milwaukee, WI

BJB2: I'm a communications teacher in a male juvenile correctional facility where 80% of the students are sped

NeemaP: I am in Sugarland, TX and I am a student teacher

PaulDB: I am a retired Correctional Education Administrator with a background in special education.

PaulDB: So I take it that AT stands for assistive technology Roman?

RomanP: yes, sorry

PaulDB: What kinds of orthopedic conditions do your students have?

RomanP: Most of them are in wheelchairs because of cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy

PaulDB: Maybe a better question would be related to the kinds of needs that you think your students have requiring AT?

PaulDB: So there is a general lack of muscle control?

PaulDB: What kind of budget do you have?

PaulDB: What kind of classroom resources are currently available?

RomanP: YES. Here is what we did so far. They struggle a lot with using hands. They are low readers. So we have to find AT that helps them to read (high interest and low reading level 2-4 grade) as much possible hands free - no books but computer based. we have a grant of 16 thousand

RomanP: we bought computer, projector, SMART Board and SMART TABLE (Interactive Learning Station - not on the market yet)

PaulDB: What kind of oral communication skills do your students have?

RomanP: good skills but slow because of muscle control

NeemaP: what is a smart table?

PaulDB: So you could use audio equipment in a sort of read-along program?

RomanP: it is 48" smart board on the stand so people in wheelchairs can touch the whole thing

NeemaP: ohh

RomanP: yes we're using Don Johnson series "START-TO-FINISH" books

PaulDB: Do you have access to a library of audio books?

RomanP: I wasn't looking for one yet since we have license for Don Johnson library

PaulDB: I am thinking that with the number of books that are on both CD's as well as cassette tapes you should be able to create a rather large inventory of all sorts of "books".

RomanP: but, we are looking for large print materials and that limits the field

RomanP: some students are also visually impaired

PaulDB: Especially if you are looking for materials from such sources as Smithsonian, National Geographic or even NASA.

PaulDB: Find the local library for the visually impaired they will be able to direct you to publishers of large print material or even put you on their list to receive materials.

RomanP: they do have small print but we were able to use some of NG multimedia presentations

RomanP: good idea

RomanP: we create our own power points

PaulDB: Good. That means you can develop lesson plans covering all subjects or disciplines.

RomanP: yes

NeemaP: does using the SMART board improve the curriculum?

NeemaP: or the lesson

PaulDB: Can you integrate the power point into the SMARTBOARD?

RomanP: this is the best investment we could ever make

RomanP: yes, anything on the computer is transferable to smart Board which is also connected with Smart table - all three can work together

PaulDB: Have you been provided the opportunity for ongoing training in the use of the SMARTBOARD?

RomanP: ongoing?

RomanP: I was trained a year ago. Recent training was cancelled, I'm hoping to go again soon

PaulDB: All right then, you have the basic needs for classroom instruction, now what is needed are personal devices for some or all of your students, is that right?

RomanP: their laptops are their tools

PaulDB: By ongoing I was referring to training provided by the company as they improve their product and find additional ways it can be better used.

PaulDB: Can the students easily use the laptops?

RomanP: my relationship with them might improve since we are their showroom for the Smart Table. But I need to pay each time for training - no problem with participating

PaulDB: I assume you have an intranet in the classroom?

RomanP: We use the public school e-mails

PaulDB: Is there a file server in your class that ties all of the student laptops together while in the classroom?

RomanP: some can use laptops easier (still with some difficulties) some need DiscoverSwitch program (scanning and using head switch)

PaulDB: You might want to look into that along with the installation of a wireless network.

RomanP: no, we don't have intranet

PaulDB: Depending on the type of system installed, it would be possible for you, as teacher, to interact with the students individually as well as collectively.

PaulDB: Do you have a self-contained classroom?

RomanP: we are not there yet. Getting SMART Technologies devices was a big step

RomanP: yes

PaulDB: I imagine so!! That is cutting edge technology for the classroom!

NeemaP: what other SMART devices are there?

RomanP: the grant was a gift but we need to think of maintenance issues and building our budget on regular bases

PaulDB: I am assuming that you spend a lot of time developing power point presentations. I would also assume that you involve the students in the development as part of a learning experience?

PaulDB: Neema, I know something about the SMART technology but never had the chance to work with it directly.

BJB2: . o O (we're all jealous of Roman's toys)

RomanP: Yes, reading is being improved but practicing and building a vocabulary by creating power points is incredible

BJB2: the students are creating the ppts?

RomanP: I started 2.5 years ago with not one poster on the wall - nothing

RomanP: yes, students are creating power points by telling me what to write, where to put it or preparing the text and pictures themselves, then we put it together

PaulDB: Now we are talking about "integrated" instruction. Using the power point for visual stimulation and adding an auditory component to supplement, explain the visual content would help move you along the vocabulary continuum.

