Chapter 24

A Practical Guide for Integrating Technology into Social Studies Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a resource to practitioners not only about what types of technologies can be integrated into Social Studies instruction, but also provides resources by Social Studies content area (U.S. History, World History, Government, Civics, Economics, Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology). The intended audience is the Social Studies teacher who wants ideas on how to improve their instructional delivery and learning environment through the integration of technology. Differing levels of technology integration are defined. Major types of technologies covered in the chapter include audio, video, simulations, and interactive whiteboards. Implications include the opportunities for Social Studies educators to provide students content in more readily understandable ways and in richer learning environments.

INTRODUCTION

"In the twenty-first century, participatory media education and civic education are inextricable" (Rheingold, 2008).

Technology is as old as the first crude tool invented by prehistoric humans, but today's technology forms the basis for some of our most difficult social choices. Modern life as we know it would be impossible without technology and the science that supports it. But technology brings with it many questions: Is new technology always better than that which it will replace? What can we

learn from the past about how new technologies result in broader social change, some of which is unanticipated? How can we cope with the ever-increasing pace of change, perhaps even with the feeling that technology has gotten out of control? How can we manage technology so that the greatest number of people benefit from it? How can we preserve our fundamental values and beliefs in a world that is rapidly becoming one technology-linked village? This theme appears in units or courses dealing with history, geography, economics, and civics and government. It draws upon several scholarly fields from the natural and physical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities for specific examples of issues and the knowledge base for considering responses to the societal issues related to science and technology.

Young children can learn how technologies form systems and how their daily lives are intertwined with a host of technologies. They can study how basic technologies such as ships, automobiles, and airplanes have evolved and how we have employed technology such as air conditioning, dams, and irrigation to modify our physical environment. From history (their own and others'), they can construct examples of how technologies such as the wheel, the stirrup, and the transistor radio altered the course of history. By the middle grades, students can begin to explore the complex relationships among technology, human values, and behavior. They will find that science and technology bring changes that surprise us and even challenge our beliefs, as in the case of discoveries and their applications related to our universe, the genetic basis of life, atomic physics, and others. As they move from the middle grades to high school, students will need to think more deeply about how we can manage technology so that we control it rather than the other way around. There should be opportunities to confront such issues as the consequences of using robots to produce goods, the protection of privacy in the age of computers and electronic surveillance, and the opportunities and challenges of genetic engineering, test-tube life, and medical technology with all their implications for longevity and quality of life and religious beliefs.

BACKGROUND

In the past, the use of technology in the social studies classroom has been minimal at best (Becker, 1986). Pre-service technology instruction for potential social studies teachers has primarily focused on the information taught in early technology coursework, with little or no additional instruction or modeling being provided. In addition, if and when supplemental instruction is provided, it is often provided by a methodology professor who is focusing his/her attention on preparing students to take certification examinations, or who generally has little knowledge or understanding of the use of technology beyond the use of chalk or a periodic PowerPoint presentation. Research has found that there has been doubt that the integration of technology will improve Social Studies education in any significant way (Martorella, 1997; Pahl, 1996; Shaver, 1999; White, 1997). Conversely, research has been done as well on how to rectify this in Social Studies methods classes. Specifically, Mason et.al. challenged Social Studies methods teachers with the following guidelines to integrating technology to prepare teachers:

1. Extend learning beyond what could be done without technology.
2. Introduce technology in context.
3. Include opportunities for students to study relationships among science, technology, and society.
4. Foster the development of skills, knowledge, and participation as good citizens in a democratic society.
5. *Contribute to the research and evaluation of social studies and technology.* (Mason, Berson, Diem, Hicks, Lee, & Dralle, 2000)

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