

Digital Storytelling and 21st Century Skills

April 13, 2007

TechForum Orlando

David Jakes
Instructional Technology Coordinator
Community High School District 99
Downers Grove, IL
djakes@csd99.org

*Resources for this presentation are found at
<http://www.jakesonline.org/storytelling.htm>
<http://www.jakesonline.org/visual.htm>
<http://www.jakesonline.org/flickrsites.htm>*

Making a Case for Digital Storytelling

By David Jakes

December 1, 2005

URL: <http://www.techlearning.com/showArticle.php?articleID=174401140>

We are our stories. We compress years of experience, thought, and emotion into a few compact narratives that we convey to others and tell to ourselves. That has always been true. But personal narrative has become more prevalent, and perhaps more urgent, in a time of abundance, when many of us are freer to seek a deeper understanding of ourselves and our purpose.

Daniel H. Pink

A Whole New Mind

Everyone has stories. Stories represent who we are, portray our life experiences, and when presented to others, help connect us to others through common shared experience. As such, telling a story is a powerful way to communicate with others. Any teacher knows that when he or she tells a story about themselves in class, every student is “dialed in,” waiting on every word. The teacher becomes more ‘real’ simply by relating a personal anecdote.

But what if we gave students the opportunity to tell the stories of their lives? Would our students have stories to tell? What kind of learning experience could we create through storytelling? And most importantly, could we teach students to have a voice that would enable them to communicate rich, meaningful stories in a compelling manner throughout the rest of their lives?

We can, and we can do so by combining story telling with a set of powerful digital tools. This process, known as digital storytelling, merges a personal story with video, still-frame imagery, music, and voice to create a personal multimedia story. Students begin by composing their narrative story, and from that, strip the narrative to its essence to develop a script. The script is then rebuilt into a digital story by the inclusion of multimedia in a highly engaging process that merges composition and creativity to extend the story and make it come alive.

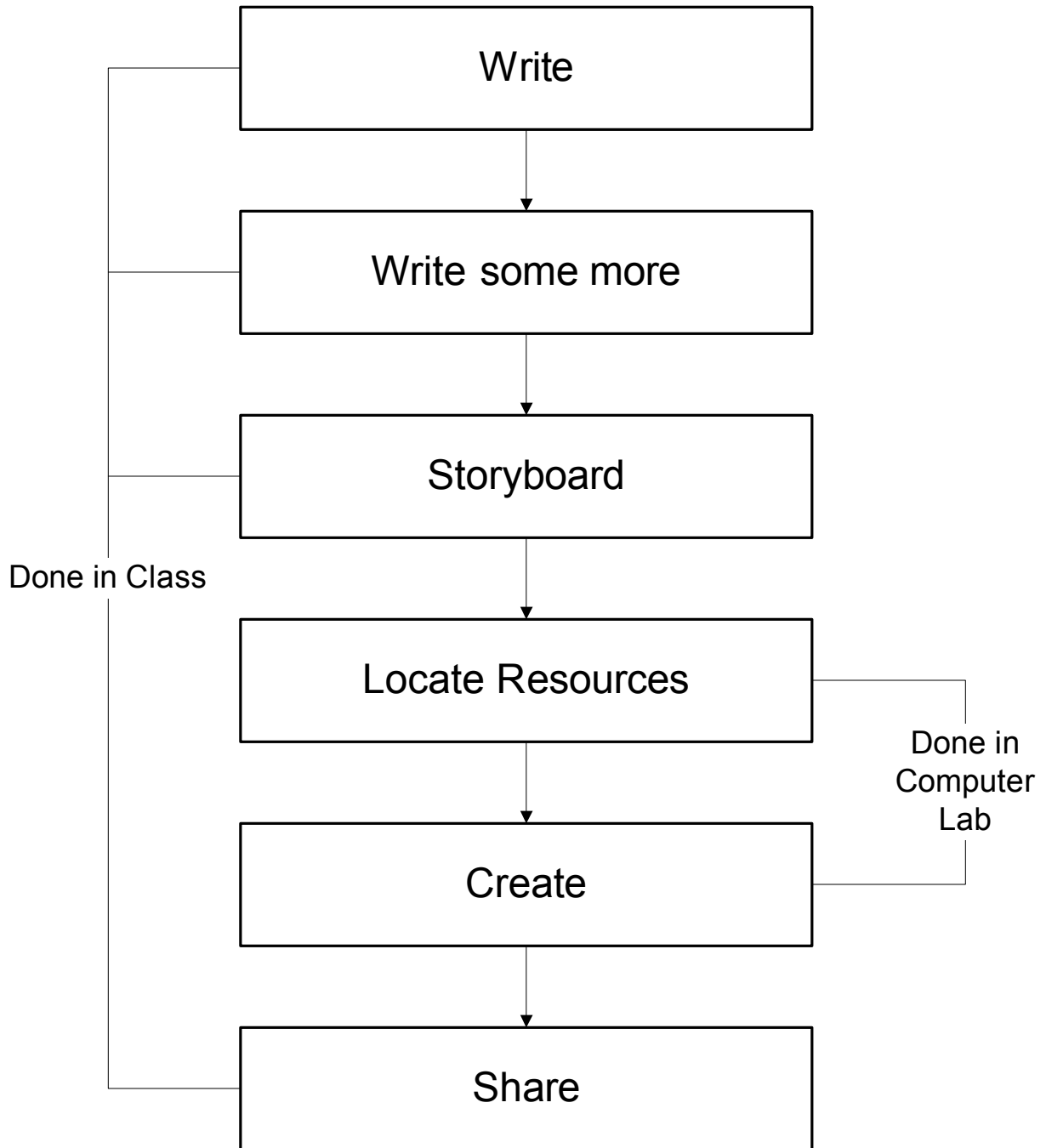
This is a truly authentic learning experience that represents value-added technology use, and develops many different types of intellectual skills in students. But most importantly, it helps students to develop a competitive voice, and gives them a creative palette to compose in a language familiar to them (technology). Here are some examples:

