



Exploring Digital Solutions

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Included in this presentation:

- what type of technology I have chosen and why
- benefits to instruction
- key technical considerations for integration
- Two potential tools
- Criteria used to evaluate the technology

Focus on asynchronous technology integration

Asynchronous technology, such as blogs, videos, messaging apps or e-mail, allow teachers and students to engage when and where they are able, outside of the classroom and school. Students are able to exercise more agency over their education and find what works best for them.

Due to the nature of the Senior Humanities (Social Justice, Genocide Studies, Comparative Cultures, Comparative Religions) within my secondary school, there is not always a full contingent of students within any one course. This means that students are often being taught 'off the side of the desk' and are expected to be motivated and independent learners. While expected, this is not always the case and engagement can wane. It is hoped with the introduction of a more asynchronous way of learning, engagement will be more sustainable and enriching.

My focus is on fostering student engagement within the Social Justice curriculum. The most substantial problem I have found with the current Social Justice course is "some students have thrived within the loose structure, while others have floundered, needing more rigidity ", as stated in my [Problem Identification](#) post. An asynchronous approach could be tailored to the individual learner, rather than a group, hopefully encouraging the student 'buy-in'. Such an approach would also students to have more say in how they complete the course, if that is what they need to succeed.

Benefits of asynchronous technology

Benefits for students

- able to work at own pace
- accessible from any device
- able to be edited
- organized portfolio

Benefits for facilitators

- portfolio format allows for holistic marking
- accessible from any device
- timely feedback
- course and material can be easily edited

Key technical considerations

In order for asynchronous learning to be successful, some of the considerations that must be made before integration include: access to reliable and sustainable internet, access to technology, digital literacy and engagement

→ If a learner is away from school, it is unjust to assume that they have access to reliable internet at home. Data costs must be considered, especially when it comes to video or other content that is bandwidth heavy.

→ Learners do not always have access to compatible technology for schooling. There may only be a small amount of time that they do and this means that they have limitations that they must work within. Expectations of educational time need to be flexible in these cases.

→ Digital literacy pertaining to the technology and its usage may need to be pre-taught before actual integration can occur. Students need to be provided with the guidelines for using the technology. A period of trial and error can be included as course material.

→ Student engagement can be encouraged by providing options in how understanding is shown. The limitations on creativity are limited by the student themselves rather than the material or the medium.

Potential tools



Sway, as demonstrated in this presentation, provides students with agency over how they wish to present information: blog, slides or resume; to name a few. It is included in the Office 365 Suite which has been adopted by many school districts. Each student is provided with a unique login and password and can be accessed from any device, provided it is connected to the internet. Students can submit assignments through TEAMS or share a link. Facilitators are able to access student work, should there be a problem, through their own accounts.



Instagram is a messaging and picture/video sharing app that can provide students with a way to asynchronously interact with facilitators and past or current classmates. Progress comments or images can be posted and accessed at any time on any device. Students are able to network within and without the course material, allowing them to discover their interests. This app is fully mobile and is accessed through a unique username and password. Permissions can be set as high or low as desired. Posts, likes or shares are saved on the user's profile, which creates a portfolio of sorts.

Criteria

- ⊗What are the likely demographics of the students?
- ⊗Is the technology appropriate for these students?
- ⊗How reliable is the technology?
- ⊗Can the changes be handed over to someone else to do, and/or how essential is it for me to do them myself?

Adapted from: Bates, A. W. (2015). Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning. Vancouver, BC: Tony Bates Associates. ISBN-13: 978-0-9952692-1-7

Summary

SWAY satisfies all of the criteria, so long as it is within my current school district, as the accounts are tied specifically to it. Any facilitator has access to both it and student files. Provided that there is stable internet access, the technology is very reliable and stable. Many of the students that would be using this application have used it before in their earlier computer courses within the district. If a student does not have the background literacy to use the program, there is good information online and questions could be asked within TEAMS.

Instagram, being that it is a program outside of the district umbrella is less clear cut. While the accessibility is extensive, it can be accessed via data if wifi is not available, student information is less protected. Student awareness of their digital footprint and how to guard their personal information will need to be taught if it has not already been done so. An added advantage to using this app is that it is not tied to a school district account, so students can continue accessing their content after they leave the district. If the facilitator account is general rather than personal, changes in personnel would not pose a problem.

References

Bates, A. W. (2015). Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning. Vancouver, BC: Tony Bates Associates. ISBN-13: 978-0-9952692-1-7

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