

First of all, I'm curious, IBL? What is that?

Inquiry-Based Learning.

Can you describe how you teach?

I teach chaotically. How do I teach? I teach very much to each individual child, so child friendly, child-centred...I suppose looking in from the outside it would definitely be quite chaotic-looking, in that there's a lot of people doing different things.

Why do you teach this way?

I suppose, it possibly suits my learning style, and I don't like teaching whole class. I don't think it's effective.

So you do lots of [small?] group work?

No. More individual work than anything.

What influences or experiences do you attribute this to?

When I came through training college there was a woman called [name] who was one of our lecturers at training college, and she kind of shaped the way that I am in many ways. Made me think about how I wanted to teach. And then in recent years John Taylor Gatto and [Lane Clark *Unable to make out name on tape*], and John Holt, another person who I would say would have changed me. And then various other readings that I've read - the new school movement in America. Made me think about teaching and learning.

So what sort of things have you read?

Lots of internet articles, lots of information about schools and how they are run, lots of information about teachers and teaching styles, and basically how schools, in many ways we fail children, and that there has to be another approach to the whole school situation, because I felt that, for me, as a learner in that situation, I didn't learn. I didn't reach my potential. And I can see that with a lot of other children that I've seen over the years, that, that whole class doesn't work for them either.

So how do the children respond to the way that you teach?

Usually pretty well. I would say that children respond to it because of the fact that they're working on things that are at their level, or pertinent to them, or that they're keen on, or keen to learn about.

Do you teach the same for all subjects?

No. I teach the same for five minutes in a row. It all varies, complete and utterly for circumstances, the child, whether it's a hot day, it's a cold day, whether the windows are open or the windows are closed. Everything has an influence on the way I teach and work.

Why?

It works for me. It works for children, and I think that I am fortunate because I end up really loving my job. And the children enjoy the teaching and they enjoy the learning from that.

How do you see your role in the classroom?

Ultimately I am the person who is in charge of their welfare and therefore, help them to come up with boundaries for their own education, and goals for their learning, and make the decisions, which benefit them for the learning and behaviour. At the same time I sort of facilitate them into making a lot of the decisions and assisting them to make the right choices.

As a teacher, how do you relate to your students?

Again, it's a little like I was describing before, a multi-faceted approach, in that some children have a sense of humour, so I will work on sense of humour. Some children are very serious and might like to discuss problems, or discuss problems and it might be that we do things physically together, or it might be that we do things mentally, or it might be that we go outside and work.

Can you tell me about your classroom management strategies? Just your management and general organisation.

General organisation. Very clear with explanations about what I'm wanting from the children. It's co-operation between them and myself, and parents in regards to their learning. And, things are very fluid all the time. Really fluid. There is no, or very little rigidity in the structure, and even then, I think I reflect upon why we need to have certain things.

How do you think we learn?

We learn by interacting with our world. And, for some people that's sitting down and just having their ears open and they can learn from hearing. But for the majority of people it involves their other senses, and working with children or other peers, I should say. How the brain functions - you've got your left brain and right brain learners, therefore you've got those people who are analytical, like to think about things and process them once step after another, whereas you've got the more holistic who will take things in from various senses in a more muddled format. And then you've got the classic view and the romantic view of the world as well, which I think all children have. So, you've got those children who have the understanding of an object from its form, and then you've got those who just simply appreciate it for what it is.

So where did your understanding of this come from?

Through reading and observing, and then putting the two together.

Was teacher's College an influence at all?

Definitely an influence, and an influence possibly into the fact that the way that I was taught was not necessarily the right way to teach. Made me reflect upon the fact that I came out of school feeling like I was a dummy, but possibly in reality it was because I learnt in a different way.

A lot of people had that same experience. It's sad.

Yes it is. It is really sad.

Tell me how you use ICT when you're teaching.

It would be easier for me to say how I don't use ICT when I'm teaching. ICT - it's a little bit like how do we not have pencils or pens? That's a little bit like how I see it, in that, it's all around us, we're using it constantly, whether it be maths and children finding problems or looking at the Sudoku question, or we search, or it might be making a movie, or it might be putting their ideas and thoughts into a digital format. It might be just simply typing up a project because handwriting is not as tidy as their typed writing. Use of mobile phones to text each other, text myself, keep me informed of what's going on. I struggle to keep ICT out of what I do.

