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Journal #5 – Multimedia Resources in the Classroom

In an era of rapidly expanding technological interconnectedness, it is only logical that the use of technology and communication should be integrated into the educational experience. Beachwood Middle School has fully embraced this philosophy by fully integrating technology into everyday classroom use. This past week in Mr. Holman's class, I have had the opportunity to witness a variety of uses of technology, all harnessed to provide students with experiences that are not just technology rich, but are also interactive and collaborative. Through these experiences, students were able to learn from an expert in Renaissance art, collaborate on group projects, and for some, develop an interactive lesson that will eventually be taught to students at another school. All of these experiences were the culmination of several weeks of lessons about the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.

This week began with the students learning about Renaissance art from David Church, an art professor in Syracuse, NY. The students were taught by Mr. Church through Skype, a free Internet video conferencing program. During the Skype videoconference, the students followed along with a PowerPoint containing Renaissance art images, as well as provided feedback and questions to Mr. Church regarding the presentation through a Google Document. Through the combination of Skype and Google Documents, students can learn, ask questions, provide feedback, and receive responses to their questions in real time. This was not only an excellent way for these students to learn about Renaissance Art, but it was a way that everyone involved found enjoyable and highly informative. Additionally, the use of free programs (Skype and Google Documents) allowed for collaborative instruction with an expert who was hundreds of miles away at a bare minimum of expense.

The teleconference with Mr. Church was just the beginning of 2 different types of culminating projects that would be completed by students over the course of this week. The majority of Mr. Holman's classes would be working on group projects involving finding images of Renaissance art, and then building a podcast or movie that would be sent to Mr. Church to show them what they had learned. In a more ambitious project, Mr. Holman's 3rd period class (which consists of only 6 students) is collaborating on a presentation covering both the Renaissance and Protestant Reformation, which will eventually be presented via videoconference over Skype to the entire 7th grade class at Chardon Middle School. I will discuss these projects and my impressions in further detail below. While my explanation may be a bit longwinded, I do not feel that it does these experiences justice to simply gloss over them in a succinct manner.

Renaissance Art Projects

As I stated above, the majority of Mr. Holman's students (excluding 3rd period students) developed different projects about Renaissance Art. Based on guidance from the videoconference with Mr. Church and from what they learned in class about Renaissance art, students were directed to find several examples of Renaissance art on the internet, including a copy of the image, as well as information about who the artist is and when the painting or sculpture was created. Additionally, students were to state in a Word document how they felt that the images that they had selected were excellent examples of Renaissance art, as well as how they felt the images embodied the Renaissance ideals and art techniques.

On Wednesday, Mr. Church "Skyped" (for lack of a better term) back in to the classes for another videoconference. During this videoconference, students were invited to share some of the images that they found with Mr. Church, who explained the significance, techniques, and religious iconography shown in the images. Again, students were invited to share their feedback

and questions for Mr. Church in Google Documents. Mr. Church took the time to address each question and comment posted by students, which was not only informative, but was extremely generous that he took the time to address each students' questions. As with the initial videoconference on Monday, students were all actively engaged, interested, and enthusiastic in their participation in this interactive lesson.

Beginning on Thursday, the students began building their podcasts and movies from their "scripts" using Garage Band or iMovie. Students were encouraged to build embedded podcasts, are essentially a slideshow. In embedded podcasts, students can insert their Renaissance art images into the podcast, then record an audio track for each image, creating what is essentially a guided slideshow presentation. These presentations will be sent to David Church, who will review and comment on their projects.

At the time of writing (Thursday evening), many of the students were well on their way to completing podcasts of extremely high quality. I found it rather interesting that they were able to complete these projects with a minimal amount of help from either Mr. Holman or myself. This is probably due to the high degree to technology use and integration into every class, similar to what has occurred throughout this entire week. Not only do the students enjoy doing these projects, but also they complete them without expressing any frustration with using the software.

3<u>rd</u> Period's Collaborative Lesson

As I had mentioned before, Mr. Holman's 3rd period class consists of only 6 students. This smaller class size allows for these students to participate in educational experiences that would otherwise be difficult or impossible with average sized classes. One of these is the opportunity to build an interactive and collaborative lesson that will be presented to the entire 7th

grade class at Chardon Middle School at a later date. This presentation covers both the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.

These six students were split into 2 groups, each of whom focused on either the Renaissance or Protestant Reformation. From here, each group built their own PowerPoint presentation about their respective topics. Essentially, each of the 3 students in each group created 2 or 3 slides about a particular aspect of their topic. Each student will then present their slides to the entire 7th grade class of Chardon Middle School via Skype at a later date.

What I found particularly interesting about this group of students is that they all worked quite well together on the presentations. While at the time of writing I have not seen the finished presentation, what I have seen so far promises to be a very interesting and engaging presentation. All of the students dove right into the work and built their presentations with a minimal amount of guidance, prodding, or direct instruction. Additionally, each of the students seemed extremely excited to be presenting their creations to an entire 7th grade class at another school.

My Impressions

To be honest, this entire week has actually been quite a bit to take in. With all of the different things occurring that involve technology integration and collaboration in the classroom, it at times is a little intimidating, but extremely exciting and informative. Through the use of technology, students are able to learn, collaborate, and present in ways that were simply not possible when I was their age. Additionally, students enjoy and embrace its use without fail. I have not seen any instances of students appearing to be uncomfortable with using technology; rather, they use it effortlessly in ways that make technology integration seem like it is commonplace and standard in all classrooms.

The projects that the students in Mr. Holman's Social Studies classes are working on and the level of technology integration used in the classroom are cutting edge and quickly becoming the new standard of modern education. The lessons that I have learned from sitting in on these classes have really opened my eyes to the fact that these practices are the ideal model for technology integration in today's classrooms.

As a future teacher, this has really driven the point home to me that current and future educators need to really step their games up to keep up with the pace of technology that is available for classroom use. Most of the programs that can be used to create interactive and collaborative projects like these are either free or of very minimal cost. Additionally, the learning curve for using the software and utilities involved is relatively low. Learning to master the use and implementation of them for the most part involves simply playing with them for about an hour or two, which makes them perfect for student use since a minimal amount of direct instruction will be required.

I look forward to seeing how these projects finally turn out, and I also look forward to seeing how the lesson being taught via Skype to the students at Chardon Middle School goes. If it is anything like what I have witnessed so far this week, I am sure that it will be a great success. I will try to post about it in another journal after it takes place.