

Digital Storytelling in the Content Area

Newfound Schools

click below to view the movie

See It! Hear It! Read It!
Chester Academy EBooks

Kim Bernard, Sherri Dinger, Shawne Hilliard, and Susan Kessler

Chester Academy students in grades 3 and 4 worked independently and collaboratively to create electronic audio and digital books along with traditional (paper) companion books. The books will be distributed to others through the school's library. The production of the electronic books tapped into varied learning styles and multiple intelligences resulting in increased success in literacy while making books and subjects come alive through the use of technology.

The use of digital photo and video cameras, MP3 players and recorders, audio and video editing software, green screen and desktop publishing software all sparked interest and ignited a love of reading and learning! In addition to the digital equipment that we purchased with the grant funds, we also had great support from community resources. We collaborated with Chester College which is a local school specializing in visual and media arts. We had two students who worked with the teachers and our third and fourth graders, teaching them how to use the cameras, edit programs, sound and lighting techniques and more. We look forward to continue working with Chester College in the future. We also had the advantage of working with the Children's Stage Adventure theater group who helped the students to develop their scripts create props, and act out the stories. We highly encourage other schools to endeavor to collaborate with various community resources for this type of project.

It was especially rewarding to integrate technology with so many content areas including, language arts, science, social studies and the arts. We concentrated on the northeast region in the third grade and biographies of famous people in the fourth grade. While the topics differed, the process was similar for all the classes. Because our project can be replicated for virtually any content or subject area, we have listed the steps we took to create the electronic and audio books, but not the prior lessons about the specific content areas. Lessons about a content area of your choice would be the first step towards integrating this content with the creation of the electronic and audio books.

We began by trying to answer our essential question, "What different types of books can you create that will best share your acquired knowledge with others in our learning community and beyond?" After exploring the many different kinds of "traditional" paper books, the students talked about audio and electronic books. Many ideas for electronic books evolved from the discussions! Each third and fourth grade class decided on a topic and format for their electronic book. Once the topic and format was decided, the students began working individually, in small groups, and as a whole class to....

- √ Introduce students to examples of electronic and audio books
- √ Brainstorm a list of "jobs" that will be involved in creating an electronic or audio book. The jobs included writers, authors, illustrators, photographers, videographers, sound technicians, prop people, editors, and stage hands

- √ Complete a job application listing the desired position, their qualifications and why they wanted to do that job
- √ Write an “acceptance letter” to the assigned job, similar to a contract (done by fourth graders)
- √ Research their topic
- √ Use graphic organizers to aid the writing process and plan the steps involved in the project
- √ Write and edit the scripts
- √ Illustrate pages of the both the ebook and traditional companion book
- √ Create backgrounds for the ebook pages
- √ Make or locate props for the ebook
- √ Create costumes for the ebooks
- √ Practice using the equipment including the laptops, digital voice recorders, MP3 players, Flip video cameras, Canon digital video recorders, tripods, digital cameras, green screen, scanner, audio editing programs, desktop publishing programs, paint programs, and video editing programs
- √ Rehearse with and without the video equipment
- √ Film the ebook with either the video camera or the digital camera
- √ Record the sound with the digital voice recorders and/or MP3 players
- √ Download the digital photos, videos, and audio files and save to a folder on the student network
- √ Edit the videos, digital photos, and audio files, and save to a folder on the student network
- √ Create the ebooks with Windows MovieMaker, iMovie, Frames, or Final Cut Express 4, using the edited photos, videos, and audio files
- √ Create traditional companion books using desktop publishing, word processing, hand-drawn illustrations, scanners, digital photographs, and illustrations created with a paint program
- √ Bind the books in various ways

The completed books were presented to the school library for everyone to enjoy. Each classroom also had copies of the books. We look forward to creating more ebooks for our school!

