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Wikispaces Technology Review

Read 3311-OR 2+2

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**Learning With Technology**

Today’s generation of tech savvy students are well versed and fully capable of using all the latest tools and gadgets that they can get their hands on. From IPods and podcasts, to YouTube and wikispaces, current classrooms are filled with students who have grown up in a technological world. So, why not use this as an advantage? Creating projects that get the students excited about learning is every teacher’s dream! To have fun while being at school, that is every student’s dream! By using some of the newest and latest technologies out there, teachers can create a thriving classroom environment for everyone involved.

For my technology portion of the wikispace, I chose 6 technologies that I felt were relevant to the Multi-Genre and Verse Novels that I selected to read. When weighing the benefits or downfalls of the technologies, I tried to choose the projects that would create a healthy balance of learning and enjoyment into the process. I also felt that it was important for the technologies to be simple enough that they could be used with a wide variety of age groups and learning abilities

One of the most creative technologies for students to use can be found at Glogster.com. Glogester is basically set up for students to create and design their own virtual poster. This site provides thousands of poster templates, where the student can upload photos, videos, text, and even podcasts; all while having artistic and creative freedom to express their thoughts and ideas. Students can also share their digital collage with their friends via facebook, myspace, or their own personal webpages, which allows students to take pride in the work that they have designed and their learning experience in general. The virtual posters provided by Glogster are excellent tools that can be used for a multitude of educational purposes (and can vary according to the assignment). For the purposes of the wikispace assignment, the Glogster that I created was designed as an introduction to the text. In this particular situation, the technology was used as a pre reading strategy, but depending on the assignment it could be used for pre, during, or post reading strategies.

Storybird.com is a website that is designed with collaborative storytelling in mind. This website is very easy to use, and another great tool that allows students to get creative. Storybirds are short stories that can be saved to the website, and then shared with teachers, classmates, family, and friends. One great aspect of storybird is that this site allows the student to create their own story, then select artwork to add life to their pages. The storybird that I created for my wikispace is a short summary of the book “Heartbeat” by Sharon Creech and was used to build retention. This activity was created after reading the story (post reading stage). However, storybirds could also be used as pre and during reading activities with story starters or with an assignment on what the student thinks or predicts will happen next.

Another great technology tool that can be used in conjunction with vocabulary development is found at Tagxedo.com. Tagxedo.com is a website that allows its users to load words by typing the text or allows the student to enter an entire website. After entering the text, students can create their very own word cloud and save it to their computer or thumb drive. One great feature of tagxedo.com is that this site allows you to change the text font, color, shape, and directionality of each word. This is a great resource for building and retaining vocabulary and can be used as a pre, during, and post reading strategy.

Facebook is a social networking site that most children, teens, and even adults are very familiar with. By using technology to create a mock facebook page, students can essentially take on the role of any character in a book or short story that they are reading. By doing this, students gain a much deeper knowledge of the character, and therefore increase their comprehension and retention. This comprehension strategy would typically be constructed by the student as a post reading activity, but could also be constructed during reading, as information regarding the characters unfolds. The particular mock facebook page that I created for our wikispace assignment was created to relay information about Libby Fawcett, the main character in “Something to Blog About: A Novel.” By creating this mock facebook page, I was able to recap and review some of the most important themes within the story.

Another simple, yet extremely effective technology tool comes from phrasr.com. Phrasr is a website that allows students to type in a specific phrase, and then the site matches a selection of predetermined photos to each word in the phrase. This is an excellent tool that can promote both comprehension and vocabulary, and can be used as a pre, during, and post reading strategy. Additionally, Phrasr works well with visual learners and ESL/ELL students because it links an image of a picture to a specific word. For my own personal Phrasr example, I chose a statement pertaining to my novel, then chose pictures from Phrasr that I thought vividly depicted the specific words in that phrase.

Lastly, one of my personal favorite technology tools is the Penzu Online Journal. This is a great tool because it is safe, secure, and can be set to private or shared with whomever the student may choose. By using Penzu, the teacher has the ability to create a variety of assignments, and then evaluate the student’s comprehension. Some examples of assignments that may be used with Penzu include: Writing about what you think will happen (during reading strategy) and creating a journal entry from a characters perspective (during and post reading strategy). I chose to create a journal entry for my wikispace project as a post reading comprehension strategy, because not only did it relate to the story “Something to Blog About: A Novel,” but it allowed me to delve deeper into the characters emotions and continue her story.

These six technological tools are all great ways to increase a student’s comprehension as well as to “spice up” their learning. Today’s students use technology for fun, so shouldn’t that be an incentive to incorporate technology into learning? The benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. By incorporating technology tools such as these, the teacher makes learning fun, while creating an educational experience that the students will profit from for years to come.

*Text to Text Connections*

*Heartbeat* - By: Sharon Creech

1. *Love That Dog* By: Sharon Creech
2. *Walk Two Moons* By: Sharon Creech
3. *The Unfinished Angel* By: Sharon Creech
4. *Bud Not Buddy* By: Christopher Paul Curtis
5. *The London Eye Mystery* By: Siobhan Dowd

*Something to Blog About –* By: Shana Norris

1. *Troy High* By: Shana Norris
2. *TTYL* By: Lauren Myracle
3. *The Amanda Project-Book 1* By: Amanda Valentino
4. *Confessions of the Sullivan Sisters* By: Natalie Standiford
5. *The DUFF (Designated Ugly Fat Friend)* By: Kody Keplinger

**Webliography**

*Glogster.* (2010). Retrieved September 30, 2010, from <http://sllloyd42.glogster.com/heartbeat/>

*Mock Facebook Project and Template.*(2010, January 22). Retrieved September 23, 2010, from <http://techtoolsforschools.blogspot.com/2010/01/facebook-project-template.html>

*Penzu Free Online Diary and Personal Journal.* (2010). Retrieved September 13, 2010, from <https://penzu.com/pad?s=447ce6019be7>

*Phrasr*. (2010). Retrieved September 13, 2010, from <http://www.pimpampum.net/phrasr/?id=24494>

*Storybird Collaborative Storytelling.* (2010). Retrieved October 2, 2010, from <http://storybird.com/books/a-short-summary-of-heartbeat-by-sharon-creech/?token=mmhvsf>

*Tagxedo.* (2010). Retrieved October 2, 2010, from <http://www.tagxedo.com/>