

A Motivation to Write:  
Stepping it Up with Digital Storytelling

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### ***First Impressions***

*The purpose of this paper is to introduce the process of digital storytelling and to show its benefits within the academic setting. Storytelling in digital form is a rising genre that brings new elements to the table that go beyond the capabilities of traditional storytelling. Digital storytelling is a way to incorporate twenty-first century technology into the already powerful process of narrative writing. It ultimately becomes a tool to stimulate and motivate students to engage in the storytelling process and unlocks the door for students who struggle with traditional writing to share their voices.*

### **Getting Acquainted with Digital Storytelling**

*“The principle goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things not simply repeating what other generations have done.” – Jean Piaget*

The Digital Storytelling Association (2002) introduces digital storytelling as “a modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling” (Karan-Miyar 27). The term *modern*, in this case, refers to the advances society has made in the area of technology. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, advancements in technology have given us the ability to carry sixty plus gigabytes of music with a portable, hand-held device called the iPod, and with the invention of smartphones, we now have the internet at the tips of our fingers at any moment. On the whole, technology has changed the way we teach, learn, communicate, socialize, talk, read, write, think, live – and now, with the invention of digital storytelling, it has changed the way we tell stories.

Digital storytelling is really no more than using a computer to tell a story. Through the use of modern software, an author is able to bring to life their story more so than with the pencil and paper; they are able to create an interactive experience complete with audio and digital imagery. According to the “Center for Digital Storytelling”, a digital story is defined as “A short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voices, still and moving images, and music or other sounds” (storycenter.org). Digital storytelling can take on several different faces – personal and historical narratives (which are beneficial for learning purposes), informative, and instructional (which make it an effective pedagogical tool). It also holds to many of the same elements that constitute a traditional story – point of view (typically first person), themes, plot elements, etc. (Robin 1). “Like traditional stories, digital stories help

form and define our culture. They provide a window into who we are at a given time and in a particular place” (Czarnecki 7).

### **Narrative Writing Gets a Makeover**

*“We are lonesome animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome. One of our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say –and to feel –‘Yes, that’s the way it is, or at least that’s the way I feel it. You’re not as alone as you thought.’” – John Steinbeck*

If you want to get students buzzing about meaningful memories of their past or sharing personal incites and experiences that open up a channel for students to self-reflect and connect with others, assign your students the task of writing a personal narrative. According to Dictionary.com, a narrative is “a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious.” A personal narrative, at its core, is “a window into a moment, a self-contained story set in one particular place and time” (Kajder 66). George Hillocks says it this way: “Work on narrative . . . is a way to examine the stories of our lives” (1). If we look at the word *examine* even closer, we discover that students, when writing narratives, should travel beyond the important skills of capitalization, spelling and syntax; instead, the emphasis should rest on the content of the students’ stories. Probing the past is an excellent way for students to gain perspective about who they were and who they have become. “In other words, the stories participants tell simultaneously portray and shape who they are, how they see themselves, and what they plan to do in the future” (Jocson 171).

Since students’ own inquiry into their past and into meaningful experiences can serve as a springboard for self-reflection, getting students to engage in routine narrative writing will cause students to not only discover things about themselves, but through sharing their stories, they will be able to discover things about others. It is through the telling of their stories and listening to the stories of others, that students have the opportunity to learn about individuals from backgrounds different from their own. Furthermore, story sharing carries with it the potential to generate classroom dialogues that will not only deal with familial and social issues, but also world issues such as cultural and religious diversities, racial differences and globalization (Robin 2). However, getting students to spend quality time creating the kind

of meaningful narratives that encourage learning on this level can be a daunting task that, at times, will require the use of more innovative tools than just pen and paper. The marriage of narrative writing with the digital world could serve as just the right incentive to get students interested in sharing their stories.