RomanP: It was suggested to me to write for a technology grant and I was helped with the process

PaulDB: Every school system is responsible for the development of a technology plan.

BJB2: do any podcasting, Roman?

RomanP: we watch the movie on the book, we read the book (start-to-finish) and we create dictionary on power point with pictures we can find on-line

RomanP: we want to add our own pictures to the mix soon

PaulDB: Within the state department of education there will be someone who is familiar with or has access to grant applications to promote the use of technology.

PaulDB: I trust you have done a power point that is based on the Doltch 220 word list?

RomanP: school districts have similar sources - it does take time to investigate, but it is worth it

RomanP: I'm not familiar with D 220

NeemaP: isn't that a list of words that you can test students on?

RomanP: no podcasting yet

PaulDB: Find a good basal reading text and it should contain the list. It is the 220 most common words in the English language comprising about 60% of common written language in newspapers, magazine articles, etc.

PaulDB: Yes, you can and it is routinely done as part of the teaching of reading.

RomanP: I will investigate this. We concentrate on comprehension, while books have word list test at the end of each chapter

PaulDB: Most, if not all, of the words are "sight" words. Just have to learn them and their usage.

PaulDB: If you cannot find the list, let me know and I will locate a source for you.

PaulDB: I am a firm believer in the use of the list as once it is learned, non-readers can begin to "use" the newspaper.

NeemaP: you can find the list on the internet

RomanP: Thank you, Paul. I learned to "Google" everything. Doltch 220 on google?

NeemaP: there are 11 categories

NeemaP: or lists

RomanP: that's great Neema

RomanP: thanks

PaulDB: Thanks Neema!!

NeemaP: no prob

PaulDB: Is there something you wanted to discuss Neema?

NeemaP: I am here to just learn since I am a student teacher

PaulDB: As a student teacher you must have a lot of questions!?

NeemaP: hehe yes but I am learning a lot from this discussion

RomanP: I started as a student teacher and even though I have a year behind me on my own, I'm still a student teacher

PaulDB: Have you looked into podcasting Roman?

RomanP: do you have a mentor-teacher assigned to you?

NeemaP: no

RomanP: no I haven't, Paul

PaulDB: We are all "student teachers" Neema!! No matter how long we have been a teacher!

NeemaP: hehe I see

PaulDB: Well Roman, you might want to consider that as an element of a classroom intranet.

RomanP: You should have a teacher or a group of teachers you can rely on with smallest and biggest things. It really helps! It is so hard to feel alone in first few years

PaulDB: Roman you make an excellent point.

NeemaP: the program that I am in now, we haven't learned how to use technology in special ed.

BJB2: . o O (one of the strengths of Tapped In is that there is support here for new teachers...)

RomanP: I will look into it. I'm learning new technology but I have to write IEPs - long process

BJB2: as well as experienced teachers who also can feel pretty isolated in the classroom

RomanP: This is a great source for information for all teachers, I agree.

NeemaP: do you also use the powerpoint for math?

PaulDB: Writing the IEP is the heart and soul of the special education process, but it is how it is translated into classroom activities that transforms the IEP into a meaningful learning experience for the child.

RomanP: Yes. You need to program it, so numbers can come up in order you want them, but after creating one or two slides, you can use the same template

PaulDB: I trust you save each of your power points for future use?

RomanP: first we do IEP on the power point - we write them together and answer any questions, then the plan needs to match our activities

PaulDB: You have learned well Roman!

RomanP: all this work wasted? I hope not, so we need to save it on discs and flash drives

PaulDB: You must have an interesting time developing lesson plans.

RomanP: ALL credits go to UW-Milwaukee special ed department

PaulDB: There is a collaborative working relationship between a school and a university?

RomanP: yes

PaulDB: That is truly a unique situation.

BJB2: our time is about up, Paul

RomanP: Thank you all.

PaulDB: Oh, okay.

BJB2: did you have a topic for December 18?

NeemaP: thank you

BJB2: . o O (the next meeting of the SPED Forum)

BJB2: Roman, did you have any requests for a topic?

PaulDB: Well, I was thinking about teaching strategies and how they could be modified to meet diverse needs of a diverse student population.

RomanP: any ideas about how to help students read and retain knowledge. Communication retention needs at least 7 times the same message?

PaulDB: But, as usual, I am willing to discuss anything that is important to the group.

PaulDB: I would suggest the use of mnemonics as one strategy.

NeemaP: okay

NeemaP: thank you

RomanP: I'm so new to teaching, there is so much to learn

BJB2 waves goodnight and heads for the PBC discussion

PaulDB: You might also think about the use of examples to re-enforce the reading and explain the concept being taught.

PaulDB: Bye BJ, Thanks for your help. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!!

RomanP: good night, thanks again to both of you

PaulDB: Goodnight Roman. Happy Thanksgiving to you as well!!