

# Podcasting: Viewing Research through a Technological Lens

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## **Podcasting: Viewing Research through a Technological Lens**

**Abstract:** How can technology help students look at assignments in a different way? In my fifth grade classroom, we explored the possibility of incorporating podcasting into the students' science unit on the Animal Kingdom. We put a new twist on an old research paper assignment. This paper explores the technological challenges of podcasting and the implications for instruction. It will address how we overcame challenges and continually forged ahead with this emerging technology. Through ongoing data collection and analysis, I have found that podcasting can enhance the publication process of students' work. Instead of regurgitating facts about a particular topic, podcasting created an opportunity for students to present information in a new way.

## **Description of Teaching Context**

I have had a unique pre-service experience in that I was assigned in two different self-contained fifth grade classrooms. From August to March, I spend my mornings in one class and my afternoons with the other class. In April and May, I am with one class for the entire month while I am full time student teaching. For the purpose of this paper, I will only focus on the class in which I carried out my inquiry. Before I describe the classroom in which my inquiry took place, I want to share a little background on this school district.

### **School District Information:**

Radio Park Elementary is one of ten elementary schools in the State College Area (PA) School District. It is located about one mile from the Pennsylvania State University campus. Radio Park serves a variety of students from different socioeconomic groups. The majority of students live in the surrounding neighborhoods or apartment complexes. There is a high level of parent involvement within the Radio Park's school community. Parents volunteer throughout the year to assist with book fairs, intramurals, after school programs and other school functions.

Radio Park is noted for its high test scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSAs). Fifth grade is a critical year for test taking at the elementary level because it plays a role in placement for middle school. Preparation and actual testing limits instructional time throughout the school year.

**Classroom Profile:**

There are currently 19 students in my fifth grade class: 7 girls and 12 boys. Since I began this inquiry, I had one girl transfer out and another girl transfer into this fifth grade class. The girl who transferred out was partially involved with this inquiry; the girl that transferred in did not take part in this inquiry, because we were finishing it. This did not have an impact on the project. My two learning support students did not participate in this project because it was completed during the language arts period. During this time, they go to another classroom. Another student attends Title 1 weekly but this did not affect his participation. Three students are above grade level in mathematics, reading and writing. Thirteen students would be considered “average,” performing at grade level and meeting the fifth grade district standards. There are high academic expectations for all of the students from parents, teachers and/or school district.

This group of students has interesting age-related developmental differences. Several of them are as young as possible for fifth graders and this seems to limit their maturity in some cases. After observing these students since the beginning of the academic year, it appears to me that motivation levels depend on the expectations set by the classroom teachers and the students’ interest in a particular assignment.

My mentor and I have both had an interest in technology and integrating it in the classroom. After sharing the Greenwood Furnace podcasts with him, he wondered if we could do a similar project with fifth graders. When we decided to experiment with this technology, he was willing to sit down and learn about different programs for creating podcasts. He was open to new suggestions throughout the creation process and played an active role in contacting outside sources to implement this idea.

### **School Technological Resources:**

The State College Area School District uses Macintosh computers. At Radio Park, there is a computer lab with thirty computers. Programs include Apple Works, Microsoft Office, Type to Learn, Kid Pics and iMovie. The fifth grade technology competencies involve word processing, spreadsheets and databases. The computer lab also has a smart board for teaching. In my classroom, we have three additional computers. Two of them are at the teachers' desks; the other one is located in the back corner and is rarely turned on. Projectors are available to teachers; however, they need to be signed out and returned. Because all interns have laptops for this school year, they are readily available for classroom teaching. Teachers are encouraged to use technology and receive support for using it, but resources are limited.

### **Rationale**

As our nation becomes more technologically advanced, it is imperative that teachers become more aware of the variety of resources available to further students' education. Presently, programs such as podcasting and blogging are beginning to be incorporated into classrooms across the nation, from the elementary to the college level. Because technology is a growing area of interest, many teachers are still experimenting with how to effectively integrate different types of technological resources into the classroom in ways that are motivating, yet beneficial to the students.

The use of technology allows students to engage differently in their learning in order to be more successful. With the use of a computer and a variety of software, students can create projects that target their own strengths as an individual.

Learning with educational technology means to use technology tools to enhance the construction of new knowledge and understanding. In constructivist learning approaches, students actively construct meaning from their own activities. They connect, learn to use, and test personal ideas through collaborative research and data taking with real-world events, problems and issues. (Carin, 2005, p. 320)

As a result of the technologies available in this school district, I was interested to see how this resource could serve as a motivating factor for students and how students might benefit from the integration of new technological approaches to learning.

At the beginning of my student teaching internship, the PDS community began a partnership with Apple Computers. Each intern was given a laptop for the school year with the intent of increasing the use of computer technology in the laptop. The 1-1 initiative with Apple Computers created an opportunity for me to take advantage of this resource in my own professional development.

The word 'podcasting' originates from the words iPod and broadcasting, and a podcast is best described as "radio" content, which a listener subscribes to via the internet. Once subscribed, the listener receives a new podcast as soon as it's available, which can then be played on either a computer or portable MP3 player at a time that suits them. (O'Hear, 2005, p.3)

During our fall semester, we were first introduced to the idea of "podcasting" in our science methods course. This emerging technology involves producing and publishing content that can be accessed through iTunes or web browsers. Like a radio broadcast, new episodes are added to the podcasts to keep the listener up to date with a particular topic.

The fifth grade classes in the State College Area School District take a field trip to Greenwood Furnace, a state park located in Central Pennsylvania. This trip is incorporated into the fifth grade science and social studies curriculum. For the science component of the trip, the students study pH levels and macroinvertebrates in a nearby stream. For our science methods course, we were given certain topics about the area. We researched our topics; then, we created podcasts for the fifth graders in order to provide them with background information before visiting Greenwood Furnace (See Appendix A for Greenwood Furnace Project Description).

The Greenwood Furnace Project introduced me to the idea of podcasting. While I thought it was an interesting way to present researched information, I was wondering how I could apply this technology to my own teaching practice. After sharing the Greenwood Furnaces podcasts with my mentor, he suggested incorporating the podcasting project into the fifth graders' research project on different animals in the Animal Kingdom. At the time, students were in the process of writing a research paper about their animal; however, they had to follow a three-paragraph format that included a description of the animal, its life cycle and whether or not it was endangered. Finding out whether or not the animal was endangered became challenging because not all of the books in the library included that information (See Appendix B for more information). According to Selingo (2006), learning through technology is "better than learning out of a textbook because you're actually doing something with what you learn" (p. 4). From my experience, this quote hold true depending on how the technology is being used to support student learning. Experimenting with podcasts created an opportunity for students to look at their researched information in a different way. By using an alternative form of publication, we were hoping to enrich the original assignment and encourage more active, engaged student learning.