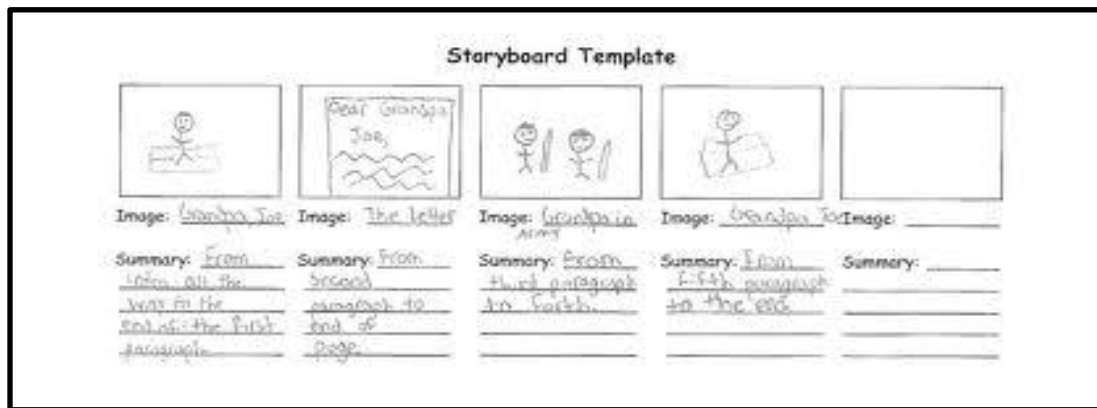
Teachers who cringe at the idea of forfeiting the beauty and skills of traditional storytelling methods to twenty-first century technology integration should be informed of the benefits of digital storytelling. “Digital storytelling helps build twenty-first century skills: not only literacy, but the logical and critical-thinking skills and ability to understand culture that comes with learning how to tell a story” (Czarnecki 8). Digital storytelling becomes an area where old and new literacies meet, and students are now required to have an understanding of both. Using digital literacies as a way to bridge the traditional with the technological will, over time, not only change the way students communicate and share their voices, but it will also change the way students learn depending on the digital tools they are exposed to within their educational setting (O’Brian & Scharber 67). Like traditional storytelling, digital storytelling engages students’ creativity to produce a work that not only communicates meaning to an audience but also stimulates their imagination (Czarnecki 18). Digital storytelling, however, adds an element of imagery and sound to the storytelling process which causes the story to be both visually and aurally appealing.

When making the transition from traditional storytelling to digital storytelling, the writing process remains the same. Students are still required to work through the stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, before the final publishing stage where students will present their stories to an audience. “Knowing how to effectively create a story structure, develop strong characters, establish appropriate timing and expand a plot are aspects of storytelling that do not disappear with the digital format . . . the storyteller must effectively weave technology into the work without losing the soul of the story in order to convey the intended meaning” (Czarnecki 7). Digital storytelling still preserves the first-person point of view attached to traditional personal narrative writing; it also maintains a well-developed plot, a way to evoke emotion from the audience, and a conscientious effort to being sensitive to specific audiences by

using appropriate language. In addition, digital storytelling focuses the storyteller's attention on maintaining an attractive rhythm, and adding voice animation and musical enhancements for triggering emotional responses from the audience (Sylvester & Greenidge 287).

The tradeoff for using digital storytelling over traditional methods of narrative writing, which is a plus for struggling writers, is that digital storytelling takes the focus off of surface-level issues and puts the focus, instead, on the story's content. The shift of interest, in this case, from low-level writing skills such as spelling, handwriting and grammar to developing a carefully considered plot with well-rounded characters makes it possible for students to focus more on maintaining control of the story (Kajder 67).

One of the best ways for students to maintain their focus when creating digital stories is by constructing a storyboard; this is where students map out the images they plan to use in a chronological order, and make notes of techniques as well as audio and visual interactions that will enhance the flow of their story. The development of a storyboard after the planning stage helps give students a clearer picture of the layout of their digital story. With the use of a storyboard, students will be able to pinpoint any area of their story that has missing elements or details that are important to developing their plot (Sylvester & Greenidge 292).



