

REFLECTION TABSA 2024

TABSA 2024 will be a year to remember for many reasons! Just getting to South Africa and returning home to Honolulu took us around the world quite literally thanks to a United flight cancellation.

The 2024 TABSA team was truly a dream team. The support and comradery will long be treasured. I could not have done my assignments without them! This of course includes Laurie, Yunus and Thoko as well as the maths, robotics, and science teams. Getting to know and work with these amazing educators gives me hope for our future world.

Partner Jami was wonderful, so full of ideas and energy. I will never be able to thank her enough for just sliding in when “Gogo” needed a wee break! And this on top of pulling her full share of the load besides. We teamed together with our grade 6 colleagues the first week in Bloemfontein, our old stomping grounds. I cannot say enough about Gillian’s and Michael’s support and encouragement.

The second and third weeks presented a brand new challenge, working with Foundation Phase teachers and subject advisors. We weren’t given a whole lot of direction from the administration other than focus on Life Skills, primarily from grade 3. We pulled out the science topics and some health topics from the entire Foundation Phase (R-3) as a starting point. CAPS Life Skills include Personal and Social Well-Being that focuses on many health topics, Beginning Knowledge that targets natural science, technology, and social studies (but not mathematics or language), Creative Arts, and Physical Education. I mention this because when we asked the participants on the first day what topics they would like us to include, they mentioned many math and some language skills. Yikes! Even the subject advisors wondered why our focus was on Life Skills. I did share my early communications with the administrators with them.

I had planned activities for the astronomy ideas included in the Foundation Phase plus a bit of teacher background to support learner questions likely to arise. Jami and I worked on the weather activities and Jami headed up the life science activities. We added in some math strategies as they fit and Jami came up with a clock activity to address the “hot time topic!” We also included, mostly by using within the activities, some teaching strategies like concept mapping and working in groups. Jami did an incredible job getting all the CAPS guidelines posted for each activity.

We asked the colleagues after activities and ideas were presented to discuss and share how they could implement them in their own classroom situations. Some highlights included one teacher with a class of 52 students who was incredibly enthusiastic about using “all” the activities and having her students work in groups. Another stayed after class to “collect” recyclables for her Inventor’s Box from the outgoing trash. One of the subject advisors was working on modifying activities for her deaf and blind learners.

Four of the five subject advisors in the third week seemed supportive of the ideas and activities presented. One was a bit more reticent. Her negativity was a bit of a downer but she stayed through the entire week so hopefully she found some things useful. Working with Foundation Level Teachers was a real privilege. Their positive attitudes and singing both before and after class made this not only a worthwhile endeavor but an enjoyable one as well. If you catch the learners at the Foundation Level, you’ve got them for life! Thank you Yunus for including the Foundation Level and me, again!