

Title of Session: Beyond Penguins and Polar Bears
Moderator: Jessica Fries-Gaither and Kimberly Lightle
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Room: Beyond Penguins Group

JessicaFr: So Maureen, are you an elementary teacher?

MaureenB: yes I teach 4th grade

JessicaFr: Great! I just left the classroom in Oct to take this position at Ohio State

JessicaFr: I was in 4th grade at the time

MaureenB: I am the science coordinator in my building

JessicaFr: where in the US?

MaureenB: yes NY Putnam County

JessicaFr: and how big is your school? how many teachers?

MaureenB: just north of NYC

MaureenB: there are almost 700 students

MaureenB: 6 or 7 sections on each grade level

JessicaFr: wow! urban/suburban?

MaureenB: suburban

MaureenB: lots of our parents work in NYC

JessicaFr: I planned on having a discussion about challenges in teaching science...but it is hard to discuss with just one teacher!

MaureenB: hehe

JessicaFr: So why don't you share some of the challenges you see in your particular setting, and then we can look at some of our resources.

MaureenB: everyone is out enjoying the summer

BjB . o O (big opportunities come in small packages ;-)

MaureenB: time is always the issue

JessicaFr: does having a science coordinator help encourage teachers to spend more time on the subject?

MaureenB: can only do Science every other day opposite Social Studies

JessicaFr: well, that's better than some schools. I've heard about studies that say teachers are spending just minutes per week on the subject!

MaureenB: I try but the teachers often get other messages from administration

JessicaFr: I'm guessing they are worried about test scores...

MaureenB: No we have a very good hands on program developed by teachers through our local BOCES

MaureenB: you got that right

JessicaFr: that's great. Do you (or other teachers at your school) integrate subjects to save time?

MaureenB: when we complain about science I get well only 3 students out of 140 didn't meet state standards

JessicaFr: like science and LA, for example

JessicaFr: and that's fantastic! You must be doing something right!

MaureenB: all the time the program gives lots of hints on doing that

JessicaFr: are you familiar with Beyond Penguins and Polar Bears at all?

MaureenB: but the fourth grade teachers have to do all the test prep and the test gets early and early in the year

MaureenB: no just the quick peek before I got on

JessicaFr: timing makes a big difference!

JessicaFr: okay, then I'll share some information with you...hopefully you can pass it along to your colleagues

MaureenB: that I will do

JessicaFr: we are an NSF funded project that began in November

JessicaFr: part of the International Polar Year efforts worldwide

JessicaFr: I'm in the college of education at Ohio State, but we partner with the National Science Digital Library and a few other organizations - local and national

JessicaFr: we have a blog and a magazine

MaureenB: is the magazine kid friendly or just for teachers

JessicaFr: both written to help elementary teachers incorporate polar science and integrate literacy and science

JessicaFr: mostly for teachers, but I'll share a few kid friendly resources

JessicaFr: the blog is at <http://expertvoices.nsd.org>

JessicaFr: *<http://expertvoices.nsd.org/polar>

JessicaFr: we started that first before we had the magazine ready to go

JessicaFr: there are some posts that include lesson plans on penguins, polar bears, geologic time, the Iditarod, etc

JessicaFr: but now we mainly use it to post news and professional development opportunities

JessicaFr: if you want, you can take a minute and go visit the blog.

MaureenB: ok

JeffC joined the room.

JessicaFr: hi Jeff

JeffC waves

JeffC: not a lot of penguins today

JessicaFr: Maureen, just let me know when you're finished looking or if you have any questions

JessicaFr: not many penguins...hopefully more in the fall!

JeffC: yup

JeffC: is that when they molt?

JessicaFr: good question...that's the start of their summer, so I'd guess yes...but I can't say for sure!

JeffC doesn't know a lot about penguins.

JessicaFr: lol

JessicaFr: Maureen, are you still on the blog - or are you back?

MaureenB: I'm back

JessicaFr: great - any questions for me?

MaureenB: so much to digest

JessicaFr: yes, there is! We've been busy here!

JessicaFr: The other part of our project is our cyberzine (online magazine)

JessicaFr: we publish monthly issues to the web at <http://beyondpenguins.nsd.org>.

MaureenB: I am going to a conference on geography and was looking at the Artic and Antarctic comparison using the themes of geography

MaureenB: guess that was where I was

JessicaFr: great - you'd be interested in our whole first issue of the magazine

JessicaFr: its called A Sense of Place

JessicaFr: <http://beyondpenguins.nsd.org/issue/index.php?date=March2008>

JessicaFr: we've had three more issues since

JessicaFr: Learning From the Polar Past (about fossils, artifacts, etc)

JessicaFr: Polar Patterns: Day, Night, and Seasons (and the aurora)

JessicaFr: Weather and Climate: From Home to the Poles

JessicaFr: our next issue (August) is Water, Ice, and Snow (the water cycle and states/changes of matter)

JessicaFr: our goal is to use the polar regions as a context for topics you already teach

MaureenB: love the virtual bookshelf

JessicaFr: me too! Glad you already found that!

JessicaFr: another of my favorites is our feature story - we have an expository article for kids each month - differentiated text (three levels) - and have printable books and electronic versions with narration.