<http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRKbulA2nlJhpdw5Hj3M10BoCgUcBkT6yhdwkFQ2w1o74tylR6&t=1>

One might argue that the gap left when eliminating surface error issues is filled in with adding images, voice, and appropriate pans and zooms for effect. While it is true that “creating a digital story

requires a multiplicity of tasks” (Sylvester & Greenidge 292), they are typically tasks that build the content and make it stronger, more effective, and meaningful. Students use images from the Internet, photographs taken by digital cameras, or their own artwork to create the setting for their story. Voice fluctuation and music choice create the story’s mood and enhances the emotional connection between the writer and the viewer. With digital storytelling, students even have the option of adding a variety of voices for dialogue. Other technical skills required to complete the finishing touches of a digital story – pans and zooms – draw on the students’ creative abilities to enhance the overall storyline and effectively make meaningful connections with the audience. For students, digital storytelling becomes a way of adding “voice to their pieces or [of] helping the events to come alive for the viewer-reader” (Kajder 67).

“The rise of the Internet and digital technology has the potential to transform the process of storytelling and expand its audience” (Czarnecki 5). This is one of the most appealing benefits to structuring narratives in digital form. No longer is the publishing stage of storytelling limited to only peer and teacher review, but with digital storytelling, students now have the potential, “because of the method of delivery, duplication of stories, and posting to the internet” to reach beyond the walls of the classroom (Sylvester 290). In addition, the invention of digital storytelling paves the way for storytellers to not only reach a variety of audiences, but it also reaches those audiences in a way that traditional storytelling methods do not (Czarnecki 5). The use of images and sound provide a way for storytellers to break down the language barrier and share their stories with people from other languages and cultures. Ultimately, when students realize they are creating a story that will be viewed and heard by a larger audience, their motivation to write tends to increase and they become more concerned with doing their best (Sylvester & Greenidge 290). Since enlarging a student’s audience is a way to foster conscientious writers, the benefits are obvious for expanding narrative writing to include the process of digital storytelling.

### **Stepping Out of the Pedagogical Comfort Zone**

*“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” –  
Albert Einstein*

“Technology can only be effective if teachers themselves possess the expertise to use technology in a meaningful way in the classroom” (Sadik 487). If there is an absence of technology in the educational setting, the reasons can range from a shortage of school funding to a lack of teacher inquiry to learn new twenty-first century skills. True integration of technology is not characterized by what kinds of technologies are used or by the quantity of new literacies learned; true integration of technology is defined, instead, by the teachers’ application of that technology to positively affect students’ learning (Sadik 488). Without the proper training for classroom teachers regarding the usefulness of educational technologies, the benefits of such technologies may go unlearned. Students will continue to neglect the educational purposes of digital technologies, such as digital storytelling, and concentrate solely on technology for its social purposes (O’Brien & Scharber 67).

Having a vision for how the benefits of technology reach beyond its social functions is difficult for some teachers. When teachers have a lack of vision for technology’s ability to enhance both the teaching and learning processes and for technology’s ability to connect with curriculum requirements already established, the result becomes a limited application of technology, and in some cases, technology is dismissed altogether (Sadik 488). The best way to get teachers to make the connection between technology and the curriculum is to expose teachers to the method and provide them with the training they need to develop proper insight into how technology can improve learning. Since many of today’s students are comfortable with using technology for multiple purposes, twenty-first century teachers need to know how to apply technology instruction into traditional classroom procedures and use it to challenge and motivate students.

When it comes to integrating the technologies needed for digital storytelling, teachers must begin with a positive attitude. The best way to generate this kind of optimism is to pinpoint the advantages of using digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool – advantages that, at this stage of the research, seem to far outweigh the concerns.

To start with, digital storytelling provides a way for students to learn the processes and strategies of narrative writing from a unique, less-traditional approach; it offers a way for teachers to incorporate variety into their teaching style. Digital storytelling can also be used as a means of offering personalized learning, which, according to Wikipedia.org, takes into account students' interests, abilities and creativities. Personalized learning constructs more individualized methods for engaging students in a positive learning process that integrates some type of technology and that is designed to help students reach their highest levels of success. Next, digital storytelling, as a pedagogical tool, can be used as a tactic to captivate students' attention when learning or applying new information or skills in any subject, or as a motivator to get students involved in learning processes. It not only stimulates students' involvement in the writing process, but the large viewing audience prompts students' revision until their work is visually and audibly satisfying. Finally, digital storytelling offers an inexpensive, straightforward mode for teachers to recreate real-life situations in any classroom setting (Karan-Miyar 27).

