Samantha Forster

CEP 800

Lesson Plan

Reflection

Description:

The lesson was to formulate connections between photographs of small southern towns during the Depression and the description of Maycomb throughout the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students will develop the connections and present them through audio, video, or text using the program VoiceThread. There students will post their connections and supporting evidence; they will also view other student’s connections and further the discussion with questions and commentary in response.

Narrative:

This lesson is taking place directly after a five week unit reading and discussing the novel. The initial day was spent getting students registered with VoiceThread. This seems to be the biggest hassle with technology use with large classes. Prior to this day, I made sure that students could access the website using a student login. I wanted to make sure that the site wasn’t blocked. While I was doing this I did come across a small issue that was not anticipated. In our district the student computers are very small Netbooks. The students could access the site and register with no problems; however, when creating or view a slideshow, the image and text surrounding the image was incredibly small and illegible. I was severely disappointed, but after talking with my library media specialist we decided that the idea behind the assignment was to create ways to collaborate with peers and interact with texts outside of the classroom. Therefore, students wouldn’t be working on this assignment at school and the size configuration shouldn’t be an issue.

The students successfully registered during a class period, and I navigated the site for them in class, giving directions for the activity using the Smartboard. I also create a Jing video that I posted to the class Moodle site that gave directions for registering (for those who were absent) and directions for the assignment with basic how-to instructions for posting and commenting. The students had five school days to work outside of the classroom to post their original connections to each of the six photographs. They had to acknowledge the connection that they were making in a thesis and support it with two examples from the primary text. They then had the weekend to post a minimum of one comment on a peer’s connection for at least three of the photographs. Overall, logistically the assignment went well. As with anything else, the quality of connections and commentary varied. I will implement it again, and it will be nice to have a student model of the lesson.

Reflection:

At the completion of this lesson the students were exposed to collaborative skills, online and discussion etiquette. The students engaged their critical thinking skills when formulating connections between the photographs and text and deciding the most effective way to present the information. The program used afforded the students with multiple options for presentation of their ideas; this accommodated multiple learning abilities and the variety fostered engagement with the material. However, the length of comment whether audio, video, or text was limited and forced students to shorten their explanation at times. I turned this problem around and prompted the students to use strong ideas and vocabulary that were all imperative, the time constraint forced them to neglect the fluff and repetition of ideas that usually bogs down their ideas.

There were various ideas in place that supported constructivism and behaviorism with the lesson. The students were forced to make connections on their own without guidance, they then had to determine the ultimate outcome of their response and decide which presentation alternative achieved the goal. After a connection was successful and accolades were given by peers, the students learned to immolate the process for which they made the successful connection to proceed with the components of the lesson. The lesson was initially intended to enhance the learning of existing curriculum; however, after the completion and reflection on the lesson, I discovered that students learned more than what the curriculum desired. The discussion skills and online etiquette, as well as the simple navigation skills for the program were unanticipated, but welcomed.

Teachers and students need basic technology skills to participate and implement this lesson; however, the initial run of the lesson addressed many of the potential problems that a teacher could get frustrated with. Therefore, the only trepidation a teacher might have with the lesson is the initial day of registering for the program and directions for the assignment. However, the frontloading of instruction with directional videos could be recycled through various classes and ease the load of the teacher. Also, as more teachers use the program students will become familiar with the program and less time will have to be spent with initial registration and instruction. Overall, the students embraced the new technology. It did seem to create more engagement with the material. There was the initial kickback of interest; however, once the students started to interact and see the feedback from peers on their ideas, they not only increased the quality of their work, but began to value others opinions. The added component that their ideas are visible to all of their peers, staff, and parents added pressure and also created more accountability for the students.