

## W401: Review of Video Critique

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In this week's review, I summarize your answers to the video critique, highlight two take home messages, and provide examples of good answers.

### General comments

Good job on this week's task! I noticed that most of your answers are increasing in quality and it seems like as the tasks get more challenging, you are rising to the challenge!

This week's video case illustrated a **large scale** incorporation of various forms of technology and instructional strategies. Preparation was elaborate and content was cross-disciplinary. One of my personal goals for this week's task was to provide you with a range of possibilities, not illustrate that this is what I think technology integration looks like. Technology integration works just as well, if not better, on a **small scale**. This is the focus of W401.

### Strategies

There were several instructional strategies that most of you identified:

- Student/peer mentoring so that the teacher does not have to be constantly consulted.
- Collaboration among students (group work and peer mentoring).
- Student-centered but teacher-structured learning: Active involvement of students and direct experience in actual environments so that they captured and presented history for themselves.
- Teacher modeling/rehearsal, e.g. phone call to veteran.
- Teachers behave as a facilitator (female teacher) or content expert (male teacher). They generally took a hands-off approach. Each teacher was a guide on the side as opposed to a sage on the stage.

One caveat: It is great to see planned strategies work in reality. But they do so only with careful selection and practice.

### Preparation

Preparation is necessary no matter what the scale of technology integration. Most of you identified preparation that was:

- *Technological*, e.g. technology knowledge and skills
- *Logistical*, e.g. how many groups, who is in the groups, who does what; field trips
- *Administrative*, e.g. getting permission for peer mentoring, going out on a field trip
- *Interpersonal*, e.g. working with other teachers and other grades, working with members of the community

What may not have been obvious in the videos was the need for very clear instructions. Such instructions were crucial because many of these activities were carried out independently and concurrently. These instructions can take the form of verbal instructions, regular verbal reminders, and handouts, job aids, and document templates.

### Alternatives

Most of you suggested very good alternatives, both technology and non-technology based. The wide range of recommendations that seemed to reflect your preferred teaching styles:

more freedom vs. more structure, other options in terms of what technology to use, more or less focus in terms of content covered, etc.

### **How to ensure objectives are met**

This was the other item on my agenda: How do you ensure students learn something worthwhile instead of being distracted by the technology?

Some of you suggested that students develop technology skills beforehand so that they could focus on their tasks. The question becomes how do they learn the various technology skills they need in an already tight curriculum? In any case, technology is best learned in the context of some relevant content, not as a standalone tool.

Furthermore, there will always be learners who have different abilities as far as technology skills are concerned. This is where providing some guidance in the form of handouts, job aids, or peer support can help immensely. The key is to scaffold any complex task.

Technology and aids aside, the most basic thing to do is to make objectives clear at the beginning and remind students periodically. In addition, you have the option of assessing what they learned. This can take the form of tests, journal writing, presentations, debates, report on another group's work, etc.

### **Take home message 1**

There are at least two things I hope you already know, or if not, learned from the video case.

First, when planning to integrate technology, objectives and strategies come first. You should then ask yourselves what technologies enable you to reach those objectives with the aid of specific strategies. A common mistake is to design an activity around some "cool technology" and lose sight of objectives.

### **Take home message 2**

It is important to observe and critique how other teachers incorporate technology (or teach for that matter). Such opportunities may be rare as an in-service teacher, but free online video databases such as the one you used are goldmines for ideas and information.

### **Exemplars**

[This week one response by LM stood out as an exemplary answer to the questions. I have left out the answer to Q6 as each of you learned something different.](#)

**1. What value did the technologies add to this lesson? Was the technology absolutely necessary? Explain your answer by highlighting a few of the technologies as examples.**

~In this particular lesson, technology was not absolutely necessary but it definitely made the project more interesting to complete and more unique to present to the students' families and community members. In this lesson, the particular technologies mentioned and used added to the quality of this lesson dramatically. First, the digital camera was a fantastic way for the students to take pictures of local historical people and sites in order to use in their projects. By using digital cameras, students could view the pictures immediately and decide whether or not they would be helpful in aiding in their final projects; if not, the students could take new and different pictures that would better suit the criteria. The students used the scanner to put the taken photographs onto the computer to use later

when creating their final projects using the Avid Cinema software. The Avid Cinema software helped the students organize their research information and pictures into a wonderful video presentation with audio sound. Creating the video looked fun and interesting to the students and helped make their final projects more enjoyable to the viewers.

## **2. What teaching strategies did the teacher use? What other strategies might you have used and why?**

~The teachers included many different teaching strategies while working on this specific project. First, the social studies teacher helped the students organize their pictures. While doing this, the teacher asked the students specific questions in order to guide them to a helpful way of organizing the pictures without giving them any clues as to which method of organization would be the best one. The teachers conducting this project also believed that bringing the students to local historical sites (local museums) would allow the students to obtain useful pictures while also physically being able to view sites that would be used in their presentations. This type of learning seemed much more real than learning by reading straight out of a textbook; by visiting these sites, the students seemed to retain the information much better than if they stayed in the classroom in order to complete this entire assignment. I also liked how the teachers included social goals while having the students complete this project. I thought it was a great method to have the local high school students come to the school and help the students complete this project using the Avid Cinema software. This gave the students a great opportunity to receive help from their older peers while also allowing them to possibly develop friendships. The teachers were all a great help to the students during this lesson, guiding them whenever needed and answering questions about criteria the students did not understand completely. I feel like if I was the teacher conducting this project, I would have the students work more together in groups of 4 or 5 people in order to collaborate their ideas and information together. I think it is extremely helpful for students to work together because I think students can teach their peers extremely effectively. I also would probably conduct an assessment of the project when everything is completed. By simply having the students answer various questions about the particular topic, new information they learned, and the technology itself, the teacher would be able to see how much each of the students obtained by doing the assignment.