## **Wonderings and Questions**

Initially, I was wondering how the integration of technology could increase students' motivation and engagement in different subject areas. While this wondering was a start, it was still a very broad wondering that covered many areas. Also, technology is a broad term. I needed to tweak my question in order to pinpoint the exact type of technology I would like to incorporate into the classroom and how exactly I would approach this integration process.

In January, I was chosen to represent the PDS community in Florida at the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education Conference. To attend the conference, I was asked to complete a podcasting project with my students. Ironically, I had already started working on a podcasting project with them. The question I had in mind was: *What are different ways students can publish their work?* My mentor and I were hoping to put a new twist on a previous research assignment. As a result of the conference opportunity, the classroom assignments I had completed as a student, and my own attempt to introduce podcasting to fifth graders, I began wondering about further applications in my classroom and possible effects on students as well as the difficulties I might encounter.

***My main question became:*** How can podcasting help students look at assignments in a different way?

### ***Sub-questions:***

1. What are the challenges with using computer technology in the classroom?
2. How can podcasting enhance a research paper assignment?
3. What are the implications for instruction?
4. Does podcasting engage students who are not usually engaged?

According to Dana & Silva (2003), teacher inquiry “focuses on providing insight into a teacher’s classroom practice in an effort to make change” (p. 3). As evident throughout this paper, my wondering focused on a “desire to improve or experiment with teaching strategies and teaching techniques” (Dana & Silva, p. 30). With my developing knowledge of podcasting, I wondered how this technology could be used with my fifth graders to help them look at an assignment in a different way. This was my chance to experiment with an emerging technology, to evaluate the implications of using it in my classroom, and to determine whether it would ultimately enhance student learning and my teaching.

### **Inquiry Plan Description**

#### **Timeline of Events:**

##### *November*

- Introduction to science unit of Animal Kingdom
- Students choose animal and begin research process
- Librarian shows students different sources available for research
- Students collect information about animal

##### *December*

- Students begin writing research paper
- Mentor and Intern begin brainstorming how to use podcasting as a form of publication

##### *January*

- Students finish research paper
- Mentor and Intern begin planning what the project will look like in the classroom

- **Field notes collected**
- **Emails with mentor and tech specialist collected and reviewed**

*February*

- Introduction of podcasts to students
- Mini-lessons on interviewing
- Students write scripts
- Intern records/edits podcasts
- Meetings with outside staff about technological resources available for students
- **Field notes collected**
- **Emails with mentor, tech specialist and Penn State professor reviewed**

*March*

- Intern records/edits remainder of podcasts
- **Reflective journal about using podcasting in the classroom**
- **Emails with mentor and tech specialist reviewed**

*April*

- **Student surveys collected**
- **Mentor Interview conducted and transcribed**

*May*

- Share podcasts with parents
- **Parent Feedback collected and analyzed**

## **Data Collection**

### **Reflective Journals**

As part of the student teaching experience, interns write weekly journals reflecting on different issues occurring in the classroom related to learning and teaching. I used my journals to brainstorm where I was going with this inquiry project. I paid attention to student reactions and the challenges of using podcasting with my fifth graders. I also included additional questions and concerns relating to my inquiry and modifications I could make to the project if I were to use podcasting in the future.

### **Emails**

Emailing ideas and keeping each other updated on the podcasts was another way I collected data. Most of the emails were between me, my mentor, the school principal, Helen Quinn (Instructional Tech Specialist), Jennifer Grube (User Support and Staff Development Manager) and Carla Zembal-Saul (Associate Professor of Education at Penn State). The emails ranged from passing along information about podcasting to arranging meetings to discuss the specific implications of podcasting.

### **Student Surveys**

In April, I had students fill out anonymous surveys to get their viewpoints of the podcasting project. First, I checked for their understanding of the word “podcasting.” Then, I asked the students what they liked most and least about the project. Finally, I asked if they would want to do this project again and ways to improve it in the future (refer to Appendix C).

### **Field Notes / Observations**

Throughout this inquiry, I recorded notes of student reactions to the introduction of podcasting. Documenting how students were responding to the project helped determine what was or was not going well with the project. I included several specific incidents that occurred with my students. Also, if I had an idea or question about my inquiry, I jotted it down for later reflection.

### **Mentor Interview**

I conducted a follow-up interview with my mentor after the completion of the podcasting project. First, I asked several questions about the overall goals of the original research assignment. Then, I asked him challenges he encountered and the benefits of using this type of technology (refer to Appendix B)

### **Parent Feedback**

Within the next month, I plan to send newsletters home to parents and guardians explaining the podcasting project and how they can access their child's project. I would also like to collect feedback from the parents, including their opinions of the project.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Reflective Journals**

I reviewed my reflective journals looking for evidence of the implications of the project. This served as a valuable tool because my inquiry began with a very broad topic of integrating technology into the classroom. As I began to talk about different uses of technology, the podcasting project continually came up. After reevaluating my initial wonderings, my journals directed me in a more specific direction. Looking back at my journals also allowed me to determine the progression and effectiveness of podcasting. I listed each finding and then summarized in an informal document for use in analyzing the project.

### **Emails**

The emails also served as valuable data, because I was able to record and recall ways we addressed the issues relating to the project. I saved most of my emails from my mentor, the principal, Carla, Helen Quinn and Jennifer Grube regarding the progress of the podcasting and possible installation of Garage Band onto the school's computers. By highlighting major points and areas that led to further inquiry, I used the emails to monitor how we were progressing with the project.

### **Student Surveys**

The main objective of the student survey was to find out the students' consensus regarding the podcasting project. Before the students filled out the surveys, I read each question to them. Then, I answered any questions they had about the survey. Students had the option of

including their names. All but one student chose to leave it anonymous. I chose an optional anonymous survey because I wanted to allow the students the freedom to express their ideas without worrying what I would think of their responses. It was only necessary to include their names if I wanted to follow up with any of their responses. I was interested to see how the students' viewpoints compared to my own and to my mentor's opinions (See Appendix D for Student Responses). These surveys were additional evidence to support what I had found in my journals and field notes. I pulled out specific responses from each of the surveys so I could compare the students' response to each of the questions. Then, I reviewed each question and the different responses looking for patterns of consistency or inconsistency among the students.

### **Field Notes / Observations**

I referred back to my field notes to see how my thinking was developing during this inquiry. I began with a very broad question in mind. By recording ideas and happenings in the classroom, I was able to use this information to narrow down my initial wondering to a more specific one. By referring back to my field notes and looking for alternative ways to approach different challenges and situations throughout the inquiry process, I was able to find answers to some of my questions about podcasting with my students. Also, I recorded several of my students' behaviors and reactions to certain aspects of the project. These notes allowed me to analyze what might have caused these students to behave in a particular way.

### **Mentor Interview**

While my mentor and I have been exchanging ideas and advice about the project, this was a chance for me to get his formal opinion of the overall project. The interview helped

clarify the initial goals. Also, it filled me in on things I missed while I was with my other class. I read over his responses and compared them with my journal and field notes.

