



Digital Storytelling

Curricular Integration Projects for Academies



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Digital Storytelling: Curricular Integration Projects for Academies

Digital Storytelling, Curricular Integration Projects for Academies allows high school teachers to integrate media projects in their lesson planning with an academic focus on standards-based content and skill development in writing, research, communication, technical and media literacy, critical thinking, public speaking, and collaboration.

Designed as a supplemental instructional tool and best practice, this approach to teaching and learning supports instructors as they meet traditional learning objectives while providing a rich, hands-on technology experience for their classes.

For students, the project-based focus of these activities affords an opportunity to explore new modes of expression, new ways of working independently and with peers, and new ways of seeing their own relationship to their academic goals and objectives.

In addition to the technology immersion and the traditional skills required to complete a finished project, this hands-on work helps students to consider the importance of audience and develop a strong sense of authorial voice as they explore connections between listener and viewer and text, sound, and image.

Using a curricular design that follows the best practices of project-based learning, digital storytelling projects in the classroom provide a powerful and rewarding learning opportunity for all students.

Getting Started

Project Objectives. Project Duration. Project Overview. Project-Based Learning Quality Elements. Content and Skills. Essential Questions.

Project Objectives

(key activities and learning for students who complete this project)

Participants will:

- Complete traditional research, writing, and collaboration activities as they develop their projects.
- Complete finished written materials in the form of a script or narration to accompany the digital story.
- Make decisions about priorities and emphasis in terms of subject matter, audience, and the material and images selected to illustrate key points.
- Gather digital assets to support their projects in the form of photos, video, audio, and scanned imagery.
- Develop organizational, communication, and presentation skills.
- Collaborate with peers, the teacher, and project coaches to document a specific subject and perspective on the information gathered for presentation.
- Learn the basics of digital storytelling – including storyboarding, file management, presentation, and narration – and work with related video applications such as iMovie, Moviemaker, or the Adobe or Final Cut suite of applications.
- Reflect on their product and process.

Project Duration

(time commitments and scheduling requirements to complete the project)

The amount of instructional time required to implement this project will vary from school to school, depending on factors such as weekly course schedule, length of class periods, amount of work completed outside school, and depth of student preparation.

These projects are typically organized as end-of-unit activities or culminating events.

The majority of the project preparation work is similar to that of traditional research and presentation assignments. The recommended project schedule is listed below.

- In-class preparation: similar to standard research and presentation projects, requiring introduction and orientation, as well as supporting time in groups, in the library, and in requisite preliminary assignments.
- Out-of-class time: may include additional asset gathering – images, audio, and video footage or testimony sourced on the Internet or gathered from sites or locations using digital cameras.
- Preparation and rehearsal of the script or voiceover narration, completion of related storyboards: one week of class time.
- Workshop: one week (five 50-minute periods).
- Individual and group reflection: one hour.

Project Overview

(description of key activities)

Typically, participating students complete digital stories as part of a unit of study or in conjunction with a class project or presentation. Instructors may use these media projects as stand-alone activities or as supplements or extensions for familiar assignments such as a written story, a research paper, an opinion piece, a PowerPoint presentation, or the creation of a poster display or presentation.

Digital stories most often begin with a written assignment, and instructors teaching core courses need to recognize the value of the written foundation for these projects. (Art and media instructors may take a different, more visual approach to the creation of a digital story, encouraging students to work from imagery first and then to create scripts that respond to the visual elements of the project. The majority of instructors, however, will likely begin with a written assignment of some kind.)

A script for narration may be a stand-alone task or be crafted or distilled from a more formal assignment, such as an essay, research paper, or book report. Revised, well-researched scripts, specifically written to be read aloud, create strong digital stories – which in turn serve to enhance effective instruction and classroom engagement.

