



Digital Storytelling through PowerPoint

Each of us has a story to tell. Digital storytelling with PowerPoint® allows girls to tell their stories, use their creativity, and learn basic technical skills.

Not all girls come with an interest in programming or the skills and confidence to work on challenging technical projects. For these students, digital storytelling holds appeal and gets them to give technology a chance. PowerPoint is an easy-to-learn program that yields quick results and reinforces girls' willingness to learn basic skills such as navigating through windows and file folders and formatting with text and graphics. The lesson also gives girls an opportunity to explore issues that are important in their lives, such as body image and relationships with boys. The lesson can easily accommodate students with a wide range of abilities and interests.

Icebreaker

Storytelling

Invite students to sit together in a circle. Begin a story, sharing 4-5 sentences. Ask the student to your right to continue the story where you left off. Continue around the circle until every student has had a chance to add to the story. As each member takes her turn, the group will delight in the twists and turns the story takes.

This game builds community spirit and is a fun start to digital storytelling. The exercise also helps students loosen up and encourages them to exercise their imaginations.

Materials and Set-Up

1. Computers (at least one for every pair of students)
2. PowerPoint software loaded on every computer (Other presentation software can be used.)
3. Floppy disks or space on a server or hard drive to store saved projects
4. Ideas for Digital Storytelling sheet
5. Photo Essay: PowerPoint Project Ideas sheet
6. Samples of student PowerPoint projects, if possible
7. Photographs and drawings (These can be digital photographs, photographs that can be scanned, drawings, or images on the web.)
8. PowerPoint Project Planning handout with timeline
9. Storyboard handout
10. PowerPoint in the Classroom tutorial available from <http://www.actden.com/pp/>
11. Music to accompany the stories (optional)

Directions

1. Start lesson away from the computers to reduce distractions.



2. Begin with a discussion about what it means to tell a good story. Invite the group to consider who will be the audience for the group and what purpose(s) will be served by the students' stories.
3. Show samples of student work and discuss what worked well in the stories. Next, ask students to identify areas that could be improved upon.
4. Establish ground rules for projects. Begin by inviting students to come up with their own rules for acceptable and unacceptable topics, images, and language. For example, our lists included no profanity, no put-downs, no copyrighted material, and no sexually explicit language or photographs. We also advised students that all presentations would be reviewed for acceptability before they were presented to an audience.
5. Review the Ideas for Digital Storytelling and the Photo Essay: PowerPoint Project Ideas handouts. Do your students have topics that aren't included on the sheets that they'd like to work on?
6. We recommend giving students time—at least a couple of days and preferably a week—to select their topics and partners. If students are having difficulty deciding, offer them a chance to see you individually to discuss project ideas.
7. Come together and review students' project ideas. This can be done one-on-one or in a group.
8. Pass out the PowerPoint Project Planning handout. Review each section in light of what it takes to tell a good story.
9. Ask each student or group of students to complete the PowerPoint Project Planning handout. Review the completed PowerPoint Project Planning handouts and provide general feedback on the projects.
10. Pass out the Storyboard Handout. Have each student complete her storyboard with a description of the image for each slide and any text she might have on the slide. Remind your students that all presentations should start with a title slide with the presentation name and the name of the presenters.
11. Once students have developed their stories, they are ready to learn the tools to tell the story. Using the PowerPoint in the Classroom tutorial available from <http://www.actden.com/pp/>, go through each step as a group so that everyone masters the steps before moving on.
12. Once students have learned the tools of PowerPoint, allow them to start developing their own PowerPoint presentation, based upon the story that they outlined.
13. You will want to regularly remind students to save their work.
14. After students have completed their PowerPoint presentations, ask them to review their work and to correct spelling and grammar mistakes.
15. Next, invite students to share their PowerPoint presentations with a partner and get feedback.
16. Now, it's your turn to take a look at the students' work. This step gives you a chance to make certain that students have followed the directions for a good story, and have followed the agreed-upon guidelines.
17. Provide an opportunity for students to practice their presentation skills. This can be done a number of ways, but we suggest that each student have a chance to speak in front of you and a group of other students. At the end of the practice presentations,



offer students feedback on what worked well and suggest concrete ways for them to improve their presentation.

18. For a grand finale, schedule a venue for students to show their presentation to an audience. Our students have enjoyed presenting to other students and to families.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes a “good” story?
2. Who is your audience? Why are they interested in the story?
3. What makes for a good presentation and how can you improve upon your presentation skills?

Time Required

The process of understanding what a digital story is, reviewing samples of digital stories, deciding on what the student’s story will be, and how they will tell the story takes 60 minutes. Storyboarding takes 30 minutes. The PowerPoint in the Classroom tutorial takes 30 minutes. The final portion of this project is student-driven, based upon your timeline. A student should be able to finish the project in 3 hours. Students will need approximately 60 minutes to practice presenting their works to their peers before they make their formal presentations to families. Final presentations should be limited to 2-5 minutes for individual presentations and 5-7 minutes for group presentations. In total, this activity will take 6 hours with additional time for presentations to families.

Lessons Learned

Story is the key to this project, and so it is important that students spend sufficient time planning and writing their stories before they get started working with the technology. Our students selected a wide range of topics for their projects; however, those that addressed personal and expressive topics were particular favorites.

With stories that get personal and tap into strong feelings, it is very important to begin this lesson by discussing guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. It works best with middle school and high school girls to involve them in setting the ground rules. When questions about these rules arose during the lesson, we found it worked well to ask the girls to think about their audience—their parents—and decide if the language or image in question would be appropriate.