JessicaFr:

<http://beyondpenguins.nsd.org/issue/column.php?date=May2008&departmentid=literacy&columnid=literacy!feature>

MaureenB: great

MaureenB: always looking for ways to differentiate

JessicaFr: that link will take you to the Feature Story from the May issue - look for "printable files" and "electronic versions". Take a minute and check out the electronic books - I love them!

MaureenB: This is great always looking for short text on same topics at different levels

JessicaFr: good! We have these each month, so you have lots of choices

JessicaFr: and starting in August, we're going to have a featured reading strategy and templates to go with each story

MaureenB: you must have been reading my mind

JessicaFr: August's strategy is "Determining Importance". We'll have graphic organizers and other guides to help students discriminate between interesting and important information

JessicaFr: we're lucky to have found some collaborators to help with these!

JessicaFr: we also have an article each month on common misconceptions

BjB feels sorry for all the people who are missing this discussion!

JessicaFr: and we create a pdf file of a "probe" you can use to assess what your students are thinking

MaureenB: any thought to multiple choice questions (always have that test prep thought

in my head)

MaureenB: "probe" interesting

JessicaFr: I tried to write some for the first story...didn't go very well! I am not a good multiple choice writer!

JessicaFr: but it is an option we'll explore

MaureenB: I am glad I signed on tonight

JessicaFr: here's a misconceptions article - scroll down to "Probing for Student Understanding" and find the probe link

JessicaFr:

<http://beyondpenguins.nsd.org/issue/column.php?date=June2008&departmentid=professional&columnid=professional!misconceptions>

JessicaFr: NSTA has three books of formative assessment probes (Uncovering Student Ideas in Science, volumes 1-3) which I highly recommend as well. We've gotten permission to follow their model for the probes...and will have one in each issue.

MaureenB: you could put "adults may think" as well :)

JessicaFr: very true - we know that many of us don't know much about those places!

JessicaFr: I'm sure the kids would love to give the probes to their parents as well :)

JessicaFr: and teacher content knowledge is something else we address

MaureenB: there is a homework assignment

JessicaFr: we have a science content knowledge article and a literacy content knowledge article in each issue

JessicaFr: May's science article (weather and climate) was written by a climatologist at UCAR

JessicaFr:

<http://beyondpenguins.nsd.org/issue/column.php?date=June2008&departmentid=professional&columnid=professional!science>

MaureenB: have the sight bookmarked and will be studying it more closely this summer

JessicaFr: great! There is a lot of content, and I know it is easy to get overwhelmed.

MaureenB: are you doing this again next month

JessicaFr: it is all organized into 5 departments: Professional Learning, Science and Literacy, Across the Curriculum, In the Field, and Polar News and Notes. Same departments and columns every month.

JessicaFr: Yes, we have monthly events - next month I'll be sharing content from our August issue on water, ice, and snow (water cycle and states of matter)

JessicaFr: We also have two web seminars scheduled in Oct and Nov through NSTA - have you ever participated in those?

MaureenB: I will get some of my 3rd grade teachers on that is their subject

MaureenB: no

JessicaFr: I HIGHLY recommend them - and not just because I'm leading them! :)

MaureenB: hehe

JessicaFr: They are in the evening - free - you log on from your computer and watch and listen to presenters for about an hour

JessicaFr: teachers from all over the country (and world) participate.

MaureenB: sounds interesting

JessicaFr: the presentations are great, and the chat is too! I've learned a lot as a participant and as a presenter

JessicaFr: I'll grab the url for you - hang on just a second

MaureenB: great

JessicaFr: <http://learningcenter.nsta.org/products/webseminars.aspx>

JessicaFr: we aren't showing up on the 2008 list just yet - but we will soon. Ours are scheduled for Oct 29 and Nov 13. Again - completely free! It looks like there's another good one on using children's books. I'll probably participate in that one, too.

MaureenB: do I need any special software

JessicaFr: Many are aimed at middle school, though.

JessicaFr: You download a program called Elluminate when you register. It is free.

JessicaFr: and you could have a headset or mike, but almost no one does (besides the presenter).

JessicaFr: but I would recommend ours (and that picture-perfect science lessons) for elementary teachers

MaureenB: thanks I will download that before the presentation

JessicaFr: Great! Do you have any other questions I can answer?

MaureenB: I have a headset and mike.

JessicaFr: We also have flyers and promotional materials I could email you, if you'd want to share them with colleagues.

MaureenB: not right now but I will try to check back next month when I have looked at things more closely

MaureenB: sure

JessicaFr: I'll email some materials to you tomorrow morning!

MaureenB: thanks now I better go feed hubby

JessicaFr: and I think we'll wrap up early, if that's okay with everyone.

MaureenB: thanks for all the great info

JessicaFr: thank you!

JessicaFr: hope to "see" you again next month!

MaureenB: what date next month?

MaureenB: I want to put it on my calendar

JessicaFr: we haven't scheduled yet - probably early in the month? BJ?

BjB: just let me know

BjB: August 6?

MaureenB: I will have to bring my laptop on vacation :)

JessicaFr: How about the 7th? I have commitments on Wed nights in August.

BjB : ok

MaureenB: night all

JessicaFr: sounds good! goodnight!

BjB waves goodnight