The work of assembling a finished digital story occurs on several levels. The aural and visual material in these projects encourages students to reconsider the relationship between meaning and supporting evidence. The combination of authorial voice and illustrating media supports the logical and sequential presentation of information. In terms of collaboration, the pairing or grouping of students in these projects leads to a supportive learning environment and creative partnerships that appear to be a direct result of the engaged, hands-on nature of the work.

These kinds of projects can be organized in four stages, with instructors overseeing Stages I, II, and IV and workshop coaches or facilitators assisting with the workshop, Stage III. The stages are as follows:

STAGE I: Preparation and Content Development

During the Preparation stage, students develop their material and organize the presentation of information. These activities occur in the context of traditional guidelines, directions, and expectations regarding citation, revision, primary and secondary sources, and the depth of research or reflection required for the assignment.

Essential questions may include ideas about audience, especially if finished video projects will be presented in a public forum. For example, if an economics class is looking at socio-economic diversity in city neighborhoods, and students are interviewing residents in order to present their work as part of a panel or neighborhood meeting, the issue of audience will be immediately relevant. The same is true with opinion pieces, or editorials, or personal reflections that will be shared with others. Who is the audience for the project? What kind of information, written and visual, is appropriate for the subject and the forum for presentation?

STAGE II: Asset Gathering and Storyboarding

As the assignment takes shape, students gather supporting media in the form of images, video, and audio. This material serves to illustrate specific information and provide rich thematic and contextual connections as students present their ideas.

Instructors need to provide clear expectations for the organization of the information and the management of these assets in a digital format. Such basic file management allows students to begin to identify images and related media that will best illustrate specific ideas in their voiceover narration. When a written script can be mapped to a list of supporting media elements, students can complete storyboarding exercises effectively, which in turn prepares them for assembling their projects in the workshop.

STAGE III: Workshop

The Workshop stage typically takes place over a single week. Students who have prepared effectively can complete simple and accomplished digital stories in five 50-minute periods. These kinds of projects involve voiceover, still images, and the use of limited video footage that does not require extensive editing – video clips, for example, that might have been downloaded from the Internet or saved as .AVI files from digital cameras.

Depending on an instructor's expertise with technology, it may be necessary to have a coach or workshop assistant in the classroom during the workshop itself. The logistics required to move an entire class through a project together can be daunting. Preparation is the key to a productive workshop. A workshop schedule may proceed as follows: voiceovers recorded on Day One, assets loaded on Day Two, the video timeline fleshed out by Day Three, transitions on Day Four, and music and titles on Day Five. A simple outline like this is typical of what can be accomplished day to day for a majority of students working together as a class.

STAGE IV: Presentation and Reflection

In the final stage of the project, students are asked to present their video to an authentic audience and to reflect on their product and process. For their presentation, students may exhibit their finished work for their peers in school, on the web, or in another "real world" setting. Finally, to bring closure to the project, students practice metacognition by completing structured reflections on their product and process.

Project-Based Learning Quality Elements

(how this project aligns with the “Six A’s of PBL” quality indicators)

Project-based learning asks students to participate in the classroom in the same way people learn and perform in their everyday lives: they establish a question or a need, investigate potential solutions, and then create their own responses to what they’ve discovered. This commonsense approach encourages students to take the lead in making critical choices and decisions, requires them to develop and demonstrate essential skills and knowledge, and builds in opportunities for reflection and self-assessment.

