Title of Session: Special Education Forum-Instructional Objectives and Assessment
Moderator: Paul Bohac
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Room: Special Education Forum Group

BJB2: shall we formally welcome everyone to today's Special Education Forum, Paul?

PaulDB: Yes!

BJB2: we usually start all events in Tapped In with introductions. Please tell Paul where you are located and what brings you to this discussion.

BJB2: I'm a remedial communication teacher in south central Pennsylvania

PaulDB: I am a retired Correctional Education Administrator and Special education teacher.

HovanZ: I am a Middle School Science Teacher at the Honiss School in Dumont.

YvonneR: I am a school psychologist. I am also currently working on administrative papers

HovanZ: Dumont, NJ

SandraAS: I am a spec. education teacher taking a grad. class in technology thorough National Louis University in Wisconsin.

DaveGst3: I am in Mayville, ND I am reviewing this site for a technology class I am taking for my administrator's credentials.

PaulDB: What an interesting group!

BJB2: cool! we're spread across the country today, Paul!

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm a HelpDesk volunteer and I lead a math education and technology discussion. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

PaulDB: Yes, should make for some lively discussions!

HovanZ: I am also reviewing this site as part of a technology class I am taking

HovanZ: The people in my class are absolutely impressed with this site

PaulDB: Well, last month we discussed the relationship between testing, assessment and instructional objectives.

HovanZ: We had to choose an MUVE to report on. I worked with Second Life but decided to also come here based on all the positive reviews

HovanZ: Assessment can be a challenge with an online course

PaulDB: Hovan, what is MUVE?

HovanZ: A Multi User Virtual Environment

PaulDB: Thanks.

HovanZ: welcome

PaulDB: Yes, it can be but the focus was on the classroom environment.

HovanZ: Oh ok. Have you ever tried the powerpoint games as a tool for assessment?

HovanZ: "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?"

HovanZ: Jeopardy

BJB2: Hovan, you may be interested in participating in the Tapped In festival on July 25...

PaulDB: No, have not but maybe some of the others have?

BJB2: the theme is Playing to Learn and games for education

HovanZ: I would definitely be interested, I am planning on writing my thesis on Educational games

PaulDB: Now that sounds like an interesting symposium topic BJ.

DavidWe . o O (big, big, topic these days)

BJB2: I'm familiar with using games for assessment. Jeopardy and who wants to be a millionaire are pretty popular

SandraAS: Not familiar with powerpoint games. Am a K-1 spec. ed. teacher and find it difficult to find relevant technology for the lower levels.

PaulDB: Yes, much of the computer technology seems to require a somewhat higher level of computer skills than younger children may possess.

HovanZ: Sandra, I do not have experience with that age group but there has to be some kind of interactive computer application geared for that age.

HovanZ: Maybe even something with touch screen technology

BJB2: you can also do very simple ppt using a projector...letter recognition for example

BJB2: make bingo games

HovanZ: Also if you have a smart board and speakers

SandraAS: Yeah, Hovan, that's part of what I will hopefully be learning this week in my tech. course.

SandraAS: I like the bingo games idea. No smart boards in my building. Any idea what they cost?

PaulDB: A lot!

HovanZ: I think around 1,200 but you also need a digital projector and computer

JeffC: not if you draw on them in crayon

HovanZ: Crayon?

JeffC: joke

SandraAS: We have the computer and projector and a budget for some bigger items so it's a possibility.

PaulDB: Can also use an overhead projector to cast a tic-tac-toe diagram on a blackboard where students can enter letters or numbers to complete a word or a math computation.

HovanZ: Sandra, if you can get one then definitely shoot for one

BJB2 agrees. Tech can be very basic.

SandraAS: Are they hard to learn to use?

YvonneR: Smart Boards are pretty basic

PaulDB: Also, with the purchase will likely come some staff training.

