ACTIVITY ONE

Seeing Opportunities for Change (Weeks 1-2)

Title: How can I improve my practice as co-coordinator of Schools Integration Project 062?
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Summary of Problem:
As a classroom teacher, the author wanted to use Internet-based collaborative projects to enhance student learning. She saw the need to include parents and the wider community in this project because her particular interest beyond the inclusion of technology in the curriculum was to break home/school barriers and to build an interest in other cultures and a pride in that of her students.

Literature Review Structure

Chapter 1: The Focus
What are ICPs? Definition—collaboration between students and others via Internet
Why include the wider community? Families should gain access to computers
The Problem: Will bringing schools into the infosphere justify the effort? Berenfeld (1997: 14)

Chapter 2: Context of My Work:
19 year teaching veteran in remote Irish community which would be enhanced by virtual travels

Chapter 3: Method of Enquiry
The Plan—Action Research ref. McNiff, Whitehead
• Collected data
• Reflected
• Success Criteria Indicators
Ethics
• Student anonymity
• Permission for research in school

Chapter 4: The Project
Area of Investigation—Internet and Internet-based projects
My Concern—drive from interest in tech or interest in enhancing learning?
Evidence to Show My Practice Needed Improvement—Problems with previous partnership with Texas school didn’t enhance learning
What I Could Do—Reflection, sharing with colleagues, reading
What I Did—Read M. Reiś’s writing on learning circles, created a schedule
of circles with students and parents, then Cyberfair
Learning Circles—created LCs with 6 schools, project title Places and
Perspectives and Local Landscapes, sharing with Learning Circle
Newsgroup online
Online Expeditions—Followed online a lone sea man rowing around the
world
Cyberfair 2001—collaborative and competitive worldwide environment
based project on a website
Parental Involvement—volunteer help creating computer room, 6-week
tech skills course for parents
Impact of My Involvement in SIP—made learning more “real” for students
Conclusion I Drew from the Evidence
  • Real and relevant learning
  • Children’s personal development
  • Improvement in socio-economic disadvantage
  • Developed intervention strategies to overcome problems
Validation
  • Data
  • Validation group
  • Critical friends

Chapter 5: Significance
  Personal Significance—assessment of knowledge, relevant learning,
personal development
  Significance for My Institution—improved home/school relationships
  Educational Significance—generated a practical theory with model

Bibliography

The research question or questions:
How can I improve my practice as co-coordinator of Schools Integration Project
062?
  • What are ICPs?
  • Why include the wider community?
  • Will bringing schools into the infosphere justify the effort?

Reflection:

This particular text drew me in first because of the setting. It involves a teacher
working in a rural area in which none of the families had computers at home. For
this reason she had to find new ways to find acceptance for enriching student
learning with technology by increasing the family to school connection. It was
only after this gap had been bridged that she could progress with her classroom research with the children. One of my schools, though neither rural nor completely absent of home computer skills, has some similar difficulties. We have a high number of family members who are recent immigrants and who do not speak English and whose computer skills are minimal. This means that sometimes there is a great deal more skill learning that has to be done as students incorporate technical tools into their learning because there can be no assumption of prior learning or skill support from home.

I was also drawn to her honesty in describing unsuccessful past attempts, because I have met some of the same stumbling stones with project attempts in videoconferencing. Her resolve to move ahead through research, planning, action, and reflection is moving and encourages me.

Quite frankly, I also love to read about interesting ways teachers engage students (and in this case the community as well) in learning with technology as a tool, but not as a driving force. I found her activities interesting, far-reaching, and applicable in most school settings.