Just harking back to the texting, have you found that there's anything happening between texting and the writing abilities of students?

No.

Has it influenced them?

I think so. I think text abbreviations come through more and more in writing styles. And, at the moment I'm actually doing a short story competition where children are actually encouraged to create a story using 160 characters, that includes the spaces. So it's one full screen of a Telecom mobile phone, and that's what their story's got to be written on. Because, that's what we do, we're constantly using the phones to text message people, so why not learn to use it properly?

How do the kids respond to that?

They're good. They really like it. One of the things that they were wanting to discuss was could they actually get their text stories printed out off their phone. A lot of them were trailing them on their phone, and they wondered whether we could actually print them out. They took to it. They taught me all the abbreviations, the language of abbreviations on a mobile phone. Lol is 'lots of laughs', but then somebody said it's 'lots of love', and then said it meant something else. And there's just a huge amount, tb was 'text back' in abbreviations. I just don't know, it's just a different world.

Yes. It is something that I am outside of. Sounds great. You should make up a dictionary.

Yes, that's right. Except that it would just constantly being revised I suppose.

How do you think that ICT relates to the students ' learning?

I think I struggle to separate it from their learning. Because ICT is not just sitting at a computer and doing an internet search, or sitting at a computer and writing up a story, it's using a digital camera to take shots of something happening in the school, or it might be that you've got this drama idea which would look so much better if it then became a small movie, and from there it's well, okay, it's great having a movie, but we possibly need to have a theme song, So downloading a theme song that goes with it. And then not having that knowledge, but knowing that someone else in the classroom has that knowledge, and getting them to show you how to change from a WMA file to another music file. So it's all learning and it's all inter-related.

Can you describe your classroom management strategies when you use ICT? Are they different?

I don't know whether they're any different because ICT is so much of what I actually do in the classroom. In fact, I'm not really sure what it would be like to actually not have access to ICT in the classroom situation any longer. It's all the same, it's individualised, sitting down with a child, saying well okay have you thought about, do you know about, how can we done this better, who's got the skills to show us how to do this. Trial and error. Problem solve.

I see you've got three computers there...how do you organise time for each student with them?

We don't. You obviously came a little bit late, we've got four computers there, and I've got a laptop sitting behind my desk, and then we had ten other laptops in here for most of the day as well. I've got a room down here where I've got children who are putting together the [name of school] idol. It's a little bit like New Zealand idol. So that's another computer, two monitors, and various digital recording and video editing software and recording devices, so it's all go.

I think I should be a kid again and come here!

Yeah. It's exciting. We have a child who every so often brings her own laptop along, and then we have the mobile phones that come out for various reasons during the day, whether it be to put something into their own calendar, or to find out whether Mum's going to pick them up or not pick them up.

So then, do most children have mobile phones?

I would say that it would be over half the class that have mobile phones, maybe two-thirds of the class.

Would you happen to know if they were Vodafone or Telecom?

No. I would say again, that it would be fifty-fifty.

How do you see your role in the classroom when you or your students are using ICT?

I suppose the same as everything else. Hoping that they are seeing all the possibilities. Hoping that they are making things work better than before. And, also the fact that children are actually doing things that there is no way in the world that I could have actually taught them those skills. I've got children at the moment who are putting together movies with animation, and they've gone beyond where I'm at. So therefore, they're learning off their peers - trial and error.

So how did they get those skills in the beginning?

Trial and error. Problem solving - this is one idea. It started off, I had a child from another class who I was working with, who was into animation. He said, there's this freeware called 'Pivot'. And so we sat and had a look at that, and suddenly found that it had limitations because of the fact that it couldn't be transferred into a movie file, and then we found that we could actually save it as a different file. So the Pivot file could be saved as a Windows media file. And, so all of a sudden it became a file that we could then export into Windows MovieMaker. And then we're using background from Paint and backgrounds from off the net, and putting them altogether, and creating small movies.

So what have you observed when you use ICT in the classroom?

Children are engaged. They're engaged in things, which obviously mean something to them. They can instantly access the world beyond these four walls. They don't need me to be the font of all knowledge. That children will go way beyond where teachers are at. The teacher shouldn't be frightened of allowing children to work beyond their own skills. And, generally it is more boys than girls who are engaged with use of computers.