### **Parent Feedback**

In the next month, I hope to share with parents and guardians the final podcasting project. I am interested in their knowledge of podcasts and in their perception of the project. It will be interesting to compare their feedback with the information I have gathered from the students, my mentor and my own notes.

### **Claims and Evidence**

For this section of the paper, I am going to revisit the sub-questions of my inquiry.

#### **1. What are the challenges with using computer technology in the classroom?**

##### ***Claim:***

*The challenges we faced were space and time constraints. However, it is important to note that every school has a different context in terms of technology and therefore individual challenges may be different than these. Considering space and time carefully at the beginning of a technology project may give teachers the flexibility to meet whatever challenges they face when using technology.*

Being prepared to address challenges with computer technologies allows teachers to assess the situation and to make necessary modifications. The teacher can examine the issue and develop an appropriate plan of action to successfully carry out a project with the particular

computer technology. Throughout the inquiry process, I kept track of the challenges that I encountered when creating the podcasts. Repeatedly, these challenges were associated with space and time.

*Evidence: Space Challenge*

Space was a challenge because there were limited areas in the building to record the podcasts. When students responded to the survey question, “What did you like least about podcasting?” two of my students said, “Having to redo parts because of background noise” and “when you messed up and had to start over.” Their responses matched my own observations of the problems we encountered because we had limited space for recording.

Because every room in my school is utilized for classroom teaching or special services, it is difficult finding a quiet place for recording. Taking note of this issue allowed my mentor and I to brainstorm different ways to get around this challenge. We moved from the computer lab to the hallway. When other students or teachers were in either of these locations, it delayed the recording process because I thought we needed a studio type setting or complete silence. Because we had to find quiet rooms to record podcasts for the science methods course, I thought this would apply for my fifth grade students as well.

Instead of letting this challenge hinder the process, we used it as a strategic tool to know where and when it was possible to record effectively and efficiently. After experimenting with different locations in the building, my mentor asked, “Why can’t we use Writer’s Lab because students are writing/publishing material?” This idea eventually led us back to our own classroom. Writer’s Lab was a solution to the space issue. (Appendix E gives specific

information on what challenges we faced for space, how it was solved, and how we approached the space problem.)

As evident in Appendix E, the space challenge did have a positive impact on the students. Many were with me when we were interrupted in the hallway or when we had trouble finding a vacant classroom; therefore, they understood the importance of silence when we finally resorted to recording the podcasts in Writer's Lab. It may be important for future projects to note that while there is slight background noise in the podcasts recorded in Writer's Lab, it does not disrupt the overall flow of the podcasts.

#### *Evidence: Time Challenge*

Another challenge we faced was finding the right time to record the podcasts. Several factors played into this problem. Because I have two mentors, my time is already limited between each class. Since I was only recording with my one mentor's class, the recording could only be done at certain parts of the day. Also, PSSA and district testing were occurring between the months of February and March. There were days in which podcasting was completely ruled out because students were preparing or actually testing (Appendix F gives specific information on what challenges we faced for time and how it was solved).

At first, we recorded the podcasts during STAR (Silent Time Assigned Reading). This is a thirty-minute reading period in between recess and the afternoon subjects. Due to space, we either recorded in the computer lab or the hallway. While these two locations worked out for a while, it made the recording process longer when we were in the hallway because many students and teachers continuously pass through going to specials, recess or other classes. Finally, we decided to record the podcasts during Writer's Lab. This is usually a thirty to forty five minute

period for writing. By using Writer's Lab, we were able to gain time and space. If students were finished with recording, they worked on a writing assignment. If students still had to record their podcasts, this was their opportunity.

When I reviewed my field notes, I came across an incident towards the end of the project. One of the students who had been last to record was getting upset because I had not recorded his podcast yet. At this point, we had been attempting to record all of the podcasts for the past month. I tried explaining to him that it is a long process and we only have so much time in the day to work on the podcasts. His recording got delayed once again because we ran out of time during Writer's Lab on the day he was scheduled to record. I overheard him saying to his friend that I kept delaying his turn to record. I'm not sure if he understood that we had limited amount of time during the day. While this was a minor incident, the time constraint had this particular student questioning whether he would ever record his podcast. Because all of the students were excited when we introduced the podcasting project back in January (refer to Appendix G for field notes), it is important to keep up the momentum of the recording process so students don't lose their enthusiasm about it.

## **2. How can podcasting enhance a research paper assignment?**

### Claim:

*Podcasting can be used to help students look at assignments in a new way. When teachers develop a purpose for using podcasts, they enrich their own assignments. For this particular inquiry, podcasting was used as an alternative form of publication, allowing students to use more creativity with their researched information.*

Before teachers introduce podcasting into their classroom, they need to determine a purpose for podcasting and an audience for sharing. These two elements are key for using podcasting effectively. Once the teacher has established a purpose and an audience, students can use podcasting to approach the assignment from a different perspective.

Evidence:

There is some interesting evidence in the literature that supports this claim. For instance, O’Hear (2005) says

While on the surface students are working with audio, producing a podcast involves written work, too. Bearing in mind that most podcasts require a script, it’s not replacing the written word. In fact, it’s the opposite because kids need to redraft to make it fit the time slot they are given [to record]. (p.3)

The original goal of this lesson, to write a report on an animal in the Animal Kingdom, was achieved by the students. The podcasting did not take away from the goal of researching and writing a report; it actually enhanced the project because it gave students an opportunity to publish their information in two different formats.

My mentor’s fifth grade class did not complete this particular assignment last year; however, he did a similar project when he taught in third grade. My mentor told me that in his third grade class, “students had to look in one book and write five fascinating facts about an animal. Then, students drew pictures of the animal in its habitat” (Rodger Smith, Interview, 2006, April 7). Because the fifth grade unit involves the study of the Animal Kingdom, he had the opportunity to adapt an original idea for his students. Not only did he adapt, he expanded the possibility of the publication process when podcasting was introduced to him. He said he “likes the idea of working intensely with research and then publishing different ways.”

There was a motivational element for producing podcasts. After introducing the podcasts, students worked on their scripts for several days so they could record them. When I would return early from lunch, students would ask when we were going to record their podcasts. To me, this was a sign that interviewing an animal and/or working with a new technology interested the students (See Appendix G for field notes). Also, students were writing for a larger audience. Selingo (2006) found the same thing happening. He says,

their audience had moved to the entire world. The students find that exciting.

It's a lot more motivating to write something that the whole world can hear, rather than just something for a teacher to put a grade on. (p. 4)

Podcasts make students' work available to family, friends and the general public. Students shared that podcasting:

- *Is taping talking on a computer and putting it on the internet for people to listen and learn about what you are talking about*
- *Is making a recording, in this case about animals, that you put on the internet for others to listen to*

(See Appendix D for more responses from the Student Survey)

Podcasting created an opportunity for my students to approach the publication process in a different way. Not only were they creating a piece of work to share with my mentor and me, it was going to be available for others to listen to as well.

