Integrating Technology and Reading in the Elementary Classroom: A Workshop for Educators

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**Introduction**

This paper will address the topic of integrating technology and reading in the elementary classroom. It will discuss, both, the purposes of integrating technology with reading and the purpose of having a professional development workshop with educators on this subject. Being able to combine the teaching of technology and reading will be important when implementing the upcoming Common Core standards. Applications of the common core standards will be discussed in this paper as well as the benefits of the workshop for teachers, students, and the school environment.

The workshop is designed to be done at Long Mill Elementary school in Youngsville, North Carolina. Teachers will learn how to use various technology and web tools to design effective lessons. A sample lesson plan that includes technology and reading are included in this paper. The possible effects and outcomes of the workshop will also be explored.

This focus of integrating technology and reading in the elementary classrooms is important because we live in a generation of constant communication and we can no longer confine learning to the walls of our classrooms. “Teachers do not want to just teach for the sake of teaching. They want what they teach to be revelant lessons that will help students successfully engage in life both in and out of schools (Covey 2008).” Educators must now facilitate learning, encourage students to think independently, help them understand the importance of being able to communicate with people around the world. In *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, Whitaker (2004) says that it is our responsibility as teachers to change out classrooms and we must look to ourselves for answers about how to improve student learning. A way to do this is by using technology sources. Considine, Horton, and Moorman (2009) state that “universal literacy is the goal, with expectation of the ability to read and write complex text at critical and interpretive levels. In addition, the concept of texts has changed from traditional printed materials to a variety of media, including internet, film and television.” This shows that goals of literacy have shifted. Literacy includes reading form many difference sources and educators need to prepare themselves to teach using various technology tools.

**Purpose of the Workshop**

The purpose of integrating technology and reading is for teachers to make the most of their time with students. By combining two important subjects together will save time and allow students to make more meaningful connections with reading.Next year teachers at Long Mill, and across the nation, will begin using the Common Core standards. These standards are more rigorous than previous state standards and call for students to do deeper thinking about reading and to be able to communicate with other. These standards are in place to help students around the United States work towards the same goals for each grade level and to help them be competitive with students of other cultures. Two of the standards that are consistent throughout grade levels are “literature” and “speaking and listening”. The web tools discussed in this workshop will support these two standards. It will help teachers learn how to use them in to classroom to create 20th century, technologically advanced classrooms. In the book *Catching Up or Leading the Way* (Zhao 2009) the author says that in order to teach global competencies schools will start to reconfigure their curriculum, identify teaching materials, implement professional development for staff. This workshop will do those things.

Another reason why I designed this workshop is to gain experience in presenting professional development. Throughout my matriculation as a graduate student I have gained lots of “craft knowledge” as Roland Barth calls it in *Learning by Heart* (2001). He says that craft knowledge is a “description of practice accompanied by an intentional analysis of practice”. I plan to share my experiences of integrating technology and reading with other teachers in my school and encourage them to do the same by creating a wiki page to share ideas. Zemelman and Ross (2009) list using forms of technology as a way to make connection between staff member work.

**Implementation of the Workshop**

This workshop will be done at Long Mill Elementary School in Youngsville, North Carolina. This school is a very technology rich school having smartboards, document cameras, web cams, and several computers in every classroom. There are also mini laptops provided for each student in grades four and five. The teachers at this school have expressed many times that they would like training on how to use technology. This workshop will provide them with ideas about how to use these tools to implement effective integrated reading lessons in the classroom. As stated in Katzmeyer and Moller (2009), “to improve American education, we must develop a highly qualified teacher workforce that will, in turn, use its knowledge, skills, and dispositions to ensure increasingly higher levels of performance of our students.”

Below is an agenda of how the workshop will be presented.

*Integrating Technology and Reading the Elementary Classroom*

AGENDA

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| --- | --- |
| Introduction | I will discuss the purpose of the workshop and the benefits of integrating reading and technology in the classroom. |
| TPCK | I will share the TPCK model (Koehler and Mishra (2008) with teachers to help simplify the idea of planning integrated lessons. |
| Web Tools (descriptions, explanations, classroom applications and examples) | I will discuss the five initial web tools and how to use them in the classroom. I will share the sample lesson plan and video. I will give teachers time to brain storm ideas about how to use these tools for their grade level. |
| Benefits | I will discuss the benefits of integrating lesson and including global learning into our curriculum and how to corresponds to the Common Core Standards. |
| Wiki | I will have a wiki set up to display all of these tools with explanations and classroom application ideas. Teachers will have the ability to access this and add their ideas to it. This wiki will compile all of our technology/web tool ideas in one place. |
| Questions | I will take any questions teachers may have about the workshop. |

**Technology Tools and Descriptions**

*Skype*

Skype is a web conferencing tool. Users create a name and password and are able to connect with other users around the world. In order to use this tool users have to have access to a computer, the internet, and a webcam. In the classroom this tool can be used to allow students to conference with students, teachers, and citizens in various places. Skype helps bring the outside world into the classroom.

Classroom Applications

1. Students have book talks about books that they have read with students from different schools.

2. Students conference with authors of books

3. Students interview public figure or community leaders

*Voicethread*

Voicethread is a tool used present and share information. Users can upload text, pictures, videos, and audio to the site and other users are able to comment on it using the same forms of media.