Why do you think that is?

The way boys are wired I supposed. Boys are more likely to experiment with things - trial and error. Try this, try that. Where as the girls, they like to know what it is that we're going to do and accomplish it. That's just my general observation.

I think you're right there. I'm not one for experimenting. I like it laid out.

I've got some girls in the classroom who are very, very skilled, but one today had a whole lot of footage that she'd shot herself, plus she'd downloaded off the net in regards animal cruelty, but she didn't know how to put it together. She'd just procrastinated, and procrastinated, and eventually I said, well look, it's so easy. You do this, this and this and this, and all of a sudden she had enough to be able to go on and start putting things together. And then she started asking the questions; well I want to be able to put my voice over the top, I want to have this voice over. And what about credits? And titles? How am I going to fit those in? And she started asking the questions and it was very easy to help her with them. She moved on from there, whereas boys will tend to just fiddle and play, fiddle and play, until they get it right.

Why do you think this happened, regarding your observations when using ICT in the classroom?

Children being engaged? Because everything then becomes pertinent to them. We had some coins, which were left here by a Korean teacher, and I told the children to be very, very careful because each one was worth one New Zealand hundred dollars. And they were gold coins, and I could see that there was a little bit of disbelief from a few of them. And a group of them said that we're going to go down after school to the bureau de change to get them converted into dollars. And within two or three minutes I heard a child coming up and saying to me no, this is a one yen or whatever it was coin, and this is the conversion rate for this into New Zealand and it's worth less than a cent. Thank you very much, (name of teacher). But that's rubbish. So it's children see the possibilities all the time of it. It's part of their life, part of their world.

How do you interact with your students when using ICT?

One to one. Challenging them to do better than for. Challenging them to make sure that there's rigour in what they're doing. It is very easy to just download pictures and information off the net, but okay what about the references, what about cross-references, what about putting it into your own words, what about making sure that

you understand what it all means, what about understanding where this has come from, is there a bias on it? So that rigour is happening all the time, and it's happening within a real context.

How do the students respond?

On occasion I have kids who grizzle because of the fact that I'm actually asking questions. I'm not prepared to just put up the pretty pages which they've downloaded. And, they then go away, and they've done their grizzle and their moan, and they complain but they actually turn up with the goodies at the end.

In your opinion how does the ICT that you use relate to a real world context?

It relates all the time, because I can't make it the opposite way, I can't disengage it or pull it apart from the real world. It's all part of what we're doing.

Can you give me some examples?

We've got a couple of boys in the classroom who've decided that this term they want to look at stock markets, and find out about the stock market, and so they're tracking ten companies that they've chosen over a four week period of time, to see whether there is improvements, gains, and then at the end of that time they actually want to buy some shares themselves. And, then there was group of boys who said, well hmm, I'm willing to put ten dollars in it, and we went from just maybe twenty dollars to close to a hundred dollars being offered to be put in on some stocks and shares. And then we need to work out how we're going to share it out at the end. Another boy was looking at a business and he was trying to look at different businesses, and this term we're looking at statistics, and he's moved it into using Trade Me to look at property prices in Dunedin, and then got on and had a look on the DCC website to find out rates costs, and then created a table to show price expected appreciation of the property, rent or costs out, including maintenance, and rates and insurance, and then he's graphing it, and choosing a house which he thinks would be pertinent or suitable for him to buy. It's real life stuff.

Have you seen 'Digital Horizons'?

No.

It's the Ministry's ICT strategy for schools. In the draft strategy presented a picture of where we are now and where we go from here. It identified the integration of ICT into teaching and learning across the curriculum as crucial in moving forward and achieving further gains. What do you think about this? What does it mean?

To be truthful I think that the Draft strategy, as soon as it is written it will be out of date. In that ICT and the way that it can be used, nobody, no government, no organisation, will ever keep up with it. You know Microsoft can't keep up with it. Or therefore, ICT is as good as the people who are wanting to use it. Or, as good as the dollars and cents will allow. Even then there's ways around it.

What about "it identified the integration of ICT into teaching and learning across the curriculum..." So what does that mean?

To me it means, just get on and do your job. To not have ICT in the classroom would be like not having pens and paper. It's the same thing.

So obviously you do integrate...

Totally.

Into each subject area?