### 3. What are the implications for instruction?

*Claim: The integration of computer technology may affect the teacher's instructional practices.*

Challenges create opportunities for teachers to further their professional development. When teachers are active in the learning process, they seek out additional information from a variety of resources to enhance their own knowledge of the subject or situation. In the end, teachers' discoveries can positively impact the learning community.

*Evidence:*

Students used an interviewing format to create their podcasts. However, students needed direction on how to conduct an interview since this was a new skill. Before interviewing could be introduced to the students, the teachers needed to provide background knowledge of interviewing skills, such as how to ask and respond to questions. My mentor found a website that included mini-lessons on interviewing. He used role-play activities to help students think about the difference between open, closed, and leading questions (refer to Appendix H for Interviewing Lesson). Both students and teachers benefited from these mini-lessons. My mentor now has a better knowledge of how to teach interviewing to students in the future. My students had the chance to practice and to write their own interviews using the strategies they learned from the interviewing lessons. When I listened to the podcasts, it was evident that the mini-lessons helped the students develop questions that required more than a "yes" or "no" response. Also, the students' surveys confirmed the effectiveness of the lessons. Students shared that the interview lessons:

- *Helped with proper level of funny facts – it helped me balance it out*

- *Helped because you knew after the lessons what questions were appropriate and when is a good place to ask them*
- *Helped a lot because they really made you think, "Is this a good question?"*

(See Appendix D for more responses from the Student Survey)

Interviewing skills would not have been necessary in the original lesson. Without the technology addition to the assignment, we would not have taught this skill.

Getting Dr. Zembal-Saul and the district's tech specialist involved with this project created more opportunities to expand our emerging ideas about podcasting. For the first two podcasts, I was working with an older version of Garage Band. Making the audio files compatible for the internet was an extremely meticulous process. If codes were entered incorrectly, the conversion would not happen. When Dr. Zembal-Saul finally finished the first two, she sent them to iTunes where they are currently being hosted (See Appendix I for iTunes Confirmation). Dr. Zembal-Saul's involvement led to an easier conversion process when my laptop was upgraded to a new version of Garage Band and iWeb which puts together the RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed. With these updates programs, an audio file can be converted into a podcasts within a few clicks. The availability of these resources sped up the timing of the project. This is another example of how my own capabilities have changed, in that I can now use the most advanced version of this technology.

Hosting the podcasts was another issue. Being in contact with the tech specialist, she was able to find additional district server space (germanium) for my mentor to host the podcasts. Since Penn State provides all students with server space, I was able to load the podcasts onto my personal webpage. Along with the server space, we asked if it was possible to get Garage Band on all of the computers in the lab. If this program was readily available for the students, it would

be easier to get them involved with the technical aspect of the project. After discussing the potential installment of Garage Band at an after school meeting, the program was placed on all of the computers several weeks later (See Appendix J for Garage Band Installation email). This is an aspect of the project we did not consider at the beginning. The availability of the software could have created more opportunities for students to be more involved in the editing process. It would have also helped the teacher have a better understanding of the program, since he/she would have to teach the students how to use it. Learning how to acquire access to additional technology and learning how to teach students to use it increased my own professional skill base.

This inquiry has impacted my future instructional practices as well. While the students were using an alternative method to publish their work, the teachers gained more insight into what lessons needed to be taught and what resources needed to be available to make this project a success. Normally, a teacher would not need to engage in this level of technology. Because the resources were available, this was a chance to take advantage of them.

Learning how to use this technology has impacted practice. Because podcasting is an emerging technology in education, this project offered an opportunity to experiment with it. Saving the emails and my own journals, as well as the interview with my mentor, helped me gain these insights. Since I would have this evidence for future years, I could always go back and remember some of the issues and how we handled them. Having this prior knowledge will allow me to focus more on the students' involvement and publication if I were to use this technology again. Summarizing these issues for this inquiry will help when I implement future technology-related instruction.

#### **4. Does podcasting engage students who are not usually engaged?**

I did not collect a sufficient amount of data on student engagement to make a valid claim about this subquestion. If I did this project again, I would need observations of students' engagement levels with other classroom activities in order to make a comparison with the podcasting project. Because the original research assignment was not done in the past, I cannot compare student engagement levels between the last two years either.

Although I do not have firm data about engagement levels, I still am interested in how this technology can engage students who are not usually engaged in school. I already have ideas about how to integrate podcasting in the future. I am now more prepared for some of the challenges that I may face and have to overcome to effectively use this technology. If I were to do this again, I would focus more on student engagement during the different stages of the project. I could keep track of my students' on-task behaviors while they are researching information, writing scripts, recording and not recording (provided that the recording occurred during a Writer's Lab). Audio and/or video recordings of the students' work behavior would allow me to analyze their interactions. Also, I would like to receive more student feedback throughout the process rather than just at the end to get a better idea about their perspective of podcasting.

## Conclusion

I have some concluding information to share about my initial question: *How can technology help students look at assignments in a different way?* Based on the student surveys, all of my students would do the podcasting project again. When asked, “If we did this project all over again, would you rather write a report about your animal or record an interview with your animal? Please explain your choice,” student responses clearly showed they preferred the podcasting, even though they were required to write before they could record. I was more interested in why they chose writing or recording. One of my students responded, “There was more than just writing words, you had to make it funny and interesting, plus make it informational which is what I liked” (See Appendix D for Student Survey Responses). Based on this statement, more was happening in the creation process than just regurgitating facts. The students had to capture the attention of their audience, yet be informative at the same time. The project required them to think about the information. “It (podcasts) teaches them to do research, to communicate in print, to speak effectively and grab attention with sound” (Selingo, 2006, p.4).

My mentor “liked the idea of working intensely with research and then publishing it in different ways” (See Appendix B for Mentor Interview). Podcasting allowed the students to use an alternative publishing method to display their work. The students had more freedom for creativity. While they were still informing their listeners about the animal, students used humor or music to spice up their podcast. Instead of just regurgitating facts about their animal, students constructed podcasts that enhanced information in their original paper.

I would be willing to do this project again. Experimenting with podcasting this year gave me an opportunity to focus on the challenges that occur when integrating a new type of technology into the classroom. I used problem-solving strategies to solve these challenges

instead of letting them hinder the project. Publication is just one way to use podcasting with students. I am interested to learn more about how to effectively use this technology with elementary students in my future teaching practices.

