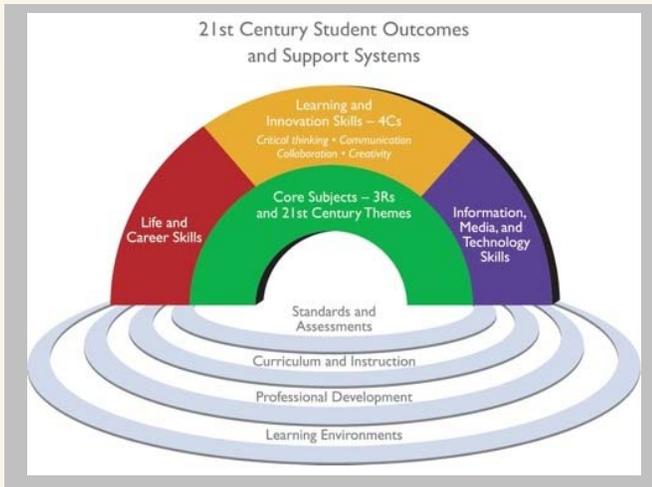


DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN CLASSROOMS

ENHANCING LITERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING

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OVERVIEW

The theoretical framework and key concepts explored in this research include teacher-as-researcher, TPACK, new literacies and multiliteracies, 21st century learning, and the affordances of digital technologies and resources for literacy teaching and learning.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The central question posed in this research is, “What is the impact of digital technologies for pedagogy and literacy learning?” Teacher-researchers investigate the affordances of digital technologies for literacy teaching and learning, particularly 21st century learning recently emphasized within their school district. Teacher-researchers reflect on their practices and students’ literacy learning as they make use of digital technologies and Internet resources for multiliteracies design activities in their classrooms.

IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The importance of this research lies not only in the ubiquity of technology in the lives of students outside schools, but also how schools might adequately prepare them to live and work in a world dominated by networked spaces. While evidence shows that students do spend considerable time on the Internet (Lenhart, 2009) they may not be as technologically savvy as we might wish them to be; educators can find great need for “modeling and teaching the safe, effective, and ethical use of all the Internet has to offer” (Richardson, 2009, p. ix), including digital resources like Kidblog, Ning, and Photostory. In addition, teachers encourage new forms of writing and representing - design in multiliteracies terms (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), encouraging meaning-making through combinations of words, image, sound, gesture, and special conception. As researchers, they observe students’ composing strategies in conventional and new/digital literacy contexts. Additionally, teachers, as part of their own professional learning, are examining their current pedagogies and acquainting themselves with the possibilities of digital technologies and networked spaces for learning and, as researchers, in unpacking the processes and constructing knowledge to share with colleagues. They are creating local “knowledge of practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

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FINDINGS

This research, ongoing over three years in various schools and classrooms, has revealed much about the teaching and learning possibilities of various Internet and digital tools and resources. Drawing on observations, interviews and survey data, Deborah Toope (program specialist and researcher) and Roberta Hammett (MUN professor and researcher) use TPACK as a framework for thinking about teacher learning and reflect on the relationships and intersections among pedagogical knowledge, technological knowledge, and content knowledge.

Krista Lynch experienced the benefits using digital storytelling in a primary classroom. Her findings show that as students created digital stories they used technologies to combine audio, music, images and print to communicate their ideas effectively. She found that students' literacy learning is enhanced when they have opportunities to collaborate, create and produce texts using digital tools.

Luanne Langdon used Kidblog, Photostory and Microsoft Powerpoint with grade 5 students to observe how their affordances encourage inventive thinking and creativity, interactive communication, social and personal skills, productivity and accountability, as well as the knowledge of core subjects, and the attainment of curriculum outcomes.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills
A framework for 21st Century Learning.
<http://www.p21.org/>

Heather Chaulk used blogging, wikis and other digital resources to engage grade 5 students in writing and representing for different audiences and purposes. She found that students' literacies are enhanced through collaboration, creativity and combining various modes of communication to produce multimodal texts. She also found that interacting through blogging can prepare students for their futures as productive digital citizens.

Using a Ning (a private social networking site) with ninth graders, Edwina Mills was struck by the flood of written expression as well as opportunities for identity awareness and even construction of self online. Students responded to novels, visuals, famous quotes, and videos; chose avatars that changed constantly depending on the mood and the moment; and designed pages uniquely reflective of their tastes. Students used the network on their own time, writing on topics of their own choosing. Among her findings as she analyzed their postings in her research, Mills noted how the power of the written word became clear to her and to the students.

Hammett, R. F. (2011). Digital technologies, new literacies, and 21st century skills. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education, Informatics, and Cybernetics and the International Symposium on Integrating Research, Education, and Problem Solving* (pp. 28-33). N. Callos, Chu, H-W., Horne, J. & Welsch, F. (Eds.). Orlando, FL, November 29-December 2, 2011.

<http://www.mun.ca/educ/people/hammett/icEIC2011Hammett.pdf>

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