Lesson Extensions

1. **Short stories with PowerPoint.** We began one of our Techbridge programs by asking students to sit in a circle. Next, we passed around a digital camera and invited each student to take a digital portrait of the girl to her right. Once all the students’ photographs were taken, the girls partnered with the girl next to her and went to a computer. Working in teams, the partners used the images and



- PowerPoint to tell a brief story about one another. These stories described the students' interests and hobbies, plans for the future, and other fun facts. After these short stories of 2-3 slides were completed, the teams gathered together in a circle and shared their work. The exercise proved to be a fun way to get to know one another and get introduced to PowerPoint.
2. Introduce students to digital video. Have your students storyboard, film, and produce their own digital movies using digital video cameras, a tripod, and a movie editing software like Studio8 or iMovie. Students should produce their first digital video using 10 photos that they film using techniques such as zooming in and out, and panning. These can be photos of them growing up or photos from magazines such as National Geographic. They should video each photo for a minimum of 10 seconds so that they will be able to cut each clip to at least 5-7 seconds in length. Have them use the same techniques to tell the story as they did in Storytelling through PowerPoint but now the focus for this video project will be camera usage and digital video editing skills.
 3. **My Special Place.** This project gives students a chance to photograph their "special place" using disposable cameras. This special place could be their bedroom, a park, or any place in their community where they feel special. The photos can be either scanned or developed to photo CD for insertion into a PowerPoint presentation with a description on why this is their special place.

Resources

1. *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* by Joe Lambert. Digital Diner Press, Berkeley, CA, 2002.
2. Digital Clubhouse Network. View samples of students work and project ideas for youth and digital storytelling.
<http://www.digiclubnyc.org/index.html>
3. Multimedia Storytelling from PBS. Additional information for multimedia storytelling in the classroom.
<http://www.pbs.org/americanfamily/teacher3.html>



Ideas for Digital Storytelling

Adapted from *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* by Joe Lambert. Digital Diner Press, Berkeley, CA, 2002.

1. The Story About Someone Important
 - Character stories
“How we love, are inspired by, want to recognize, finding meaning in our relationship to, another person or even pet, is deeply important to us.”
 - Memorial stories
“Honoring and remembering people who have passed is an essential part of the process of grieving.” (How would you describe this person? Is there an event that best captures their character? What about them did you most enjoy? What lesson did they give you that you feel is important? If you had something to say to them, that they may have never heard you say, what would it be?)
2. The Story About an Event in My Life
 - Adventure stories
“All of us who travel, or go on serious adventures, know that the experience is usually an invitation to challenge ourselves, to change our perspective about our lives, to reassess.”
 - Accomplishment stories
“Accomplishment stories are about achieving a goal, like graduating from school... or being on a winning team in a sporting event.” (How did you feel during this event? What did you learn from this event? How did this event change your life?)
3. The Story About a Place in My Life
“What general experiences do you relate to this place? Was there a defining experience at the place? What lessons about yourself do you draw from your relationship to this place? If you have returned to this place, how has it changed?”
4. The Story About What I Do
“What experiences, interests, and/or knowledge in your previous life prepared you for this activity? Was there an initial event that most affected your decision to pursue this interest? Who influenced or assisted you in shaping your career, interest, or skill in this area? What has been the highlight of your vocation/avocation?”
5. Other Personal Stories
 - Recovery Stories
“Sharing the experience of overcoming a great challenge in life, like a health crisis or a great personal obstacle.”



- Love Stories
“We all want to know how someone met their partner, what it was like when the baby was born, or what our relationship is with our siblings and parents.”



Photo Essay

PowerPoint Project Ideas

- Include at least ten photos.
- Find them on the Internet or on the File Server, scan photos you bring from home, or take your own digital pictures.
- Photos and text placed well together will tell your story.

Here are some possible project ideas:

1. Family

Bring pictures of members of your family, including, if possible, different generations. Turn each picture into a slide, with text describing the person.

2. Pictures and Words

Choose a poem you like, either your own, or one written by someone else. Find or create pictures to illustrate each line.

3. School

Create a picture tour of your school. Try to help a person who has never been on campus to get a good idea of where things are, and how to find his way.

4. Special Place

Tell about a place that has a special significance for you. It could be your room, or a place in your neighborhood or somewhere else in the city, a camp, or a vacation spot.

5. A Day in My Life

Record the events of your day, from waking up to going to sleep.

6. Hobby

Is there something you really love doing? Tell all about it through pictures.

8. Other Ideas?

Please submit your original idea for approval.



PowerPoint Project

Planning Sheet for PowerPoint Project

Name: _____

Project Idea:

What pictures will tell my story:

What I will use/need to collect the pictures:

- My own digital camera
- Pictures I will bring from home to scan
- School digital camera
- Disposable camera, if available
- Photo and clipart collections
- My own drawings
- Other, please describe:

Timeline *(please OK this schedule, or mark any changes you may need):*

Storyboarding: _____

Initial project design: _____

Pictures: _____

Work on design, pictures, and story: _____

Project completed: _____

Teacher comments:



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National Standards

Digital Storytelling through PowerPoint addresses the following Technology Foundations Standards for All Students:

1. Basic operation and concepts
 - Students are proficient in the use of technology.
2. Social, ethical, and human issues
 - Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
3. Technology productivity tools
 - Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
 - Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhance models, preparing publications, and producing other creative works.



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