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Digital Storytelling as a Method of Reflection in the First Year Experience Course

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Author Biography
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Literature on High Impact Practices lists First Year Experience as one of eleven practices that lead to greater student engagement and completion (Kuh, 2008). In the past few years, I have taught such a course as a theme-based, one-hour section that combines exploration of an important question with application of academic skills suc vww sc   w lit368.58rQ q 0.cy TT (Kug0.24 0 0 0.Q q 0.l(u) 1 5.08tid 1521.89 -366 T

s on factors related to critical thinking, perspective taking, support of oneÕs own perspective, and issue identification. Specifically related to this essay, students are 1) to demonstrate an enhanced ability to critically evaluate information and its sources, and 2) demonstrate an enhanced ability to support his/her perspectives related to an issue or problem.

Kuh and OÕDonnell (2013) explained that an activity labeled ÒHigh ImpactÓ does not achieve that standard unless it meets most or all of eight Òquality matrices.Ó The fifth is ÒFaculty provide for and prompt students to engage in periodic, structured opportunities to reflect and integrate their learning.Ó Reflective practice figures prominently in guaranteeing the high impact nature of experiential learning. However, offering students opportunities to reflect does not ensure that students will understand, engage in, and produce

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multimedia publication, audio and video recordings, image production, and shared mediated eventsÓ (p. 33). The literature on digital storytelling typically focuses on its use in preparing preservice teachers, and ESOL instruction.

In my case, I use the digital storytelling assignment as the final reflective product of the course in order to meet the outcomes of 1) demonstrating enhanced abilities to critically evaluate information and its sources and 2) support their perspectives related to an issue or problem. By expressing themselves through digital storytelling, a kind of text distinct from standard writing assignments, the students choose visual and musical materials, recognize the correct use of Creative Commons fair use materials, and utilize digital materials that answer one of these topics related to the college learning skills:

- What do my five ÒstrengthsÓ (from Strengthsquest) mean to me?
- Who am I?
- What would I do if I werenÕt afraid?
- My obituary
- My first semester of college

They are informed their digital story will be assessed on these characteristics:

- Answering their chosen question, visually and through plot.
- Length at least three minutes long.
- Use of animation/movement.
- Incorporation of sound (music/voiceover, preferably both).
- ÒCreditsÓ shown at the end.

I use a more detailed rubric for assessment. Students may use their choice of digital tool. Many use PowerPoint because of its familiarity, and it can create an excellent digital story; however, this project creates a self-contained program that runs without student help. Other students create edited videos on their computers or use online animation tools that offer Òfreemium versions,Ó such as Powtoon, RenderForest or Animaker.

I frame their showing of their projects as a festival competition. We watch the stories together, and each storyteller orally explains the creation of the digital story, another way of showing evidence of reflection. Fiscus (2017) recommends the use of a written tex.02t (tte) 1 (n) -136 (te) 1 (x.02t (tte) 1 (n) -136 (te) 112te)n

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