

Producing a Daily News Broadcast: A Cross-Curricular Activity

Teacher: Lisa Carlon

School: Cedar Ridge Elementary

City, State: Branson, Missouri

Curriculum Area: Cross-Curricular

Grade Level: 6

Video Number: 016moms

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this project is to provide students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with different aspects of technology. In addition, this project serves as a supplement to the curriculum of all classroom subject areas.

DESCRIPTION:

The students in my sixth-grade classroom produce a daily news broadcast that airs to their entire school. The process of creating a daily newscast entails many responsibilities that cover a broad range of topic areas. In addition to strengthening curricular skills, this program also utilizes teamwork and individual responsibility to get the job done. Life skills necessary to everyone are practiced daily.

The students write scripts for the show and also write proposals for special features to be aired on the broadcast. Script writing, proposal writing, interview writing, feature writing, and many other examples are all unique forms of writing that emphasize a variety of skills.

Once the writing is completed, the students must organize the necessary components of the newscast. They use the Internet to find information such as daily weather forecasts. They create graphics using PowerPoint slides to illustrate daily lunch menus and birthdays. They videotape one another reporting the news at their news desk. They organize and hold contests and other events to promote interest around the school.

After the taping of all above components is completed, students must edit the final product. They work with a video editing system each day in the classroom to produce a final product of which they can be proud.

ACTIVITIES:

(Note: This is a unit plan that may cover several days to several weeks. Not all of the following activities/standards will appear in the video clips used.)

Procedures:	Curriculum Standards from http://www.intime.uni.edu/model/content/cont.html :	National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) Performance Indicators from http://cnets.iste.org/profiles.htm :
<p>Research Students must use a variety of sources to research and gather information for the newscast. Weather reports and other items are found on the Internet. Special features and reports are researched wherever appropriate for the topic. For example, on Columbus Day, students may produce a special report on the history of the holiday and research in the library, encyclopedia, or Internet to find the information they need.</p>	<p>English Language Arts: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12</p>	<p>Grades 3 - 5: 1 - 10</p> <p>Grades 6 - 8: 1 - 10</p>
<p>Writing Using the research information they have gathered, students write reports and scripts for use with the newscast. While their research may be extensive, their reports must be brief and concise.</p>	<p>English Language Arts: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11</p>	<p>Grades 3 - 5: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10</p> <p>Grades 6 - 8: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10</p>
<p>Proofing and Revision Students are responsible for creating, proofing, and editing their work before taping it for the broadcast.</p>	<p>English Language Arts: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12</p>	<p>Grades 3 - 5: 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9</p> <p>Grades 6 - 8: 1 - 10</p>

Filming, reporting, editing, and broadcasting Students work cooperatively to film the newscast, edit the varied components together and critique the final product.	English Language Arts: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	Grades 3 - 5: 1 - 10 Grades 6 - 8: 1 - 10
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TOOLS & RESOURCES:

When this project began, our equipment included a single computer with an Internet connection, a printer, a scan converter (which converts a computer signal to a signal the television can interpret), two VCR's, a television, and a video camera. During the three years we have worked on this project, we have added equipment that has greatly reduced the amount of time we spend on the project each day and has increased the quality and variety of our daily broadcast. Our equipment now includes two computers with Internet connections, a printer, a scan converter, a VCR, a video editing system, a television, a video camera, and a digital camera.

ASSESSMENT:

Because no grades are given for this project, there are no rubrics or formal assessments. Informal evaluation is ongoing as the students learn different aspects of technology, communication, and cooperative skills through the school year. This informal assessment is conducted simply by observing what the students are able to accomplish. Most of the time, the students far exceed my expectations.

CREDITS:

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TIMELINE & COURSE OUTLINE:

This activity is ongoing throughout the school year. Various components of the broadcast are completed by the students each day. For example, we usually work on the scripts for the week ahead on Wednesday. On Thursday, we film the news anchors

segments for the following week. This filming typically takes 30 minutes or less. Various special features are filmed throughout the week on certain days. For example, on Wednesday mornings, two students film a segment called “Coaches Corner” which is aired on Friday mornings. On Tuesdays, two students film a segment called “Quick Draw” which features the art teacher sharing art skills. This segment airs on Wednesdays. Daily responsibilities of the broadcast include creating graphics for various segments such as weather, birthdays, lunch, etc. and editing the final product for each morning’s show. Some of the graphic segments are created by third grade students each day. They then e-mail their PowerPoint graphics to us for inclusion in the daily program.

COMMENTS:

I think the greatest experiences I have had with this activity has been the students’ interactions with others. It is rewarding to watch them interact with their peers on a cooperative level. In addition, they have learned to encourage one another and build on each student’s strengths.

More rewarding, however, is the seeing the responsibility and maturity students’ exhibit when they interact with adults involved in the newscast. For example, the students will often take the video camera and leave the classroom without me to film a special interview or feature. Most of the time, these segments will involve interviews with school faculty or staff. These situations place the students in the role of leadership. They must direct the adults in where to sit/stand, where to look during filming, and other direction needed for successful taping. The adults are always impressed with the ability and confidence of the students to interact politely and responsibly.

Technology Resources:

The choices I made regarding equipment were based primarily on availability, cost, and size. Many video editing systems are extremely expensive. Also, many systems require a lot of space not readily available in a classroom setting.

Teaching Strategy:

I chose this activity for two primary reasons. First, I have always had an interest in videos, pictures, and video editing. This is a fun project that utilizes all of those interests. More importantly, I believe that technology education is extremely important for every student. No matter what career or vocation today’s students choose, technology will be a part of their lives. Exposure to a variety of technology elements can only serve to increase the students’ potential for success.

