

# **DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

with **PowerPoint™**

**2nd Edition**

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## Introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Since the publication of our first Digital Storytelling with PowerPoint book, we have been fortunate to share these ideas and skills with hundreds of educators and students. This 2<sup>nd</sup> edition incorporates a lot of the great feedback we have received about Digital Storytelling, as well as an update of new features in PowerPoint. We continue to encourage readers and workshop participants to share their ideas and resources through our contact at [www.teachingstory.com](http://www.teachingstory.com).

What's hard about updating a book is the gap in time between the new ideas and resources and the publication of these pages. You'll find a resource CD in the back of the book to help with instant access to things mentioned in the book for using PowerPoint in the classroom. We'll continue to provide resources at our website listed in the *About the Authors* section on page 81 and encourage you to visit them often.

Many students and educators are enjoying the new features in PowerPoint for communicating a wide variety of information. What this book offers are skills and ideas for avoiding what has become known as "PowerPointless" presentations.... Essentially, presentations that lack engagement, excitement, and story. This book suggests that presenters can engage audiences using PowerPoint by the creative use of story, considering the "context" of information being shared, and the interests/word pictures of the audience.

Most important is the use of story to communicate ideas in presentations that engage, excite, and educate. We want to help the reader be capable of "powerful storytelling," which are presentations so compelling that audiences are motivated to act on the information shared.

## Chapter 1

### Overview – Teaching Powerful Storytelling

A few years ago I was conducting a workshop in Oahu, Hawaii for “IslandMovie,” a digital storytelling project of the Hawaiian Department of Education (<http://islandmovie.k12.hi.us>). My friend, Kavita Rao, an educational technology specialist for Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), came up to me during the break and, smiling, said, “Mark, your daughter was a big hit with the teachers and students in Guam.” I stared at her blankly. Besides our family’s recent trip to Japan, I could not recall our eleven-year old daughter traveling elsewhere. Kavita noticed my blank look and explained: “I showed your daughter’s digital story on Bloom’s Taxonomy in a workshop I was conducting in Guam. It was a powerful illustration for the teachers attending the workshop of how video provides a constructivist and creative medium for student learning.” Now, I understood. My daughter had created a short movie or “digital story” for her 4th grade class in Eagle River, Alaska, in which she shared her activities: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Kavita presented a copy of the movie in Guam as part of an educational technology course she was teaching for teachers on the island. Without ever leaving her home in Alaska, my daughter was reaching out across the Pacific to teach others about higher order thinking skills—this is an example of the power of digital storytelling!

Today’s technology allows students and faculty to tell stories in powerful ways. Through the use of today’s digital cameras, editing software, and media outlets anyone can tell their story. Not only can students of all ages tell their story, but they can also share a curricular concept, or create publicity for their school. Still, even with all of this capacity to create powerful stories, we must remember what makes great stories for audiences and how storytellers help audiences learn.

Students absorb a lot of stories through electronic media. TV commercials probably make up more of the content of a child’s mental diet than we care to think about. We need to offer the same tools of “digital storytelling” to students and combine it with great teaching methods to help students create and tell their own powerful stories. They must learn storyboarding, collaboration, elements of a story, videography, video editing, and publishing techniques to become digital storytellers. Like writing, it’s nearly impossible to create digital stories without thinking. Students become producers of digital stories and thought. Digital tools give students and teachers potent ways to tell their stories for a range of audiences. Powerful storytelling comes from storytellers sharing knowledge, feelings, and experiences within a community of learners. Powerful stories teach diverse viewpoints, help shape school culture, and allow students to actively share knowledge using today’s media.

Teaching students to tell stories is important. Learning to create digital stories can be related to knowledge management, achieving standards, building learning communities, scientific research, artistic expression, language and math skills, distance learning, and cultural diversity. Once educators begin to understand what is possible through teaching digital storytelling to students, they realize it represents a whole new way to give wings to a child's voice. Teaching storytelling means we give students the media literacy skills to create powerful messages that shape not only their own learning, but also helps teach others across the world.

Storytelling is powerful for students because they are learning to communicate effectively and teach others. They share their perceptions of the world as someone listens. Digital storytelling is exponentially more powerful than other forms of storytelling because the digital format immediately makes a student's story available to a global audience. When they know the whole world is listening, students are motivated to create their best work. However, interest and motivation is only half the equation; students also need the questioning, storytelling, and technical skills to bring their stories to life.