In essence, "Digital storytelling . . . brings the creator/student and the viewer together in a dialogue around the nature of representation, meaning, and authority embedded in imagery and narrative" (Fletcher & Cambre 115). Digital storytelling provides a way for viewers to learn more about their topic and to appreciate its various perspectives; this in turn can be useful to facilitate class discussions. Simultaneously, when teachers view and discuss their students' digital stories, they are able to learn about their students and recognize important information that is relevant to their students' lives (Rance-Roney 394). Teachers who have seen the benefits of digital storytelling first-hand have even credited digital storytelling assignments as a way to "increase students' understanding of curricular content" (Sadik 487), "make abstract or conceptual content more understandable," and "bridge the gap between existing knowledge and new material" (Robin 3).

Once teachers are "willing to transform their pedagogy and curriculum to include digital storytelling" (Sadik 487), they must then familiarize themselves with the digital storytelling process and applications, and be aware of how to use them effectively to enhance students' learning (Sadik 497).



Since the number of digital literacies are continually growing and appear to be a permanent fixture on society, it would be wise for educators everywhere to begin to “weave together old, new, and future literacies so that young people leave school literate in the ways of school and in the ways of the world” (O’Brien & Scharber 68); for this to be a meaningful endeavor, teachers need training, support and access to meaningful resources. (See Appendix A)

### **Traditional Meets Technology: A Meaningful Learning Experience**

*“I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.” – Confucius*

Providing students with meaningful learning experiences that will not only engage students for a moment, but will affect the way they think and feel well into their futures is a difficult, but necessary task for all classroom teachers. The *meaningful* integration of technology into the classroom has proven to be one method in which to stimulate this kind of learning. “Meaningful technology integration is defined as curricula utilizing authentic tasks that intentionally and actively help learners to construct their own meanings from thinking about experiences” (Sadik 488). Digital storytelling is one such example of meaningful technology that works to effectively engage students in the learning process.

Engaging students in learning requires “mindfulness, intrinsic motivation, cognitive effort, and attention” (Sadik 488). With traditional writing methods, students may never experience the opportunity to either share their voices or listen to the voices of their peers; this results in the limited point of view of the students, leaves them inexperienced when it comes to engaging in meaningful dialogue over specific topics, and stunts their learning of how to be open and receptive of other’s opinions and thoughts. Because of the open-endedness of digital storytelling, and because it can be easily viewed by all students at once, students are encouraged to carefully reflect on the meaning of a topic or story and to make logical connections between their personal interest in the topic and how the topic affects others.

When students use digital media to examine pertinent cultural, social, and personal issues and communicate messages about those issues through digital storytelling, students not only take on the role of expert, but they become participants “in a commendable act of teaching and awareness-raising”

(Czarnecki 18). In this vein, digital storytelling becomes a way for students to work collaboratively to explain their viewpoints, interpret their understanding of important issues and offer their own personal opinions about subjects that matter to them (Karan-Miyar 29). Used in this way, students benefit from the experience they gain through the evaluation of their work and the work of their peers.

Digital storytelling can serve as a compelling and powerful learning tool when properly integrated into the curriculum and when properly modeled for students. For students who are attracted to digital literacies, the inclusion of digital storytelling will not only get them interested and involved, but it will also capitalize on students' self-expression as they compose their own stories stimulated through both guided research, and individual ideas and knowledge. Having students view the digital stories of other's, increases their understanding of cultural diversity while at the same time builds connections with individuals who have similar views and experiences. Digital storytelling not only promotes self-reflection in a way that causes students to look inward at their own ideals, but they are also challenged to reflect on how their ideals affect others and vice versa. The end result is an enhanced personal experience for each student that shows ownership and accomplishment (Robin 4 & Sadik 490).

