iMovies and Gifted Grouping

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grouping of gifted and talented students in conjunction with how students interact with technology is the focus of this case study. Groups were created and observed while a lesson utilizing the program iMovie and utilizing iPads for research was taught. Findings are discussed and possible future actions are explained.

CASE SETTING

Working with gifted students in middle school can be stimulating, but because students are generally placed in heterogeneous classes, there are several barriers to delivering enriched content. Providing differentiation within a 50-minute class period requires a great deal of planning. With a wide range of student levels of skills and abilities, teachers struggle to reach everyone. Teachers must look for ways to create lessons that teach all their students and cover the curriculum. Developing units of study that promote student learning at all levels is a challenge.

In a middle school in a rural eastern Kentucky county, the students in a Social Studies/ World Geography content course were the focus of a study on curriculum, instructional technology, and gifted student content enrichment. The class was composed of 6th from a school of 500 students. The class had twenty-three students, who averaged of twelve years old, with a composition of fifteen males and eight females. Among these students were six gifted students and two special needs students.

The unit of study dealt with Central and South America. Students were assigned a country to research and then create an iMovie to demonstrate what they learned. The iMovie was the culminating event. The students were expected to present their movies to their peers. The lesson was meant to have the students delve deeper into a specific country. To make the assignment more challenging, students were required to include pictures, music, and voiceovers. Moreover, by allowing creativity, the creation of the movie allowed all students the opportunity to show demonstrate what they could do.

For this social studies unit, the ideas from the Parallel Curriculum (Tomlinson, 2009) provided the basis for development. During the unit, the science teacher was covering a unit on the rain forests with an emphasis on Central and South America. At the same time, the language arts teacher was covering a short story writing unit that emphasized the Aztec and Incan civilizations. By having the curriculum connect across disciplines, it was hoped that students will see the connections made through differing lessons and differing classes. In many ways, this type of planning can be beneficial to not only gifted and talented students but also to middle and lower level students. This unit of study was taught over four days. As well, the grouping of students, identified as gifted and talented, was utilized. Gifted and talented students were partnered with each other, and middle level students and lower level learners were partnered. Rogers (2006) and Tomlinson (2009) both advocate using grouping to facilitate gifted and talented student learning. As a teacher, I was able to observe my students interacting with one another, the technology, and the curriculum.

The technology used for research during the lesson was an iPad. Students also used iMac computers for the creation of the iMovie *(see Appendix A, Rubric).* Luckily, some of the students had used the iMovie program before and were able to show each other some of the finer details, such as how to use transitions and sound. As a middle school social studies teacher of ten years, I have used iMovie before, so I was familiar with its use, and that made it easier to use. Students learn better when teachers are very familiar with technology (Lennex & Nettleton, 2010).

The research portion of the lesson required a great deal of direct instruction. The students were shown how to use google.com to look for websites and information, then it was discussed how to tell if the source is a reliable one or if it is one the students should not trust. For instance, Wikipedia was an example of a source that can be changed and so students were told not to use it. However, they could scroll down to the reference portion of the website and look at those sources. This was one of the hardest concepts for my students to understand.