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Internet Integration: The Pros and Cons

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Internet Integration

  Lessons using the Internet are becoming more and more common in the classroom; however, there are pros and cons to integrating the Internet into lessons. Educators can face a variety of challenges in integrating technology that have to be balanced with the benefits (Cowan, 2008). Teachers need to keep the pros and cons in mind when planning to integrate technology in general, and the Internet in particular.

One disadvantage is the curriculum itself. Many times teachers are constrained and have to follow a set curriculum and stay on pace. Teachers are often required to follow a particular lesson and are constrained when using their creativity in integrating the Internet. Integrating the Internet can take extra time, which is also a con. Often times, teachers have to look at the lessons they create or lessons that they have been given to implement and find ways to include technology or the Internet.

In a modified lesson plan from my district that I am required to teach (PGCPS, 2010), I integrated a small Internet research project for students to complete (Attachment A). I teach reading/language arts and this lesson is a reading strategy lesson. Students are to think about their background knowledge and merge it with new information to make meaning of the text. The lesson focuses on nonfiction text. The modified lesson asks students to extend their learning by researching various aspects of a natural disaster and create a presentation on it.

A pro of using the Internet in this lesson is that students are to construct their own meaning and answer their own questions based on the research that they do. Instead of asking the teacher for the answers to their questions, they can gain confidence in knowing that they can find the information they need themselves. In this lesson, students also have the advantage of working with others so that they can clarify their thinking through talking with others.

Another pro of using the Internet is that teachers can search and preview the websites that the students use for their research. This ensures that the information that students find is accurate and relevant. For this lesson, I was able to find specific websites that addressed Hurricane Katrina and storms more generally (PGCPS, 2010). When using the Internet, there is generally a wealth of information that is available for students to use. It is important to preview them so that students get the information that will help them the most. A con in doing this is that sometimes the sites are blocked at the schoolhouse because of filtering software. A way to work around this disadvantage is to have several sites that students can use and to also try the sites at the schoolhouse before actually implementing the lesson.

When integrating the Internet into lessons, one has to keep in mind the equipment that is available. A disadvantage of increasing Internet dependence in lessons is that there is not always enough equipment available for use when you want to use it. There are three student computers in my classroom and we have a standing schedule to go to the computer lab for 35 minutes each week. When planning lessons, this has to be taken into account. For this particular lesson, students are working in groups so each group would have computer access for half of the class and then the groups would switch.

Integrating the Internet into the curriculum can be challenging because of the disadvantages that come with it. However, with a lot of preplanning, the challenges can be met. With meeting these challenges, students will have a more enriching experience as they learn new material. They will also have a more relevant or real-world way to show what they have learned.

References

Cowan, J.E. (2008). Strategies for planning technology-enhanced learning experiences. *Clearing*

 *House* 82(2), 55-59.

Prince George’s County Public Schools (2010). *Curriculum framework progress guide.* Board of Education of Prince George’s County, 85-88.

Attachment A

**READING STRATEGY LESSON** Grade 8

**IDENTIFY STRATEGY:** Activate and Connect: Merge Your Thinking with New Learning

**IDENTIFY READING SKILL:** Activate and Connect: Merge Your Thinking with New Learning

**MATCH STRATEGY WITH TEXT:** “On Deadly Ground: Storm Surge, pp. 12-13, Toolkit Texts, Selected by Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis; “Tornado”, pp.14-15, Toolkit Texts.

<http://sites.google.com/a/pgcps.org/pgcps-rela/unit-1-resources>

**STRATEGY LESSON OBJECTIVE**

Students will activate background knowledge in order to connect it with and merge their understanding with new learning in non-fiction text.

**CONNECT AND ENGAGE**

Today, we are going to be continuing our exploration of the genre of nonfiction. We usually read nonfiction if we want to learn about something of interest to us. Writers of nonfiction try to explain new ideas to others, inform us about a topic, or teach us how to do something.

Do you have any favorite nonfiction books or writers that you like? Turn and talk to your partner about some of your favorite nonfiction books- or topics that you really like to learn about. (Allow 1-2 minutes for students to share with each other; the students may talk about the nonfiction reading that they have done earlier in the week from the literature text also.)

To understand and remember new learning, we need to merge our thinking with the new information we encounter in the texts. Do you know what it means to merge? We combine our thinking with the words and ideas in the text to understand, to learn, and to remember new information. We do not just memorize the information, but try to join our thinking with the new thoughts so that we can add the new information to our knowledge base so that we can actually use what we have learned from our reading. Let’s try it out text for today, “On Deadly Ground; Storm Surge.”

Before I can get into the text, I am going to use the text features that I notice to help me think about what I know about our topic. Wow! The first thing I see is the title- “On Deadly Ground: Storm Surge”. I know that a storm usually means rain, thunder, lightening, and wind. I am not sure what a surge is but I will see if I can find out in the article. I also know the word deadly means dangerous, or fatal, so maybe a storm surge causes a lot of damage. I think I need to remember what I know to help me later, so I am going to make a chart for myself to keep track of my thoughts. Since I will be merging what I know with what I will learn, I will make two columns on my chart.

[Teacher begins two-column Anchor Chart: “What I Know” on left column; “What I Learned” on right column. This sample has some of the ideas from the “connect/engage” and the I DO think aloud below.

Put up a blank template and write in ideas as they are addressed. Feel free to model with sticky notes, or use a computer to type in ideas on a template and to change or modify the model with your own ideas and connections.

