

Supporting Music Education: Expanding the Learning Power of Music

The contemporary student comes to the classroom with a sophisticated knowledge of computers. It is vital that we creatively approach and utilize the application of available technology to *engage students and enhance learning*. Multimedia learning provides teachers, including music teachers, the *opportunity to be at the core of communications*.

What is Multimedia Learning?

- Not long ago, **Steve Jobs, one of the inventors of personal computing and co-founder and CEO of Apple**, said, “The medium of our times is video (sound) and photography, but most of us are still consumers as opposed to being ‘authors.’ **The drive over the next 20 years is to integrate multimedia tools to the point where people become authors in the medium of their day.** When students are creating themselves, learning is taking place. **And teachers will be at the epicenter of this.**”
- In many schools, students are already engaged in multimedia learning where they are acquiring **new knowledge and skills in the course of designing, planning and producing** a multimedia product. Students sharpen their **planning and organizational skills**, learn to **present information in compelling ways**, synthesize and analyze **complex content and data**, practice **research and technical skills** and learn how academic subject matter applies to **the real world**.

Why Should I Consider Multimedia?

Why should an already-busy music educator even think about including multimedia in his or her classroom repertoire?

- One of the **biggest threats** to our current programs is **what kids can do today without teachers**. With an electronic keyboard and computer, they can compose, perform, record, produce and share customized CDs. What **used to cost tens of thousands of dollars** can **now** be done with a **relatively inexpensive** keyboard and computer.
- As technology progresses, sound and sound design will play an **ever-more important role** in multimedia communication. If music (sound) educators do not step up and **take ownership of the learning opportunity**, others will.
- Multimedia learning will **attract** a new set of **students to your program**. Multimedia learning meets the needs of **students with an interest in music and a great interest in technology**.

Multimedia Learning. . .

- **enhances the learning experience** and **introduces the arts** to those who would not otherwise have the opportunity

- **reinforces language arts and communication skills**
- **invigorates the teaching process**
- **addresses music education standards**
- **facilitates interdisciplinary relationships** between the music department and other academic subjects
- **provides real-world applications** for students

Where Do I Start?

The advancement of arts-related technology is often perceived to be too rapid to assimilate, let alone grasp and articulate to today's student. Begin by asking yourself a **few simple questions**:

- **What are your interests and expertise? What do you bring** to improve student communication skills and enhance understanding of music (the science of sound)?
- **What hardware and software is available? Take an inventory:** film editing equipment, digital video cameras, projection equipment, sound equipment and computers. What does the school media center have available? Are there local computer loan programs? What do students have? (Check the age of the computers; **multimedia requires** ample memory and disk space.)
- **If you need hardware or software, consider** having it **donated**; asking your PTA, other **parent groups** or your **school council** for funds; contacting **local foundations**; **partnering with other departments** to write grants and share expensive equipment.
- **Think about your own requirements.** Are you a technology beginner, or do you need just a little technical help? Work with a **colleague**, take a **class**, attend a **conference**, use software **tutorials**, do a project yourself—**learn by doing**. **Students can be your greatest teachers!**
- **What do I need to teach?** Look at your curriculum. A multimedia project can **combine a number of skills and**

standards into one very motivating project. Though the purpose of multimedia is communication, the purpose of the project is to provide a **rich learning experience** for students.

- **What is the project?** If you are trying a multimedia project for the first time, select a **topic you feel** comfortable with. A single class topic from which subgroups can select subtopics is a good place to start. Make sure there are opportunities for students to have **primary investigations**.
- **What multimedia project will the students create?** Involve the students in this decision! Examine your goals and objectives. Think about the forms of multimedia.
- **How much time will we spend on this?** Be realistic about the amount of time the project will take to complete. Think through the project thoroughly—and then build in extra time.
- **How will I involve students in the decision making?** Work with the students to list all of the decisions that need to be made between the day the project is started and when it is to be finished. **With the students' input, decide** which decisions are yours, which are theirs and which will be made together.
- **What resources will I need?** These depend on the project. Some **general categories to consider** are library materials, field trips, people as resources, the Internet, news media and original research.
- **How will I measure what students learn?** Remember to **plan ahead** for how to measure at least one key outcome the project is designed to accomplish. An important part of the assessment component is to **establish baseline data** before students begin working on the project.
- **What is the real-world connection?** How does the project **relate to the lives** of the students? Will the students' work be useful to others? Will the students see the connection between what they are doing and the real world?

Want more tips for keeping music strong in your schools?

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