

Digital Storytelling – Best Practices

Dr. Arnie Abrams

Southern Oregon University
www.arnieabrams.net



Presentation Outline

1. Defining digital storytelling
Educational benefits and applications
Matching to subject area standards
2. Matching to N.E.T.S. standards
3. Developing writing skills
4. A ten step development model
5. Software options
6. Tips for making it easier

Defining Digital Storytelling

- Sharing stories through words, pictures, video and audio
- Often made up of snapshots & clip art
- Narrated by the author
- Usually 1-5 minutes long
- Often autobiographical
- Often emotional, sometimes therapeutic
- Can be shared on the Web
- Can be any type of story

Components of a Digital Story

- Words
- Still Pictures
- Graphics, icons, symbols
- Pictures from the Web, clip art
- Video clips
- Recorded narration
- Music, sound effects
- Transitions
- Animation

Educational Benefits

- Develops writing and reading skills
- Creativity enhancement
- Knowledge management
- Synergistic effect – more than words or pictures alone
- Develops visual literacy skills
- Develops technology skills
- Can be tied to national standards
- Can be made to be interactive
- Can foster presentation skills
- Provides a global audience for writing
- Can be fun and motivational
- Provides a good outlet for personal expression. Can be therapeutic
- Moving to watch. Can affect us emotionally

Curricular Applications

- Language arts skills:
- communication skills
- sequential thinking
- presentation skills
- Technology classes
- Art classes
- Visual literacy skills
- Media literacy
- Social studies
- The sciences
- Math
- Foreign language
- Cultural understanding
- Part of portfolios
- Business presentations, ads

National subject area standards developed:

English:

- NL-ENG.K-12.4 Communication skills
- NL-ENG.K-12.5 Communication strategies
- NL-ENG.K-12.6 Applying knowledge
- NL-ENG.K-12.9 Multicultural understanding
- NL-ENG.K-12.12 Applying language skills

Social Sciences Standards:

- NSS-G.2 Places and Regions
- NSS-G.4 Human Systems
- NSS-USH.1 Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago
- NSS-USH.2 The History of Students' Own State or Region
- NSS-USH.4 The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World
- NSS-USH.5-12.9 Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)
- NSS-USH.5-12.10 Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the Present)

National Educational Technology Standards developed (NETS):

- Creativity and innovation
1a, 1b, 1c, 1d
- Communication and collaboration
2a, 2b, 2c, 2d
- Research and information fluency
3a, 3b, 3c, 3d
- Critical thinking, problem-solving & decision-making
4a, 4b, 4c, 4d
- Digital citizenship
5b
- Technology operations & concepts
6a, 6b, 6c, 6d

Presenting the Story

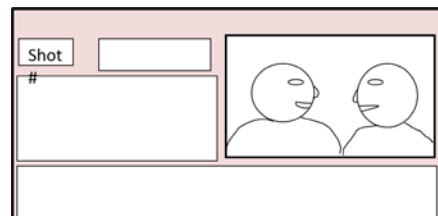
- Presentation skills are becoming a required educational outcome in many schools and states
- Digital storytelling allows young students to develop and practice those presentation skills

A ten step model for creating digital stories:

1. Start with a good story
2. Write an outline/script
3. Storyboard
4. Brainstorm visual ideas, music
5. Find visuals, shoot
6. Edit visuals
7. Add titles, graphics
8. Record narration
9. Match visuals to audio, add music
10. Produce, revise, present, distribute

Storyboarding

“Without a structure students will focus on adding images, music and other elements instead of focusing on the content and organization.” Meg Ormiston



Ways to build a digital story

- Stills in a folder
- PowerPoint (export PNGs)
- Slide Show programs
- Video editing programs
- Animation & Flash
- DVD authoring
- Codecs

Software options

- iPhoto
- Adobe Photoshop Elements
- Microsoft PhotoStory
- Corel VideoStudio
- iMovie
- Clicker

iPhoto

Pros –

- Part of iLife suite
- Really easy
- Nice looking transitions
- Makes QuickTime movies

Cons –

- Mac only
- Lacks features, such as titles

Adobe PhotoShop Elements

Pros –

- Integrated with Photoshop Elements
- Nice pan and zoom effect
- Can add clip art
- Good edit control

Cons –

- Windows only
- Only exports WMV movie files
- Some performance problems

Microsoft Photo Story

Pros –

- Free!
- Easy
- Pan and zoom
- Runs smoothly

Cons –

- Windows only
- No timeline control

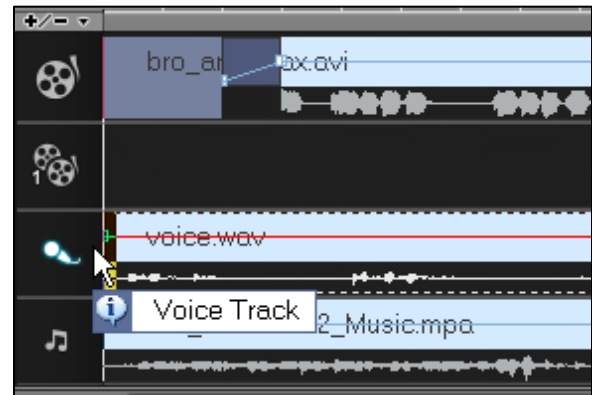
Corel VideoStudio

Pros –

- Powerful
- Good timeline control
- Can make DVD's

Cons –

- Complicated for younger students



iMovie

Pros –

- Part of iLife suite
- Really easy
- Makes QuickTime files
- Can mix stills and video