- A student who never talks in class develops a digital story about being afraid to talk. He describes how he likes being talked to, how he is misunderstood and lonely, and how he had to develop a new identity. He shows how this was accomplished through the Internet, and as a result, found some true friends. For a student who says nothing, he has much to say.
- A student who has a handicap and is selectively mute tells a story and makes a breakthrough by recording the voice-over.
- A student who is mildly autistic actually tells a story about his favorite hobby.
- A student reconnects with her estranged siblings through her digital story.
- A student tells of the importance of her childhood drawings as representations of her life, and what she wants that life to become.
- And there are other stories — tales of first-loves, of the death of loved ones, of personal sacrifice, of accomplishment, of the importance of a place, of challenges overcome, of important moments in a life, and of the value of parents and grandparents.

Digital storytelling not only empowers a student's voice, but has the potential to create a *competitive voice*. A competitive voice is one that can be heard, and with the digital publishing resources available today, such as YouTube or uTube, students have the capability to distribute their story to a worldwide audience. Additionally, a competitive voice delivers a rich, deep message that is capable of delivering a powerful message. The multimedia elements of digital storytelling provide the necessary elements to make this a reality.

Today, students have many options for communication ranging from instant messaging to blogging to podcasting. Whatever the medium, our students have important stories that need telling. Digital storytelling helps students explore the meaning of their own experience, give value to it, and communicate that experience on multiple levels to others. An educational experience that includes digital storytelling not only promotes the development of life-long learners, but life-long communicators as well.

The Digital Storytelling Process



What makes up a digital story?

