HyperStudio® and the Big Book: Reflections of Multimedia Production
Horrors and Successes

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Abstract: When HyperStudio®, multimedia authoring software, met emergent literacy in an instructional technology course for elementary preservice teachers, the results were creative and dramatic. These teachers—specializing in early childhood and bilingual education—created an electronic Big Book that merged their learnings on multimedia authoring and predictable text patterns used in early literacy. The intent was to help them develop a “talking book” they could then use with children in a classroom to teach basic emergent literacy concepts. The process was not easy—was indeed labor-intensive and frustrating—but the end results were a parade of multimedia marvels that were a great source of pride to these preservice teachers. This qualitative study compiled both the reflections of students engaged in the process of creating multimedia as well as those of the instructor and guide in the process.

Introduction

For elementary preservice teachers, the use of technology can be a daunting proposition, especially since they equate teaching to books, hands on materials, and other assorted audio/visual materials. The computer and multimedia are tools they feel best left for computer programmers. However, when students in a teacher preparation program enroll in an instructional technology course, they are faced with the novel task of learning about how technology can serve the elementary teacher.

One of the biggest challenges—and a grand source of frustration—is learning HyperStudio®, a program never before used by these teachers. Their use of this software is a collaboration of emergent literacy practices and the use of the Big Book, commonly used story books in early childhood classrooms that are oversized for better viewing by children in a group read aloud.

Preservice Teachers in the Big Book Experience

The preservice teachers in this instructional technology course must learn all about computer hardware, Internet integration, web page design, and productivity software, which include authoring software like HyperStudio®. A major benchmark of the course is a Big Book called thus because of a similarity in purpose to predictable text which comes with large pictures and print (Roe, Smith, and Burns, 2005). The students chose between four types of predictable patterns for their Big Book: repetition, cumulative sequence, rhyme and rhythm, and sequential patterns (Tompkins, 2005).

In order to publish the Big Book, they had to utilize a HyperStudio® card stack. For this, they needed to learn different features of the multimedia software that included menu features and navigation, drawing, animation and sound. Their knowledge of other software like Microsoft PowerPoint or Microsoft Word was not too useful in learning HyperStudio® because of the differences in menus and commands. Therefore, the task was extremely difficult; the experience was akin to learning how to use a computer for the first time.

Reflections of Horror and Success

The preservice teachers faced a tough task, and they battled their insecurities regarding the use of technology, their inability to synthesize information to create a multimedia product, and their own desires to create an exceptional
product. The cognitive level of this task was unlike any they had done before, and so their frustrations were great. The general sense of horror that overcomes us at extreme moments of helplessness overwhelmed them frequently in the process.

Yet, this story is also one of triumph, and through the students’ difficulties, they managed to pull through on pure grit, finally facing the astonishing idea that they were not only happy with the results, but proud of all their efforts in the process.

References