Yes. I suppose the least area I would use it in would be Maths, and I also teach Tikanga Maori, but in both those areas. I still use still use ICT for a significant period of time.

So what sort of things do you do?

In ICT - looking at things Maori, such as the study of famous Maori New Zealanders, looking at musical instruments, getting examples of bone carvings, finding out what the haka means.. So basically purely as a research tool. But then also using ICT...on the laptop I have got various Maori music which I play from time to time. For maths, a whole lot of maths websites, maths problems we find and locate. We've got a Sudoku wave happening here at the moment, and a bit of a chess wave, in that we've got children who are playing online chess. So there's two laptops going - one on one side of the classroom, one on the other side of the classroom, and they're playing online chess and I presume that this chess game is being played in cyberspace somewhere, and yet they're less than two or three metres apart.

So what has influenced your thinking about integration and ICT?

I don't think really anything influenced as such - it's just allowing ICT to take hold. A lot of schools, a lot of teachers don't like to see mobile phones. Well, I'm not pro-mobile phone if it's distracting you from your work. But then I as a teacher have my mobile in my pocket, and it's on silent alert all day long. There might be things coming in, which I would deal with at playtimes and lunchtimes. Sometimes there's messages coming in from children, children keeping up with what's going on at home, and surely that's a form of literacy. So children having the little stick pens, the MP3 players and stick pens with all their data on, so they're transferring data from home to school, backwards and forwards, altering files at home. Because most children have got the same software or access to software at home. So they take work home, play around with it, and bring it back in. The only concern is that somebody could inadvertently bring a virus in.

Are there measures to prevent that?

There's measures to prevent it. But if somebody maliciously went about it, then, no there isn't a measure.

Do you think it is easier to integrate ICT across the curriculum in some subjects or levels than others?

Yes, for sure. We don't really have any ICT happening really in sports. I can't think of any sport where I've had ICT. We've done comparative studies of sports, and looked at sports people and results, but once we're outside doing fitness or playing a game, other than me using my mobile phone as a stop watch. No, not majorly. So, not into sports, but for ICT it would be about the only place.

Could you see a way of integrating it into sport and PE?

I'm sure there could be. But at this present point in time...But, I have children who will go out at some periods of the day, who have maybe missed out on a fitness session in the morning, they'll go out and they'll take their mobile, and because will have said to them, right you've got twelve minutes from now to be outside, run around the track and be back. And, so maybe that's integration of ICT into their fitness programme, I don't know. I suppose it is really. And if I couldn't find them, I've got their phone number on mine and I could just text them and say right, get yourselves in.

Do you think that there are things that facilitate the integration of ICT and factors that are barriers? What would make it easier and what would make it difficult?

Knowledge of equipment. Two years ago as being part of this school I was given a laptop to use and I think that that as increased my understanding of ICT because I take it to and from school everyday. It's basically a personal tool, although it does belong to the school. But I use it like I would use a pen or piece of paper, and it's just constantly out being used. So that I think has been a very, very pro-active format for me to come to grips with what's available, and also a way of keeping it with children as well. And things that hinder it - definitely dollars and cents. And people's own creative visions or fear. Fear of breaking...or getting a virus...we all these worries about a virus, or we have all these worries about breaking something or losing data. Well, I one should get over it and move on. It sounds a bit blaise but I think we can't let things hinder your thinking, or your teaching or learning.

In your opinion what would you say is the most influential source of your own ICT integration understanding and why?

I don't know whether I have a great understanding of it. Not from a philosophical point of view, but I think I an understanding that there is a need to have ICT, and from a physical point of view couldn't imagine what it would like not having ICT. And regards to what is the most influential source for ICT integration and understanding, I think it's children. Children are showing me that hey they want to push the boundaries, they want to make things happen.

What about professional development? Has that been a factor?

No. Professional development - sitting with other teachers, on a one to one basis, maybe sometimes when I've sat down next to somebody and said, well how do you create this spreadsheet or how do you do this, or how's that done? But formalised, going off on a course. No.

And what about Teacher's College? Did you get any influence from them regarding ICT integration?

I came through when they were still using tapes for computers. I remember looking at them and thinking what use is this? It was just stuff for train spotters, I suppose. Whereas now it is accessible to everybody, and back in those days you had to have maybe a mathematical and analytical mind, whereas now people who are wanting to experiment and play and create can use ICT effectively.