Title of Session: K-3+ Resources - Thematic Learning
Moderator: Susan Roseman
Guest Speaker: Camille LoParrino
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SusanR: We are proud to have as our guest this evening Reading Specialist Camille LoParrino! Camille is currently doing research on Restructuring Schools through Thematic Instruction.

SusanR: Her Monarch Butterfly WebQuest was recently declared a featured project in my ecoach

CamilleL: Hello everyone!

BJB2 applauds wildly

CamilleL: Barbara Bray, the creator of My e-coach helped me to make it look more professional.

SusanR: Would you care to tell us a little about your research?

CamilleL: The first thing I did was work with a veteran first grade teacher, Joanne Cioffi.

CamilleL: Then, once we decided upon the theme, I started researching the topic on the internet and found some really great sites.

CamilleL: I got my main information on webquests, from the guru himself, Bernie Dodge.

SusanR: Cynthia, Camille is discussing how she approaches working on a theme at the grade 1 level

CamilleL: I was so worried about working on the computer with children so young, but...

CamilleL: They were daredevils, plugged away (literally) and far exceeded my expectations!

CamilleL: I also had some help from a professional tech developer from Fordham University, Theresa Lupo.

SusanR . o O (wonders if she modified an existing webquest or started from scratch)

CamilleL: She gave me the encouragement to continue.

CamilleL: I decided on the task -- you have been assigned to help the director of the Bronx zoo...

CamilleL: then depending on the resources I found, I selected three roles.

JeffC joined the room.

SusanR: That's the Butterfly Webquest, Camille

CamilleL: Yes, it is.

SusanR listens

CamilleL: Do you have any other questions, Sue?

SusanR: can we take a look at the webquest

CamilleL: yes, of course. it's on the homepage of My e-coach.

SusanR: http://my-ecoach.com/

CamilleL: The best advice I could give to newcomers to webquests is to start out with a template from Filamentality. They also have some great resources you could borrow there.

CamilleL: It's a website that Tom March, the man who studied under Bernie Dodge, the guru.

SusanR: Filamentality was my first introduction to web pages

CamilleL: Isn't it great!

JeffC: Bernie Dodge has set up a new template for creating Webquests called "Quest Garden."

JeffC: Filamentality is great though.

CamilleL: I know I tried it, but I'm so involved with my tech research right now, I never completed one there yet.

SusanR: very similar to Trackstar..trackstar has a prettier interface

JeffC: http://webquest.org/questgarden/

CamilleL: Trackstar is very helpful. I also recently heard about Portoportal and they're free.

SusanR: How much of your day did you teach thematically, Camille

JeffC: I'll be doing a staff development on ALTEC tools next week... Trackstar definitely is one of the most useful tools out there.

CamilleL: You see that's exactly why I'm on sabbatical now -- had to get away. I only got a chance to do that a few times a week.

DavidWe has handouts for Trackstar...for one reason or another

JeffC: You want to send them to me David?

CamilleL: I have something there myself on the 100th day of school.

SusanR: You can do a keyword search on Trackstar and get quite good results
http://trackstar.4teachers.org/trackstar/ts/startSearchByKeyword.do

DavidWe: You want them, Jeff?

SusanR: ie Butterflies

DavidWe: I think I DID NOT send them with the ENC stuff to Susan

CamilleL: oh, yes, that's right. I'm so used to googling everything.

SusanR: Cynthia, Christine are you familiar with Trackstar

JeffC: Sure... always looking for more resources David.

CynthiaSA: yes

ChristinPi: No

CamilleL: enchanted learning is your best bet for the kiddies.

CynthiaSA: although I forget about it for long periods of time and then happily remember what I left there.

SusanR: back to Thematic resources..now basically called project Based Learning

JeffC: Oh... thought they would be word docs, etc....

CamilleL: the problems I'm discovering is the factory type education going on in the nyc public schools. Unless you have a block of time to do this...

SusanR . o O (my first theme was on Chocolate)

DavidWe . o O (physical resources, Jeff, hold 'em in your hand)

CamilleL: you have to be sure and work in a school that doesn't compartmentalize education and allows you the freedom to incorporate everything in long blocks of time.

SusanR: if you are quite creative you can make your themes meet and fit the standards, Camille

CamilleL: we also have a site called NY Learns which helps you a bit in finding the standards -- not the best but getting there.

CynthiaSA: Research certainly supports the idea of learning thematically.

CamilleL: of course it does, it's the particular school system you're in that has to allow you the freedom to teach the way you know best.

SusanR: this link gives you the rationale for using themes

SusanR: http://www.schoolrenewal.org/strategies/i-thematic-bg.html

CynthiaSA: I can get lots of state standards into one project, plus language support for ELLs. Makes it easy to convince administrators.

