



## Judi Francisco – Microsoft tools and critical thinking skills



### Overview

**Country:** South Africa

**Location:** Cape Town, Western Cape

**Industry:** Education

### Software and services:

Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program

### Websites:

Micklefield School

<http://www.micklefield.co.za/>

### Partners:

SchoolNet SA

Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts advance the conversation about improving student outcomes through innovative uses of technology in teaching and learning.

Judi Francisco is the computer teacher at Micklefield School in Rondebosch in Cape Town which is a small, independent not-for-profit primary school for girls. Judi says, "I have many titles at school such as IT Co-ordinator, Blended Learning Head, Computer teacher, Blended Learning teacher... but my favourite title is 'Chief Learner' because with technology you never stop learning, adapting, creating and trying new exciting things!" Judi is committed to making a difference in education, saying "South Africa may be at the tip of Africa, but the children are also at the tip of innovation and creativity. How lucky they are! Like Albert Einstein said 'Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think. – that is what we are trying to do here' "

In 2015 Judi introduced a full time Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program for the Grade 5, 6 and 7 girls at Micklefield School with the Grade 4 girls bringing devices to school on some selected dates. At the start of 2016, with great support from her headmistress, Jeannette Welgemoed, Judi formalised blended learning by making it part of the formal school timetable for the Intermediate phase. During the IT lessons the girls learn the skills need for the blended learning lessons, or completely separate tools and skills. Judi says, "It was not difficult to formalise blended learning for two reasons. One is that blended learning covers the work set out in the curriculum. The second is that the teachers can see that the same amount of work is covered, but to a much deeper level of level whilst incorporating critical thinking skills."





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Judi Francisco, Teacher,  
Micklefield Primary

### For More Information

For more information about Microsoft in Education, visit:

[www.microsoft.com/education/ww/solutions/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/education/ww/solutions/Pages/index.aspx)

To find out about the Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert program, see: <http://www.educatornetwork.com/Sites/Educators/Index>

For more information about Micklefield School, visit: <http://www.micklefield.co.za/>

Judi focuses on teach critical thinking skills in her ICT lessons. Critical thinking skills are spread across 6 levels, and we tend to focus on the 1st three too often: knowledge, comprehension and application. So I now include the next 3 levels: analysis, synthesis and evaluation in my lessons. Critical thinking skills fits hand in glove with Bloom's taxonomy and blended learning."

Judi emphasises that Microsoft applications lend themselves very well to the six steps of Blooms Taxonomy to enhance critical thinking. "Microsoft Word, MS Excel, MS Paint, MS PowerPoint with Office Mix and MS Sway are my favourites. This is because they allow for text, images, videos, animation and audio. Using these I can set a task that requires almost any of the verbs found in critical thinking and Blooms Taxonomy."

For example, Judi completed a MS Word and MS Excel project with the Grade 4 class where they focused on critical thinking skills and metacognition (with this term even becoming one of their spelling words!). The class teacher needed the children to cover quite a few curriculum tasks such as understanding visual data and creating and understanding graphs, and converting visual data to text whilst also covering content related to countries seas and oceans. When they looked at the list of critical thinking verbs up on her board, they selected compare, contrast, prioritise and form an opinion. The girls created spreadsheets in Excel based on places the girls had visited. They then converted these into bar, line and pie graphs and formatted these graphs using colour, axis, patterns, titles and tables in order to show an understanding of them before copying the graphs into MS Word. It

was here that the critical thinking skills of comparing, contrasting, prioritising and predicting came into play with girls writing a summary of each graph, the data it presented and what they found interesting about each graph.

Judi motivates her colleagues to use Microsoft applications for these blended learning tasks. "In doing these tasks I work very closely with each class teacher to develop the blended learning projects. Once we have worked out which part of the curriculum we are covering, we let our creative juices flow! This is where Microsoft tools come into play. The class teacher also gets to see how I link up the task to Microsoft Tools and sometimes learns to use the tools along with the children. By the end of the project they are more confident with using whichever Microsoft tools we covered. The teachers then happily uses the tools more regularly on their own or for other tasks in their classroom."

Judi says, "I love PowerPoint Office Mix! Who doesn't like to see their face on their presentation! Using the inking tool is great for keeping the children focused on their message. The fact that there can be audio, presentation skills and text in the Office Mix really amps up the critical thinking skills. I love using Microsoft Sway. We also arrange exciting Mystery Skypes with classes around the world."

#### Key Technology

- Microsoft Office
- Office Mix
- Sway
- Skype

*"Once I had researched more about how and why to incorporate critical thinking more regularly using Microsoft tools, I was convinced that I was on the right track. We are teaching 21 century children, so we need to teach them 21 century skills."*