

Palm Crest Teachers Participate in Depth and Complexity Workshop

Chemists need to understand the language of a chemist, rules that govern chemistry, ethical decisions chemists face, etc. A master of chess would be an expert in the language of the game, patterns, rules to follow, and the way the game has changed over time.

What happens when students learn to approach any subject -- chemistry or chess, popcorn or poetry -- from the point of view of an expert? How could they learn and use the language of the discipline? How could they learn to identify big ideas and details? See patterns turn to trends over time? That's the basis for the Depth and Complexity Icons introduced by Dr. Sandra Kaplan over a decade ago at the University of Southern California. First used as strategies for teaching gifted students, they are now more universally used as ways to differentiate instruction for all students.




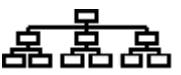



Last spring and this fall, Palm Crest teachers participated in grade level workshops led by Misty Covington and Christina Bakoo, icon presenters and teachers from Saugus Unified School District. Covington and Bakoo tailored these workshops, not only sharing their own experiences with the icons but also responding to grade level requests.

"Second grade teachers asked us for ways to use the icons in the teaching of graphing, singular and plurals, and fairytales," explained Christina Bakoo. "Fourth grade wanted tools for teaching By the Great Horn Spoon and for incorporating blogs, and so on."

Fifth Grade Teacher Carol Bilowitz, who attended a workshop last spring and was back for more in October, noted the effectiveness of such shared terms as 'Language of the Discipline' and 'essential details'. Because it steps up the depth of thinking, she says, "It has really sparked the kids. "

"Often," said Misty Covington, "teachers will look at the visual examples we've brought and realize that they are already doing quite a bit of this, but that a simple tweak can make a huge difference. Other times they use our ideas as starting points and put in their own style.

Sixth Grade Teacher Judi Healey left the workshop armed with ideas for discussion questions to use on the district's My Big Campus. "When we read The Cay next month, I'm ready to utilize these depth and complexity icons. For example, Phillip, the main character, has been taught by his mother to be prejudiced, but then finds himself blind on an island with only one other person, a Caribbean. There's a lot my students can discuss online here about perspective and ethics. "

Name	Small
Big Idea	
Details	
Ethics	
Rules	
Patterns	
Trends	
Language of the Discipline	
Unanswered Questions	