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MAET YR2

DreamIT Project

Brief:

Individuals within every society around the world are constantly bombarded with information from various sources trying to influence them. Whether it is a news channel, advertising poster, book, family member, or teacher we experience information overload. As we enter the 21st Century, new challenges brought about by new technologies will make this challenge even harder. While some persons develop the skills necessary to analyze these sources others do not. As a teacher my recognition that young people need to develop these skills has led me to try and confront this issue within my own classroom. I will utilize media, technology, sources, and skill building to help students develop the tools necessary to be independent thinkers within a complex global society.

The high school years are a very transformative time in the lives of every individual. From a cognitive perspective students are beginning to enter Piaget's final stage of development where humans begin to comprehend higher-level thinking and complex thought. These students are also beginning to develop who they are, what they believe, and what they will become. These transformative years are essential. Thus it is imperative that students receive the skills necessary to determine their fates and not be influenced by unhealthy sources.

These societal issues are forever present within the high school Social Studies classroom. The study of history, politics, economics, geography and sociology brings up topics of evaluating sources daily. As a Social Studies teacher I confront dozens of biased perspectives and student prior knowledge daily. Learners within my class constantly struggle with evaluating bias, viewpoints, and voice within these sources. This creates a potentially dangerous environment for our young learners. These developmental years are imperative for creating knowledgeable global citizens. If they are not properly trained to evaluate and synthesize what they read this may hinder them from becoming successful individuals within society. Furthermore, research on the human mind suggests that if students do not learn these skills it very hard to unlearn false information attained by unreliable sources.

Transformation:

In an effort to confront this problem I would like to construct a curriculum that trains students in the skills they will need to evaluate sources they confront on a daily basis. These talents require considerable practice. Therefore, not only will I teach students the tools to be successful, but I will also have students engage in evaluating sources daily. These skills are not learned within a single lesson or unit. These tools must be developed, practiced, and evaluated over years and throughout ones life. The key to this growth will be properly scaffolding learning in this area. I will begin by teaching students basic skills on how to read and analyze a single source. Then I will be build upon this skill by teaching students to evaluate and

compare different sources. Technology based learning is perfect for this strategy as the Internet provides learners with millions of sources from various backgrounds and of varying qualities. Evaluating sources of varying qualities is important because of the reality that students read these sources in their daily lives. My overall goal will be to begin this process by teaching students the basic skills then building upon these skills so they become experts. Students must continue to utilize these tools after leaving my class.

My curriculum will develop a technology based resource system that affords students access to thousands of resources from various backgrounds. Students will engage in news resources, journal databases, Internet websites, etc. that will allow them to develop their skills to evaluate. I strongly believe that these skills must be developed through access to more information from various backgrounds. Only through interpreting a variety of sources can this skill be built. My rationale behind this philosophy is that different sources require different strategies to analyze them. Reading a newspaper article is much different then reading a course textbook. Lastly, this project will transform the learning within my classroom to incorporate a variety of technology project based learning assessments. Students will be required to complete a project within each unit that utilizes careful research and evaluation using these databases.

Student learning while conducting this DreamIT project will be evaluated in additional areas as well. The first method of evaluating student growth will be by conducting periodic self-assessments to gauge their own learning with the skill of source analysis. This reflection tool will aid both the teacher and student in

evaluating how well students are gaining this skill. Second, students will be assessed daily through their ability to analyze, discuss, evaluate, and define sources within class. Third, Source analysis will be conducted on formal multiple-choice assessments where students will be required to read sources and answer questions about them. Lastly, students will be required to use sources from various databases when participating in writing assessments or essays throughout the year.

The TPACK Framework:

Context:

I currently teach Economics and World History at Plymouth High School in Canton, MI. This school district is one of the largest in the state, located in the greater Metropolitan Detroit area. Plymouth-Canton Community Schools is a district transforming from a rural community into a larger suburban landscape. With this growing community, new ethnic groups, cultures, and immigrants have moved into this emerging school district. What once consisted primarily of a Caucasian middle class population is changing into a more diverse one. Common migrant groups from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Detroit are moving into this district because of its reputation a quality school district.

Plymouth High School is located on a three high school campus in Canton, MI. This campus, referred to as “The Park”, houses over 6,500 students. High School class sizes within this school district average around 35 students per class. With these large class sizes various challenges and opportunities have arisen for teachers within this educational community. Access to technology was once very hard to

achieve in this district due to the size of each school. A year ago each school only had three computer labs for over 2,000 students. This presented various problems for teachers who wanted to achieve a project of this size. However, beginning this year Plymouth-Canton Community Schools passed a technology bond to create a 1-to-1 educational community where each student will be given a Google Chromebook. This bond also will transform each classroom into a 21st Century learning environment where each teacher will be given a projector, Smartboard, and Google Chromebook. This new emphasis on technology-based learning should provide me the resources to become successful. If these resources were not provided this project would be near impossible to achieve.