One of the most appealing benefits of digital storytelling is that it engages diverse learning styles – aural, visual and sensory – and it appeals to different cognitive processes – verbal linguistic, spatial, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, bodily-kinesthetic (Sadik 490). Digital storytelling can be used by students to enhance projects, organize ideas, improve communication skills, ask questions, express opinions, and construct narratives. Students can also use digital storytelling as a way to analyze and synthesize a wide range of content, and to create stories that they can share with their peers and/or for a wide range of audiences. While most students are generally excited about using new technologies and digital gadgets for completing classroom assignments, not all of them are proficient in how to make use of such technologies for educational purposes. Through the digital storytelling process, “Students gain confidence and a new understanding of literacy” (Kajder 64), and it is by “tapping into other literacies [that students] may boost their motivation and scaffold their understanding of traditional literacies”

(Sylvester & Greenidge 286). In essence, incorporating digital storytelling, and its complex writing process, into the curriculum provides students an opportunity to acquire skills in multiple areas of literacy. (See Table 2)

*Table 2: Skills learned by students through digital storytelling (Robin 6)*

<b>Research skills</b> – Collecting and examining information for story composition
<b>Writing skills</b> – Expressing personal opinions and drafting
<b>Organization skills</b> – Managing everything needed, from materials to time, to complete the project
<b>Technology skills</b> - Ability to use a variety of tools, such as digital cameras, scanners, microphones and multimedia authoring software
<b>Presentation skills</b> – Determining the best method of communicating the story to an audience, while being sensitive to the audience
<b>Interview skills</b> – Finding sources to interview and developing questions to ask
<b>Interpersonal skills</b> – Working within a group and determining individual goals for group members
<b>Problem-solving skills</b> – Learning to make decisions and overcome obstacles at all stages of the project, from inception to completion
<b>Assessment skills</b> – Gaining expertise critiquing their own and others’ work.

### Turning Struggling Writers into Confident Writers

*“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.” – Helen Keller*

“Recognizing most students’ attraction to new technologies, creating stories . . . using digital storytelling may be a viable solution for struggling writers” (Sylvester & Greenidge 294). With this in mind, using digital storytelling within the educational setting is one method in which to turn struggling writers into confident writers. Students who show proficiency in writing are more apt to use dialogue, figurative language, and vocabulary that appeals to the readers’ senses – all techniques used to add clarity to writing and to create meaningful connections between the writer and the audience (Sylvester & Greenidge 291). On the other hand, “Papers written by struggling writers are shorter, incomplete, poorly organized, and weaker in overall quality. [They] typically contain more irrelevant information and more mechanical and grammatical errors” (Troia & Graham 77). While digital storytelling is not a cure for these kinds of struggles, it does provide a way for students, who do not know where to begin with a blank

piece of paper, who lack focus, and who have difficulty elaborating, to write using a more strategic approach. As mentioned earlier, one of the prewriting steps in composing a digital story consists of putting together a storyboard of the story's "scenes" laid out in sequential order. Creating a storyboard allows struggling writers a place to organize their ideas. Finally, the incorporation of visual imagery – digital photos, clip art, drawings, various graphics – that makes digital storytelling what it is, may help balance the lack of details struggling writers tend to leave out (Sylvester & Greenidge 291).

Since handwriting is one of the biggest obstacles faced by many struggling writers, allowing students to compose their stories on the computer can be an option that provides not only relief, but also an opportunity for struggling writers to let their voices be heard without the barrier of illegible handwriting. Instead, "the handwriting obstacle is removed and replaced by the pitch and expression of students' own voices" (Sylvester & Greenidge 293). When poor handwriting skills and problems in other areas of mechanics and grammar interfere with the writing process, students tend to lose their focus and have difficulty coming up with ideas to write about (Sylvester & Greenidge 286). The inclusion of images, sound effects and music could be just what students need to generate writing ideas. Thus, digital storytelling becomes a way to help struggling writers share their stories rather than to continually be silenced by obstacles presented with traditional writing methods.