### **New Wonderings**

Throughout the entire inquiry process, I was always questioning how the integration of podcasting would work with my fifth grade class. Looking back at my field notes and journals, my ideas were continually emerging as I worked with my mentor, students and other staff from Penn State and State College Area School District. In January, my wonderings were very direct. “How long will recording take?” “Where can we find a quiet place to record?” “If Garage Band was on district computers, could students learn how to use the program?” With time, the first two questions were answered. The third question is in the process of being answered. After meeting with the instructional tech specialist and introducing her to Garage Band, I suggested that it would be helpful if the program were on the district computers so students can access the files and do some of the editing themselves. She talked with the User Support and Staff Management Director and they were able to install Garage Band on all of the computers at my elementary school. Now that the program is available, the next step is to teach students how to use the program. When I worked with some of my students, they already had experience with Garage Band because older brothers and/or sisters use it to record music. Having this knowledge, I believe my students are capable of being actively involved in the creation process. ***My question now is:*** How will my students in my next class be able to adapt to this technology and what type of resources will be available?

**My new wonderings include –**

- *How do I design and implement a podcasting project in a one-teacher classroom?*
- *How do I make podcasting more student-driven?*
- *What are the long-term benefits of using podcasting?*
- *Does podcasting engage students in the learning process?*

Now that I have completed my first set of podcasts, I am wondering how to design and implement this project when there is only one teacher in the classroom. After going through the entire process once and finding out what does and does not work, I have a better idea of challenges, such as space, time and resources, that need to be considered and planned out beforehand. Also, having the support of the technology staff and principal creates more opportunities to forge ahead with the project. However, it will be different when I do not have an extra person in the classroom to work with students one-on-one like I did this year. I am wondering how to effectively integrate this project in my classroom with only one teacher.

I am also wondering how to make podcasting more student-driven. While students had the freedom to create their own scripts, they were to include all of the information from their research papers. I did most of the technical parts – editing and converting audio files to podcasts. How tech savvy my students are and what types of resources are available will determine the level of technical involvement from students. If students do not have technical backgrounds, should I take time from the curriculum to teach them?

What are the long-term benefits of using this technology? Determining the benefits of this project could answer additional questions. Was teaching extra skills, such as interviewing, important or did we waste time that could be used teaching content or other subjects? Is this

emerging technology a valuable skill that students will be required to know later on in their educational career? As I continue my professional development, I hope to continue my exploration of this emerging technology in the elementary school setting.

### **Final Thoughts**

Original Inquiry Question: *How can technology help students look at assignments in a different way?*

As I look back on this inquiry, I have gained valuable knowledge about looking at an assignment in a different light. Podcasting is just one type of technology that can be integrated into the classroom to support student learning in new ways. For this inquiry, it allowed students to use the publication process to produce products with similar information in two different ways. When I have my own classroom next year, I hope to continue my exploration with this emerging technology. By experimenting with podcasting this year, I have seen the challenges that may arise throughout the project and how to handle them. This initial inquiry has established the groundwork for future implementations using technology to enrich the curriculum.

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## *Greenwood Furnace Project*

Each fall, as part of their science and social studies curriculum, 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in SCASD take a field trip to Greenwood Furnace (GWF). The science component of the trip requires them to investigate the question, “How healthy is the stream?” PDS interns support this trip by accompanying students to GWF and facilitating two investigation stations – (1) pH and turbidity, and (2) temperature and macro-invertebrates.

During Jump Start, our class will visit GWF and participate in the investigation of the stream as learners. This will allow you to experience the field trip, as the students will. You will have an opportunity to sign-up for a particular date and station well in advance. To prepare for the trip, you will work in small groups to do some background research on your station and modify an existing lesson plan for your station. After all interns have completed the trip, we will reflect on what was learned from the experience through in-class discussion and a blog assignment.

### **GWF BACKGROUND RESEARCH PODCAST (10%)**

This assignment will introduce you to an emerging technology for producing and publishing content. You will be doing background research associated with the Greenwood Furnace field trip, preparing a brief script for a radio-type broadcast for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, and recording/producing the show.

In this assignment, you will need to research, write and produce an audio program that has solid content intended to enhance the 5<sup>th</sup> grade unit, is concise (5-7 minutes in length), is age appropriate for 5<sup>th</sup> graders, is interesting and engaging (question driven), and includes supplemental materials (script, pictures, maps, graphs, etc.).

You will work in small groups organized around the following topics:

- Measuring water quality: Temperature and macros
- Measuring water quality: pH and turbidity
- Geology of central PA (and its influence on water quality)
- History of the iron industry in PA (and its influence on water quality)
- The central PA watershed
- Ecosystems (plants and animals and their influence on water quality)
- Agriculture and recreation (and their influence on water quality)

[http://www.ed.psu.edu/pds/03mentor\\_resources/2005\\_SCIED458pdsvf1.pdf](http://www.ed.psu.edu/pds/03mentor_resources/2005_SCIED458pdsvf1.pdf)

## Questions about the Podcasting Project (with mentor 04/07/06)

1. *What was the goal of the original lesson (animal research reports)?*
  - The animal part was to write a report on an animal in the Animal Kingdom
  
2. *How were the animals assigned to the students?*
  - Went to Library - would it support the research project? - Had an idea it would because he did similar report in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
  - Knew of Zoo Books and Nature Children
  - Worked with Librarian and explained what he wanted to do; wrote up lesson plan and shared with her
  - She looked for books and resources to support the project
  - Students picked animals out of a hat
  - Put the names of animals that library could support on board for students to see; then, kids picked out of hat
  
3. *When students were researching information about their specific animal, was the goal to learn certain characteristics of their animal or how to write a research paper?*
  - Write research paper – was specific about what paper would be about
  - Description of animal, life cycle and whether or not it was endangered (this ended up being a tough part b/c not all of the books included this last piece of info)
  
4. *What if students found all of their information from one source? How were they encouraged to use multiple sources?*
  - Told students they couldn't find all of their information from one source – direct
  - A lot of reading in easy books before moving to grade and higher level books (i.e. encyclopedias)
  - Could read the harder material once you had background knowledge from 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade books
  
5. *Was this lesson done in the past? If so, was it structured by the teacher? How?*
  - No, not exactly this way
  - In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students had to look in one book and write 5 fascinating facts about animal; draw picture of animal in habitat (background)
  - Didn't do this last year (animal research w/ 5<sup>th</sup> graders)
  - Librarian taught research skills – first, read; then, write
  - Here's where things are; extended – going out on internet and writing bibliography
  - In art, they were going to be making animal puppets- students would need some background info
  - Idea of podcasting and writing scripts about their animals was beginning to fall into place
  - Serendipity

6. *Where did the idea of podcasting come from? Or Why podcasting?*

- Wanted to do more with expository writing and reading
- Then Kristen came and shared Greenwood Furnace (GWF) podcasts
- Already had an idea about what were podcasts (could download); liked podcasts they are interviews
- Wondered... “Could 5<sup>th</sup> graders do this?” - Probably not... too much technology...take a while to practice
- Kristen shared that interns did it on Garage Band (GB)... knew a little bit about GB because son used it before
- Never thought about 5<sup>th</sup> graders doing podcasts until I talked about how it wasn’t as complicated as it seems
- Have them “interview” animals – write scripts to show the things that fell together
- Found website of how to introduce how to write an interview – lead questions, follow up questions, open/closed ended questions
- Learning about it as we were went along
- Suspended final evaluation until we see where it went
- Would it be useful in own teaching practice?
- Carla, Tech Specialist and Principal got involved / supported idea; email chains to keep each other posted on progress
- Intern – recording interviews