1

Voice

2

Still Frame Imagery

3

Video

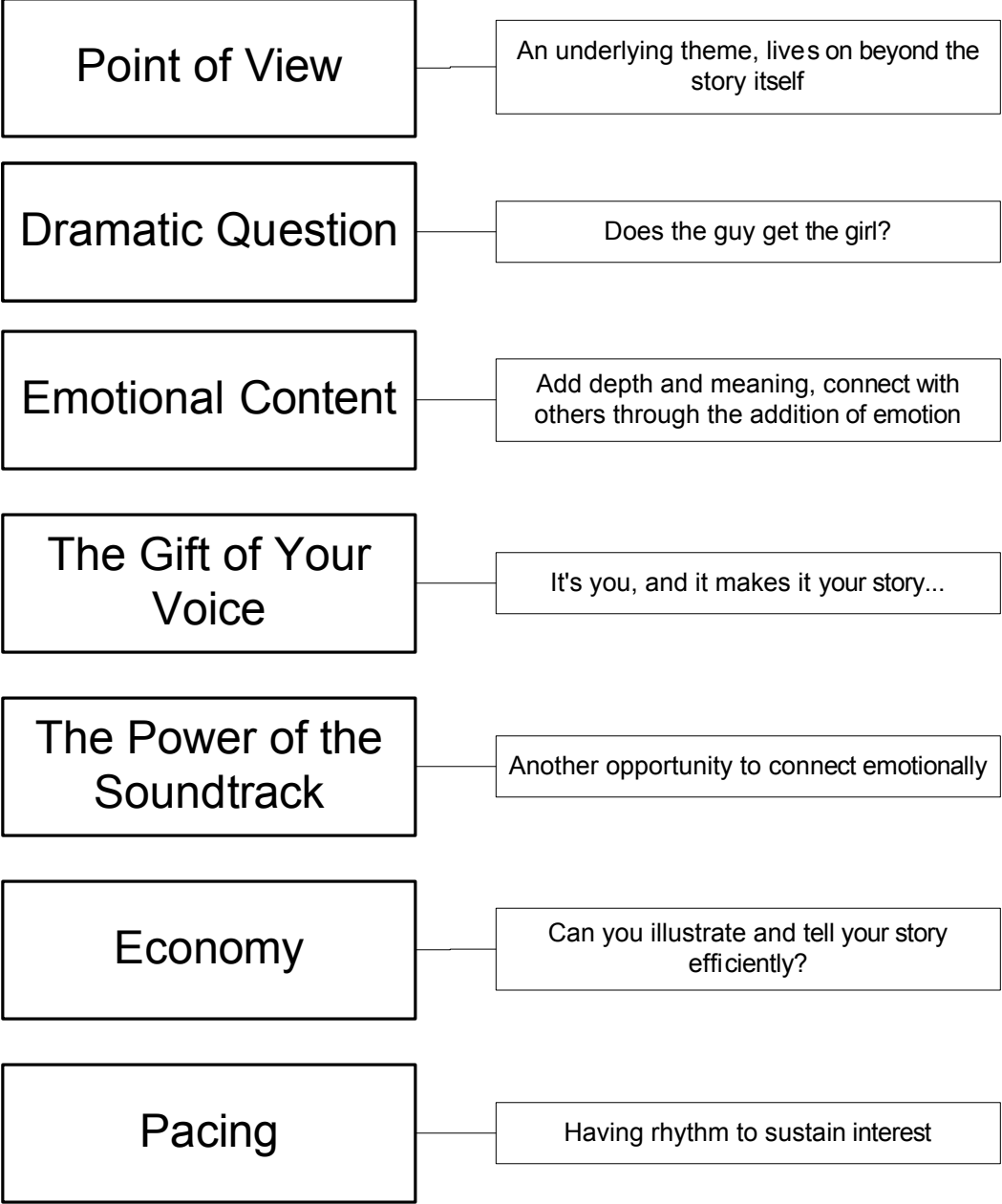
4

Music

Additional Elements that contribute to the digital story

Black space, text, transitions, title slides

The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling



Adapted from the Digital Storytelling Cookbook and Traveling Companion

Lambert, Joe. "Digital Storytelling Cookbook and Travelling Companion." May 2003. Center for Digital Storytelling. 04 Nov 2004 <<http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.pdf>>.