SIX A’s PBL ELEMENT	DIGITAL STORYTELLING FEATURES
<p>AUTHENTICITY <i>How project work connects to real-world issues that students care about</i></p>	<p>Aspects of a project should connect directly to student interests and real-world issues, making the area of focus relevant and challenging for students. By creating unique presentation opportunities for students – screenings, public displays, including the work as part of local or civic events – instructors can help students understand the real-world application of their ideas and their finished work.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC RIGOR <i>How the project challenges students to master content standards and use professional-level thinking skills</i></p>	<p>A number of key thinking, communication, and technological skills are embedded in this project, including archiving, organizing, prioritizing, oral delivery, writing, and video production skills.</p>
<p>ADULT CONNECTIONS <i>How adults beyond the classroom are meaningfully involved in the project</i></p>	<p>The primary adult connections for this project include video workshop instructors and possibly adult professionals and others who will view the finished video.</p>
<p>ACTIVE EXPLORATION <i>How the project requires students to engage their bodies and minds through hands-on, field-based work</i></p>	<p>The project design used here is completely hands on, with active participation of students from preparation to production, presentation, and reflection. Students operate video production equipment to produce a tangible product.</p>
<p>APPLIED LEARNING <i>How students use learning and practice important workplace skills</i></p>	<p>Students learn and practice key workplace skills through the delivery of the project, including brainstorming, interviewing, messaging, and using technology to solve problems.</p>
<p>ASSESSMENT PRACTICES <i>How students receive relevant feedback during and after their project work</i></p>	<p>This project design allows teachers to provide the level and type of assessment that they feel necessary. Many teachers will want to provide structured feedback on student process work, written products, and oral communication skills.</p>

Content and Skills

(key concepts, skills, and habits of mind)

CONTENT

- An understanding of a selected topic or subject area
- An understanding of appropriate information for a specific audience
- Use of video production techniques and tools

SKILLS

- Creative and critical thinking
- Collaboration and critique
- Written communication skills
- Oral communication skills
- Organizational skills and time management
- Utilizing word-processing, video-editing, and image software
- Graphical presentation of ideas
- Ability to think abstractly and synthesize and convey key ideas in a presentation

HABITS OF MIND

- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Metacognition
- Questioning and posing problems
- Applying past knowledge to new situations
- Striving for accuracy

Essential Questions

(driving questions that serve to focus students on key elements of their projects)

- Who is your audience, and what essential information do you want to convey to them?
- What perspective are you coming from in the presentation of information? Is this a personal, reflective project? A point-of-view piece, commentary, or editorial? A factual, research project?
- If you are working in a group, how can you divide up the work effectively? What are the tasks and roles required to create a successful project?

Presenting the Project

Materials and Resources Needed. Activities and Timelines. Instructor Checklists.

Materials and Resources Needed

(supporting information and equipment teacher needs to have on hand)

Supporting Handouts

- Storyboarding Quickstart: a guided reference showing students how to build a simple storyboard in outline form.
- Storyboard Worksheet (Print): an accompanying worksheet help students organize their scripts and supporting visual assets.

For more information and supporting material for teachers see this URL on the Pearson Foundation's Digital Arts Alliance website:

http://www.digitalartsalliance.org/resources/resources_teacher.htm

Name: teacher Password: resources

Equipment

- Student access to portable storage devices (USB drives, CDs, external hard drives)
- Scanner for flat file images or print photographs
- Video-editing software
- Digital cameras
- Computers for word processing

Activities and Timelines

PREPARATION	KEY TOPIC AND ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
<p>Introducing the Unit or Activity</p>	<p>Setting Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting project as part of larger assignment • Showing sample movies as appropriate • Discussing timelines, preparation, key dates for completion of preparatory assignments – outlines, research requirements, evaluation criteria, the gathering of supporting media • Introducing Essential Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Who is your audience for this project?” - “What kind of information will be appropriate for this project? Factual research? Reflection? Synthesis of multiple points of view or voices?”
<p>Student Preparation</p>	<p>Research, Fact-finding, Brainstorming, Developing Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional assignments, skill development to organize and frame key ideas • Library time, research activities, community engagement or interviews, the gathering of information • Outlines, first draft work, revision, and peer critique as appropriate
<p>Refining a Script</p>	<p>Writing to Be Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating 300- to 500-word scripts • Introducing information effectively • Reading and revising the script • Modifying the script for groups, as appropriate, so each participant is invested and involved
<p>File Management</p>	<p>Organizing Digital Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sourcing supporting media from the Internet • Including citation information as appropriate • Capturing digital imagery and video footage as appropriate • Saving material to project folders • Compiling 50 to 70 digital images for each project
<p>Storyboarding</p>	<p>Worksheets and Templates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using outline and storyboard templates to organize the script-media relationships • Preparing basic storyboards, arranging text and related image or media assets

