Chapter 55
Multimodal Composition for Teacher Candidates:
Models for K–12 Classroom Writing Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports on a study conducted by two teacher educators in literacy instruction and provides examples of the ways teacher educators can "distribute" technology-rich writing instruction across their coursework. Using the TPACK model, 21 graduate students in a preservice course on curriculum planned, taught, and reflected on generative technology lessons with real students in real classrooms. Data collected included the lessons and reflections, ePoster presentations, and other writings by students on the topic. Findings indicate that graduate students chose a diverse array of technology tools, and planned carefully, matching tools with desired learning outcomes. Although graduate students initially felt "pushed" by the assignment, post lesson reflections showed positive changes in attitude and appreciation for the motivation and engagement of their K-12 students with the technology lessons. Graduate students also derived a more realistic picture of planning for instruction. Implications involve the necessity of supporting 21st century literacies in teacher preparation programs. Examples of lessons and tools used are included.

INTRODUCTION

Education without either meaning or excitement is impossible. (Ansel Adams, 1985, p. 17)

This chapter reports on an action research project conducted by two teacher educators in literacy instruction and provides examples of the ways teacher educators can "distribute" technology-rich writing instruction across their coursework, rather than relying on stand-alone technology courses. In addition,

the chapter addresses the composing process as multimodal rather than relying upon pencil and paper. The study occurred during a university preservice methods course (Fall 2012) where one researcher was the instructor. Real teacher candidates in real school settings were provided with an authentic assignment to incorporate literacy and technology into a lesson that they then taught and reflected upon.

The researchers sought to illustrate that "generative" technology can be infused into teacher preparation. By generative technology, we mean that the technology is embedded in the content of the course in teaching methods, rather than something "added on." We wanted to find out whether generative technology assignments in our teacher preparation program would provide new teachers with much needed skills and confidence in the use of technology in their instruction and whether such technology use would find its way into the teacher candidates' K-12 classrooms.

BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

New standards for education in the U.S. and the assessments to measure educational progress are impelling the transformation of K-12 education as well as teacher preparation. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (CCSS, 2010) adopted by 47 states mandate the use of technology for instruction, student work, and student response. For example, the CCSS require educators to focus more closely on teaching non-fiction text and to require "close reading" of those texts. Literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening) is embedded in technical subject areas, such as math and science. In addition, technology is being featured in all subject areas (CCSS, 2010).

As educators, we know that writing is essential to student success in academic settings and in the world of work. The 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Assessment is a good case in point (The Nation's Report Card, 2012). NAEP assessments have occurred since 1969 and provide a reliable snapshot of educational progress in the U.S. on a variety of topics. The 2011 writing assessment is the first that has used technology as part of the assessment. Also, rather than responding to literature or describing something, the NAEP prompts have changed to match CCSS requirements.

For example, the types of writing in percentages of prompts for 8th and 12th graders are now as shown in Table 1 (The Nation's Report Card, 2012).

Prompts for student writing were formatted such that students could, at the 8th grade level, *listen* to the prompt as well as read it. At the 12th grade level students could *view* a video augmentation to the writing prompt. When responding to the prompts, students used a word processing program with several tool affordances (cut and paste, spell check, etc.). Findings from NAEP indicate that students whose teachers asked them to use computers in their composing and revising tasks scored better on the assessments (The Nation's Report Card, 2012). Tool use (allowed in the prompt) was also associated with higher scores.

Table 1. Types of writing in percentages of prompts from 8th and 12th graders

	Percent of Assessment at Grade 8	Percent of Assessment at Grade 12
Persuasion	35%	40%
Explanation	35%	40%
Convey an Experience	30%	20%

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