This district also has great opportunities given the diverse population of students that are learning within this educational community. Due to the size of the district a variety of unique opinions, beliefs, religions, and backgrounds are present to explore perspective in sources. Within each class I have students from different cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This wide variety of students will give myself the chance to explore each student opinions about various Social Studies related issues. To fully explore topics of bias and perspective within sources, it is essential have a group of unique learners within the classroom. This will provide students with multiple occasions to discuss, debate, and evaluate each topic as it arises. This will provide myself the ideal learning environment to employ this DreamIT Project.

Content:

This project will be initiated in both my World History and Economics classes using different research topics and “big ideas”. Each class is taught to different age groups and covers vastly different content. This course content requires very different “big ideas” related to this DreamIT project. World History, a graduation requirement for all 9th grade students is an overview course that covers World History from the fall of the Roman Empire to the present. I teach this course thematically and not chronologically, as is common practice among History educators. These thematic units are; Basic Skills (how to think like a historian), China (an exemplary nation), Empires, Trade, Imperialism, Revolutions, Conflicts, Genocide, Human Rights and Globalization. Each of these themes covers various events across history related to this subject area.

Economics is a graduation requirement for all 11th grade students taught over a semester. This course focuses on teaching students basic concepts of Economics that will benefit students as they enter adulthood. Not only does this class teach students about the economy, but it also focuses on teaching students about basic human decision-making related to economic decisions. Economics covers five major themes throughout the semester; The Market Economy, Supply and Demand, The National Economy, The International Economy, and Personal Finance. Most teachers’ focus on covering basic terms, concepts, and ideas related to economics. It has always been my philosophy to teach these basic ideas and then present how they play out within society through case studies. This approach gives students context within modern society. Furthermore, there are various opinions

about how to solve economics problems within society. I will use this variety of opinion to analyze different sources. As an educator I strongly believe in debating these problems within the classroom so that students are able evaluate these sources beyond the classroom.

Technology:

Technology Education is of paramount importance to foundation of each of these classes. The new district Technology requirements will allow each of my goals to be met within these classes. One of the essential basic skills I teach within each of my classes is the ability to utilize, analyze, and evaluate sources. Through this skill building students gain an understanding in how to determine the worth of sources and their own personal ideas about them. Technology is essential for meeting this goal because of the extensive resources that can be used through the Internet and computer devises.

My Technology plan will be to utilize various medias using the Internet to give students a variety of sources to evaluate and interpret. I will utilize research databases in conjunction with news, and common knowledge Internet sources. This variety will give students the tools from thousands of sources to answer “big ideas”, topics, research projects, etc. within each unit. Specifically, I will require access to; Internet search engines, MetL Michigan Library Database, JStore educational journal database, various news sources (CNN, MSNBC, FOXNEWS, Etc.). Each of these sources along with others that students discover using their technology devises will allow myself to teach students the skills they require. Throughout this learning

process the utilization of technology will be important to interpret sources individually and as a class. Additionally, I will personally utilize these resources to discover sources for my lessons, units, and educational tools.

Pedagogy:

My Pedagogical approach to education will constantly evolving throughout my time as an educator. I believe that the goal of every educator should be to mentor students, assisting them in educational discovery and construction of knowledge. I believe that this is accomplished through inclusive teaching, which incorporates various learning styles and backgrounds. A teacher must diversify how and why they teach subjects in order to include all cultural, social, ideological, and psychological individuals in the learning process. Technology is paramount to the movement. Our goal as educators should also be social progress both for the person and society, this I believe is essential for education. I believe education is student driven as well as teacher driven. A teacher must not only transmit knowledge, but include students in the process allowing for a positive democratic classroom environment. This is accomplished by incorporating student input in unit planning, discipline, lessons, etc. Lastly, I believe a teacher must always be forward thinking and reflective in nature. A teacher has to constantly push themselves toward discovering new and exciting ways to teach. This is achieved through reflecting upon lessons, units, and incorporating collaboration with colleagues and input from students. In reflecting upon our practice we, along with the students, are working towards improving education.

The Total TPACKage:

The use of Technology to complete my goals of skill building and evaluating sources is essential. The use of Internet databases will facilitate learning on a deeper level in this content area. Internet databases provide access of millions of resources from around the world to students. Without Technology access, resources would be limited to the course textbook and the small number of books available in the school media center. Technology will provide students the opportunity to evaluate sources from various perspectives that would not be available in their immediate community. These Internet databases also fit well within the course Content of Social Studies. One of the fundamental goals of every Social Studies course is to teach students how to think like Social Scientists.

Michigan Social Studies Content Standards:

National Standard 1:

The World in Temporal Terms: Historical Habits of Mind

1. 1.1 Temporal Thinking
2. 1.2 Historical Analysis and Interpretation
3. 1.3 Historical Inquiry
4. 1.4 Historical Understanding
5. 1.5 Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision Making

This project is in direct connection to this Content standard. To build these skills of understanding, inquiry, decision-making, analysis, and interpretation students must be exposed to variety of sources. Individuals must be challenged to evaluate

hundreds of sources throughout their time in school so that they are prepared to evaluate these resources when they become educated members of the populous.