Teachers should never underestimate that students who struggle with traditional writing methods may be gifted when it comes to using digital technologies. In this case, digital literacies would serve as a motivation for struggling writers by allowing them to use new literacies to "scaffold traditional literacy" (Sylvester & Greenidge 294). While students cannot afford to regularly bypass methods of writing that reinforce spelling, handwriting and grammar for all writing exercises, an occasional digital story may be the best tool to provide students a way to gain confidence as writers. Gaining confidence is vital because it enhances participation of struggling writers who may be intimidated to share their written stories, engage in peer evaluations, or even to choose their own topics for writing (Troia & Graham 82). Therefore, digital storytelling would be a positive modification that will enable students to write

successfully, and will provide motivation for students who need to strengthen their writing abilities under the traditional writing methods.

### **Breaking the Language Barrier**

*"If you find yourself saying 'But I can't speak English...', try adding the word '...yet'" – Jane Revell & Susan Norman*

With the ability to connect text and readers through the use of imagery and sound, digital storytelling can be useful in providing instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs). One of the advantages of digital storytelling is that it helps diminish the gap between students' prior knowledge and what they need to learn. Or, in the case of ELLs, it generates a development of background information (i.e. understanding culture) in order to prepare them for future academic work (Rance-Roney 387). In summary, before ELLs can feel confident enough to read scholarly literature, they must first develop an understanding of English culture and language usage. Digital storytelling makes this possible in several different ways.

Digital storytelling exposes students to new vocabulary and grammar in a way that stimulates a variety of learning styles and cognitive processes. With digital storytelling, ELLs are visually exposed to real-life situations that will build students understanding of cultural practices that go beyond the spoken word. Exposure to new vocabulary through simultaneously using the written word, images, sounds, and voice (for pronunciation) helps to strengthen the ELL's understanding of the vocabulary and helps them become "confident in meaning, contextual appropriateness, and pronunciation" (Rance-Roney 389).

The inclusion of visual and aural elements to digital storytelling provides a way for students to hear words orally rather than just see them in written form; it also provides an opportunity for students to see (through written words and images) and hear (through teacher pronunciation and sound effects) the words used in context which helps students develop an understanding of the meaning of words in addition to correct pronunciation. In addition, "diverse learners . . . need expertise in visual literacy to help them

cope with the abundant images that deluge life today” (Rance-Roney 389); digital storytelling contains the components to make this kind of well-rounded learning possible.

Past methods of supplementing language mastery included “photographs cut from magazines, videotapes, cassette tapes, and teacher lecture notes delivered through whole-class instruction” (Rance-Roney 388), all of which provided help and motivation for students while in the classroom setting, but are generally inaccessible beyond the school day. Since repetition is one of the main ingredients to learning a new language, this kind of accessibility is important. With access to online resources, Web-based videos, and the ability to easily and cheaply mass produce DVDs for students to take home, the ability to practice language learning outside of the school environment has become more attainable. However, none of these materials focus on specific vocabulary, syntax, or language development as a teacher created digital story has the potential to do. Essentially, nothing has given language development the personal touch that is possible through digital storytelling.

Teachers now have the ability to intentionally incorporate meaningful vocabulary and deliberate contexts depending on the students’ learning progress. This ability for personalized instruction offers “a rich pre-reading experience that would engage students in content, develop schema, and preview the language that learners would need to access the upcoming text” (Rance-Roney 394). In addition, through free access websites, such as YouTube, students can access digital stories beyond the school day; this kind of repeated exposure is the key to building students’ confidence when using the English language, to giving students a sense of control of the language, and for helping students gain their own voice among English speakers.

### **Disadvantages and Drawbacks: Having Cold Feet about Moving Forward**

*“Technology... is a queer thing. It brings you great gifts with one hand, and it stabs you in the back with the other.” – C.P. Snow*

As with any type of technology, the incorporation of digital storytelling to education has its drawbacks. One such drawback is the lack of administrative endorsement needed to raise awareness and

give support to teachers who desire to incorporate meaningful technology into their classroom curriculums. This lack of support creates one the most profound disadvantage that teachers face when desiring to integrate digital literacies – the lack of available equipment needed for teachers and students. For the purpose of composing digital stories, students will need computer and Internet access as well as the availability of digital cameras and scanners. Getting the equipment, however, is only half the battle; the use of such equipment must still be made “relevant to students’ needs” and teachers and students must receive training in order to use the equipment in “empowering ways” (O’Brien & Scharber 67). Essentially, this lack of training presents a problem in itself. Many teachers lack the confidence and expertise needed to integrate meaningful technology into the curriculum. On the contrary, even if training were available, it would take valuable time away from teachers who already have little to spare.

