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Grounded Technology Integration: Visual Arts

Judi Harris
College of William and Mary

J. Camille Dempsey
Duquesne University

Mark J. Hofer
College of William and Mary

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The visual arts may bring to mind images of a painter in the studio, a sculptor working in stone, or a photographer capturing a dramatic landscape. While these modes of creative expression remain important to the study of visual arts, digital technologies—including graphic design software, image- and video-editing applications, and animation tools—provide students with new opportunities for visual-arts learning. Using these technologies alone, however, does not necessarily help students construct meaningful learning as they design, develop, and communicate their ideas visually. Instead, it is through meaningfully selecting, combining, and sequencing learning activities and complementing them with the savvy use of technological tools and resources that teachers can help students grow as artists.

Planning for Technology Integration

One way to help teachers integrate technologies meaningfully is to focus on instructional planning. When teachers plan according to their students' curriculum-based learning needs, they typically organize their lessons, units, and projects around content-based learning activities. When considering how to integrate technologies effectively into instruction, we suggest that teachers begin by thinking about the learning processes and outcomes intended for the lesson, project, or unit before selecting appropriate content-based learning activities. Teachers then choose educational technologies according to how well their use supports learning in each of the activities.

To help teachers select from a full range of learning activity types in each content area, we have developed and published comprehensive taxonomies of learning activity types in each of 10 curriculum areas. The learning activities in each of the taxonomies are organized into subcategories to make working with the taxonomies more efficient.

Once teachers select and sequence a combination of activity types that will help their students meet identified curriculum-based learning goal(s) for a particular lesson, project, or unit, then they consider the digital tools and resources suggested for each. Because the suggested technologies are uniquely suited to support, extend, and/or enhance each content-based learning activity, we consider this planning process to be a "grounded" approach to technology integration that is focused on students' curriculum-based learning. (To learn more, see "Grounded Tech Integration: An Effective Approach Based on Content, Pedagogy, and Teacher Planning," *L&L*, September/October 2009, pages 22–25.)

Visual Arts Learning Activity Types

The 75 visual arts learning activity types that we have identified are organized into two main categories that describe the essential nature of students' learning in the visual arts: explore and respond. We've put the 45 explore activity types into three subcategories: build awareness/conceptualize, apply, and create/design. We've also organized the 30 respond activity types into three subcategories: describe, analyze/interpret, and evaluate.

To view the entire visual arts learning activity types taxonomy, go to the Activity Types wiki at activitytypes. wmwikis.net.

What follows are sample visual arts activity types and accompanying technology recommendations from each of the subcategories in the explore and respond collections.

Explore Activity Types

As students explore visual arts concepts, processes, and techniques, they need multiple entry points to study visual arts. The 12 build awareness/conceptualize activity types help students construct their knowledge and awareness of visual arts concepts. The 18 apply activity types challenge students to apply and make connections using their knowledge of visual arts concepts and forms. The 15 create/design activity types engage students in creating and designing original works. (See examples in the table "Explore Activity Types" on page 37.)

Respond Activity Types

Though creating and designing are important aspects of visual arts, students also benefit from arts-based communication activities. While developing language applicable to the visual arts, students can learn to develop aesthetic awareness and form critical judgments of works of art, which are important aspects of higher-level thinking in the arts. There are 8 describe activity types, 17 analyze/ interpret activity types, and 5 evaluate activity types that assist with this communication-based learning. (See examples in the table "Respond Activity Types" on page 37.)

Project Example

Blending the visual arts with educational technologies can facilitate collaborative learning experiences that are supported by the convergence

By J. Camille Dempsey, Mark Hofer, and Judi Harris

Explore Activity Types

Sample **Build Awareness/ Conceptualize** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Visualize	Students visualize imagery and recall experiences and stories. They explore ideas to organize information using concept/mind mapping.	Concept-mapping software, mobile apps, web 2.0 art tools

Sample **Apply** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Alter	Students alter pre-existing works of art in physical or electronic formats.	Digital-image and video-editing software, graphic-design software, online fair use/copyright resources, web 2.0 art tools/online resources, photocopiers

Sample **Create/Design** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Design	Students work collaboratively or individually to create a design, such as a set, advertisement, poster, cards, graphic design, typography, logo, fashion design, lighting/architectural design, storyboard, or magazine, which demonstrates what they learned.	Digital-imaging, editing, and graphic/web-design software; image-editing software; mobile apps; QR code scanners; and web 2.0 art tools/online resources

Respond Activity Types

Sample **Describe** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Share	Students express their thoughts and feelings about arts-related concepts and works with their peers or other audiences.	Discussion forums, collaborative word processors, mobile apps, video-sharing services, screen capture and screencasting software, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites

Sample **Analyze/Interpret** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Connect	Students connect symbols, metaphors, and real or imagined subjects in a cohesive work of art.	Digital drawing and painting tools, image-manipulation tools, mobile apps, web-based digital archives, and WebQuests

Sample **Evaluate** Activity Type	Description	Example Technologies
Critique	Students explain and articulate ideas verbally and critically respond to works of art from a variety of social, historical, and contextual perspectives.	Blogs, discussion forums, web conferencing tools/services, and podcasting tools

of interactive elements embedded within media arts experiences, such as animations, moving and still images, sound, space, time, sequencing, and text and typography. For example, to help middle school students discuss their individual approaches to a drawing or other 2D artwork, they can use a digital video recorder to document their creative processes and reflections as they develop their works. They can create a film using video-editing software that communicates their artistic activity, narrations, and reflections on their artistic process. They can then present the films to their classmates and share them online with a wider audience. In sharing the films with others, onsite and virtual audiences have multiple opportunities and formats with which to discuss, compare/ contrast, and critique the artistic works.

Invitation for Collaboration

Teaching the visual arts is complex and challenging. Although we have identified 75 visual arts learning activity types, we expect that number to change, along with the technologies that support them. We invite you to help expand, refine, and further develop this taxonomy. Please visit the Activity Types wiki and share your ideas via the email link there.

—*J. Camille Dempsey (jcdempsey3@gmail.com) is an arts education consultant and a doctoral candidate at Duquesne University. Mark Hofer (mark.hofer@wm.edu) and Judi Harris (judi. harris@wm.edu) are faculty members in the Curriculum and Educational Technology program at the College of William & Mary.*