Flippin' Out

This article showcases the Flip Video camcorder in an educational environment. This tiny camcorder is relatively inexpensive, which is a benefit for school districts, and it is easy to use. A signature feature is its pop out USB arm which allows the user to easily transfer his or her video to a computer. Because of the ease of use, elementary students can benefit from the Flip; it's not just for upper grades.

One way the Flip is being used in education is for collaborative projects. Students team up, conduct research on a given topic, supplement video with music and more, film a video, edit and make a movie. I love the "Animal Adventures" project idea from this article. This project helps students develop research skills, communication skills, reading and writing skills and more.

Secondly, a teacher, while traveling through the Middle East, documented short interviews with people that he met using his Flip. He then used those interviews to show to his class and then engaged them in a project to examine themselves deeper through the process of interviews and documentation with the Flip. This experience allowed students to experience another culture and then to also reflect on themselves at a turning point in their life. These students were seniors in high school. This application could easily be used in an elementary school quite easily.

Third, a high school uses the Flip to produce an in-house TV series that highlights events in the school. The holiday episode highlighted the various ways students observe the holidays. I see this as a great learning tool, students gain insight into other cultures, acceptance and

awareness and appreciation for the differences within each other. This could be a great tool for bullying prevention and teaching overall acceptance and kindness.

This article addressed the benefits of using video in the classroom. Creating videos, editing them and personalizing them is cool and it speaks to this generation of learners. Students will be more engaged doing a video project than making a poster for a presentation. I believe that creating a video also incorporates Gardner's multiple intelligences, allowing artistic expression. It may help the shy child who doesn't want to speak in front of the class; he can express himself on video, which will be viewed by the class. A student that is musically gifted can showcase that talent in the making of a video. The benefits as they relate to Gardner's Theories could go on, the bottom line is more students have a chance to shine and become more engaged and therefore learn and retain more from the project. The skills that are learned from the examples highlighted above will be beneficial to students from elementary school into adulthood.

Making the Most of a Teaching Partner

Making the Most of a Teaching Partner, by Boni Hamilton, aims to guide classroom teachers toward using the computers in their classrooms as a teaching partner. This article focuses on websites that take a constructivism approach to learning. A language arts curriculum would greatly benefit from the following websites. Students will be guided through websites that allow them to construct their own knowledge, and to move at their own pace with sites that are specific to their level and need.

First Into the Book can be accessed at www.reading.ecb.org/index.html. This site supports reading and comprehension strategies. The teacher section provides teachers with guides, student and teacher videos, lesson plans, teaching tips, student book suggestions, website suggestions and related research. The best part is that registration is not required to access this information. The "Kids" section allows students to further explore a strategy, either directed by their teacher or by following their personal interest. Students practice the strategy in an interactive session, they view a video, and an independent activity is also provided in this section. Depending upon the number of computers at your disposal and teacher preference, this site can be used in several ways: whole group instruction with follow up activities, pairs working together on a computer, or individuals each having their own station (via computer lab).

The second site referenced was www.learner.org/interactives/story/index.html. This site is home to an Interactive Cinderella Story, which aims to educate students about narrative texts. By understanding the structure of texts, i.e. the elements of a story such as setting and

character, student comprehension will improve. This site engages students through ordering events, choosing settings and characters and more. Students can print their results following a checking for understanding quiz at the end. Student work cannot be saved at this site, nor do they register at this site, they do however work independently.

Silly Books, www.sillybooks.net, is geared toward increasing student experiences with stories via online. Online stories contain motivational factors for students. The animated books and songs at this site are free of advertisements and they also offer some Spanish language stories in addition to voice-print match. This site also supports writing contests. If your classroom is limited with the number of computers available, this article suggests using a Y-adaptor and pair students, two per computer. Pairing students has benefits to learning, such as social experiences, engagement and learning.

Starfall, www.starfall.com, addresses pre-reading to beginner reading. Activities on this website are for independent use, they can be differentiated for student ability. This site helps with fluency skills through online supplemental practice experiences. This site also provides teachers with supplemental resources, reproducibles to use in conjunction or independent of this site.

