

10 Reasons to Use Multimedia in the Classroom

Barbara Schroeder Posted by Barbara Schroeder on August 4, 2010

By incorporating multimedia in their instruction, teachers can capture attention, engage learners, explain difficult concepts, inspire creativity, and have fun. However, there are many tools available and many ways to use those tools. If you are a teacher searching for a technology tool to accomplish certain learning goals or outcomes, you can easily be overwhelmed. Given the limited amount of time teachers have during the day, why should you take the time to learn about and use these tools? I'll try to answer this question.

Following is a list of ten reasons you should use multimedia in your classroom. As you investigate and try these and other tools, you will notice that they are social—encouraging sharing, feedback, publication, and other experiences that support learning. By modeling social learning and learning with technology, you will be preparing your students for success in today's rapidly changing world.

1. Facilitate and develop a community of learners through online ice-breaker activities. These activities offer fun and easy ways to get to know each other while also providing outlets for student creativity. A neat tool that works well for this is [VoiceThread](#). Students can use a computer web-cam to record a video of themselves and view other students videos, all on one page.

2. Help students visualize difficult concepts or procedures more easily by using static or dynamic multimedia. I have used a very simple and efficient software called [ScreenSteps](#), which allows you to quickly create visual handouts for learners. Teachers and students can use [Jing software](#) to record a screen shot or video, which produces a video tutorial or information about a website, embedding the video on their website or sending it to the student as an email attachment. These types of software provide a great way for teachers to make the most out of their multimedia and online resources.

3. Scaffold learning through activities enhanced by videos and online games. When assigning reading about an obscure historical event, you might want to create pre-reading activities by having students watch and comment on videos that fill in needed background knowledge. Searching for videos about events on Global Grid for Learning ([GGfL](#)), for instance, can provide needed support and add to a student's gap in knowledge. Then you could embed these videos on your class website, blog, or wiki. Or have students add to a playlist as they locate more videos on the topic.

4. Make language and culture come alive through the viewing and creation of audio and video instruction. Students could view videos and television programs available online and stay up to date on current events in that country. They could also create their own videos and share them with another class, comparing cultural norms and addressing other questions through a group blog or wiki.

5. Provide a “menu” of authentic assignment options for students to complete, allowing them to explore and identify their passions and talents. Encourage them to create and publish an original digital story. Have them produce a weekly podcast show for the classroom, highlighting events of the week, using blogs. They might also want to film their developing skills in a sport or record their progress in learning a musical instrument.

6. Enhance accessibility through the use of powerful multimedia software tools. Encourage students to use a speech-to-text tool to write their next essay or short story. This is especially helpful for students who have fine motor challenges or students who have trouble with keyboarding. Use auto-captioning features to create accessible multimedia for students with hearing challenges.

7. Enable visualization of concepts and their connections through collaborative construction and discussion of concept maps. One of my all-time favourites is [CMap tools](#), a free, multi-platform software tool that can be downloaded to your computer. Students could work in groups, constructing a concept map and even recording within CMap tools this construction.

8. Encourage collaboration and feedback by integrating assignments with tools that support conversations and comments. For instance, have students post their slideshows and have them view their classmates' presentations, and post comments. Or have students create video comments on video sharing sites such as [TeacherTube](#). Use collaborative software such as blogs and wikis for students to easily create, edit, and publish their work. And make sure you provide information for parents to access these social media sites to see what their children are doing.

9. Make learning situated and personal with easy to access information from you and the rest of the world. Have students subscribe to your class Twitter and blog feeds and enable them on their mobile devices, if possible. Or, have them use a Twitter aggregator, such as [Tweetdeck](#), to stay on top of news announcements. Show them how to subscribe to dynamic sites using RSS Readers and how to read and track updated content. Have them subscribe to podcasts and rate those podcasts. Allow students to contact you using SMS.

10. Help students document and present their learning through authentic assessments. Instead of taking an end of term test, have students collect their work and detail their progress on their Learning Log, using any number of free blogging tools. Show them how to tag their posts, how to create categories (which could be the course objectives or standards), how to link to artefacts, how to write reflections, and then set aside time at the end of each week for reflection and documentation of their work. At the end of the term or semester, students could then refine their Learning Log, turning it into a showcase Portfolio, presenting it to the class and parents, discussing their work, what they learned, and where they want to go from there. Not only would this individualize their learning experience, but it would make students more responsible for their work and enable them to experience learning as being life-long and active.

As you can see from these ideas, you can easily align instructional goals and empower instruction through using appropriate multimedia tools. It takes some planning, time, and expenditures (video cameras, software), but in the long run, your students will reap many benefits, such as taking more responsibility for their learning, becoming aware of their learning and how to document it, and realizing their own creative potential.