

TEACHING
literacy
IN THE
digital AGE

Inspiration for all levels and literacies

EDITED BY MARK GURA



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Preface

The chapters in this book were all written by educators: teachers or instructional supervisors or those who moved into professional and curriculum development to support teachers and further develop the field of education. All contributing authors have logged a very significant amount of time in the classroom. All are still teaching or directly supporting teachers as full partners in ongoing efforts to develop and implement technology-supported instructional practices.

The idea for this book came from discussions I had with numerous colleagues, as well as the editors at ISTE books. Clearly, there was interest in a collection of exciting, replicable classroom practices focused on literacy learning that take advantage of the ever more ubiquitous communications technologies that surround students and teachers as they live and learn. These practices would be particularly relevant, we felt, if they were written by teachers or those who support them directly, in a colleague-to-colleague manner.

I had previously co-edited a compendium of articles for ISTE highlighting technology use for literacy instruction that had been published under the title *Making Literacy Magic Happen: The Best of Learning & Leading with Technology on Language Arts*. Although popular for years, it was eventually retired from print. Instructional technology is a dynamic, changing field and what was relevant when it was published, eventually became tired and outmoded. This book is an attempt to pick up the thread and is comprised of 18 chapters, each highlighting a technology-based practice or resource with great promise for K–12 literacy instruction.

Outreach to potential contributing authors was accomplished primarily through the newsletter and wiki of the ISTE Literacy Special Interest Group (SIGLIT). Many members of the SIG contributed to the book or reached out to their own network of colleagues, spreading the call for articles. In fact, many of the contributing authors are also members of other ISTE SIGs, groups that range in focus from media specialists (SIGMS), to teacher educators (SIGTE), to innovative learning technologies (SIGILT). These SIG affiliations are listed in the contributor profiles.

All of this attests to the wide body of interests, experience, and expertise represented here. The breadth of experience included is also clear from the geographic locations of the contributors who hail from such diverse places as Louisiana, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, Missouri, Massachusetts, Florida, China, and South Korea.

The call for submissions requested chapters describing practices of interest to literacy specialist teachers as well as teachers of other subjects across the curriculum who make fostering literacy an important goal. Of interest would be practices adaptable to the instructional needs of many grade and ability levels. These would feature the use of technology resources that are commonly available for the typical classroom and that address instructional goals defined by state and national standards, including ELA, ISTE Standards for Students, content area standards, and the Common Core State Standards. We sought practices that are immediately useful to teachers in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, particularly those involving authentic projects in which students produce real literacy products (e.g., books, magazines, online content items, podcasts, videos) to present to real audiences. All chapters would explain how technology facilitates learning, increases motivation, and changes the nature of teaching and learning and how that new knowledge is applied.

Resulting submissions included descriptions of practices that apply technology to classic activities but that heighten their relevance, engagement, and efficacy, as well as practices that focus on aspects of literacy that have changed because of the emergence and impact of technology. All have high potential to be successfully adopted and adapted by classroom teachers.

Covered here is a wide range of practices, including book trailers, persuasive writing, story writing, argumentative essays, digital storytelling, graphic novel projects, and more. Student products that result from these activities include numerous varieties of digital videos, slide presentations, blogs, comics, podcasts, and text items. Many types of media resources are used in the activities, including video, audio, and other media sharing resources, word processing, video- and audio-editing software, as well as tools for online publishing. Other types of instructional resources used in the practices include vocabulary search tools, gaming resources, collaboration and social networking resources, interactive fiction software, and note-taking and archiving resources.

This book presents a body of practice that represents a snapshot of important trends in technology-supported literacy instruction. It also represents a trove of good-to-go instructional activities ready for classroom implementation. All indicate the technology resources required—the vast majority of which are either free, low-cost, or already commonly available in schools—as well as information on implementation, how to assess the student work they generate, and how they align to important educational standards. Thus, the book stands ready to inform and guide educators as they redefine literacy instruction as something that is very much a part of our technology-shaped world.

—Mark Gura

Introduction

Mark Gura

Can we provide our students with educational experiences that are truly worthy of their attention? Can we engage them in activities that will prepare them to be successful in the various dimensions of their lives, particularly as lifelong learners? The authors of the chapters in this book think so. The practices they share in these pages are steeped in their direct experience in making these goals a reality in their classrooms.

Between the covers of this book is a large body of approaches, activities, and resources. This material will intrigue and delight many educators who've been looking for ways to apply a growing body of recently developed technology resources to the needs of classrooms that still have one foot in the world of traditional instruction.

On the pages that follow you'll find practices and approaches to implement curriculum and foster standards-based learning of required content and skills. Because these are not lesson plans per se, there is a great deal of flexibility in how they can be adapted to your own practice. These activities were developed for classes that range from elementary through high school and are labeled as elementary (ELEM), middle school (MS), and high school (HS) grades in Table I.1. However, the majority of the activities can be adapted to use at any of these levels, as well as for English language learners (ELL) and special needs students, so long as the activities are implemented with ability-appropriate vocabulary and performance expectations commensurate with age and grade level capabilities and that the teacher makes certain that students are familiar with and adept at required foundation skills and concepts.