HovanZ: A workshop would be helpful but it is pretty much an interactive extension of your computer's desktop

HovanZ: it comes with an application that has some useful tools

YvonneR: We had an inservice for all teachers this past school year on their use

BJB2: I'm going to paste a big amount of text here for a basketball game for spelling

BJB2: I taught in a Varying Exceptionalities 9th-11th Language Arts class and my students were most motivated when we utilized game based learning. We did vocabulary bingo as a weekly activity to get ready for the vocab quizzes. My student's favorite game was one that I came up with during student teaching, Spelling Basketball. We were on block scheduling with 90 min periods, so this game was awesome for unit spelling reviews were you had a large list of words. The day before I implemented the game, we did a lesson on team work and working cooperatively in groups. All you need for the game is a nerf or small basketball, a garbage pail, two slices of masking tape, a board to keep score, and spelling lists. You need a score keeper from each team responsible for keeping track of points on the board.

I also set the game up by placing the garbage can in front of the board and then placing one slice of masking tape a reasonable distance to represent a 1 point bonus and then another!   piece of tape further away for the two point bonus challenge. I split the class into two teams and had them come up with catchy team names. A member of each team would take turns approaching the board and I would call out a spelling word (I gave certain students with lower ability levels a small list of condensed focus words to study the day prior, other students were directed to spend the prior class and the night prior studying their unit list). If they spelled the word I called out correctly, they got a point for their team. If they spelled the word correctly, they then had the opportunity to earn either a 1 point or two point bonus by making a basket from a certain spot in the classroom (their choice).

The student's loved this game so much and were so excited to come to class when it was on the schedule for the week. It was difficult at times to motivate a class that contained a large amount of student's with emotional disturbances and varying exceptionalities. I frequently made modifications to the game and used it for different purposes. You could even bring it outside to the basket ball court with a visa board.

PaulDB: Did all teachers have access to one for their use?

HovanZ: My school has two smartboards, one in each science lab. 7th and 8th grade

HovanZ: Since this window has been detached, does that mean I can continue to explore the site without being logged out?

PaulDB: BJ, you have described a game that accommodates classroom diversity while also meeting the instructional objectives in the classroom.

PaulDB: The use of technology to assess has made a change in assessment practice possible.

JeffC: If you leave the room, you lose this chat, Hovan.

JeffC: but you may post to Discussion in this room, etc.

PaulDB: However, the use of technology has also made it necessary to re-define assessment.

YvonneR: Technology has made the record keeping easier and more visual for parents to see charts and graphs

PaulDB: Yes it has in a big and important way.

YvonneR: I have many parents who do not understand my testing, but if I can show them on graphs, they seem to understand

PaulDB: But it has also made it necessary to ensure that we are assessing the child's knowledge, skills or performance on the task and not on the use of the technology.

YvonneR: I think that is a problem with all special education students in all subjects. If there is a LD in reading are we assessing reading or the content knowledge of a subject

PaulDB: Kids who do not have access to technology at home may be adversely affected by assessment or test-taking that requires use of a computer, for example.

PaulDB: Very good Yvonne, you are so right!

JeffC: Have any of you SPED educators explored the possibility of using speech to text with your students?

PaulDB: I have not Jeff.

SandraAS: No, but I would be interested in learning more about that.

PaulDB: Can you elaborate Jeff?

JeffC: Well... one of these days I'm going to write a grant to the Gates foundation on that... but basically for K-4 students, not SPED specifically.

JeffC: It's a no brainer for me Paul... all kids can talk... none can type.

YvonneR: And a lot can't spell

PaulDB: Okay, thanks for pointing out the obvious.

SandraAS: What is currently available for speech to text?

JeffC: There's been a lot of research on multiple intelligence, and various learning styles... but the minute you put a pencil into a kid's hand you basically put in a filter for their thinking process.

JeffC: Windows XP has a built in speech to text (not great), Dragon Naturally Speaking is one, and Windows Vista is supposed to have improved the system.

JeffC: My thinking is that if you want kids to write, then simply get them talking...using speech to text (and vice versa) *should* do wonders for reading/writing/thinking.

YvonneR: I have had students who use Dragon Naturally Speaking

HovanZ: Sandra, I know there is a speech to Text included with MAC OSX , if you use apples

HovanZ: or are they called macs?

