

Best Practices of Technology Integration

Title: *Reflections of My Life--Student Autobiographies*

Subject: Language Arts

Intended Grade Levels: This unit was developed for 6th grade, but it can be modified for grades 4-8.

Description:

“The Reflection of My Life--Student Autobiographies” is a unit intended to encourage and provide a writing experience based on their own lives. The components of the writing process will be emphasized as well as narrative writing experiences.

All students will publish their autobiography on the computer and use the scanner to add photographs. For extra credit, students may: record thoughts and experiences on a cassette player, make a video using still pictures and appropriate music, create a power point presentation, construct a timeline using the computer for graphics and word processing, or another suitable idea that a student proposes.

As a culminating activity, the teacher could videotape the students’ oral presentations of their autobiographies. The students would enjoy seeing themselves and their friends on TV.

Narrative:

This unit works well to help build community in your classroom or team at the beginning of the school year. Using the students’ personal experiences provides a great comfort zone for the student and allows the teacher to get to know their students in a personal way. The use of *Create-An-Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story* by Eleanor W. Hoopes creates several opportunities for students to develop their voice and refine writing process techniques.

This unit can be modified to fit various grade levels and any time frame according to students’ needs and curriculum demands. Choices for the students’ autobiographical presentations allow students to apply their personal learning style preferences. Our school district is extremely limited in the technology available for classroom use. A large spectrum of socioeconomic status and educational levels comprise our student body. Additional project choices allow all students to tap into their strengths and will allow the teacher to make any student modifications necessary.

Curriculum Benchmarks:

MI.TEC.1.MS.1

Interpret, analyze and evaluate information with the assistance of technology.

MI.TEC.1.MS.2

Use search strategies to locate and retrieve information electronically.

Detailed Timeline:

Nine 50-minute lessons that may be adjusted at the teacher's discretion. The number of prewriting activities and the time required to publish student projects is flexible.

Material/Hardware/Software:

--Purchase *Create-An-Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story*, by Eleanor W. Hoomes, Ph.D. Published by Educational Impressions, ISBN 1-56644-000-9.

--Writing folder or portfolio for each student.

--Green or purple pens for editing workshops.

--Dictionaries.

--Thesaurus.

--Writing process editing checklists.

--Your choice of a children's autobiography.

--At least one computer, though more would help.

Additional/Optional:

--Scanner.

--Cassette recorder.

--Video camera/VCR/TV.

--PowerPoint® software.

Teacher Preparation:

Purchase and preview *Create-An Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story* and decide which prewriting and writing activities fit your time schedule and student needs. (This resource provides 26 student activities that will help them recall past experiences, fond memories, and organize their thoughts for the composition of their own story. The prewriting activities provide opportunities for several writing experiences: short stories, diaries, journals, and creative stories.)

Introduce the concept of an autobiography. Autobiographies record an author's life in their own words. Autobiographies can not be all inclusive. There are two styles typically used in autobiographical writing: chronological style or the topical style. A topical style arranges the author's life/events according to the order of time. A chronological style arranges the events or chapters according to topics.

Read an autobiography of your choice or one of the books listed below aloud to students before beginning this project, pointing out the author's use of detail, vivid imagery, figurative language, and the figures of speech. Provide students with and make available several examples of well-written autobiographies at various reading levels:

The Air Down Here by: Gil C. Alicea.

The Times of My Life by: A. Memoir.

In My Own Time by: Nina Baden.

Self-Portrait By: Eric Blegvad.

Go to www.webrary.org/kids/jbibautobiog.html for more autobiographies.

Prerequisite Student Skills:

- Students will need to know what an autobiography is.
- Students must have had a brief introduction to the two typical styles used to compose an autobiography.
- Students must also have been exposed to various examples of well-written autobiographies.
- Provide students with an overview of the writing project and the rubric, which will be used, for the evaluation of their autobiography.

Here are some tips that you may wish to share with your students that will help them more efficiently compose their autobiography:

1. Avoid trying to recall and write about every detail of your life.
2. Record your favorite and meaningful life experiences.
3. Use vivid imagery to recall detail.
4. Concentrate on details and describe their experiences using the various figures of speech. It may be necessary to teach a mini-lesson or to review the figures of speech.
5. Be clear and concise in your writing and avoid rambling.

Activities/Procedures:

The first four lessons are all prewriting activities to help the students see how they view themselves and to assist them in brainstorming about their past. See *Create-An-Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story* by Eleanor W. Hoomes for many other potential prewriting activities.

Lesson One:

Using the book, *Create -An -Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story* by Eleanor W. Hoomes, use page 10, The Past and the Present, for prewriting.

Lesson Two:

Using the book, *Create -An -Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story*, by Eleanor W. Hoomes, continue prewriting with page 11, Mirror Image.

Lesson Three:

Using the book, *Create -An -Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story*, by Eleanor W. Hoomes, continue prewriting with page 12-13, Personality.

Lesson Four:

Using the book, *Create -An -Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story*, by Eleanor W. Hoomes, continue prewriting with page 14, Interview.

Lessons Five and Six:

Now that the brainstorming is complete, the next two days are spent writing the rough draft. Students should either choose to use a topical or chronological approach. Refer to pages 42-47 in *Create-An-Autobiography: Writing A Personal Story* by Eleanor W. Hoomes to assist students in composing their rough drafts.

Lesson Seven:

Provide students with an editing checklist before they begin self-editing.

Sample Editing Checklist

- _____ The author has consistently used either a chronological or a topical approach to compose their autobiography.
- _____ The author has used and arranged details in a logical and concise manner.
- _____ The author has used various figures of speech: metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification.
- _____ The author has a strong introduction and conclusion.
- _____ The author has used correct mechanics.

Lesson Eight:

Have students peer edit their autobiographies using the same checklist with two classmates.

Lesson Nine:

After reviewing editing, students use computer to publish their final draft and scan their pictures.

Teachers will need to adjust the allotted time for published works based on their students' needs and abilities.

Assessment/Evaluation:

Students will be assessed using the following rubric:

All pieces of writing process are submitted with project.	25
Used either a chronological or topical approach.	15
Used and arranged details in logical manner.	15
Used various figures of speech.	15
Has a strong introduction and conclusion.	15
Used correct mechanics.	15

After autobiography submission, students will self-assess this project as a whole and their participation in it. Extra credit technology-related projects will mainly be independent, but must be pre-approved by the teacher, where a time frame will be agreed upon.

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