Engage

+ join a discussion
+ write a blog post
+ share a resource

Search the site   Search

International Reading Association

Help | Login | Logout | JOIN

Homepages ▾ My Profile ▾ Community ▾ Resources ▾ Discussions ▾ Events ▾ Blogs ▾ Main Website
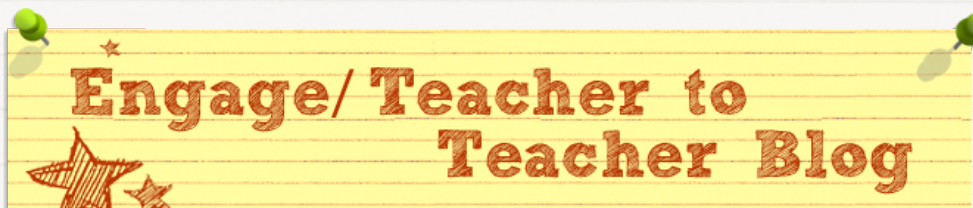
Home >   Blog Viewer

Blog Viewer

+ Add a New Blog

My Blog | My Contacts | Most Recent | Top Rated | Most Read | UnPublished

Plugged In: Julie D. Ramsay Starts with a Sip

1 Rating
⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
Your Rating
☆☆☆☆☆

View Profile
Add Contact
Blog This
Contact Author

1   Ratings
0   Comments
1067   Views

Engage/Teacher to Teacher Blog

Plugged In

Taking a Sip
By Julie D. Ramsay

In today's world, the topic of using technology in the classroom can be intimidating. In this monthly column, join one teacher on a quest to discover the best way to meet the needs of her digital-age learners…moving beyond the technology tools to focusing on supporting each student's learning.

Where Do We Begin? Taking a Sip from an Open Fire Hydrant

When you mention "technology in the classroom," usually one of several responses is elicited. You have those educators who get excited about the new possibilities and you have those who cringe and leave the conversation as quickly as possible.

Embedding technology into our classroom environment can often feel like trying to get a small sip from an open fire hydrant. It's very easy to get sprayed in the face or knocked to the ground, leaving us vowing to never try taking a sip again.

The world of technology is ever-changing. There is such a mass quantity of tools and apps available, where does one actually start? Better yet, why would someone want to start? Don't tried-and-true teaching methods still work? Isn't good teaching still good teaching?

I think the example of my young niece will illustrate this very well. At the age of two, Annalise was already able to play and strategize with Angry Birds. Now, she regularly sends me text messages with photos, knows how to pull up her favorite Sesame Street YouTube videos. When we get together, she will usually ask to see my iPhone to create music, draw, or listen to songs that inspire a dance routine. When her dad was doing mission work in Norway, she even learned how to use Skype.

Did I mention that Annalise hasn't entered kindergarten yet?

Students entering our classrooms today are very tech-savvy. They have no fear in trying new things that involve technology because their daily lives are engulfed in this digital world. Are we giving them the best education if we

ignore this aspect of their lives? Absolutely not. Good teaching looks at what best meets the needs of each learner. The world, and our audience, is changing and so must we.

So, where do you begin? For me, I started by searching for simple tools that could support work in which my students were already engaged. Since I teach in a Title I school, I had to keep in mind that many of my learners don't have access to technology at home. And since our school was in the midst of a reading initiative to encourage a love of reading, we were strongly encouraged to have students engage in meaningful activities with literature.

photo credit: **Perry McKenna** via **photo pin** cc

I knew that my readers needed to move beyond just telling about a book to actually connecting and analyzing it. In my classroom, I let my students have choice in the types of projects they publish. They must always be able to explain how a project, whether it's digital or not, will support their learning and the learning of others.

One of the book projects that my students created was scanner collage book reports. In this project, the students would choose 15 or more three-dimensional objects that represented key parts of the story. They would compose a piece that would explain the relevance of each item to the book. All of the three-dimensional items were put face down onto a flatbed scanner and scanned. Usually, we would print these to display for their classroom peers and we posted them online for their friends, family, and the students in other classes from around the world to see. (**See some examples here**.) Once they started playing with these, the learners began creating them without the book title included so that their peers could try to figure out the mystery book.

My learners began creating other ways to use this technology project to support their learning, including making a digital quilt where each student created one block to a science themed "I Spy." Once, when the scanner wasn't working, they arranged everything on their desk and took a digital photo of their collage instead.

Another simple project in which my students engaged was making their own READ posters that were inspired by American Library Association's posters with celebrities. (**See examples here**.) These projects required the students to really think about the point of view of one of the characters to retell the story. The students dressed up like one of the characters and had a peer take a digital photo of them. One struggling reader said, "Mrs. Ramsay, I wish we could have a book character parade every day. I've got a book I'd love to read and share with everyone." Did the tool inspire her? No, it was the learning in which she had been engaged.

As peers in class and online began to see their scanner collages and READ posters, it spurred much discussion about literature. It led to my students finding new authors and reading everything that they had written. They became avid readers.

Are either one of these two projects "cutting edge?" No, they are not. However, they were an easy transition from what I was already doing in class to what my students craved….a digital medium to create their projects.

See, what I realized is that it's not really about the specific tools. It's really about meeting students where they are on their learning journey. You don't have to be a technology expert—you just have to realize that these are tools to support their learning.

Often our students have an understanding of what they need to learn. All we need to do is listen and plug into what they need most to support their learning.

Put the tools into their hands, guide them in making good choices (you are the content specialist and strategist) and you'll discover that the fire hydrant won't be knocking you over any more.

Julie D. Ramsay is a Nationally Board Certified educator and the author of "CAN WE SKIP LUNCH AND KEEP WRITING?": COLLABORATING IN CLASS & ONLINE, GRADES 3-8 (Stenhouse, 2011). She travels the country to speak, present, and facilitate workshops in applying technology to support authentic learning. Read her blog at **juliedramsay.blogspot.com***.*

Created By: Teacher to Teacher, IRA On: Tue, Jun 26, 2012 12:03 PM

Related Resources

No Related Resource entered.

Comments

No Comments submitted.

PermaLink

Copy and paste the link below into other web pages, documents, or email messages to allow immediate, permanent access to this page. Security settings will remain in place and login will be necessary for protected content.
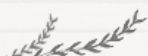
http://engage.reading.org/READING/Go.aspx?c=BlogViewer&BlogKey=3216c2b6-1631-4a36-9b23-ead7a569a6af

You must **login** as a member to comment on blog posts, if you are not a member **join**!

Tag

Tags/Keywords:
Topic : **Digital and media literacies**, **Plugged In**

Visit the Main Website

International Reading Association
The World's Leading Organization of Literacy Professionals

www.READING.org