PaulDB: Can you explain how one would access the speech-to-text in Windows XP?

SandraAS: We have access to both macs and pcs

HovanZ: it is in the utilities folder

JeffC: It's built into the system Paul.

PaulDB: Guess I will have to go look for it!

JeffC: I'll get the route for you.

SandraAS: Does anyone know what company sells Dragon Naturally Speaking?

PaulDB: My wife is a Speech and Language pathologist in the local school system. This would likely be a big help to her.

HovanZ: it is called "Voice Over"

SandraAS: Thanks

PaulDB: Look for "Voice Over" in the utilities file?

HovanZ: yes

HovanZ: or do a search in the finder

PaulDB: Thanks.

PaulDB: You may have started something special Jeff.

HovanZ: just so there is no confusion, voice over is for Mac OSX only

PaulDB: I can think of so many ways the teaching of reading could be enhanced if the speech-to-text and text-to-speech program were readily available without additional expenditures.

JeffC: In Word... click Tools-- Speech.

PaulDB: Thanks for the clarification Jeff.

PaulDB: Does anyone know the answer to Sandra's question about Dragon Naturally Speaking?

JeffC: Although there are still bugs with it, I really think it could be one of the most useful tools that students used in the early grades especially, and obviously for SPED students as well.

SandraAS: Paul, I agree. We try to fully include all our spec. ed. students in the classroom and that would enable me to do so even more.

JeffC: Dragon Naturally Speaking is a better system than XP speech, but is costly. I'm not sure how much an educator's version would cost.

SandraAS: I can google it to find out where to buy.

PaulDB: Not just reading but also writing, spelling.

JeffC: plus... and correct me if I'm wrong... but I think the kids would actually have *fun* using it.

JeffC: although fun isn't a NCLB standard (should be though)

PaulDB: Yes, it would be fun and would likely help to reduce the fear of using technology!

YvonneR: My technology person at school did some research for me and recommended Dragon as the best. I can't remember how much it cost. We used ACCESS money

SandraAS: A big plus since so many of my students already struggle and need motivators to learn.

SandraAS: What is ACCESS money, Yvonne?

PaulDB: Anything that brings relevance to the task contributes to motivation.

YvonneR: Schools can bill students with MA for certain services

SandraAS: Not sure, but is MA Medicaid?

PaulDB: Yvonne, you might want to look into the use of IDEA funding for the purchase.

YvonneR: Yes, schools in PA can sign up as a provider of MA. There is paperwork involved, but well worth it. The money can only be used for spec. ed

PaulDB: According to my understanding, at least 80% (at least that is what it was) must be spent on the kids in the classroom.

SandraAS: Yeah, we have that. It's never been "offered" to us by our administrators as a funding source but that must be how when we need big ticket items, they come up with a way to do it.

PaulDB: Additionally, if your school is a Title I school, you may be able to access those funds as well.

YvonneR: You can use the money for student aides, computers or additional staff for a year

SandraAS: We are not Title I.

JeffC: Dragon Naturally Speaking is the best (from what I've read)... it retails for $100, but I'm sure you could get an educational discount.

SandraAS: Wow, that's reasonable.

PaulDB: Also, remember Jeff's comment about seeking funding through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation? You might want to look into that as well.

PaulDB: Where can it be ordered Jeff?

SandraAS: Great ideas, everyone. This definitely gives me some things to consider and pursue.

PaulDB: For that price, I would be willing to buy and donate a copy.

YvonneR: Use your PTG/PTA. Ours are great!

PaulDB: Good point Yvonne!

SandraAS: Yes, our PTA is great, too and would definitely do that!

JeffC: various places Paul... I'm looking at a site in Australia now... apparently there is a way to license it based on 10 purchases of software, but then by the *user*... so... less than $50... but I would say contacting the company directly would be the way to go.

PaulDB: Using such a program would also be helpful in those situations where some of the kids are ESOL or LEP.