7. *What were some of the challenges that occurred during this project?*

- Like... “Teaching a dog new tricks”
- Didn’t know where anything was going
- Made arrangements to meet with people (Tech Specialist, Carla) to learn more
- Kept trying to forge ahead
- Didn’t know if we could do this? Or if school district supported it
- Challenge of paradigm of trying something new – tech staff had to get on board – had to get Helen up to speed with what podcasting was
- Question – should students do this?
- Thought we needed a studio type of environment – Helen said another District Instructional specialist listen to ones that kids did made and there was background sound
- This is different from just recording
- Publication of writing / recording
- Why can’t we use writer’s lab b/c students are writing/publishing material?
- Wanted to ask permission to buy ipod for podcasts, but wasn’t sure if it was going to work out – so dropped idea
- Podcasting - same idea as recording w/tape just different technologies

8. *What were the benefits from using this type of technology?*

- Students wrote research paper which made it easier for them to write more creative script about animal – helped with students’ background knowledge
- Background Knowledge – art – sketching; library – reading; writing class – certain format for writing – easier for students to be more creative since they already have that knowledge
- Easier to write script
- Using their research and publishing it several different ways in the future – paper, podcast, what else?
- A lot of things came from it – drop box, public box, space on district server germanium
- Like idea of working intensely w/ research and then publishing different ways
- Learned about teaching interviews – benefit personally
- Kids seems excited about podcasts – even weeks later when we did podcasts
- Next year – wants to push students more and be more demanding of technicalities of script
- Next year – will have a better sense of what to do with project
- Kids benefited –
  1. Helped that took technology class – don’t just regurgitate info, can you add creative aspect to it, can you find a new way to present it
  2. This idea will be beneficial for the students in the future b/c they had experience taking info and turning it into a new project / product
  3. Students are more visually oriented
- What benefits did I get out of it!!!
- Be better if we could get students more involved in the editing process instead of just writing script and recording voices
- Kristen had the chance to see the challenges / anguishes of trying to experiment with this project

## Student Survey – Podcasting

Directions: Please respond to the following questions below. You do not need to write your name on this unless you say yes to the last question. When you are finished, turn it over and read silently! Thank you! ☺

What is podcasting?

What did you like most about the podcasting project?

What did you like least about the podcasting project?

How did the mini lessons on interviewing help you write your scripts?

If we did this project all over again, would you rather write a report about your animal or record an interview with your animal? Please explain your choice.

If we did a podcasting project again, how can we make it more interesting for you?

If I have more questions, would I be able to talk with you during STAR?  
YES or NO

If you said YES, please write your name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks again!! ☺

## Student Responses – Podcasting Survey

Given: Thursday, April 6, 2006 (after morning meeting)

Total Number of student surveys: 16

- 2 students – Learning Support / Didn't participate in project
- 1 student – New to school a couple weeks ago / Didn't participate in project

What is podcasting?

- It's when you record information, but instead it is a radio show (kinda)
- It is when you post an article on the internet which people can download
- Podcasting is making a recording, in this case about animals that you put on the internet for others to listen to
- Podcasting is when you write a script about anything and then you record it
- Podcasting is taping talking on a computer and putting it on the internet for people to listen and learn about what you are talking about
- When you interview someone then put it on the internet
- It is an educational documentary that is done electronically
- Podcasting is a recording at anything like an interview
- Recording anything you want to on the computer
- Podcasting is a commercial on the computer for people to entertain themselves from listening to it
- It's when you record someone's voice and just recording, not videotaping. When you listen to it, you hear that person's voice and if you want you can download it to an iPod
- Podcasting is recording an interview on iTunes
- Recording information
- Podcasting is basically interviewing someone and then people can download the podcasts and listen to them
- Podcasting is when you do something like a short educational slide show
- Voice recording of an informational play/skit

What did you like most about the podcasting project?

- Picking out music (IIIIII)
- Recording with a friend/partner (IIII)
- Recording interview on computer
- Recording podcast and making voices sound funny
- Reading scripts and recording on laptop
- The interview part because it was a bit humorous and it was really fun
- Sometimes funny bloopers happened

- Final voice recording because we finally go to hear ourselves on tape

What did you like least about the podcasting project?

- Writing the script (IIIIIIII)
  - It was hard to remember all of the facts
  - It was a long process
- Having to redo parts because of background noise
- Filling out survey and writing script
- When you messed up and had to start over
- Picking the music - it was a hard choice
- My voice when it recorded me
- I really didn't like waiting to do my recording because I was one of the last people, then it got messed up, then I had to wait to do it again

How did the mini lessons on interviewing help you write your scripts?

- They helped me see what you should do during an interview
- They helped me gain my confidence and my ability to speak up
- It helped me add small funny parts, but still stay focused
- They helped with the proper level of funny and facts - it helped me balance it out
- It helped because you knew after the lessons what questions were appropriate and when is a good place to ask them
- Gave me ideas to make it better
- I think that it helped a lot because I used to just ask question after question in my interviews
- Showed us how to write our reports with excitement, but very informational
- They helped me write follow up questions
- It helped by letting us write follow-up questions and talking loud enough so our voices would be clear
- Yes, because we actually had a better idea of how to interview which would help us a lot
- It gave me most of my ideas
- It helped me write more open-ended questions
- The mini lessons really helped me because we learned the basics which was helpful
- It gave me a way of asking questions other than saying No or Yes\
- They helped a lot because they really made you think, "Is this a good question?"

If we did this project all over again, would you rather write a report about your animal or record an interview with your animal? Please explain your choice.

- Record interview (IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII)
  - Fun way to learn facts about different animals! (IIIIII)
  - Get to work with a partner (II)
  - I think people get the point better if they can listen to it rather than just read it
  - Adds fun to learning
  - Better at writing interviews than writing reports
  - A report is kind of dull and not that exciting, just information, but recording, even if it's just information, is still really fun
  - More enjoyable
  - There was more than just writing words, you had to make it funny and interesting, plus make it informational which is what I liked
  - Stick with the podcasts because you can have fun with them; reports can be dull and boring

If we did a podcasting project again, how can we make it more interesting for you?

