

Instructions

Explore the following issues/questions.

How does digital media production impact student engagement in schools?
What strategies can educators use to ensure that multimedia presentations remain engaging without overwhelming students with information?
In what ways does creating digital media projects empower students to express their “voice” and representation in educational contexts?
How can educators balance the creative freedom of students with the need to teach technical skills in media production?
How can role-playing games be designed to align with specific educational objectives, such as improving communication skills or understanding complex systems?
What challenges might educators face when implementing role-playing simulations in classrooms, and how can they overcome them?

Adaliz:

Digital media really boosts student engagement because it’s interactive and visually appealing. Take i-Ready, for example—it walks students through tasks but also includes little cartoon videos that talk to them. The animations are designed to grab and hold their attention, which makes the learning experience more enjoyable.

As educators, we have to be intentional when using multimedia in our lessons. It’s important to keep things clear and not overwhelm students with too much at once. I once saw an educational video (still looking for it, but I’ll share if I find it!) that talked about how powerful our word choices are when presenting. The message was basically that if you want to get your point across effectively, you need to keep it simple and purposeful. That really stuck with me. Honestly, if we as adults can get distracted during a presentation, imagine how easily kids can lose focus—we have to keep that in mind.

Creating digital media projects is also a great way for students to show their voice and personality. When they work on something like a presentation, they’ll choose images and words that not only fit the topic but also reflect who they are. It reminds me of my ePortfolio—even though it’s for potential employers, the color scheme, the way I write, and the blog posts all show my voice and passion. Digital media allows for that kind of personal connection while still focusing on learning.

Christopher:

I believe the number one strategy to use to help keep students engaged while not being overwhelmed would be to make sure your presentation is not too busy and make it interactive. From time to time we will use Peardeck to add interaction to our notes presentation, which also lets us gauge understanding in real time.

When you give a student a digital media project it allows them to express themselves more freely and show their creativity. This year in Biology we gave the students a week-long project to create their own creature and they were free to use whatever platform they wanted and with very basic framework of what to do we saw a lot of buy-in and creativity in the projects. I think one of my favorites is from a student that has done very little all year long dove head first into the project and knocked it out of the park.

Paula: I'm not sure that all the digital media exposure our students are subjected to is beneficial to them, especially when they are asked to perform on a boring state test. There is a place for technology, but we are dealing with a generation that have experienced technology as babysitters. I have so many students that even when trying to responsibly use technology with my students, I have to watch them all closely or they will be playing a game the second I'm not actively monitoring them. We have started to remind students that they will be turning in their district issued technology soon and they look at us like we have lost our minds.

I think teachers have to balance technology applications with active learning. Are students actually learning important concepts or just clicking buttons to get to the next game. For my intervention students this year, it was really pushed to have the students on an app. I chose to add in actual mini lessons with gradual release and then had the students do the activities in the app that corresponded as additional practice. I think digital media products give students that struggle to meet grade level expectations a chance to be successful. One way educators can balance creative freedom with technical skills is by having a holistic rubric that includes a scale of proficiency. When I assign a presentation to my students, I give them a template with guided questions to help them with the bare minimum. When my students get really creative, I make sure to recognize their creativity and ask them about it.

Role-playing games where students could interact with the scientists or historians, in context of their time periods, would be interesting. Students today really struggle with the context of what they are learning. Kids can not imagine life without wifi, xbox, and cell phones among many other things. I would love to step back in time with them and show them how all this got started.

Thaddeus: I think multimedia projects are a great way to wrap up a topic you're learning about. Teachers still need to have an exploration and introduction assignment to scaffold the information for students, so they don't get overwhelmed. For example, students learning about the water cycle still have a traditional assignment to gather information, which helps them develop a good grasp of the content. Once the students are familiar with the topic, the teacher can hook the students with an example from a previous student. She explains that it is the end result. The teacher then has the students create a storyboard, but they always start learning about a storyboard by using a story like ["The Three Little Pigs"](#) (click the link to see examples created in my class). Now that they are familiar with the storyboard concept, have them create a storyboard of the water cycle. Also, all these can be assigned grades. Then, when the students have the water cycle storyboard, they use [Brush Ninja](#), a basic online animation tool. Students can create key frames and then an animation of the entire water cycle.

Ozone brushninja gif



This is also an excellent avenue for student voice because they are creating their own brushninja gif (with teacher-created rubrics) to convey what they have learned and how they want to display that knowledge.

Role-playing games can be useful, but they have to be used in the right way. In intro to architecture, I have seen teachers use Minecraft to teach that buildings have to follow a plan or to be able to build in 3D when floor plans are in 2D. First, the student creates a design using grid paper (on 2D) then using Minecraft, they have to follow their own floor plan and elevation plans to create their building in 3D.