Standards-Proof Your Digital Storytelling Efforts

By David Jakes

March 1, 2006

URL: <http://www.techlearning.com/showArticle.php?articleID=180204072>

In today's educational climate of No Child Left Behind, classroom instruction must be correlated with local, state and sometimes national standards. This correlation in many cases is in support of a guaranteed and viable curriculum, which itself is in support of effective schools (1). In some instances, this correlation may also relate to high-stakes testing and the need for students to perform at acceptable levels. Given the above, how can educators justify an educational activity like digital storytelling, which at first glance, seems an unlikely candidate for standards-based education? Ironically, the answer to this question can be found through a careful examination of a series of standards and position statements.

21st Century Skills

One of the more recent sets of standards to emerge are the 21st Century Skills. As the name suggests, the skill set defines what students should know and be able to do in the 21st Century, which includes being literate on multiple levels, being capable of independent inventive thinking, being able to communicate in various mediums, and using productivity tools to produce high-quality knowledge products. Specifically, 21st Century Skills are organized into four categories, each containing a set of expectations (20 overall).

- a. Digital Age Literacies:
- b. Inventive thinking
- c. Effective Communication
- d. High productivity

The process of digital storytelling addresses 18 of the 20 expectations for what learning should look like in the 21st Century. The need to be literate in many ways (e.g. information literate, visually literate), being able to be creative and take risks, and in the process use cutting-edge tools to communicate in a highly engaging manner makes digital storytelling a process that is truly reflective of 21st Century learning.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Since digital storytelling is traditionally based in personal narrative writing, it is logical to examine the position statements of The National Council of Teachers of English that apply to the process of digital storytelling. Specifically, three are of interest.

- a. On Promoting Media Literacy (1975)
- b. Storytelling (1992)
- c. On Composing with Nonprint Media (2003)

As early as 1975, NCTE was advocating new models of instruction that promoted “sophisticated media awareness.” In 1992, NCTE released a position on storytelling as a universal tool for communicating understanding from one person to another that could be developed in any learner. These two positions were then supported in 2003 by challenging English educators to develop instructional strategies for composition in non-print media, and that that composition should include text, motion, imagery, sound and music.

NETS for Students: Technology Foundation Standards

The NETS for Students represent a comprehensive set of expectations for technology use in schools. The set is composed of six standards, with several subordinate standards contained within each of the six. Specifically, the process of digital storytelling can be applied to the following standards:

- a. Basic Operations and Concepts
- b. Social, Ethical and Human Issues
- c. Technology Productivity Tools
- d. Technology Communication Tools

Any teacher that uses digital storytelling knows that it is a powerful instructional technique that provides an exceptional learning experience for students. Beyond the exceptional products produced by kids, beyond the complexity and hard work, and beyond the emotion of the stories, is an experience that is grounded in fundamental standards and beliefs, so necessary in today’s educational climate.

Where to learn more....

Jakesonline.org Digital Storytelling Resources
<http://www.jakesonline.org/storytelling.htm>

Photostory Tutorials and Screencasts
<http://www.jakesonline.org/photostory.htm>

Flickr Resources for Digital Storytelling
<http://www.jakesonline.org/flickrsites.htm>

Flickr Creative Commons resources
<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>

Visual Literacy resources at Jakesonline.org
<http://www.jakesonline.org/visual.htm>
http://www.jakesonline.org/visual_lit.htm

Visual Literacy and 21st Century Learning
<http://visuallit.pbwiki.com/FrontPage>

My digital storytelling resources at del.icio.us
<http://del.icio.us/djakes/digitalstorytelling>
<http://del.icio.us/djakes/DST20> (digital storytelling 2.0 resources)

Del.icio.us feed on digital storytelling
<http://del.icio.us/tag/digitalstorytelling>

Center for Digital Storytelling
<http://storycenter.org/index1.html>

Digital Storytelling 2.0 Article (David Jakes)
http://www.techlearning.com/techlearning/events/techforum07/DST20_Jakes.pdf

Storymapping.org
<http://www.storymapping.org/>

The Strength of Weak Ties: my blog
<http://jakespeak.blogspot.com>