CamilleL: where is this Cynthia?

CynthiaSA: I have done my own, I have one up on my district website.

CynthiaSA: give me a second and I'll give you a URL

CamilleL: wow, could you give us the address?

SusanR . o O (waits excitedly for the URL)

CamilleL: don't you find it to be a pretty hefty time consuming experience finding the standards?

CynthiaSA: http://mcunis.dearbornschools.org/Staff/alvarado/copyright/Cinderella.htm Here it is

SusanR: What are you finding in your research, Camille

CynthiaSA: It is my job to make everyone in my school follow the state standards, especially in language arts.

CamilleL: I'm now focusing on Technology Staff Development. I have found about 6 different studies and now I have to compare it to a computer program here in New York.

CynthiaSA: I know the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations by heart.

CamilleL: I know what you mean -- i used to do staff development for literacy myself.

CamilleL: I'm now interested in finding out if teachers are incorporating technology into their curriculums.

DavidWe: Good question, Camille

DavidWe: Some are...

CynthiaSA: My experience is that support makes all the difference.

CamilleL: I know. I think it was Alan November who said to spend less time worrying about learning the technology. It's more important to be able to teach with technology.

SusanR: a key question; I know they are using technology extensively in their planning

DavidWe agrees

SusanR . o O (web 2.0)

CamilleL: how nice Susan. I'm going to analyze a new initiative -- a 1:1 computing initiative here in New York.

CamilleL: this is a partnership arrangement between Teaching Matters Inc. and the NYCBoE.

CamilleL: Teaching Matters, Inc did the initial training and set up a resouce portal for the teachers -- it's very thorough -- they call it "I Teach I Learn"

CamilleL: The objective is for the teachers to learn computers and how to integrate it into their programs.

SusanR . o O (wonders if Christine is listening and has any comments)

CamilleL: it seems Learning Matters has accomplished this on a smaller scale with two academies in the Bronx, and has now extended it to dozens of schools across the city.

CamilleL: I'm interested in knowing whether or not the teachers will have enough time and resources to turn key what they've learned to their students. hmmm.....

CamilleL: I heard this has worked somewhere in Maine I think -- anyone else heard about that one?

SusanR: harder with one or two computers in the classroom..may require too much effort for significant payback

CamilleL: Oh, no. sorry Sue. each of the kids will get a lap top in the spring.

SusanR: teachers get discouraged if things do not work seamlessly

CynthiaSA: Do they have access to people to ask questions? or just online tutorials and files?

SusanR: aha that is the way to go

CamilleL: I know -- I think there should be a lot of nervous breakdowns, retirements at the end of the 06 season.

CamilleL: Cynthia, I'm finding only the on-line resources so far.

CamilleL: I'm not sure if they have more at the school -- I've got to get permission to go into the building before I know.

SusanR: Have you used blogs with young students, Cynthia and Camille

CamilleL: no, never. sounds like fun, though.

CynthiaSA: I find sometimes a few words with a knowledgeable human makes all the difference in implementation.

SusanR: I would suggest registering with Alan November's site

SusanR: none of the dangers of spam and porn or whatever here..unadorned..no advertising and it's FREE

CynthiaSA: I have not done it yet. but I am contemplating it for January.

CamilleL: What did you mean about the blogs, Sue?

SusanR: Here is an example http://www.novemberlearning.com/blogs/sroseman/

SusanR: easy..easy..

SusanR: nice PDF help file as well

CamilleL: I'd love to meet that Alan November -- he really seems to have a handle on the tech reality.

SusanR: met him many moons ago at a conference

SusanR: been around for a long while

DavidWe: He gives talks at a fair number of edtech conference

CamilleL: I like the one about inviting kids to the workshops and having the teachers watch them.

SusanR: I was notified about a conference in Boston

SusanR: upcoming

SusanR: BLOGS ARE GOING MAINSTREAM

SusanR: Here's another positive sign: an article on CNET talks about how more and more teachers are using blogging in the classroom as an educational tool

SusanR: http://www.weblogg-ed.com/2005/10/17

DavidWe looks

CamilleL: educational? hmmm.... not so sure about that one.

DavidWe is still unsure about what's so compelling about blogs

JeffC: no html needed

JeffC: rss to other blogs

JeffC: kids love em

JeffC: fun for the whole family

DavidWe: FrontPage, Microsoft word all can save as HTML

CynthiaSA: Gives kids a presence in cyberspace w/o new software

SusanR: btw here is the track on Thematic learning

CamilleL: nice to "meet" you Cynthia. thanks for the resources.

BJB2: Thanks, Camille and Sue!

BJB2 runs to the ASO for the next discussion

DavidWe nods to BJ

SusanR: http://www.snipurl.com/jnmh

CynthiaSA: Likewise