Classroom Applications

1. Teachers can post a question about book chapters and students can respond using text or a media source.
2. Students can tell about their books on the initial thread and others can comment with their opinions or questions
3. Students can write poems and each create a thread of them reading their poem.

*Voki*

Voki is a website that allows users to create characters to communicate information. Users can manipulate how the characters look, speak, and what they say.

Classroom Applications

1. Students can create a voki based on a character from a book they read.
2. Students can read a voki of themselves tell about their thoughts and opinions of a book or text.
3. Students can create voki of an author to tell about why they wrote a book.

*Prezi*

Prezi is a website used to organize ideas. Users are able to create their own pages to display information in a sequential manner. Prezi is an alternative to PowerPoint.

Classroom Application

1. Students use prezi to retell or summarize a book
2. Students use prezi to tell about a characters and changes they go through in a book

*Interactive reading*

Interactive reading is strategy intended to promote the development of language and literacy skills in young children. When reading in an “interactive” manner, teachers engage in discussion with students about the book being read. Teachers ask children open-ended questions and encourage them to make use of vocabulary from the book. The strategy is similar to that of dialogic reading, but, whereas adults generally work one-on-one or in small groups with children when engaging in dialogic reading, interactive reading is an appropriate teaching method for use with whole classes. A major goal of interactive reading is providing children with multiple opportunities to use book-related words. In this vein, prior to reading a book aloud, a teacher will select from that book target words – common words that are likely to be unfamiliar to children, but are necessary for story comprehension. Teachers will introduce these words to students before reading the book (often using concrete objects), alert children to their usage in the book, and, after reading the book, engage in activities with children that allow them to make use of these words.

Technology can be easily incorporated with interactive reading by the use of online storybooks. Some sites provide book that are read to students online while the students follow along. The words are usually visible and highlights during the reading. A site that can be used to for this is [www.tumblebooks.com](http://www.tumblebooks.com). Interactive reading will be a great way for younger children to be exposed to “literacy and opportunities to interact with literacy in the world (Goldenberg 2001).

**Sample Lesson Plans**

Using Skype and Voki:

Prior to this lesson teachers will need to become familiar with the website of Voki and Skype in order to effective teach students how to use them. Teachers will also need to make contact with a teacher from another school in order to organize the book talk. Computers, internets services, and webcams will be needed to complete this lesson. The lesson will take place over several days.

Session 1: During this first session students will be given an overview of what they would be doing for the next two weeks. The students from Long Mill Elementary were taken to the library and asked to choose a book that they could read on their own. The students know their reading range (zone of proximal development) because they are all a part of the Accelerated Reader program. They were all able to select a book that interested them and that was on their independent reading level. The students read their books independently during class and at home over a period of one week.

Session 2: During the second day of this lesson the students will meet in a reading group and retell their books to the teacher. This is done to ensure that the students fully comprehend their books before implementing the Web 2.0 tools. Next, the students will participate in a tutorial of the Voki website by the teacher. They will explore the website and will be shown the features of it. The students will be given about fifteen minutes to become familiar with the website.

Session 3: During the third day of the lesson the students will Voki characters create. They will have two rules to follow.

1. The Voki will look similar to the main character in their book.

2. They will type three sentences describing events that happened in their book.

Teachers will support and scaffold the students during this process.

Session 4: During the fifth day of the lesson students will participate in a Skype “book talk” session with students from another school. The teachers will facilitate the book talks and the students had to address the following questions:

1. What was the title of the story?

2. Who were the characters in the story?

3. What happened in the story?

4. Would you recommend this book to others?

Session 5: After the lesson was completed the students had the opportunity to tell us their feelings about the project. They told us what they liked most about the project and what things they would change.

(see video at <http://cedvideo.ncsu.edu/video/2489/Using-Technology-to-Assess-Reading-Comprehension>)

**Conclusion and Possible Effects of Workshop**

This workshop will be done in hope of providing teacher with ideas and short explanations of how to use web tools for reading in the elementary classroom. After the workshop I would expect more teachers to use some of these tool to help students become more engaged and interested in reading and to also bring the outside world into the classroom. I also want teachers to feel more comfortable using these tools themselves and to be able to come to me or other teachers who have experience with technology to help them plan integrated lessons. Integrated lessons are a more effective use of time and teacher knowledge about how to do this is vital. In their article about TPCK, Koehler and Mishra (2008) emphasize on teacher knowledge because they “view the teacher as an autonomous agent with the power to significantly influence the appropriate integration of technology in teaching. It is up to the teacher to plan lessons that will be the most beneficial and meaningful for their students.

A possible outcome for students, if the teacher use more tecnology in the classroom, would be they are doing more global learning and using med ias to connect with others around the world. In his book *World Class*, Gaudelli (2003), he talks about how in global education, leaning is “self movtivated and direct; focuses on aestheitc, moral, emotional, physical, and spirtual needs of the learners as well as comgnitive attainment; knowledge building entails a dynamic interactions between teachers, learnings and multiple sources of information”. By using the web tools to students will be more likey to reach their goals. Above all, the aim of educating students is to prepare them to be successful, contributing citizens of our global society.