INTRODUCTION

In teacher education programs, there is a consistent need to locate and to recommend to teacher educators, teacher candidates, and in-service teachers, viable technology tools and concepts that can be used in the classroom. Digital storytelling is a concept that is growing in popularity and one which offers versatility as an instructional tool. This chapter presents information and ideas on how to facilitate learning, productivity, and creativity through a variety of digital storytelling classroom uses.

BACKGROUND

Storytelling is nothing new and has indeed been a tradition in many families and cultures. However, in an evolving technological age, the trend of storytelling is becoming digital. Digital storytelling uses multimedia software and hardware and “incorporates all available multimedia tools—graphics, audio, video, animation, and Web publishing—into the telling of stories” (Mellon, 1999, p. 46). As the Institute for New Media Studies (2004) notes, “The digital frontier is a dynamic new space for storytelling but its potential has yet to be realized” (¶ 1). Taking a series of still images or moving images and combining them with a narrated soundtrack in order to tell a story is a crucial component of a well-told digital photo story (The Institute for New Media Studies, 2004; Kajder & Bull, 2005).

In teacher education, digital storytelling can be used in many ways including as a tool to promote self-reflection, to illustrate historical perspectives, to promote inquiry, and as a method of technology integration and ongoing instruction. In a K-12 classroom, visual images combined with technological applications have the capability of changing the often teacher-centered, transmission dominated classroom. However, any integration of technology should take place with careful preparation and thought by teachers and students. According to Mason, Berson, Diem, Hicks, Lee, and Dralle (2000), technology should: (a) be “introduced in context”, (b) “extend learning beyond what could be done without technology”, and (c) “be used to encourage inquiry, perspective taking, and meaning making” (p. 108). Weis, Benmayor, O’Leary, and Eynon (2002) make the claim that advances in multimedia and digital technologies have the ability to change teaching and learning as these forms of media enable students to become researchers, storytellers, and historians.

USES OF DIGITAL STORIES

Through past experiences in using digital storytelling tools across content areas/disciplines and classroom levels, the author proposes three primary categories in which a digital story may be categorized: personal, historical, and reflective. Each of these categories is briefly explained and some examples for classroom implementation are given.

Personal Digital Stories

In a personal digital story, an individual may use pictures, video, or other media to tell a story, visually depicting personal history or personal observations of an incident or historical account. This concept for learning could be extended into several classes and content areas for teaching and learning. For example, a student in a psychology class may add his/her voice to a digital story depicting an individual who exemplifies one of Gardner’s multiple intelligences. Or, a foreign exchange student may build a digital story to illustrate her impression of visiting an American school. In another use, Mellon (1999) developed a digital storytelling assignment using an online conference center in which the instructor could set up a topic or thread. Students added entries and could review others’ entries. She developed threads for storytelling, including threads for “a family member who made an impact on your life and an early childhood memory” (p. 47). Mellon concluded that “students are willing to