


Chapter 10

Digital Storytelling and Young Children: Transforming Learning Through Creative Use of Technology

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ABSTRACT

Using Puente's framework for transformative use of technology for learning, and the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, practitioner vignettes, and practical strategies highlight the possibilities for integrating digital storytelling activities in the PK-3 classroom in support of literacy learning. The chapter explores ways in which digital storytelling can be a transformational way for young children to develop an array of literacy skills. The vignettes share examples of teachers integrating digital storytelling activities in transformative ways to enhance children's learning. The chapter provides suggestions for lesson ideas and digital tools for engaging young children in a variety of storytelling projects.

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INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has been used for centuries as a way for people to learn from, and communicate with, each other. These stories can take the form of fiction or nonfiction, and can be about any topic. Storytelling that originates in Western cultures often follows a standard format. In these stories, the creator develops their own narrative perspective on the topic as they write. The central part of storytelling is a strong script. Narrative stories often contain a recognizable story structure, or story grammar. This narrative typically has a beginning, middle and end (Ang, 2014). These stories are often familiar to the listener because they describe events they have experienced or they have knowledge of others experiencing. Early storytelling themes often included fairytales, legends, folktales, and mythology, as told through song, dance, narrative, and various text formats. These stories were passed down through generations in verbal or written formats. Modern storytelling can address these common cultural themes but more often explores personal perspectives on historical events, personal reflections, and current cultural experiences (Coggin, Daley, Snyder, & Davis, 2019).

More recently, the act of storytelling has become intertwined with using technology to share tales with a larger global audience. Digital storytelling enhances traditional storytelling with multimedia production by combining oral narration with multimedia tools (Lathem, 2005). These tools may include apps for tablets, mobile devices, and computers. Typically, these projects are not long in length. The completed projects can be shared with and viewed by a wide audience which can have greater and faster reach than they might have with traditional forms of media.

The purpose of this chapter is to support practitioners with ideas for incorporating technology in meaningful and appropriate ways during literacy instruction in the PK-3 grade levels. There are many applications, or apps, available for digital storytelling, but few are designed for young learners. The chapter includes multiple vignettes of teachers integrating developmentally appropriate digital storytelling strategies and applications in their classrooms. Significant focus is given to Puentedura's (2006) substitution augmentation modification redefinition (SAMR) model framework which supports the use of digital storytelling in the development of literacy skills in young children. The chapter concludes with lesson ideas and examples for introducing a wide range of digital storytelling projects in the PK-3 classroom. The goal of this chapter is to provide guidance to educators seeking to engage their students in meaningful literacy skill development combined with 21st century skills and technology integration.

BACKGROUND

Technology plays a major role in the lives of many children. Smartphones, iPads, interactive digital whiteboards, laptops, and the apps and software programs associated with these items, are common in both home and school settings. How should these technologies be used in the classroom when considering the cognitive and social development of children? This section addresses the importance of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) when working with students, PK-3 through third grade, and technology.

Developmentally appropriate practice has, at its core, the idea that relationship building is essential to the learning process (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). Teachers must get to know their students' strengths, and areas in which they need support. Vygotsky's (1962) concept of the zone of proximal development, the idea that children, with support from a skilled partner (their teacher), can develop new knowledge

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