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| --- | --- |
| What I Know | What I Learned |
| Storm: Thunder/ lightening; rain and windDeadly means dangerous or fatalHurricanes- high winds, floodsKatrina- victims, flooded streets | New Orleans is 6 feet below sea level90,000 square miles = United Kingdom; wholearea was federal disaster areaKatrina is the most destructive storm ever foreconomic loss/ 10th worst because of deathtoll |

I also see that there is a picture of a hurricane and one of dead fish in floodwaters, I also notice that there is a scale for hurricanes that is based on wind speed and storm surge. I know that hurricanes are very powerful storms and that they produce high winds and floods. I also see the boldfaced heading that talks about Hurricane Katrina and I remember seeing pictures of flooded out streets and stranded victims. Hand out 2-column chart or asks students to make a chart of their own.

I’d like you to talk with your partners for a minute and add any other information you already know about storm surges/Hurricane Katrina to the left side of your chart. Any information about what they are or what people did in the disaster…anything you know can go in that left column under “What I Know.”

Teacher should then have 1-2 students share out ideas and add them to the group chart that is being used as an anchor chart model.

**I DO - Modeling**

It looks like we all know at least a few things about storms and hurricanes to start us off. Now, when we read, we will be looking for information that we don’t already know…information we are learning. Any information we learn we should put on the right side of our chart.

Let me show you how we can do this. [Teacher reads first quote and paragraph on p. 12: “In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into Florida…, sea level.”] Wow! I see that the hurricane hit coastal regions. I did not realize that this is where most of the damage occurred and that New Orleans was the worst. I did not know that it lies six feet below sea level! This is new information for me, so I am going to add it to my “What I Learned” column. [Teacher adds” ] I’m going to keep reading. [Teacher continues reading on p. 12: “Storm-driven waters rushed…, Katrina the 10th worst natural disaster to affect our nation.”] I am starting to see that when I notice some new information as I read that I find myself thinking: “I never knew that” or I can’t believe that”; so maybe noticing this as I read will help me with figuring out what is new learning for me. For example, I never knew that 90,000 square miles is equivalent to the size of the whole United Kingdom and that all of that part of the United States was declared a federal disaster area. It helped me to connect the number of miles to another country to get a perspective on how big this was. I was surprised to learn that Katrina is the most destructive storm ever in terms of economic loss but not the worst for death toll (Galveston is the worst one.) It is the 10th worst!

Let’s keep reading. [Teacher reads Flood of Horror section, p.12.] I didn’t know what a storm surge was! I see that it is a “hideous bulge of water-often 15 feet high and 50 miles wide- that forms directly beneath a hurricane’s center, or eye (an area of extremely low air pressure).” I am definitely adding this to my new information/learned column. I also liked how the author gave me an example of how this works by using the idea of a straw and a bowl of water.

**WE DO – Guided Practice**

Okay, let’s try one together! I am going to continue reading about the storm surge on p. 12- A Recipe for Disaster. This time, as I read, you should jot down any new information that you are learning on the right side of your chart. [Teacher reads A Recipe for Disaster on p. 12: “When Katrina made landfall…, where it causes massive destruction.”] What new information could you add to your charts? [Teacher picks one/two students to share new information and how it connects with their background knowledge. Students may address the 15-foot dome of water that formed in the Gulf of Mexico beneath the hurricane that was pushed forward by 140 mile-per-hour winds; winds pushing the wall of water, canal fail, and the 30 ft wave that hits the Mississippi coast, or any other appropriate response. Teacher may use any of these suggestions to model again with students if needed.] Before we try one on our own, let’s do one more section together. I will read the section with the bold-faced heading “The Human Disaster”; continue to chart new information that you are learning on your own response logs.

[Teacher reads “The Human Disaster”, p.13]

What are some of the new things you learned in this section? Did the boldfaced subheading give you a clue about this portion of the article? [Teacher has different partners share their ideas. Students may identify the word irony and note that they had to use the text box at the bottom of the last column on p. 13 to find out the meaning. This is a good sample of both learning and adding to one’s background knowledge, as well as using a text feature and vocabulary development. If none of the students address this example, the teacher may want to model with it.]

**YOU DO** – Collaborative or Independent Practice

With your partners I would like you to continue reading the rest of this article and then I want you to try this strategy with “Tornado” on pp.14-15. Be sure to note any new and interesting information you are learning and try to make connections between the learned information and your background knowledge. You might see links between the two articles- the one we just read on hurricanes and the one on tornados- because they are both about dangerous weather events! [Teacher allows student pairs or small groups of 3-4 to work together and complete reading of text; circulates room to facilitate discussion]

**DAY 2**

**ASSESSMENT:** Students will be in groups of five. Each group will research an aspect of hurricane disasters in the United States. Students will have 30 minutes to research their topic. Students will create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation to share their new knowledge with the class. During the research, students will have the opportunity to merge their thinking with the new knowledge they gain.

Group 1 will research FEMA using <http://www.fema.gov/kids/index.htm>

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Group 2 will research characteristics of hurricanes using <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngkids/0308/hurricane/>

Group 3 will research the aftermath of hurricane Katrina using <http://www.scholastic.com/news>

Group 4 will research the worst floods in the United States and what caused them using <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/2003/circ1245>.

Group 5 will research safety responses to a flood or hurricane using <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/crisis-intervention/hurricane/34246.html>

Group 6 will research how hurricanes get their names using <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4268588.stm>

<http://www.tramline.com/tours/sci/hurricane/_tourlaunch2.htm>

**CLOSING**

Students will share what they have learned with the class and the class will add new information they learned to their chart.

Now that we’ve listened to all of the presentations, I’d like you to write a response in your notebook. Spend a few minutes writing something you learned about the content. You can write down something you already knew, something you still wonder about, or a reaction of some sort. Try to include something about the bigger ideas from the research that was done.