Technology as Facilitator of Quality Education Model Components Highlighted in This Activity <http://www.intime.uni.edu/modelimage.html>

(Note: This is a unit plan that may cover several days to several weeks. Not all of the elements from the Technology as Facilitator of Quality Education Model that are described below will appear in the video clips used.)

Principles of Learning

Informal Learning: Once the initial training for the broadcast is completed, the students are allowed and expected to take their new knowledge and add their own creativity, ideas, and experience to it to expound on existing ideas and create a unique product.

Patterns and Connections: *Connections* and *Patterns* exist between each component of the newscast. The students must be able to view the finished product while creating their single component.

Active Involvement: The students must work both individually and in teams to take their knowledge and build upon it to make their broadcast unique to current situations and interests.

Enjoyable Setting: The students enjoy the variety of tasks available for them to complete in this project as well as the recognition they receive from their peers.

Frequent Feedback: The students receive *Feedback* daily on their work from their teacher, their peers, administration, and other faculty and staff members as the entire school sees the broadcast they produce.

Compelling Situation: The students must report current trends, interests, and events in unique ways that are available to them based on their existing equipment, resources, and creativity.

Reflection: The students must continually be aware of current trends, events, and issues in search of items to be reported. In addition, they must be efficient at evaluating what items from their brainstormed lists to include in the newscast. Additionally, they must determine what method of reporting will be most effective for their identified element. Finally, upon completion of their report, they must *Reflect* how effectively they accomplished their objective.

Information Processing

Appreciation: As students research and report current events, historical dates, and other components of the newscast they gain an awareness and Appreciation for information they have as yet not dealt with in an enjoyable setting of their own independent choosing.

Presearch: The students must complete *Presearch* activities in order to determine what stories they should include in each day's broadcast.

Search: Once an item or event has been identified for inclusion in an upcoming broadcast, students must determine the most effective research tool available to them. This can include encyclopedias, textbooks, the library, online research, or an interview.

Interpretation: In order to effectively write and report the news, students must consider the interests and implications of the report as it relates both to themselves and others who will view the newscast.

Communication: All types of *Communication* skills are practiced as students write, revise, and orally report the news.

Evaluation: *Evaluation* of this project occurs at several levels. Students must self-*Evaluate* in order to assure that their component of the broadcast is ready for sharing with others. Then, as the newscast components are organized into one final product, *Evaluation* by their classmates occurs. At the end of the day, the teacher views the completed broadcast and *Evaluates* the success of the students. Finally, the entire school views the broadcast the next morning, and comments during the day assure that the students have complete knowledge of the success of their creation.

Content Standards

Language Arts: The students work on writing and communication skills daily. In addition, they must strive to utilize correct grammar and proper word usage.

Democracy

Thinking Together and Making Meaning: The process of daily creation of the newscast is a team effort. The students must plan and work together to produce a broadcast that will inform and be enjoyed by all.

Critical Thinking and Decision Making: In order to form a successful broadcast, the students must envision the final product before it is actually finished. They must make decisions based on the needs, likes, and dislikes of their audience rather than their own interests.

Tolerance, Individual Responsibility and Civil Involvement with Others: Because the newscast is a team effort with individual tasks, each student is accountable to the rest of the team to insure task completion. They must work to get along well and complete their individual contributions promptly and efficiently.

Power Sharing and Empowerment: Once initial training is completed, the teacher serves only as a supervisor to the entire project. The students take responsibility for each aspect of the news. They are given tasks, equipment, and deadlines for which they alone are responsible.

Student Characteristics:

Student characteristics and talents are the driving force behind this activity. Each year, the students' personalities, abilities, and creative talents shape the organization and creation of the broadcast. Therefore, each year the broadcast moves in a different direction. During the first quarter of the school year, the students learn the process involved in the project. After that, I step back and let them go to work. It is fun to see what they can accomplish, given the opportunity.

How the Activity Has Evolved Over Time:

This project began when I attended a technology workshop and a teacher there shared how her class produced a news broadcast. The idea appealed to me, because I had always had an interest in videos and I had been searching for a way to bring technology into my classroom. I returned to my school excited to pitch the idea to my principal. Another teacher in my building had attended a similar workshop and also approached the principal who encouraged us to try it.

In the beginning, we alternated weeks sponsoring the broadcast. Our equipment was limited and we learned many lessons through our mistakes that first year. After the first year, I took over the daily responsibilities of the broadcast. I now rely on other teachers to contribute news items and features but my students are solely responsible for the daily production. The project began as an opportunity for my students to gain more experience with different aspects of technology. It has grown into a teaching tool utilized in all subject areas. Students who avoid researching and writing whenever possible are excited to research reports and features for the newscast.

Somehow, putting the work into electronic form makes it seem like play instead of chore. In addition, the students who have participated in this project have gained a greater self-confidence and a recognized awareness in their own abilities. Their communication skills, both oral and written improve as they interact with students, faculty members, and other adults to bring all elements of the final product together. It is truly a rewarding project that can supplement all subject areas in the classroom. Technology will be a part of every child's future. As educators, we must educate our students to successfully utilize technology if we truly want them to succeed.

The main evolution in this activity during the past three years has been the change in the equipment we have available. The addition of video editing equipment, especially, has greatly reduced the amount of time spent each day on the newscast. In addition, many of the tasks involved with editing were difficult for students to work with in the time allotted. The new equipment has allowed the students to be responsible for the entire production with teachers serving only in an advisory capacity.

(Learning activity format adapted from *National Educational Technology Standards for Students Connecting Curriculum & Technology* <http://cnets.iste.org/index2.html>)