WORKSHOP	KEY TOPIC AND ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
<p>Dedicated Time with Computers and Video-Editing Software</p>	<p>Hands-on Work with Coaches and Facilitators (in the computer lab or in a workshop setting in a classroom or the library)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students work on dedicated machines • Loading assets in project folders • Reviewing day-by-day tutorials • Receiving peer critique and coaching for content choices and editing techniques • Completing project by the end of the week

PRESENTATION & REFLECTION	KEY TOPICS AND ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
<p>Connecting with an Audience, Considering the Learning Process</p>	<p>Exhibition of Finished Work Reflection on Process and Product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students exhibit finished product (put up on web, demo with live audience, etc.) • Students complete individual reflections on product and process following instructor-provided prompts • Students complete whole-class reflection on the project, including key learning and next steps

Instructor Checklists

(things to consider for a successful project)

Planning

- Use your annual lesson planning work to anticipate activities or units of study that may be appropriate for a digital storytelling project.
- Assume your classes will require a week of in-class preparation activities, focused on revising scripts and organizing assets, along with one week of workshop time in order to complete a successful digital storytelling project.
- Secure permissions forms from participating students in order to be able to share and present the finished products. If students will be taking pictures of one another, or including pictures of other students, this is extremely important.
- Check with your administration on the school or district policy for this kind of release and waiver.
- Make arrangements for a workshop space, be it your classroom or a general-use space at school, such as the library.
- Organize an end-of-project presentation to showcase the work of your students. This can be part of a parent night or a school-wide presentation. Having an authentic forum for presentation increases the quality of student work and raises useful issues around an understanding of audience and voice.
- Make decisions about evaluation criteria – how will you assess performance in the preparation stages and in the final product? Can you incorporate existing rubrics for research, writing, collaboration, and contributions?

Media Projects and IT Issues

- What percentage of the class will not have access to a computer at home and/or a means of storing and organizing files outside school?
- How will you accommodate this potential scenario? Will students work in teams? Can groups be organized to accommodate the different levels of technology expertise and access that may exist in the class?
- Is there equipment and supporting hardware – USB drives, external hard drives, digital cameras, and video cameras – that students may use to gather and organize their digital assets?
- Can you organize Internet research time in the school library or media lab to allow students to run image searches for supporting illustrations and imagery related to their projects?
- Will you be storing student videos or image files on a school network? Can these assets be easily downloaded and saved to local storage devices?
- If you are working in the school computer lab, application performance often requires that student assets, as well the video-editing application itself, reside on the local hard drive and not be referenced from a school's network. Be sure to ask IT staff or workshop coaches to review performance and storage capacity prior to hosting a workshop.

Student Support Issues

- How will students with special needs be supported to successfully complete this project? What modifications or accommodations can be made at each stage to ensure student success?
- How can special education and/or English language learning staff members work together with the Academy teaching team to support students?

Shortlist of Activities

- *Summer*: Identify projects, consider team teaching opportunities, review scheduling issues.
- *Mid-semester*: Introduce activity, provide overview, follow lesson planning to support the study unit. If this project will be completed in groups, organize the student teams. Present a timeline for supporting assignments – writing, research, asset gathering.
- *Week prior to the workshop*: Focus on revision of the written script. Students rehearse and read their work aloud to their peers. The class completes storyboarding exercises with worksheet templates. Students collect and organize their supporting assets (50 to 70 images per project).
- *Workshop week*: Student teams complete their projects. Workshop coaches collaborate with instructors during in-class residencies as required.
- *Presentation and reflection*: In-class personal reflection and assessment on skills and knowledge learned. Students present their finished projects in a public forum.