Cons –

- Mac only
- Limited audio control

Clicker

Pros –

- Great for early grades
- Can read aloud
- Can be interactive
- Cross platform

Cons –

- Needs Clicker to view the story
- No movie file output

The Writing Process

- Teachers often seem to be concentrating more on the movie making process rather than the writing process
- Too difficult for young students to undertake independently (and often times too difficult for their teachers also)

Writing Genres

- Narrative
- Instructional
- Persuasive
- Personal Expression
- Book Report?
- Autobiography?

Personal Narratives

- Character stories.
- Memorial stories.
- Stories about events in our lives.
- Adventure stories.
- Accomplishment stories.
- Stories about places in our lives.
- Stories about what we do.
- Recovery stories.
- Love stories –discovery stories.

Historical Themes and Events

- Could be “faction”
- Based on material students explore
- Facilitates research and organizational skills
- Needs to go beyond the “encyclopedia entry”

Informational or Instructional

Deliver instructional content on many different topics, including: math, science, social studies
Can be a “how to” sequence
Technical writing

Tips for Building:

- Help students brainstorm
- Help students organize and enhance ideas.
- Have students create a script and storyboard cards
- Check the writing
- Identify keywords
- Use stills and/or video
- Allow students to use clip art
- Limit length, number of images

Starting the Story

- “Blank page syndrome” - the beginning is what often troubles aspiring writers
- Innovative teachers have used various story-starter techniques to help students overcome initial writer’s block for decades
- For 2nd graders or college students
- Story-starters are viable techniques for stimulating written creativity, and digital technologies can improve them

Writing Prompts

- “Digital story starters”
- Techniques include:
- Complete the story
- What-if prompts
- Different endings
- Describe the picture
- Collaborative stories
- Picture stories

Digital Story Starter Templates

- “About Me”
- “Digital Diary”
- “All About My...”
- “What I Like...”
- Topic based presentation
- “Create an Ad”
- “How To”
- “Digital Tour”
- “Tell a Tale”
- “Creativity Study”
- “Virtual Travels”
- “Creature Features”

Making it Easier - Production

- Pair with older kid/aid
- Keep in a folder
- Limit to 6 -10 pictures
- Allow “fair use” of images and music
- Use keyword graphics
- Don’t grade?

Making it Easier - Audio

- Record narration separately
- Use external mike
- Set up recording booth
- Record narration first
- Speak real slowly

Sharing Students’ Stories

- Curriculum nights - share stories with parents.
- put online or on disk.
- Creating a hard copy - printed booklet
- Festivals and contests

An Effective Tool for Teachers

- Stories created by teachers can serve:
- as a lesson hook

- as a way to integrate multimedia into the curriculum
- as a way to make difficult content more understandable
- to facilitate classroom discussion

“Stories are powerful vehicles for gaining a student’s attention, conveying practical or moral lessons, and sparking thought.”

Mark Standley

Challenges in the Classroom:

- Emphasizes tech skills more than writing skills
- Technical problems
- Access to technology, hardware and software
- Time consuming to create
- Not integrated into subjects other than language arts
- Don’t mistake activity for achievement
- Becomes competitive
- Don’t mistake activity for achievement
- Measurable?
- Tied to standards?
- Privacy, appropriateness issues
- Copyright violations

Copyright Disclaimer

“Many of the digital stories on our site include images and audio found on the Internet using commonly available search engines. The stories have been created for non-profit, educational use by students and teachers and we hope are within the fair use protection of existing copyright laws. If any copyright owner objects to the use of any work appearing on this site, please contact us and we will remove the work and review the propriety of including it.”

Assessment:

- Match to subject area standards
- Use rubrics
- Include writing assessment
- Tech skills assessment?
- Team approach?

Things to Assess

- Overall purpose of the story
- Narrator’s point of view
- A dramatic question (or questions)
- Choice of content
- Clarity of voice
- Pacing of the narrative
- Meaningful soundtrack
- Quality of the images
- Economy of the story detail
- Good grammar and language usage

Digital Storytelling Rubrics

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Point of View				
Voice - Consistency				
Voice - Pacing				
Soundtrack - Emotion				
Images				
Economy				
Grammar				

Sharing Stories:

- CD’s and DVDs
- PowerPoint
- Web sites, blogs, podcasts
- Facebook
- YouTube
- SchoolTube
- Festivals and contests

For handouts, links, publications, workshops and presentations contact:

Dr. Arnie Abrams

abrams@sou.edu

www.arnieabrams.net

www.deanofdigital.com

