

Best Practices of Technology Integration

Title: *It Was a Dark and Stormy Night.....*

Subject(s): Language Arts

Intended Grade Level(s): 3rd Grade, but may be adapted to accommodate higher or lower grades

Description:

The concepts of problem/solution and setting the mood of a story is first explored in class through the study of different examples presented in children's literature. Using AlphaSmarts, students then begin writing a "Story-in-the-Round" that begins with the phrase, "It was a dark and stormy night." The end result of this project is one story for every student in the class that has been written by the entire class. The students then create a PowerPoint presentation with a background soundtrack and pictures that reflect the mood of the story and share it with the class. All the stories will be burned to a CD and copied so each student will have a copy of every story to share with friends and family.

Narrative:

Conceptual Statement:

Change is the one element that propels the plot of all stories.

Focus Questions:

If no change occurs is it really a story?

Do all stories contain change?

Is change in a story an independent action?

If students are to truly understand the structure of a story they must realize that change, such as problem/solution, is what makes a story interesting and keeps the plot moving forward. They must also realize that all stories have a mood that emphasizes the plot and that it also changes when the plot changes. This mood is generally set by word choice and imagery, but can also be emphasized through pictures/illustrations and in the case of this project background music/soundtrack.

Throughout this lesson students are challenged to use higher order thinking skills and substantive conversation as they read, listen to, study and discuss various examples of change and mood found in children's literature. They then use what they have learned to write stories as a class while paying close attention to how their story changes as a result of problems/solutions written into it. They also must be attuned to the mood of the story as it is being written. When they begin creating their PowerPoint presentation they must use their deep knowledge of story structure, problem/solution and mood to ensure that their presentation is cohesive in regards to these aspects. Their thoughtful choice of background music and graphics must ensure that the mood of their story is conveyed the way they feel it should be.

Once their PowerPoint presentations are completed they are all burned to a CD (every student receives a copy) so that they may be shared with the class as well as with the students' family and friends outside the classroom. Being able to share their work with others gives students a sense of pride and accomplishment.

The use of technology greatly enhances this learning experience for students. It allows them the opportunity to work with the concepts of change, problem/solution and mood in a more interesting and engaging way than simple paper and pencil. By learning to use the main elements of a word processing program and presentation program they will have a valuable skill, which they will be able to use in future educational settings, as well as for their own personal use as well.

My students love this project and often ask if they can create others in a similar manner. They are also excited about the prospect of using what they learned during this lesson to create similar projects for other subject areas.

Curriculum Benchmarks:

MI.ELA.2

All students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

MI.ELA.3.LE.1

Integrate listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing skills for multiple purposes and in varied contexts. An example is using all the language arts to prepare and present a unit project on a selected state or country.

Detailed Timeline:

- One class period of 50 minutes was spent familiarizing students with how to use PowerPoint® and Microsoft™ Word®.
- This project spanned a two-week period averaging about 50 minutes a day. Many days, more extended time was spent and on other days less time was spent. This amount of time will vary depending on how many computers you have at your disposal for students to create their PowerPoint® presentations on.
- We spent two 60-minute class periods presenting stories to the class.
- Plan on spending at least 1 hour to burn the presentations to a CD.
- Time spent on copying the CD's for each student will vary according to your computer's speed.

Materials/Hardware/Software:

- Various trade books to demonstrate problem/solution and setting/mood
- AlphaSmart – One for each student in the class
- Computer (PC or Mac) **With Internet connection if graphics are to be gotten online

- Microsoft™ Word® word processing software (ClarisWorks, MS Works® or other word processing programs may be used)
- PowerPoint® presentation software (Presentations can also be created using HyperStudio®, Kid Pix™, or M Power software)
- CD Burner (optional)
- TV/Monitor w/ scan converter (or similar technology) to demonstrate how to use word processing and PowerPoint® programs and to view student presentations

Teacher Preparation:

1. Prepare a list of trade books that illustrate change through problem/solution and setting the mood of a story to share with the class prior to this project.
2. A reasonable amount of time must be spent on reading, sharing, discussing and studying the trade books prior to beginning the project. I usually spend at least one week on this.
3. Be familiar with/feel comfortable with using word processing and presentation programs such as MS Word® and PowerPoint®.
4. Be familiar with/feel comfortable with using a CD burner.

Prerequisite Student Skills:

1. Students must know the basic elements (grammar, punctuation, structure...) used in creating a written story.
2. Students must understand the concepts of change through problem/solution and setting the mood in a story.
3. Students must be familiar with using AlphaSmarts, MS Word or other word processing program, PowerPoint of other presentation software.

Activities/Procedures:

1. Every student is given an AlphaSmart keyboard.
2. The story starter phrase “It was a dark and stormy night” is given to the students. You then explain that they are all going to be writing a story that begins with this phrase. They should be reminded to keep problem/solution and mood in mind as they write their story.
3. Explain that at the end of 10 minutes they will pass their AlphaSmart to the right and take the one that is passed to them. After reading what the other student has written they are then to continue writing the story.
4. This process continues until everyone has his or her own story/AlphaSmart again. At this point they should read the story and write an appropriate ending.
5. When students are finished writing their endings they are instructed to use the spell-check feature to make sure all words are spelled correctly.
6. Students then transfer their story to a word processing program on the computer. They then re-read their story making sure that it makes sense and is formatted correctly.

7. Students then may begin working on their PowerPoint® presentation. They are instructed to begin by selecting a background that will enhance the mood of their story. Once they have selected the background they apply it to all slides. They may now begin transferring their story to the PowerPoint® slides (this can be done by either cut/paste or re-typing on each slide).
8. Remind students that they will be adding graphics/pictures to some of the slides in their presentation so they must decide if they want graphics and text on the same slide.....if so they must leave room for the graphic as they enter/format the text.
9. Once the student is happy with the layout of the text in their presentation they may begin adding graphics. They should be reminded that the graphics should enhance the mood of the story as well as go along with the plot. The graphics can be obtained through the clip art gallery contained in the word processing program, additional CD's of graphics, or searched for on the Internet.
10. When student is satisfied with the text and graphic layout of the slides he/she is now ready to add the background soundtrack. Using the PowerPoint Custom Soundtrack feature the student will choose a background track that reflects the mood of the story. The soundtrack can be changed at anytime during the story where the mood changes.
11. When students have completed, their presentations have them use the Pack and Go feature in PowerPoint to pack their presentations.
12. Presentations are then burned to a CD.
13. The CD is then copied so that each student has a copy containing all the student presentations.
14. Presentations are shared with the class. During this time, students critique every presentation in regards to how well it uses problem/solution, graphics and soundtrack to enhance the mood of the story.
15. Students take their CD home to share with family and friends.

Assessment/Evaluation:

The final presentation is graded using a standard rubric. The grade is based on the how well the student's PowerPoint® presentation demonstrates his/her understanding of how the use of graphics, backgrounds, and soundtracks enhance the mood of the story. It is also based on how well the presentation demonstrates his/her understanding of how these elements change as the story changes in relation to problems/solutions within the story.

The students' understanding of change as it pertains to problem/solution and mood in a story is assessed through class discussion. It is also assessed by how well they use their understanding of this concept to create their PowerPoint® presentation.

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