JeffC: this is their homepage: http://www.digitalriver.com/v2.0-img/operations/scansoft/site/367062/367062_dns-talk.html

PaulDB: Thanks Jeff!

DaveGst3: Thanks for allowing me to be part of this meeting. You are very professional and have the best interest of kids in mind.

SandraAS: I wonder if speech to text is an allowable accommodation for State testing?

DaveGst3 left the room.

PaulDB: Sandra, I think a strong case could be made for such an accommodation. Certainly if you want to make such an attempt I would like to help you if you are so inclined.

PaulDB: If we can allow extended time, or alternative assessments, I would see the text-to-speech or the speech-to-text as just one more kind of alternative assessment.

SandraAS: I personally don't deal with state testing since it starts at gr. 3 and I only go up to first. However, my colleagues would be interested in learning more, I am sure.

JeffC: I have to run... I'll stay logged in... if people want to talk to me about teaming up on a grant for this thing... jbcoops@gmail.com

PaulDB: There you go Sandra, get in touch with Jeff on the grant. A multi-state project will have its own kind of appeal.

SandraAS: Okay, sounds good! This has been very informative-thank you all!

PaulDB: Thank you all for a very lively discussion.

BJB2: The next Special Ed Forum will be on July 16

BJB2: Thanks, Paul, for leading the discussion

PaulDB: One never knows where the discussions will go, but I prefer to think that we are responsive to our participants.

BJB2 . o O (all educators have to be ready for plan B ;-))

DavidWe: Thanks, Paul

PaulDB: Righ now I am reviewing Adult Education grant applications for the Florida DOE in the areas of Adult Literacy, ESOL and Civics Education.

PaulDB: Thank you David.

BJB2: that sounds like fun ;-)

PaulDB: Also trying to meet with Superintendents of residential programs as possible research study sites.

PaulDB: That takes time for travel.

DavidWe smiles

PaulDB: Actually, the reviews are fun, just a little time-consuming.

DavidWe nods

PaulDB: Not to mention that the on-line course I am teaching for the local community college has the largest number of students I have ever had in any sort of classroom or on-line setting!

DavidWe: How many?

PaulDB: 52

DavidWe: yikes!

DavidWe: That's a lot

DavidWe: Do you have to grade papers?

PaulDB: Yeah, especially trying to read, comment on and grade all of the various assignments!

DavidWe: yes, that's a lot of reading

PaulDB: Not hard copy papers, just the posted assignments.

DavidWe nods

DavidWe: Have you taught an on-line course before?

PaulDB: Yes, several on behalf of the University of West Florida.

PaulDB: Actually met BJ on-line through her participation in those UWF courses.

DavidWe: What is the biggest drawback as you see it?

DavidWe remembers Bj taking one of those courses

DavidWe . o O (with online education)

PaulDB: The difficulty of conveying emotion through writing when reviewing or responding to a student.

DavidWe: do you have any synchronous interactions?

DavidWe . o O (like in Tapped In)

PaulDB: No, but that is because there has been a change in the platform used to deliver the courses. Am not sure it can provide such interaction.

DavidWe: that's too bad - I think one needs the interaction - in the best of situations

PaulDB: Guess I will go now, have some grant applications to review.

DavidWe: Thanks again for leading the discussion, Paul

DavidWe: good luck with the grant reviews and the BIG class

BJB2 hugs Paul. Take care. I'm looking forward to seeing LaVaughn at CEA

PaulDB: I agree with you David, but the reason so many students take on-line courses is because they are convenient to the student's schedule.

DavidWe: right, but junk food is convenient, too

DavidWe . o O (fast food...)

DavidWe smiles

PaulDB: Yes, but not nearly as beneficial as on-line course work!

DavidWe smiles

PaulDB: You all be good! I look forward to next month's session and Jeff, thanks for the information about the text-to-speech programs!

DavidWe: I'll be at NECC in Atlanta this coming week

DavidWe . o O (ed. tech conference)

PaulDB: Good night. Bj appreciate your help, it always make the evening go smoothly!

DavidWe waves to Paul