Thousands of Multimedia Ideas You Can Use With Your Students

Ron Scott, Teacher, Sandy Lake Academy, Bedford, NS

Imagine sixty or more Grade 9 students in three different classes, sharing three computers to produce a project that will form a unified whole. Sound impossible? Hundreds of teachers from ESD105 in South Central Washington State have done similar projects as part of SHARE105, a huge grant that supplied computers, other hardware such as scanners, zip drives and digital cameras, software, networking hardware, and other computer related supplies for classrooms, as well as release time for training for teachers taking part, for a nominal investment on the part of the school (approximately equal to the cost of one computer). In return, the teachers were required to attend five all-day training sessions, come up with Big Questions relevant to their field of teaching and suitable for computer-related projects, develop the questions in Units of Practice, and then carry out the projects with their students. After completion, the projects were reviewed by other teachers in the project, and their students. The grants continued for at least five years, with about 750 teachers involved each year. I was privileged to be a part of the grant in 1997-98.

One requirement of the grant was that at least one of the projects had to be done using specified software. The year I participated, HyperStudio, from Roger Wagner Publishing, Inc., was required. In later years, teachers were required to use Microsoft PowerPoint. Each teacher was required to post on the web a classroom page with buttons for each project their class completed (a minimum of three projects, one of which was supposed to involve a whole class), as well as various other links. Thousands of these projects can be viewed or downloaded from the ESD site. One way to visit the site is by accessing my classroom home page (*dead link*) and follow the link that says "Back to the SHARE105 site". Each step of the development process, from Big Questions through Units of Practice, to finished products, is accessible from the classroom home pages. The classrooms can be sorted by subject and grade level to make your search easier. They can also be sorted by school district or alphabetically by teacher's last name, though these are unlikely to be useful to people outside the ESD 105.

The process we used is a great way to get your students involved in producing interactive media presentations. They love it, and can learn a lot from the process. Teachers can also learn a lot from the process, from technical skills to organizational skills.

All right, so that was there, but you are somewhere else. You do not have the grant available, and you do not have the training sessions available. What do you do to get your students involved in similar projects?

First you need at least one computer with internet access. Our Web pages were produced in Microsoft Word. The graphics were downloaded from the Internet using several different sites with downloadable graphics specifically for that purpose, and the completed pages sent to the SHARE105 server. What server will you use, since this option is not available to you? Free website servers such as Geocities may be used, or your page could be included in your school's home page on TAGnet.

For your projects, I recommend using Microsoft PowerPoint, since it is in common use, or simply html format. Organize your thinking by first deciding on an area of research you wish your students to explore. You can make it as broad or narrow as you desire. Break down the task for your students. If you are using PowerPoint, specify how many frames they are responsible for, tell them that they need interesting

visuals to accompany their presentation (possibly from clip art or a photo bank, or scanned in from photos they take or find), and that they need to decide on interesting transitions from frame to frame. Do you want them to have a bibliography? Tell them how to make proper entries. Then organize the time so that each student or group of 2-3 students has equal computer time. Give them a deadline. Post the finished product on your classroom homepage-kids of all ages love to see their work displayed, and it is fun for them to access their projects from their computers at home or at the public library. Perhaps you can have a counter on your page to tell how many visitors you have had. Cooperate with a colleague in your field and view and give each other feedback on your projects. Each of you can show the multimedia projects to your students, and get their feedback. It helps you to make the next project better.

Of the three projects on my classroom page, the first involved over sixty Grade 9 students working in pairs during three class periods of the day. Often students would come in after school on their own initiative to work on their part of the project (3 or 4 frames about elements in one group from the periodic table). To view this project, you will have to download the HyperStudio plugin available at the SHARE105 site. The second project was produced by three Grade 10 students in html format (using Microsoft Word). I helped them locate links (some of which may be dead due to the ever-changing nature of the Internet). The third was done as an extra-credit project by two outstanding students in my Grade 9 class. It is also in html format. The magnet surrounded by compasses was scanned directly from the scanner in my classroom, using an actual bar magnet and see-through compasses.

Enjoy browsing through the projects, if you have the time, but even better, get your students enjoying the creative process! Have fun.