Just Try It: Pre-Service Teachers’ Use of Technology to Extend Learning in an Elementary Social Studies Methods Course

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In today's classrooms, teachers must utilize technology in meaningful ways that both extend student learning of content and allow them to develop necessary technology skills. Pre-service teachers, although comfortable with technology in general, are often reluctant to try new tools and express anxiety over using technology with future students. This presentation examines four tools (Voice Thread, Glogster, Prezi, and LiveBinder) used in an elementary social studies methods course to both introduce students to various technologies as well as model how and when to use these tools with students. Handouts will be provided.

In today’s classrooms, teachers must utilize technology in meaningful ways that both extend student learning of content and allow them to develop necessary technology skills. This presentation will show how to utilize technologies with pre-service teachers (of K-12 students) in ways that aid their own learning of these tools as well as their understanding of how to make pedagogical decisions about technology they will use in their future classrooms. Four technology tools will be presented within the context of student projects completed for an elementary social studies methods course. The presenter will demonstrate how specific tools can be selected to match traditional ways of completing student projects (i.e., pencil/paper, typed papers, posters) and extend learning in meaningful ways. Specifically, three projects completed by students in the presenter’s methods course will be shown and explained. The projects include conducting oral histories, examining the impact of cultural issues on self, and sharing cultural identities with classmates. Then four technology tools (Voice Thread, Glogster posters, Prezi presentations, and Live Binder) will be demonstrated as ways to organize and present student work.

The presenter will also discuss common problems with using these technologies with students and the importance of developing a sound educational rationale for incorporating technology.
Often teachers add technology to their classroom as a “wow factor” rather than a tool for extending student learning and enhancing student work. This presentation will address this concern. Handouts with student directions for use of the technologies in the presentation will be provided.