- Student picks their own animal instead of picking out of a hat (II)
- Less script questions
- It was fun!
- Maybe do a quick skit
- Work more with the voices and music
- Video tape interview with our puppets (II)
- Make it so everyone doesn't have to wait so long to get done
- Working in groups of 3
- Have a few books of each mammal or rodent
- Get some more information by checking out books at a public library - our library doesn't have enough books on animals

**Excerpt from Reflective Journal about Space Challenge (04/01/06)**

*Initially, my mentor and I thought that the background of a podcast had to be completely silent. When I recorded them for our SCIED class, it was suggested for us to find a quiet space anywhere in Park Forest Elementary to record them. Each group had their own classroom to themselves. This space eliminated possible background noises. In a classroom, the background noises could range from students asking questions, sharpening their pencils, announcements on the loud speaker, students or teachers dropping in to ask a question, etc.*

*The first podcast for my project was recorded out in the computer lab where we had complete silence. Of course, on one of the days, there were technology assistants in the room working on the computers. The second podcast was recorded in the hallway at the top of the ramp... bad place! There are always students and teachers walking up and down the ramps from the ground floor to the first floor to the second floor. We were recording during STAR (silent time assigned reading) so students were coming in and out from recess and lunch. In a 30-minute period, we were only able to record about half of the 1 – 2 minute podcast. The next group of podcasts was recorded in the computer lab, but our time was cut because the computer lab was already signed out weeks in advanced. We were trying to squeeze in 20 minutes here and there when possible. This helped me pick up the speed of the recording process. However, if students made mistakes, instead of correcting and deleting right then and there, I would just have them continue recording and do the editing myself later that night.*

*The last set of podcasts was recorded during a writing class. At this point, my mentor and I accepted the fact that the podcasts are created for students by students in schools, so it was okay if there was background noise (as long as it didn't disrupt or take away from the actual interview). It actually went fairly well. By this time, about half of the class already recorded their podcasts and understood the importance of being quiet while others were recording. Many of the students experienced a time when they were interrupted while recording and how it affected the process. Even groups that had to practice the speaking component of the project beforehand sat far away from the "studio" (desks where we were recording) and talked in a whisper to each other. Knowing my own class, I don't think this would have worked out as well if they didn't experience some of the frustrations like people talking loudly or interrupting while recording.*

**Excerpt from Reflective Journal about Time Issue (04/01/06)**

*The sharing of mentors did cause a small problem, nothing too big. From the beginning of the year, my mentors have been very respectful about not having me do things for them when I am not with them. I think this is part of the reason that the sharing of mentors (at least for me) works out so well. Both know that they have me in their classroom at certain times during the day. When I am not there, they aren't relying on me or asking me to do things for them since they know I have additional responsibilities in the other classroom. While I maybe should have been a bit more assertive about recording the podcasts at certain times during the day regardless of which mentor I was with, I didn't want to disrupt the balance that was already established. STAR was a time to fit in one or two recordings. However, in my one mentor's class, I usually had responsibilities at this time – whether it was reading with students, helping them with a project or preparing for the upcoming lesson.*

*Aside from my time, there is just not enough time in the school day! Especially at fifth grade and this time of the year (February and March), teachers are still preparing the students for the PSSA testing. While we want to introduce new ideas into the curriculum, the bottom line is the tests count and cannot be avoided. Therefore, while we would like to have x amount of writing or silent reading during the day, so we can just record the podcasts in the classroom, that isn't the way the school system works. In the end, teachers are accountable for the progress of the students. So, while my project may be important to a course or just exciting for the students, there are things in the day that have to happen and cannot be put on hold.*

# Teaching Interviewing Skills Through Story Games

by Doug Lipman

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## Why Games to Teach Interviewing?

Years ago, I worked in a program which paired children and elders. The children were to meet with the elders and elicit some of their life-stories. My job was to prepare the children for their role as interviewers.

How would I do this? I had no idea!

I remembered, however, my experiences being interviewed by students for their class newspapers. Time and again, the students would appear with a carefully compiled list of questions to ask me. They might begin with a question like, "How did you become a storyteller?" I might answer, "Well, I began by telling stories to my younger brother...."

Then they'd continue with the second question on their list. "Did you ever tell stories as a child?" I'd be furious! Hadn't they listened to my first answer?

Based on these experiences, I knew I wanted the students to learn to ask questions, not from a list, but from what they had just heard. How could I help them learn that skill and get practice at it? It seemed that a game might be the best way.

So I created a first game and tried it out. Then I brought in some elders for the children to interview. Oops! A new difficulty presented itself. So I created another game to deal with this second issue. By the time I had worked with a few groups in this way, I had a half-dozen games that seemed to prepare the students well enough.

In the process of trying to articulate what the children needed to learn, I realized that interviewing skills are similar to story-crafting skills.

In both story crafting and interviewing, you complete the story in your mind through your own activity. In crafting a story, you *decide* what more to imagine; in interviewing, you ask questions to fill in what you need to make a complete imagined picture.

I have used these games with students in grades 4 through 8 (ages 9 through 13). All but one uses me as the subject. This lets me:

- . Make the game more lively
- 0. Educate the students through my responses.

## Closed-ended and Open-ended Questions

A good interviewer uses two different kinds of questions, each with an appropriate purpose. Closed-ended questions require specific answers, such as "Yes," "No," or "I was ten years old." Open-ended questions call for non-specific answers; they often invite the teller to tell more stories.

Here are some examples of closed-ended questions:

*"Did you like school?"*

*"What was your sister's name?"*

*"How old were you when you got your first job?"*

These, on the other hand, are open-ended questions:

*"What were some things you liked about school?"*

*"What sorts of games did you and your sister play together?"*

*"What was it like for you to stop school and go to work?"*

Closed-ended questions are useful for extracting particular information. If the interviewer is confused about when something happened, a closed-ended question gets the answer quickly.

Close-ended questions can help a shy interviewee get started. Some experienced interviewers always begin an interview by asking a few closed-ended questions whose answers will be "yes." This can put the interviewee at ease enough to answer a more open-ended question.

Closed-ended questions are also useful for stopping a story that goes on too long. A series of closed-ended questions requiring only a yes or no answer will almost certainly cause anyone to stop offering information freely.

Open-ended questions, conversely, start the flow of narrative. As a result, they are more useful to the interviewer who wants to elicit stories. Young interviewers, especially, tend to need instruction in the art of the open-ended question.

## What Fairy Tale Character Am I?

This story-game has two goals: to sensitize interviewers to the flow-stopping effect of closed-ended questions; and to encourage interviewers to ask questions based on what they have just heard.

I begin the game with the following explanation:

*This is a guessing game. I will pretend to be a character from a fairy tale. Your job will be to guess who I am. You can ask me questions about my life, and I'll answer them. But there are two special kinds of questions in this game. One special kind of question is the "yes/no" question. These questions can be answered with just one word, "yes," or "no." Every time you ask me one of these questions, I get a point on the blackboard. If I get five points, I win the game. Another kind of question is the "follow-up" question. A follow-up question asks about something I just said. Every time someone asks a follow-up question, you get a point on the board. Every time you get three points, you can make one guess about who I am.*

The game proceeds with me answering questions as though I am, say, Rapunzel. My job is not only to answer the questions, but also to judge the correct amount of information to give. With younger children, I might be quite forth coming. With older or more experienced interviewers, on the other hand, I might give evasive answers that conceal as much information as possible. In either case, my primary goal is not to fool the players, but to point out effective questions when they ask them.