## Start with the Questions

The most efficient way to teach students storytelling is by asking two powerful questions. Invariably, the first question students ask is "What should my movie be about?" It's great to have students thinking about the content of their movie, so that they can begin visualizing the final product. We want to build what Howard Gardner calls in his book, *The Unschooled Mind*, "...an education for understanding....a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles, or skills, so one can bring them to bear on new problems and situations. An important symptom of an emerging understanding is the capacity to represent a problem whom the world does not hear from or know about."

The second question simply asks, "When a child learns, who knows?" Through technology and media, schools can go well beyond putting student work up in the classroom and school halls. By streaming the movies across the Internet, sharing them through digital storytelling events such as the "IdidaMovie" or "IslandMovie" projects, or by offering them to local libraries, video stories, or TV stations, these powerful tools allow schools to answer the above question – "...the world knows when our children learn."

To get your students and staff asking questions about how to build powerful stories download a copy of *Teaching Powerful Storytelling: Book of Questions* at [www.teachingstory.com](http://www.teachingstory.com).

## Self Expression

Storytelling provides students of any culture, language, or ethnic background with a natural way to express themselves. When students realize that they are being given the opportunity to tell a story about their school in their own unique way, their eyes light up. When they discover that using digital tools makes their story available to a statewide and potentially global audience, their motivation to produce a quality story increases. They collaborate on their storyboard by designing and refining each scene they capture with the digital camera.

In digital storytelling teams, teachers play the role of coach. They know the excitement and motivation students feel. In many of the Science and Storytelling Camps we have conducted in the U.S. and U.K. ([www.teachingstory.com](http://www.teachingstory.com)), students and teachers form a team to research and tell stories about the science in the National Parks. The teacher's role is organizational coach and technology learner. The students' role is technology coach and organizational learner. The goal is to have everyone learn, have fun, and feel confident to express themselves through their storytelling.

## Digital Storytelling Events

National and international digital storytelling contests create opportunities for students to also share their work. The contests are akin to film festivals or knowledge sharing events for students and educators. However, because the emphasis on competition can put off some educators and students, the contest organizers try to create the opportunity for every entry to “win” something. Student teams can receive t-shirts or other sponsor-donated prizes for their efforts. Statewide digital storytelling events allow students and teachers to share their stories with a larger audience, which is great publicity, increase student motivation, and provide alternative forms of external assessment of their work.

An example is the “IdidaMovie” contest sponsored by the Alaska Society for Technology in Education (ASTE) ([www.aste.org](http://www.aste.org)). Alaska's rich heritage of storytelling and dog-mushing came together in this contest, created more than ten years ago to encourage students to express themselves through the integration of technology standards and storytelling. Categories included “Tell Me a Story,” “Teach Me Something New,” “Make Me Laugh,” and the recently added category, “Teaching and Learning in Alaska.”

The digital stories must be submitted in Apple's QuickTime format, be less than two minutes in length, and avoid any copyright violations. Educators from Alaska judge the movies using the “IdidaMovie” rubric. Every year ASTE awards the winners with prizes that either go to the student or the school.

As an incentive to participate in the contest, “IdidaMovie” posters featuring the warm beaches of Hawaii or Apple iPods are hung in every school across Alaska to serve as a reminder to students and educators as incentives for getting into digital storytelling. Of course, the reward is real!

Hawaii's Department of Education created the "IslandMovie" in the fashion of "IdidaMovie," but took the contest idea to a whole other level. Under Vicki Kajioka, former Director of Hawaii's Advanced Technology Research Unit, the "IslandMovie" (<http://islandmovie.hi.k12.us>) contest creates the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement standards through digital storytelling. The contest encourages teams of students to work collaboratively to focus story content on one of Hawaii's standards. Contest entries must also include a written reflection by the students on their digital story. Hawaiian educators judge the movies and the prizes include two tickets to Alaska for each winning team's school. (See the Resources page for links.)

The "IslandMovie" project's focus on standards allows students to tie digital storytelling to achieving standards, as well as allowing the state to build a streaming database of Web-based, student-created resources to share with other students. For other links to contests, assessments, and digital storytelling events, check out [www.teachingstory.com](http://www.teachingstory.com).

Regardless of how digital storytelling shows up in your school or community's culture, students need to learn to shape stories that reflect on themselves, their learning, and/or their learning community. In later chapters, we'll describe the tools and evaluation of storytelling skills that students should develop. A critical goal is helping students learn to tell "powerful" stories...those stories that motivate audiences to act on the information presented in the story. Good teaching is powerful storytelling. We want students to master their own learning through the ability to become powerful storytellers.