

## Chapter 10

# Preparing Preservice Teachers to Thread Literacy across the Curriculum with Blogging and Digital Storytelling

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes a case study integrating technological tools, digital storytelling, and blogging into a content-area literacy course for preservice teachers. The theoretical rationale and models are discussed, and the steps in planning for integration are outlined. Examples and resources are provided as well as a discussion of lessons learned during and after the integration.*

### INTRODUCTION

What is considered *new literacies* is continually evolving. Looking back over the research literature in the field, one can find studies addressing: the use of tape recorders for fluency (Samuels, 1979); the use of CD-ROMs to increase motivation and comprehension (Glasgow, 1996; Matthew, 1996); and the use of laptops in the classroom more than twenty years ago (Johnstone, 2003). All of these

studies seem quaint now, as will research studies on smart phones (Bromley, 2012) and mobile learning (Traxler, 2009) in the not too distant future. What stays the same across time is the use of emerging technology for communication and from that, the need to facilitate skills with that technology for our students. Leu (2006) stated, “Each technology has required new literacies to unlock its literacy potential; each technology has generated new social practices of literacy” (p. 7).

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As we look at the current definitions of technology and its uses in education, the need for teachers who can capitalize on strengths and responsibly address concerns is greater than ever. However, preparing preservice teachers to adequately and appropriately integrate technology into their literacy instruction is a larger challenge than might be expected. When we look at authentic classroom practices, new literacies, in its current incarnation, are not often observed (Hew & Brush, 2007; Stolle, 2008). And when teachers are surveyed, two-thirds report that they feel unprepared to use technology (Kajder, 2005). Among professors and others who prepare preservice teachers for the classroom, there is a misconception that these *digital natives*—students who have grown up surrounded by technology (Prensky, 2001)—can use and understand technology effortlessly. However, social use of technology does not indicate either competent use academically or an understanding of how that same technology can support learning (Karchmer-Klein & Shinas, 2012).

In this chapter, we explore the use of digital storytelling to create text sets. The first section discusses the theoretical frameworks and models underpinning the project. The second section situates the use of digital storytelling in a college course for aspiring teachers in the state of Virginia. The third section reviews the lessons learned from the project.

## **BACKGROUND**

As the field of education confronts the changing nature of teaching and learning, the question is no longer of whether to incorporate new technologies in the classroom, but when and how to use them (Fletcher, Schaffhauser, & Levin, 2012). Among the recommendations from many educational and professional organizations (International Reading Association, 2009; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012; State Education Technology Directors Association, 2012)

is a strong call for teachers who are prepared to effectively incorporate technology and new literacies into their teaching. Rather than a blind exhortation to increase the amount of technology present in classrooms; this call focuses on the alignment of existing technology with traditional learning goals. “So media literacy isn’t about automatically championing new technologies; rather it is a way to help students who live in a technology-dependent world regain the power that traditional literacy once enabled” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 2).

When carefully considered and implemented, integrating digital technologies into literacy instruction offers opportunities for students to read, write, and critically think in authentic learning experiences. There is no question that integrating digital technologies into on-going literacy instruction is a good fit since it involves reading, writing, and critical thinking. It can be an effective method of meeting curricular goals for all literacy and content areas (Hall & Stahl, 2012; Hutchinson, Beschorner, & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012). Previous research has found gains in student comprehension as a result of teachers learning and incorporating new technology. Teachers were better able to support interactions with non-linear text and to facilitate questioning of the text (Karchmer-Klein & Shinas, 2012). However, these skills are not the only ones impacted by the usage of technology. Warschauer (2006) found that laptops and internet access during literacy lessons provided students with many benefits including:

- Increased background knowledge;
- Increased student engagement;
- More diverse writing activities;
- Practice reading for a variety of purposes;
- Integrated textual and visual elements in a document; and
- The ability to navigate for information.

Given the clear benefits and the potential impact on literacy skills, it would seem an obvious

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