

Teacher Reflection

My objectives for the Spring semester were focused on developing students' communicative skills through the exploration and utilization of both art and technology. My student groups demonstrated relatively poor skills in direct verbal communication in English and their exposure to situations of interaction requiring communicative English was quite limited. Meanwhile, I also wished to build a stronger sense of community through close collaboration both within the classroom and with other staff and students. We thus prepared for the project first by discussing these areas of need and interest as well as our semester's focus objective involving the use of art and technology. Through class discussions and journaling assignments, a topic was finally determined which we all felt addressed our interests, needs and goals for the semester.

To explore and portray the various extra-curricular programs offered by the school would serve several purposes. My students felt it was a valid and necessary contribution to the school community, so from the onset it was felt to be rooted in real-life communicative needs. Though the idea of interviewing staff members and fellow students was daunting, most students recognized that this offered them a unique and useful opportunity to practice and improve their spoken English skills, and working in teams allowed for individuals to select preferred tasks and responsibilities.

We had read several texts in our previous genre-study units, so reading was kept to a minimum here, with a greater focus on previewing and analyzing many other examples of student-produced digital stories to develop a feel for this 'genre' and set expected standards for our own products. The use of digital photography was a continuation of art-based projects we had done last semester using photo-montage, and all writing assignments (descriptive narratives) other than reflective journals were undertaken through the steps of the *writing process* approach.

Students were held responsible for scheduling meetings and interviews with the staff members and student participants in each targeted after-school program, as well as for archiving all their materials using a folder system outlined in a previous workshop session, and keeping a log of shared time on the computer. Storyboard sheets were used to organize information sequentially. It was really useful to break down the description of each team's chosen after-school program into various components. This scaffolding involved charting the different elements of each program (origins, leaders, participants, activities, benefits, goals, schedule and location, etc.) so that each element could be handled separately on the storyboard, and assigned to a specific team-member. Furthermore, appropriate language use for interviews, questioning and note-taking techniques, and for final narratives were all presented in mini-lesson or workshop sessions, with journaling assignments serving as formative assessment tools to track student progress.

Finally, a self-assessment tool in the form of an end-of-term *reflective essay* on teamwork and collaboration, with paragraph-by-paragraph guidelines, was used upon completion and viewing of the digital stories as a summative assessment, along with two separate evaluative rubrics covering features of teamwork and a broader range of style and content elements for digital stories.

Sample Student Handout

REFLECTIVE ESSAY: Digital Story Project

Reflect on your participation in the Digital Story Project. Use the *Rubric* and the *Checklist* to guide you in writing an essay. Your essay should describe and evaluate your participation in this project.

Be sure to:

- Describe what you accomplished during this project.
- Explain what you learned about yourself as a student and team-member.
- Discuss what you learned about using technology.

Four Paragraphs

Introduction:

- Briefly describe the Digital Story project.
- Explain why collaboration was so important.
- Make a statement that says how successfully you feel that you participated in this work by collaborating with your partner(s).
- Connect your participation to your learning.

Body One:

- Make a statement about what you did efficiently and effectively.
- Develop your statement by supporting it with examples and evidence.
- Explain what you learned through your participation.

Body Two:

- Make a statement about what you did not do efficiently and effectively.
- Develop your statement by supporting it with examples and evidence.
- Explain what you learned through your participation.

Conclusion:

- Write a conclusion that summarizes how your participation – or lack of participation – has impacted your final product and your learning.

Rubric for Evaluating Student Participation in the Digital Storytelling Process

SKILL AREA	4	3	2	1
DIGITAL PHOTOS	Took many interesting and appropriate photos that vividly represent all aspects of the program.	Took an adequate number of relevant photos that represent most aspects of the program.	Took an adequate number of photos, but not all are interesting and they do not cover all aspects of the program.	Took insufficient relevant photos. Photos do not represent all aspects of the program. Had to rely heavily on internet images.
MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS	Effectively and independently scheduled meetings and coordinated interviews with all leaders and participants of the program.	Adequately scheduled meetings and interviews with program leaders and participants, needing only minimal encouragement from Mr. Pulé.	Required a great deal of encouragement and guidance from Mr. Pulé in order to schedule meetings and interviews.	Relied heavily on Mr. Pulé and on team partner to meet with program leaders and participants, and failed to collect sufficient information.
TEXTS	Intelligently compiled sufficient, well-written text to fully explain all aspects of the program.	Adequately compiled enough text to explain most aspects of the program.	Needed many reminders to compile texts, only partially explained the various aspects of the program, and relied on a lot of teacher input and editing.	Failed to compile sufficient text to describe the program; produced short and incomplete texts which were difficult to understand.
ORGANIZATION	Followed instructions to successfully organize all narrative into meaningful categories; clearly formatted texts on storyboard, and completed all organizational texts on time.	Needed few reminders to organize the narratives, but produced an organized storyboard covering all the assigned categories of information.	Needed constant encouragement and only partially organized narratives into vague categories on the storyboard sheets.	Failed to organize any information on storyboard sheets.
CONNECTIONS	Intelligently matched own images with all narrative texts on the storyboard and made strong and successful literal and non-literal connections.	Matched images quite successfully with most narrative texts on the storyboard and made many strong connections.	Matched some images to texts on the storyboard sheets, but made mostly weak, loose or unclear connections.	Failed to match all but a few images to storyboard texts, making only inappropriate or confusing connections.
TIME MANAGEMENT AND SHARING	Always worked on schedule, completed all assignments on due dates and consistently and harmoniously shared computer work with partner – as evidenced on a fully updated log sheet.	Usually completed assignments on schedule <i>and</i> mostly shared computer time with partner, partially keeping a log sheet.	Completed many assignments after the due date, and rarely negotiated equal time on the computer with partner, almost never using log sheet.	Late on most or all assignments; did not share equitably in team work; failed to keep a log of computer time.

Checklist for Evaluating Digital Stories

	Use these prompts to evaluate the various aspects of your completed digital story. Use the following scale: 1 = failed 2 = poor 3 = fair 4 = very good 5 = excellent	Score
1	We introduced the program clearly with appropriate images and narrative.	
2	We described all the program's activities clearly and completely.	
3	We presented all the program's participants and included their feedback.	
4	We provided complete and interesting information about the program's leader(s).	
5	We discussed the program's origins and/or the background of the organization(s) involved.	
6	We gave a clear explanation of the goals and benefits of the program.	
7	We recorded clear, informative and well-pronounced narratives.	
8	The photos we took are appropriate, interesting, varied and attractive.	
9	The images we found on the internet are all appropriate in tone and subject.	
10	Our timing is good, and all our images connect strongly with the voice narrative.	
11	We maintain an appealing and consistent tone throughout the digital story.	
12	We chose an appropriate soundtrack to fit our subject.	
13	We used transitions and effects which enhance our presentation.	
14	Our titles and credits are clear, harmonious and complete.	
15	We are totally satisfied with the quality of our completed digital story.	
16	We enjoyed working as a team; we shared responsibilities and we successfully negotiated problems.	