One of the fears teachers have when incorporating technology into students’ learning is any number of technical problems that could potentially arise. Teachers cannot always plan for these kinds of glitches, and while some can be easily fixed, others may take precious time away from productivity. A secondary issue that arises when dealing with such technical problems is a loss of classroom management. Losing control of technology can result in losing control of classroom behavior as students lose focus on their digital stories. One way to eliminate most of the potential problems students may have with the computer, digital camera, or digital storytelling software is to teach students how to use them properly before beginning the digital storytelling project. While the initial introduction to digital storytelling may require lessons teaching students how to use the appropriate software and how to find and document dependable resources, with repeated production of digital stories, the time spent on dealing with numerous technical glitches as well as time spent learning the basics of digital storytelling will greatly decrease (Rance-Roney 393).

While some would argue that students who are typically poor storytellers will most likely produce a digital story that is inadequate (Robin 6), it is important to remember that exposing students to writing

through digital storytelling is one way to increase students' proficiency in both digital literacies as well as in the traditional literacies of reading, writing, thinking and reasoning.

### **Ready to Commit**

*"One learns by doing the thing; for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try" – Sophocles*

Stories have become instruments of inspiration and motivation for those who take the time to listen, and it is through the hearing and telling of stories that individuals become connected to one another, and learn valuable lessons about themselves. It is no wonder that storytelling has become a powerful tool that has left a permanent mark on the way we teach and the way we learn. Teachers have been using storytelling for hundreds of years as an instructional tool to teach everything from morals to character building, and as society continues to advance into a digital age, modernizations have been made to transform the art of storytelling so that it does not get left behind in an ever-changing world with ever-changing interests. Teachers are now producing digital stories to help students master content, to engage them in critical discussions, and to get them motivated to learn and explore new topics. Students are likewise using digital storytelling to share their own stories and voices, while at the same time learning to listen to the stories and voices of the world around them. While the research concerning the academic potentials of digital storytelling is still young, there is already a substantial list of positive factors for teachers and administrators to consider. For this reason, the rise of digital storytelling cannot be ignored and it would benefit the academic community to continue meaningful inquiry into such matters.



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**Appendix A**

<b>Examples of Digital Stories</b>	<b>Tools</b>
BBC – Wales <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalstorytelling.shtml">http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalstorytelling.shtml</a>	Apple iLife <a href="http://www.apple.com/ilife/">http://www.apple.com/ilife/</a>
Center for Digital Storytelling <a href="http://www.storycenter.org/stories/">http://www.storycenter.org/stories/</a>	Audacity <a href="http://audacity.sourceforge.net/">http://audacity.sourceforge.net/</a>
Intro into Prewriting <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFLbn_x3ze0">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFLbn_x3ze0</a>	Google Images <a href="http://www.google.com/imghp">http://www.google.com/imghp</a>
<b>General Digital Story Websites</b>	Pachyderm <a href="http://pachyderm.nmc.org/">http://pachyderm.nmc.org/</a>
Center for Digital Storytelling <a href="http://www.storycenter.org/">http://www.storycenter.org/</a>	Paint.NET <a href="http://www.getpaint.net/">http://www.getpaint.net/</a>
Digital Storytelling Tips & Resources <a href="http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI08167B.pdf">http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI08167B.pdf</a>	Primary Access <a href="http://www.primaryaccess.org/">http://www.primaryaccess.org/</a>
Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling <a href="http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/">http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/</a>	Microsoft Photo Story 3 <a href="http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/en/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&amp;DisplayLang=en">http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/en/details.aspx?FamilyID=92755126-a008-49b3-b3f4-6f33852af9c1&amp;DisplayLang=en</a>
Microsoft Digital Storytelling eBook <a href="http://download.microsoft.com/download/D/F/0/DF087781-EDEF-45E1-9FAA-18FE7CD1E7E3/digitalstorytellingebook.pdf">http://download.microsoft.com/download/D/F/0/DF087781-EDEF-45E1-9FAA-18FE7CD1E7E3/digitalstorytellingebook.pdf</a>	Memory Miner <a href="http://www.memoryminer.com/">http://www.memoryminer.com/</a>
	Windows Movie Maker <a href="http://www.microsoft.com/Education/Moviemaker">http://www.microsoft.com/Education/Moviemaker</a>

