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9440 Learning With the Internet, Fall, 2008
Learning Units 1 & 2: K12 Online Conference 2008 – Amplifying Possibilities

Provide a brief overview of your selected session.

Here's the link to the presentation I will discuss:
<http://k12onlineconference.org/?p=351&print=1>

The presentation I selected was titled *Changing Disabilities to Possibilities – Using the MacGyver Approach*. It was presented by Beth Lloyd, an occupational therapist. She briefly discusses Universal Design for Learning, an approach to help teachers adapt materials, techniques and strategies to enable disabled students to participate in daily life activities. She explains that MacGyver (TV show in the mid 1980's to early 1990's) was known for his resourcefulness in using simple tools such as paper clips for purposes other than what they were intended for. In order to fit the MacGyver principle, tools must be simple and flexible. Voice Thread is a simple tool that only requires 3 steps (upload, comment, share) and it offers flexibility in its use. It can be used to offer multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement for students with diverse needs.

Ms. Lloyd then gives several examples of her successful use of Voice Thread to meet the objectives of disabled students. The first example was a selectively mute child. Her teacher couldn't assess her reading because she wouldn't speak in front of others. Ms. Lloyd scanned the reading pages into Voice Thread. Showed the child how to record her voice and left the room. The child read the pages. Using Voice Thread helped the child and over time she began to talk freely in her class. Another example of ways Ms. Lloyd has found Voice Thread useful is to give children with language delays a means of practicing appropriate language. She had a TBI (traumatic brain injury) child who couldn't greet people appropriately. They uploaded each teacher's picture and recorded their voice saying hello to the child. He watched and listened and was able to practice appropriate responses to each. Other examples were using the doodler tool in voice thread to help teach letter formation for handwriting and using Voice Thread with students who cannot write to complete assignments orally.

Describe how ideas from the session might be implemented with your students or, if not teaching, applied with learners in a broader context (be specific in your explanation, particularly if not addressing a K-12 population).

This session caught my interest because I work in special education with children with language delays and difficulties. I am sharing this session with the speech pathologist at our school because we have children with some of the same problems Ms. Lloyd's students have. I have an autistic student who is much like the TBI child described in the presentation. When he sees me, he instantly starts saying, "Open, shut, open, shut, open, shut"..... over and over. He says that because I have been trying to teach him to use scissors. I was excited to find a way that will give him endless practice in the correct

way to greet people. He likes machines and will attend to an activity like this when he will not attend to other types of tasks. I am interested to see if he will find recording his voice motivating. If so, I could create numerous activities for him that would target his academic needs such as counting and number recognition.

Share your perceptions regarding the viability and value of this online conference AND of this type of social engagement in general.

This was my first experience with an online conference. This is so much better than paying a registration fee, getting a hotel, and travelling. There's no expense and I didn't have to leave my daughter. That's a big plus for me. I think one of the major issues with attending big conferences is trying to work a schedule that enables you to attend each presentation you want. I have been to conferences where there were 2 sessions that I was interested in but they were being presented at the same time so I had to choose one. Then there was the time that I had my heart set on attending the Traumatic Brain Injuries presentation only to arrive at the door early in order to get a seat and not be admitted because it was full.

The online format has many advantages:

Convenience! Schedule is flexible. You can watch it over and over. No travel costs or time away from home. You can share the presentation with colleagues.

Online format makes it feasible (I live in Alabama and it is cost prohibitive to attend a conference in New York.).

There's room for everyone that is interested!