Classroom Book Talk Wiki, www.classroombooktalk.wikispaces.com , is a more advanced site than those previously mentioned. This site requires the teacher as well as students to have prior knowledge of presentation software or multimedia tool. Wiki spaces offer free wikis for school use; they also have a responsive staff, according to the article. Book talks are a great tool to get students interested in reading a book. A teacher or student giving a

book talk provides just enough enticing information to hook someone and leave them wanting more, this site encourages students to do this by using multimedia tools. I first learned of book talks in a children's literature class at MU, it really works. I did not consider using technology to transform this basic idea. Since these online book talks are accessible by others, it raises the bar for students to create for a real audience.

This article shows potential teachers how to utilize the classroom computers for Language Arts. By utilizing these sites as a teaching partner, the teacher is then "free" to work with another small group of students with different reading needs. I think it's a great tool. These sites include students from preschool to fifth grade, so all elementary grades would benefit.

Through the Bugscope

In a nutshell, Bugscope is a teaching tool that allows students to truly experience insects. This tool is provided by The Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign. At UIUC, an electron microscope scans insect samples submitted by teachers. The samples may be dead insects collected from a window sill in the classroom, or perhaps from a museum that is eliminating part of an exhibit or expired samples. The samples are prepared at UIUC prior to scanning them. An internet connection is then established with help from computer experts at UIUC, the images are then projected onto a large screen for students to view, all the while remaining in their school setting. During the viewing of the magnified bug samples, computer experts and entomologists are on hand to answer questions and provide assistance. The entire process seems relatively easy, almost too good to be true. The objectives of this project are exciting and positive. Students and teachers alike will be given an opportunity to experience insects on an amazing level or detail. Prior to the viewing, students can prepare for the "field trip" by reading trade books, researching insects, and observing and caring for a real insect, such as a meal worm. All of these learning experiences prepare the students to ask specific questions, to make observations and to make a connection with what they have studied to what they are seeing.

Technology-Based Classroom Assessments: Alternatives to Testing

This article addressed several technology-based resources and strategies that can be used to assess students. These alternatives can helpful in monitoring the learning that is taking place, both positive and negative, as well grading that would take place with summative assessment. Furthermore, technology based assessments can also assist in creating alternative assessments for students that do not participate in testing programs because of their disabilities. Some of the technology based assessment tools addressed were: active responding systems (clickers), digital observations & diaries, technology based educational games, web quests, digital portfolios, presentation software, creating web pages/site, blogs and many more. Throughout this article the reader is directed to websites for further reference and support.

This article cautions the reader to continually evaluate and perhaps modify how they use technology-based assessment activities so that they are meeting their goals. This can be done by evaluating one's students learning via mastery and grades. Teachers must also consider the availability of the technology he/she wishes to utilize to his/her students. Using these alternatives can be very motivating to students and helpful in developing many skills. The same alternatives can provide teachers with the tools to be more effective in their teaching as well as in sharing information with peers, administrators and parents. Proceeding with technology-based alternatives should be done slowly, all the while teaching students about responsible use, safety, and good digital citizenship.

Using Computer Graphic Representations to Promote Learning in Elementary Science Courses

This article addressed the benefits of using students' mental images and drawings for assessing prior knowledge of science concepts as well as mastery of concepts. The first technique is talking drawings, which entails students creating visual images of the concept or topic the teacher is going to address. Students then share their drawings, during this time the teacher gains insight into prior knowledge and then use this tool to aid her instruction.

A second application for using drawings in the classroom is to improve the observation process. During this activity, students work in pairs; one student describes what he or she sees and the second student creates a drawing based on what he or she hears. The article goes on to address why drawings are helpful in the learning process as well as the skills students rely on during this exercise.

The use of technology enters the equation when computers are used as a teaching tool. It is believed that by creating mental images and visualizing scientific processes, students can acquire knowledge and master the scientific concept. Furthermore, students can transform their mental images into computer generated images using software such as Microsoft Paint.

The remainder of the article is basically a lesson plan designed for students to gain experience with researching a weather phenomenon, reporting their findings in Microsoft Word and creating a computer generated visual image pertaining to the weather phenomenon they choose. In doing so, the teacher now has two ways to assess his or her students understanding of the concept.

While this article was light on the technology aspect, I still found it helpful. I had never considered using pictures to assess prior knowledge, especially in science class. It is my understanding that science curriculums are relatively new in elementary schools. Because of this, I feel this is a worthwhile article for teachers who are struggling with this subject. I think using mental images, whether computer generated or with pencils and crayons, is a worthwhile technique in science and in other subjects. I think students will enjoy this tool and great success could follow.