Teaching Culture-Learning Culture: Integrating Technology into an Early Childhood Curriculum on Culture

Multicultural learning and technology integration in teaching and learning are issues pervasive in Colleges of Education and in K-12 schools as both are key factors in preparing students to participate as 21st century learners and citizens in the global community. The Teaching Culture-Learning Culture project partners two teacher educators with early childhood classroom teachers to develop and implement a technology –rich curriculum to teach culture to elementary students.

The classroom teachers in concert with one of the teacher education faculty member acting as a facilitator, set up correspondence matching with Peace Corps Volunteer Employees (PCVEs) as an anchor for studying culture and exploring other regions of the world. The PCVEs are from diverse parts of the globe and are participating in this project as part of the Peace Corps Coverdell World Wise Schools correspondence matching initiative. (http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/) This agency of the Peace Corps serves as a collaborative friend in the Teaching Culture-Learning Culture project.

Central to these efforts is a blog that supports both teachers and teacher educators in their professional development as co-designers of the culture curriculum. The blog is designed for all members of the project to share ideas, resources, successful activities and lessons as well as those that may need refining so that all members of the collaborative team may benefit from each other's experiences. This blog supports these educators as the culturally-focused, technology-supported curriculum is developed and implemented.

Other technologies including digital storytelling, social bookmarking, and internet videoconferencing will be explored as tools to support and enrich the curriculum both from a process and product orientation. Students will create artifacts such as digital stories using audio devices and Windows Movie Maker as well as communicate with their PCVE matches via digital technologies.

The teacher education partners have provided a series of professional development workshops to the classroom teachers. These sessions included an overview of the project, explorations of the elements of culture and how to teach it to young children, and demonstrations of technology tools and software to enhance the study of culture and support the correspondence matches with the PCVEs.

This roundtable discussion will share the details of this project from initial design to its current status and will seek to generate conversation on how a curriculum focused on culture can be enriched with technology.