Lastly, this project connects with my Pedagogical approach to education. I strongly believe that my goal as an educator should be to assist students in educational discovery and growth. To meet this goal I constantly utilize a constructivist approach to education where students build upon prior knowledge through developing understanding and “deep play”. Students within my courses are taught basic concepts and then apply these concepts to evaluating various sources related to Content. This project will enhance my educational and Pedagogical goals. I will assist students in the evaluation of sources by carefully teaching the skills necessary to become successful in this respect.

While planning this DreamIT project the SAMR Educational Technology model was also considered. This project utilizes Technology to transform and redefine course Content and my Pedagogy. By employing technology based learning tools such as Internet resource databases, I am exploring resources which were previously unavailable without the use of technology. The students will be able to perform tasks of analyzing resources from various sources in a short amount of time. This opportunity was not available to students before the integration of these 21st Century learning tools. This project also allows for significant lesson redesign for my research projects, lessons, and teaching styles. Prior to this project finding resources was difficult. When creating lessons I was limited to the course textbook and resources provided by the district. With these additional resource catalogues I can now create project which require students to search for more resources or

create lessons with more variety of sources. All of these tools will enhance my teaching and learning within the classroom.

Evaluation:

For the purposes of my course, I plan to track growth in this area utilizing many tools. First, I will track growth with student reflections where individuals gauge their own abilities to read, analyze, and evaluate sources. Through reflection students and the teacher receive insight into their progress toward analyzing sources effectively. Students will be forced to reflect upon areas of strength and weakness. Additionally, they will create both short and long-term goals for themselves that they will be accountable for meeting. This tool will also allow the teacher to track how well students are learning by reading and discussing student growth with them.

Second, I will evaluate student growth through carefully scaffolding inquiry-based projects. I will begin by requiring fewer resources and more basic topics. Over time, I will add additional resources, more challenging inquiry topics, and more in-depth analysis of sources. Through the scaffolding of such a project I can carefully build student skills in the area of source evaluation and analysis. Throughout my time as a teacher I have recognized that students start my classes with various skill levels in this capacity. Some students are well trained in the use and analysis of sources, while others enter my class with no knowledge at all. I will use this skill building method to ensure that all students receive the practice necessary for long-term success in this field.

Third, students will be challenged daily to evaluate sources in class and from home. It has become common practice within my class to challenge students by enabling them to read and analyze sources to discover content knowledge. As the teacher, I gauge student learning through assignments, discussion, readings, and careful analysis. In order to do this I must first teach students these basic skills and then scaffold learning accordingly. In practice, readings at the beginning of the year will be shorter and more easily understood. As the year progresses additional resources will be more challenging to access. As teacher, I will track student growth in this capacity and provide additional opportunities to improve if students fall behind. Weekly review sessions after school, at lunch, and online technology based help discussion forums will be great tools to achieve this goal.

Lastly, to assess student learning I will utilize writing and multiple-choice assessments that enable students to engage in resource evaluation. In multiple-choice assessment, students will be required to analyze reading excerpts and answer questions about them. In writing assessments students will be required to use sources they have learned about in class to answer analytical essays. Through both of these assessment tools the teacher will be able to evaluate how well students are learning these complex content area skills.

Issues of Educational Technology:

This DreamIT project also confronts two prominent technology issues that are occurring within the education system. The first concern is the problem of developing information literacy and technology skills. Information literacy is a 21st

Century problem due to the creation of new medias and ease of access to information. Students are now required to evaluate hundreds of sources each day within their daily lives. From campaign advertisements, to Wikipedia articles, to billboards, students see these sources everyday. Through this project students will constantly be building the important skills of information literacy through the use of technology. Learners will be taught the methods and strategies to become successful in this area. Throughout this skill building process students will be enabled to build their ability to read, analyze, and evaluate sources. Additionally through the use of technology they will be required to use online resource databases. Both of these tools are hard to navigate and master. However, through careful scaffolding and utilizing the teacher as a guide students will begin to develop information literacy skills.

The second Technology Education issue that will be confronted through this project is the educational system's inability to meet the diverse needs of students by utilizing technology assistive tools. This project will seek to solve this problem by using technology-based resources to help students building reading and writing skills. Students will be taught how to use educational technology helpful resources such as Evernote, TextAloud, Text to Audio, online dictionaries, research aids, search engines, Etc. Each of these tools is very helpful in providing students with additional aids for the diverse needs of students. Lastly, both of these Technology Education issues will not be solved through one lesson or unit. These issues must be solved through great amounts of practice and time. I recognize that growth in these areas must be tracked and evaluated by the instructor.