UTILIZING DIGITAL MEDIA TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dr.V.Mary Rita Martina
Principal, Grace College of Education, Erode

Today's students inhabit a visual, networked culture. They connect and communicate with their peers - and the public - through digital media. Digital means Digitized content (text, graphics, audio, and video) that can be transmitted over internet or computer networks. Many assume that these "digital natives" are fully literate with regard to media; however, we believe that students need guidance, support and inspiration to realize their full academic potential with digital media. Traditional media for teaching-speech, text, and images-are so ingrained in our methods and curriculum that we rarely pause to consider their use. Instead of thinking carefully about which medium to use in a given situation, we usually select what we have chosen in the past or what is convenient now. Teaching Today publishes innovative teaching tips on a weekly basis. Written with the busy teacher in mind, each tip is concise, practical and easy to implement in the classroom right away. Topics covered in teaching today are classroom management, career development, high stakes testing, instruction and planning, parental involvement, reading in the content areas, using technology in the classroom, and portfolio development. Teaching today also offers free weekly downloads that correspond to the tips. Our free downloads make implementing the teaching tips even easier. Teaching Today provides educational resources for teachers looking for everyday solutions to the challenges of the classroom.

Overcoming the Limitations of Traditional Media

In the classroom, each medium poses barriers for some students, while offering particular opportunities to others. None works optimally for every student or for every situation, which means that several media options should be available. Unfortunately, many classrooms continue to be dominated by single medium usually printed textbooks. This dominance prevents teachers from reaching all students and instead forces them to cater to those who find text accessible and relate barriers for those who do not. There are further consequences. Even students able to access text are missing out because we know that there are other media more suitable for communicating particular kinds of material. Finally, students' preferences and proclivities for certain media and tools can play an important role in deepening their engagement and enhancing their success, even if they are capable of using a variety of media.

The Power of Digital Media

Although digital media also represent information through text, sound, and images, the similarities to traditional media end there. By virtue of one essential featureflexibility digital media surpass traditional media in their ability to meet diverse students' varied needs in a variety of instructional contexts. This flexibility is inherent in the way digital content is stored and transmitted. Over the last six thousand years, humans have invented a wonderful array of storage mechanisms for our communications, ranging from stone to parchment to vinyl. Most of these techniques are an application of the same basic concept: Information is stored by taking a direct or encoded representation (a letter, an image, a sound) and physically embedding it in a medium (paper or vinyl), where it becomes permanent.

Implications for Educators

With a better understanding of new and traditional media and how individual brains interact with each, teachers can reevaluate how they teach, how students learn, and how best to use various tools and techniques to individualize these processes. As our discussion of the three brain networks and individual differences makes plain, no single traditional instructional medium format works for all students. And although it is possible to remove barriers and expand access to learning by offering content in a variety of media, the fixed nature of speech, text, and images makes this an impractical, unviable option for most educators. The flexibility of new media opens new doors to diverse learners. Digital capacity to combine and transform text, speech and images leads to a more diversified palette for communication one that can accommodate the varied strengths and weaknesses of each medium and every brain. Digital media also has the potential to transform the learning process. The hegemony of printed text has already disappeared in high-impact fields like advertising, entertainment, and communication, but in education, its dominance remains. In the years ahead, however, it is clear that text-only instruction will give way to a more deliberate application of multimedia. Instructional designers will use digital tools to tailor media to the task, to different kinds of learning, and to different kinds of students, reducing the barriers and inefficiencies inherent in one-size-fits-all printed textbooks. New expertise in the representational and expressive qualities of each medium and the new blends that will evolve will help educators reach a broader spectrum of students with a broader spectrum of knowledge. The incidental but equally important beneficiaries of new digital media for teaching will include teachers and students of subjects like math, music, geography, and physics-subjects that have never easily yielded their magic through linear text. Ultimately, the new media will benefit all learners.

How Digital Media Changes the Way Students Learn

When done effectively, technology has a positive impact on student learning. It can:

- Increase student motivation for learning
- Improve communication of learning goals
- Facilitate higher-order thinking skills
- Build valuable skills that students will use in college and in the workplace
- Expand students' understanding from novice to mastery

Strategies for Media-Based Lessons

Frame: Provide a context that helps students pay attention to the main content in the media. Ask students questions about the topic explored in the media resource to activate prior knowledge.

Focus: Provide students with a specific focus, something to look for while they watch the media. An example of this would be to help students notice the important moments in a video. Without a focus for viewing, students see all sorts of interesting details, but not necessarily the idea or information you want them to focus on.

Follow-up: Provide an opportunity for students to summarize what they saw. Sometimes students will see different things, and not always what you expected them to see. Retelling what they saw helps students process their understanding of the content and retain it.

Conclusion

The learning with digital media technology has introduced an important paradigm shift in education that will have a very important impact on our educational system and the way teachers teach and students learn. This changing role of teaching and learning is inevitable with the introduction of media technologies in the educational field and the spawning of a technological generation of youths. Information is being exchanged in a digital mode, and the educational curriculum is evolving to incorporate digital media elements and interactive features that create a better teaching and learning environment for the students as well as the teachers. The future trend in educational methodology and strategy is geared towards integrating digital media technology into the classroom.

References

1. *www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk*
2. *www.map.usc.edu*
3. *www.cast.org*
4. *www.teachdigital.org*
5. *www.engage.wisc.edu*
6. *www.learningthroughdigitalmedia.net*
7. *www.jisc.ac.uk*
8. *www.businessdictionary.com*