## **3. What do you think are some alternatives (technology or non-technology based) for conducting the lesson? Justify your alternatives.**

~I think there are many alternatives to this project that would have been just as effective, if not more effective. I think the students could have learned a lot by interviewing the local veterans in addition to taking pictures of them. The local veterans could have provided truthful and helpful information for the students to include in their presentations. I think by using a video recorder in order to tape these interviews (as opposed to simply writing them down), the viewers of the presentations could see the actual interview occurring. I also think it would have been interesting to see the students actually visiting the local historical sites in town. Also by using a video recorder, the viewers could actually see the historical sites themselves. The internet is always a good resource to use to enhance a presentation. The students could have obtained factual information, including documents and pictures, to include in their presentations.

## **4. What kind of preparation do you think the teacher had to do in order to conduct the lesson?**

~I think the teacher had to do many preparations in order to conduct this lesson. First, it was imperative that she knew how to use the technology that she wanted the students to use to enhance their presentations. It was clear that a few of the students had trouble with the technology, such as the digital camera, and the teacher was right there to help and answer any specific questions that they asked. Also, the teacher needed to be sure that the Avid Cinema software would be appropriate for the students to use to finalize their presentations. It seemed as though the teacher did some research on the software and technology in the room in order to be sure that it would be feasible to use. Although it was not shown in the video, I am sure that the teacher conducted numerous lessons with the class about the criteria she wanted them to include in their presentations. While doing this video presentation, it seemed as though the students were already knowledgeable in these specific areas, as if they had already been taught some of the information. I also believe the teacher needed to be sure this topic would fit with the state education standards for the 8th grade. She needed to be sure that this project would help them reach the goals they were expected to reach at that specific grade level.

## **5. As students are engaged in technology, there is a high possibility that the students get distracted by the technology and lose sight of the objectives of the lesson. How might you as a teacher tackle this problem?**

~I could definitely see this problem occurring frequently as a teacher. If this happened in my classroom, I would certainly provide some form of assessment in order to be sure the students obtained factual information about the particular criteria as opposed to simply learning how to use the technology. If the students did not get as much out of the lesson as I had hoped, I would have them do another assignment that would show me their progress on the material. This could be done in the form of an interview, a research paper, or even a dreaded test. In the video, it seemed like the students stayed on task but this may not always be the case. As a teacher conducting this project, I would certainly walk around the room as my students were working to be sure they were staying focused. I would occasionally ask my students questions to be sure they were learning something from the given assignment as well. If it seemed as though one of the students was having a little trouble focusing, I would monitor that student and perhaps work one-on-one with that student in order to guide them back on task.

Below is an example critique that LR had in response to a group mate's posting. You do not need to read the group mate's original answer to know what the critique points are. I did not require critiques to all answers, but the effort here was appreciated and rewarded!

1. You make a great point in that the project will also be a reflection of the current time to people who see it in the future. As much as the main goal of the project is to document and reflect on the past, the means used to execute the project will serve as an image of the time in which it was created to people who open the capsule later. I think the necessity for technology in our real lives, as well as the advantages of it, are among one of the strongest reasons to use technology in the classroom. Even something as simple as the fact that you can see the pictures on a digital camera; this saved time that the students might have had to spend retaking pictures that did not turn out.

2. I think the idea of having students keep a journal of their progress is a great idea! I mentioned that I would have students keep a journal of what they were learning throughout the year that could apply to the project, but there is no reason to end the journal at the beginning of the project. Continuing the use of the journal throughout the execution of the project would help students maintain active reflection and stay on task, as well as keep the teacher aware of what each student and each group was doing. Also, I don't know if you caught it or not, but in the written description the teacher noted that she had the students change roles within their groups so that each student had the opportunity to function in a different way. I thought that was a really great idea. Without the predetermined role changes, students might have found an area with which they were comfortable and never explored any other facets of the project.

3. Although the entire thing could have been done online, I think that the personal contact with the veterans is really important to help students put history into a real life context and to realize that it truly affects us now. Also, I didn't think of this before, but it would have been great if the students could have put their project on a website. It would be really neat for everyone who wanted to view it to be able to do so. I know I personally would love to see how the project turned out from a teacher's point of view, and also as an interested American citizen.

4. I also think that with the scope of this activity, preparation was really something that took place all year. The students already had most of the information they needed, it was just a matter of compiling it and making it presentable.

5. I think having an aid would be very helpful. In a way, the high school students kind of served as aids. Although they were not there the whole time, they were able to serve as useful resources for the students and to take some of the burden off of the classroom teacher. The time issue is a difficult one, I think about the invitations we have been talking about with D and hope that the students would be interested and motivated enough that they would be effectively guiding their own learning, not simply finishing the task required and then goofing off. I guess we don't know until we try to implement these things, but I think that giving the students the power to make the project what they want it to be, within minimal restrictions, is most likely to result in interested students using their time effectively.

Ashley Tan  
W401 instructor  
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