## **The Hidden Mystery**

As an interviewer, I have often found myself sure that I had stumbled on a significant story, but could not quite elicit it from the interviewee. For example, I once interviewed a 10-year-old student in front of her class, as a demonstration for them of how to interview.

The student was telling how she had left her home in the Caribbean some years before. The scene of her departure for the United States seemed important to me, but her description of it lacked any feeling or sense of story line. Finally, I began to imagine the scene in detail. I asked her exactly where she was when she said goodbye to her family. I asked her what time of day it was.

Finally, I asked who was present. When she answered, I noticed she omitted her sister. When I asked, "Where was your sister," she told us: her sister had gone to school already, and she never got to say goodbye to her.

This was the significant part of the story, but I could only elicit it by carefully imagining every aspect of the entire scene. To help students develop this skill, I tell them:

*I'm going to tell you a story that has a hidden mystery in it. Everything about the story is ordinary, except one thing.*

*You have to ask me questions until you get me to tell you the one unusual thing.*

*Try to imagine the entire scene. It may help if you think about questions that start with words like "who, when, or where."*

Then, I respond to their questions, gradually telling a story about a day when I had a tea party for some of my friends - and one of my friends was a pink rhinoceros. When they force me to describe the pink rhino, they have won the game. As usual, I comment on perceptive and helpful questions as they ask them.

## **Before & After**

A good interviewer not only elicits stories, but also extends the stories by exploring themes.

For example, if the interviewee has just told a story about a childhood quarrel with a brother, the interviewer might pursue the theme by asking, "Were there other times you two quarreled? Tell me about them." If that question leads to a series of stories about rousing good arguments, the interviewer might eventually ask, "Do you two still fight?"

In this way, the interviewer responds to a story by extending one of its themes back to its beginnings and up to its end, or at least to its status in the present.

To help students develop this more advanced interviewing skill, I might tell them a true story from my life, for example about the time I accidentally threw a stone through a car windshield, and then was so frightened I lied about having done it. The story I tell should seem complete in itself, but also have several possible themes in it.

Then, I encourage the students to ask me "before" questions or "after" questions that develop a theme in my story. Examples might include, "Tell us about the first time you ever lied," or "Was there a time after that when you got that scared again? Tell us about it." For each appropriate theme-building question, I give them a point for "before" or for "after". When they have reached, say, 5 points in each column, I declare them the winners!

## **The Awful Interviewer**

To highlight over-all interview decorum once the students have played all of the other games, I will role-play being the worst interviewer I can be.

With a student volunteer as interviewee, I will ask a series of closed-ended questions without taking into account - or even waiting for - the answers. I will start to talk about my own experiences at length. I will give advice or speak judgmentally about what the interviewee says. I may even insult the interviewee or get distracted by something in the environment.

After the brief demonstration, I ask the students to describe some of awful things I did.

## **Next Steps**

After learning these games, a group will probably be ready to practice interviewing a volunteer accomplice, such as a teacher or the principal. During the interview, if necessary, I can offer reminders about a principle or two that they may have forgotten in their excitement. Later, I can offer the group appreciations about their interviewing.

After a successful interview or two with me present, the students can be sent in groups or individually to interview community members or family members.

Having played the above games and then applied the lessons in a supervised interview, there is an excellent chance that they will be able to treat their interviewees with respect, elicit their stories, and follow-up on what they hear with perceptive questions.

<http://www.storydynamics.com/Articles/Education/interviewing.html>

**Kristen Mascitelli**

**From:** Carla Zembal-Saul [czem@mac.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 04, 2006 2:15 PM  
**To:** ~~Carla Zembal-Saul~~<sup>mentor</sup>, Kristen Mascitelli  
**Subject:** Fwd: iTunes Music Store Podcast Approved Notification

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** do\_not\_reply@apple.com  
**Date:** February 2, 2006 2:59:21 PM EST  
**To:** czem@mac.com  
**Subject:** iTunes Music Store Podcast Approved Notification  
**Reply-To:** do\_not\_reply@apple.com

**Dear Podcast Owner**

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4/26/2006

Date: 03/02/06

Today, I wanted to record one of the girls animal interview. All of the students were working on a culminating reading activity for a book they just finished reading. The girls were all working together in the same group (5 of them). When I asked ~~Jen~~ if she wanted to record her podcast, she said no - she wanted to stay and finishing their book activity. After I tried explaining to her that now was the only time that I could record, she still didn't want to go. Finally, ~~mentor~~ had to ask ~~Jen~~ to come w/ me to record. She did - but reluctantly. When we were recording, she just wanted to get done + return to class.

I'm not sure what this was about b/c when she recorded w/ her friend ~~Kate~~ <sup>Kate</sup> several days earlier, she was very interested in ~~Garbage Band~~ <sup>Garbage Band</sup>. She is familiar w/ the program b/c she has older siblings that use it. So, why didn't she want to

~~postpone~~ record today? Maybe she was enjoying the socializing w/ her friends or she would have to finish the assignment for homework if she didn't finish it in class - so maybe that was the reason... just to note, when she recorded ~~the~~ <sup>Kate's</sup> interview she was very excited - want to actually use the computer to help w/ recording process and she kept asking me when she could record, so maybe she didn't like leaving class if she was going to have to make up an assignment that could have been completed in school?

so fifth graders could learn how to use this program!

\* Date: 03/13/06 \*

• We have ~~slowly~~ been recording for the past months.

I think it is losing its momentum b/c we can only get

\* one done a day if class time is even available for recording.

Almost all of the students have their scripts completed

and are now just waiting. Students aren't asking me anymore

when are they going to record, but good news, when I have been

\* recording students, they still get excited and into character for the interview!

# Podcasting

... students could...  
... could...  
... already...  
... already...  
... already...

- \* Students think they are really cool
- \* very fascinated w/ music that they can add
- \* good to share example before hand so they can hear how voice inflection can make it sound more interesting or entertaining
- \* where can we find a quiet place to record?!!

- only available space - computer lab possibly grand room or music room if classes aren't going on

- hallway = too noisy + too much commotion

• how long will recording take?

- 2 days to record first podcast
- spent some time messing around w/ sounds

- - don't want to take students out of class
- recess is an option (30 mins - by efficient - could possibly at least record 2 podcasts + 5th grade classes would be quiet!)
- STAR time (about 25 minutes)

\* how do you make podcasts more of an inquiry based project?

\* <sup>mentor</sup> ~~teacher~~ has expressed interest in working w/ me on an inquiry project around podcast & technology