

Reflective Statement- Practicum

The world around us is constantly changing and today's schools are becoming increasingly more diverse. "Advances in technology and interactive media rapidly are transforming how we communicate and use information in our homes, offices, and early childhood settings" (NAEYC, 2012, p.1). Throughout my time in my third grade field placement classroom, I have found this statement to be very accurate. It is crucial for teachers to understand that in today's society, technology is continuously improving and teachers no longer solely rely on traditional methods of learning, such as textbooks and memorization. To allow students to succeed, teachers need to incorporate specific technological tools into the classroom. Teachers should integrate technology into education because it allows all students, especially those who are diverse learners, to learn more efficiently.

Today, there are students in every classroom who are culturally and linguistically diverse, such as English Language Learners. Teachers should "make an effort to get to know the children's families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape their lives at home and in the communities. This background information helps us provide meaningful, relevant, and respectful learning experiences for each child and family" (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009). Having students with a variety of backgrounds allows the teacher to learn a lot about what is culturally and developmentally appropriate for students of that specific age range and group. A great way to learn about children's individual cultures and backgrounds could be through creating events, such as Digital Storytelling Night.

Digital Storytelling Night is an event to celebrate students, their families, and their cultures through creating a digital product. The students attending the event were asked to bring 3-5 meaningful artifacts with them, which would be used in the digital stories they would be making using Voice Thread. At this event, the school will provide chrome books and iPads for the guests to use to create their digital products. Voice Thread is a multimedia slide show that allows users to incorporate images, audio, text, videos, etc. over the images they used in the original slide show. Voice Thread is beneficial for both students and teachers because it provides students with a platform to display their understanding, creativity, and knowledge, while teachers are also provided with a direct form of assessment and are given room for their own creativity as well. At this event, guests will take photos or videos of their artifacts and will be able to add audio recordings, describing why they chose the artifact and what the significance of the artifact is to them. “When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development” (NAEYC, 2012). This connects to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standard 7a, that explains how students “use digital tools to connect with learners from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, engaging with them in ways that broaden mutual understanding and learning” (ISTE, 2016, p.2). In this case, students are participating in an event that explores different cultures and traditions through the use of digital stories. Voice thread is an effective, collaborative technological tool that can improve students’ learning.

Students are able to use the application Voice Thread to discuss and share the importance of their cultures, customs, traditions, and languages. Another technological

tool that has similar features to Voice Thread is iMovie. After students create their digital stories, they have the opportunity to share their digital stories with other people and spread information about their own lives and cultures. Children are able to learn a lot about one another by listening to their peers' digital stories, as well as sharing their own. Incorporating technology to create a digital story allows students to meet the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standard 6d for teachers that states how "educators model and nurture creativity and creative expression to communicate ideas, knowledge or connections" (ISTE, 2016, p.2).

As a future teacher, I think it is very important to learn about students' lives by understanding where they come from and what their backgrounds are. I believe that creating a Digital Storytelling Night was a great, useful way for students, families, and teachers to interact and collaborate with one another through technology to learn about different cultures, traditions, customs, and languages. It is important for young children to learn about various cultures and backgrounds, in order for them to comprehend that each individual is different in their own way and that they will meet other students who are from backgrounds they may not be familiar with. "Teachers and administrators need information and resources to effectively select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology and interactive media tools in intentional and developmentally appropriate ways" (Donohue & Schomburg, 2015, p.37). It is crucial for students to be taught diversity and having them use specific apps that could be used for digital storytelling, such as Voice Thread, allows them to better understand diversity through the use of technology.

References

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