Equipment Used to Create the Electronic and Audio Books

- Video camera – we used Canon ZR800 digital video camera which uses the mini DV tapes. We used those because we could transfer the video to the computer and reuse the tapes. We suggest buying extra tapes and video camera batteries if you can afford them.
- Digital cameras can be used instead of a video camera. We used them for still shots and for small videos.
- Tripod – this is very helpful and was easy for the students to use. We purchased a basic tripod and it worked fine.
- Digital voice recorders and MP3 players – the students used these to practice reading their lines and to record the audio portions of the ebooks. Those audio files were used in conjunction with the video files (sometimes replacing the original audio file).
- Laptops – we purchased 2 MacBooks, 1 for each grade level team (to share between 4 classrooms). We chose the MacBooks for the project because of the creative photo and audio programs (Photo Booth, iMovie, and Garage Band) that are included in the iLife Suite. However, we also used Windows based laptops.
- Projectors – we purchased 2 projectors, one for each grade level team (to share between 4 classrooms) for editing, viewing and sharing with other classrooms.
- Green screen – we purchased a portable green screen that was easy to set up and came in a carrying case. However, you can purchase paint to create a green screen or use green fabric.
- Video editing software – we used Final Cut Express 4 which has the capability to edit chromakey or green screen features. We also used Frames which has chromakey capabilities.
- Audio editing software – we used Garage Band and Audacity. We also used the Sound Recorder that is available on the Windows based computers. It's basic, but worked for simple editing.
- Paint program – students created backgrounds for their ebooks with various paint programs.
- Graphic organizers – students used Kidspiration 2 and Inspiration 8 to plan their ebooks.
- Word processing – students used various word processing programs to write the scripts.
- Scanners – students used scanners to scan illustrations and backgrounds drawn with colored pencils, markers, crayons, etc.
- Batteries – it helps to have many extra batteries. We used Eneloop rechargeable batteries. Our advice is “more batteries are better”.
- Whiteboards, easels and chart paper – we used these during brainstorming sessions to record the students ideas. (We also used the digital voice recorders and MP3 players during these sessions.)

Electronic Books Available Online

Here are some of the many websites that have electronic books.

- Children's Storybooks Online - <http://www.magickeys.com/books/#yc> - this site has many electronic books, however most do not have audio.
- International Children's Digital Library - <http://www.icdlbooks.org> - there are books in many languages at this website.
- Storyline Online - <http://www.storylineonline.net> - children's books read by members of the Screen Actors Guild.
- Between the Lions - <http://pbskids.org/lions> - this site from Public Broadcasting has many resources including stories online, games, free downloads and information for parents and teachers.
- BAB Books: Online Stories and Resources - <http://www.sundhagen.com/babbooks> - this site has many online books and other resources.
- TumbleBook Library - <http://www.tumblebooks.com> - this is a subscription based library and database. There are free trials available.
- Online Children's Stories - <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dKBrown/stories.html> - this site has several links to sources of online stories and books.

Contact Information

If you would like more information about our electronic books, please email one of the following Chester Academy teachers:

Susan Kessler – Technology Integration Specialist – susank@chesteracademy.org

Kim Bernard – Grade 3 – kimb@chesteracademy.org

Sherri Dinger – Grade 4 – sherrid@chesteracademy.org

Shawne Hilliard – Grade 4 – shawneh@chesteracademy.org

Electronic Book Application

Please complete this application by choosing “guests” from the wax museum (8) and a job for yourself. At the end of the application you must answer the questions to explain why you should get the job you chose. It is possible that you will be given a different job than the one you have requested.

On-screen roles:

Scientist _____

Guest #1 _____

Guest #2 _____

Guest #3 _____

Guest #4 _____

Guest #5 _____

Guest #6 _____

Guest #7 _____

Guest #8 _____

Time Machine Creators:

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

Book Publishers:

Writer _____

Writer _____

Illustrator _____

Illustrator _____

Camera Operators:

#1 _____

#2 _____

Audio Recorder _____

Still Photographer _____

What special abilities do you have for the job you are applying for?

What would you do to get ready for this job?

Why did you choose this job?

I agree to do any job I am given to the best of my abilities _____
Please sign

Student Self-evaluation for the E-Book

Please grade yourself on your work during our e-book project. The number next to each line is the most points you can put down for each section. Try to think about how much effort you truly put into each part.

Participation in whole group discussions/brainstorming _____ (20)

Effort on application and acceptance letter _____ (20)

Cooperation during group work _____ (20)

Staying on task during group/individual work _____ (20)

Completion of role/task for e-book _____ (20)

Student's Name _____

Total points (add all the points you wrote down) _____

Do you think this grade reflects your work on the e-book? Why or why not?