**Using Student-Created Videos in the Classroom**

Using student-created videos in the classroom is a topic I feel is one that needs to be addressed with teachers, especially at the elementary level. There are several reasons I feel this topic is one that can benefit my fellow teachers in a staff development class. Survey results, the technology climate and ease of our students today, positive research studies, meeting Common Core Standards, and even the opportunity to challenge ourselves as teachers to changing up to normal presentation projects and methods. The process in creating this staff development class involved all of these elements.

Students-created digital videos and projects offer benefits to the teachers and students. When deciding on a topic, the positives of student-created videos outshined the other topics considered. To ensure the teachers at my school would be willing to learn about and explore using student-created videos in their classrooms, I developed and sent out an online survey using SurveyMonkey.com. I created ten questions, some multiple choice and some open-ended, concerning the teachers attitudes and feelings of having a staff development class on creating digital videos. Some questions asked concerned how often and what applications for digital video they already used (if any), the format preferred of the staff development day, and the willingness of having their students use these applications for projects. I sent out the survey link through our school system email and I also notified teachers of the link through Facebook. I requested 25 teachers fill out the survey and had a response from 24 for a participation rate of 96%. In reviewing the results of each question of the survey, I had a clear understanding of the response, use of applications, and attitude in using student-created videos in the classroom. The majority of responses wanted a hands-on staff development class that allowed time for the participants to explore and create in the application. The teachers also wanted quick, printable instructions, easily referenced when needed for each application. The concerns with using digital video projects were time and technology resources, according to the survey results. As Michael Moylan (2010) points out, “Professional development must be adequately provided to the faculty is appropriate implementation is to be expected. Learning a new technology can be an incredibly frustrating task to undertake” (Moylan, 2010, p. 29). Keeping these responses in mind, I decided to create a staff development class that would last around two hours, with the first hour explaining each application, and the second hour exploring each application individually. I would also create a wiki to allow teachers easy access to links, applications summaries, and printable instructions. To organize the staff development day visually, I also created a Prezi presentation. Grayson (2010), interviewing Rashton Hurley, writes, “When teachers look at something and say, ‘Wow, that’s incredible! Wow, that’s easy! Wow, even I can do that!,’ things will happen in their classrooms” (Grayson, 2010). I wanted student-created videos to happen in classrooms at my school.

The survey results provided direction, but to truly convince a teacher or administrator the importance of student-created videos in the classroom curriculum, research evidence was needed. Digital video projects offer many benefits to students as being technological areas they are familiar with given the social media society we live in today. Students come to school already influenced and utilizing technology many teachers feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar with. Gunter and Kenny (2004) comment, “The youth today are inundated with technology that has the potential to extend literacy and allow them to actively participate with a variety of media […] technology can be a valuable tool to achieve instructional objectives if integrated into the curriculum appropriately” (Gunter &Kenny, 2004, p. 215). The technology competency of students combined with educational objectives can meet our students on a field they understand and increase interest and academic success.

Using technology to create digital projects can enhance student interest and engagement in the concepts being taught. Moylan (2010) writes, “As students take creative ownership over their work, increases in motivation, interest level, and engagement will also occur” (Moylan, 2010, p.28). having students excited and engaged in creating projects naturally allows the student to be engaged in the concepts being taught. A teacher that generates high interest levels can almost certainly generate high success rates. Moylan (2010) also states, “This is a tool that creates an engaged learning environment in which authentic, challenging literacy tasks are completed” (Moylan, 2010, p.31). Student-created videos can increase engagement and interests in academic learning. They can also teach many more skills than just the intended standards.

Student-created digital videos also improve student success and achievement in other academic areas, as well as the one where the digital video project is used. Moylan (2010) reports researchers found “students’ writing increased adjectival description, greater use of setting and mood, effective use of vocabulary, and clear descriptions of cause and effect” (Moylan, 2010, p.27). Moylan later states in his article, “Students demonstrated gains in the skills of literacy, communication, presentation, organization, collaboration, critical thinking, and metacognition” (Moylan, 2010, p.28). The requirement of many more skills than just technology in digital video projects, demands students learn more to perfect their video creation. Spires, Hervey, Morris, & Stelpflug (2012) state, “Students, when engaged in video production, have unique opportunities to learn about content as well as to create new visual interpretations of the content” (Spires, Hervey, Morris, & Stelpflug, 2012, p.484). The research for digital videos is overwhelmingly pro the use of them in the curriculum and now Common Core standards align and promote the use of “multimedia’ presentations, according to the CCGPS of the Georgia Department of Education. An alignment to the CCGPS and the use of student-created videos also needed to be included on the wiki in an effort to show relevance and a method of addressing several standards with one project.

After researching the pros of using student-created videos, I began researching different applications and creating easy, printable instructions on how to install and use each application. The applications I decided would best fit elementary curriculum and the technology skills of elementary-age students are Animoto, Windows Movie Maker, PhotoStory, ToonDoo, Voki, and Little Bird Tales. I chose each of these for their user-friendly and ease of accessibility. Animoto.com offers an easy way to create short videos using images or video clips. The user can add music, themes , and text to create a video. Windows Movie Maker is an application I chose for the older students or teachers. It can create simple or complex videos with music, narrations, images, and videos. The variety of choices can be overwhelming and intricate. This is why older elementary or teachers are recommended in using this application. PhotoStory was chosen as appropriate for the younger grades and as an application that can be independently used in the upper grades. It is allows users to upload images and provide text, narration, and/or background music. Another application geared toward the younger grades I chose to explore was Little Bird Tales. This application allows students to upload photos or draw their own to create a narrated story. The final two applications, ToonDoo and Voki, do not create a digital video, but can be incorporated into a digital video. ToonDoo is an application geared to children and allows them to create their own cartoons and comics. The comics can then be saved as a jpeg and used in other digital video applications. Voki allows users to create an animated, talking avatar. The students can design a personal avatar and type what the avatar will say. The application avatar says whatever is typed in the manner it is typed. This application can be helpful with grammar and conventions in writing. All of the selected applications I have used in my classroom. I also found other examples of the applications in use for the lower grade levels. I created instruction guides for each application and provided at least two examples of the application in use in an educational setting. I felt these applications would be best for the teachers and students at my school. It was also a limited list to not overwhelm them and cause them to just file the information away and never use it, as sometimes happens with staff development class information.

The final component to this staff development class on student-created videos is to actually present it. I spoke with my administration and hope to hold a class at the end of august on in October on a teacher in-service day. I have already had several teachers email me and ask if the survey topic was ‘for real’ and was I really going to teach a class. I decided to go ahead and allow teachers to access my wiki with all the information to allow teachers who want to use some of these applications in their classrooms before the staff development class. I am excited to see this enthusiasm and hope to see many student-created video projects this school year at my school.

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