## Writer's Memo

It didn't take me long to know what topic I wanted to explore for my "Teaching Project". Up until a year ago, I had no idea what digital storytelling was. My brief encounter with it was enough to get me interested, and when I tried my hand at creating a digital story of my own, I was hooked. (An example of my digital story can be found in Appendix A, under "Examples of Digital Stories", titled "Intro into Prewriting".) It appealed to me as a teacher because it had such captivating elements that possessed the potential to enhance students' learning. It also appealed to me as a writer, because it offered me a way to enhance my written voice with both visual and audio appeal. Sadly, once my brief encounter was over, I did not pursue any further inquiry into this genre. So, I was excited that this project gave me the incentive to explore what the experts and practicing teachers had to say about the benefits of digital storytelling.

Okay, so expository writing is not my forte. I discovered that I enjoyed reading what other researchers had to say about digital storytelling, but when it came to writing my own reflections, the powerful arguments for using digital storytelling in the classroom seemed to get lost in translation. I have a tendency to be overly self-conscious when I write because I feel like I am unsuccessful with my wording. I realized that this insecurity led me to use exact quotes more than I should. When I read for revisions between my first and second drafts, I noticed that this not only made me look like a lazy writer, but it took away my personal voice.

Since my overall assessment after reading my first draft was that it was dry and impersonal, and since my intended audience was for a broad range of teachers (spanning from elementary to secondary) who could benefit from a general knowledge of digital storytelling and an explanation of the advantages of adding digital storytelling to their curriculum, my main focus then, for my second draft, was to add voice to my paper while at the same time maintain its scholarship. The first thing I noticed was that I needed to add a bit more flare to my headings to make them more engaging. The quotes were also added to appeal to the readers. I tend to like quotes, and coming from well-known individuals, they often carry with them their own splash of wisdom and incentive. I also added a bit to the content such as an overview and concluding thoughts, which worked to portray my intentions and personal opinions regarding my digital story research. For my third and final draft, I focused on content and syntax, made sure my references were accurate, added/fine-tuned visuals, and made sure my thoughts and voice were portrayed clearly. After I gave myself some time away from my paper, I came back and made revisions the old fashioned way – with a colored pen and a hard-copy. (This helps me to focus better for some reason.) Then, when I exhausted all my ideas, I handed it to my husband for a fresh perspective.

One of the biggest trials of expository writing is summarizing the research in a way that formulates fresh ideas with a personal touch; this was hard for me since I wasn't able to test the research in my own classroom. However, for future teaching purposes, I would add the requirement of students writing about a topic they could actually test or explore directly; this hands-on layer of expository writing will help students form their own opinions and make their writing come alive with their own voice.

In guiding the writing for my future students, I will definitely focus more on audience, especially since this sets the tone for the piece and many students don't think about this aspect unless they are specifically guided. Due to this class, I am sold on the idea that students will produce more conscientious writing if they know their projected audience will reach beyond their teachers and classrooms.

One of the biggest things I learned about expository writing is how important it is to find reliable resources. The expanse of the web makes this a very tricky task for anyone conducting research, but especially for students who may be accustomed to giving credibility to anything that "looks" legitimate on the Internet. For this reason, I would spend some quality time teaching students how to recognize whether a source is credible. I also learned that without my outline, I would have been lost when I sat down to actually begin my first draft. Prewriting is one of the easiest steps to bypass, but it literally is one of the most important steps . . . that and revising – another step that most students want to skip. While I am aware that I need more practice with expository writing, I did learn that writing about digital storytelling gave me a tremendous appreciation for what technology in general can add to the curriculum; this was a reminder to me of how expository writing can increase students' understanding of whatever topic they are discovering . . . and for me, this is key.