# Language Association Journal
A publication of the
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# Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleagues,

If you can believe it, we are already well into another school year and have just enjoyed another fantastic annual conference focused on inspiring proficiency for life. Our annual conference, this journal, webinars, social media chats, summer institute, and regional conferences offered by NYSAFLT give us the opportunity to be inspired ourselves as we grow as proficient educators.

This edition allows you explore digital stories as a method for integrating the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) in your language classroom. Digital stories allow students to grow in language and cultural proficiency through collaboration, while also empowering students to share their own voice and story. Digital stories might be a great topic of conversation for your Professional Learning Community, which, as this edition investigates, is not limited to colleagues in your district. PLCs can be fostered in innovative ways!

Wishing you and yours a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year!

Mary Caitlin

# Call for Papers

The Language Association Journal is the official peer-reviewed journal of the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT). The audience for this journal includes world language educators at all levels, teacher educators, administrators, and others who are interested in world language education. To address the diverse interests, focuses, and needs of this audience, each issue of the Language Association Journal allows for three submission types—scholarly articles, reports, and teacher-to-teacher articles—across multiple categories that are organized by key words, including, but not limited to: advocacy, assessment, culture, curriculum, FLES, instruction, issues in the profession, language development, literacy development, methods, policy, professional development, teacher preparation, technology. While previously the journal was thematic, we now welcome submissions from a range of topics for each edition. The Language Association Journal is published two times per year.

# Submission Guidelines

- Publication Status
    - Your manuscript must not be previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- Language
    - Write your manuscript in English.
    - You may include examples written in languages other than English. Italicize these and include the English translation.
- Content
    - Your manuscript may be a scholarly article, a report, or a teacher-to-teacher article.
    - Graphic content such as tables, charts, and photographs, should enhance your written content.
    - Key word categories: advocacy, assessment, culture, curriculum, FLES, instruction, issues in the profession, language development, literacy development, methods, policy, professional development, teacher preparation, technology.
    - Present content that is appropriate for the audience of the Language Association Journal; that is accurate, timely and relevant; that extends or deepens what is currently known on the topic; that represents innovation or new ways of thinking; and that bridges theory and practice.
- Length
    - Limit scholarly articles to no more than 8,000 words.
    - Limit reports to no more than 5,000 words.
    - Limit teacher-to-teacher articles to no more than 3,000 words.
- Writing and Style
    - Write in active voice and with language that can be understood by all audiences of this journal. Define terms that may be unfamiliar to readers.
    - Include only and all works cited in the reference section.

- o Use style guidelines outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition* (2009). See http://www.apastyle.org for style support.
  - o Replace all references that would reveal your identity in the manuscript with generic terms such as *Author X* or *School X*.
  - o Proof-read your manuscript to ensure that it is error free.
- Technical Considerations
  - o Prepare the manuscript in a word document (.doc or .docx) using Times New Roman font size 12, double-spaced.
  - o Assure that any external links included or hyperlinked in the manuscript are active at the time of submission.
  - o Indicate the placement of any graphics (e.g., charts, tables, illustrations, student work) or photographs, within the word document. (You will submit these in separate files.)
  - o Remove any evidence of tracked changes that were used in the writing of the manuscript.
- Permissions
  - o Photographs
    - ▪ Your photographs must have high resolution and in a standard file format (e.g., .jpeg) and be the property of the author.
    - ▪ Obtain written consent for publication from anyone recognizable in your photographs. (You will submit this in a separate file.)
  - o Graphics
    - ▪ Obtain written consent for any graphics (e.g., charts, tables, illustrations, student work) that are not your own or that are not copyright free. (You will submit this in a separate file.)

**Manuscript Submission Guidelines**
- Submit your manuscript and any additional files (e.g., graphics, photographs, consent forms) that have been prepared according to the above guidelines through the submission form on the NYSAFLT webpage.
- In your manuscript submission, provide a brief biography to include at the end of your article or report if it is published.
- Upon receipt of your manuscript submission, the Editor will send you an acknowledgement email and an approximate timeline for review of your submission.

**Manuscript Review**
- After the Editor has received your manuscript and completed on-line information form, he or she will do an initial review to assure that your submission abides by the stated guidelines.
- If the submission abides by the guidelines, the Editor will forward the manuscripts to one or two members of the Editorial Board for anonymous evaluation and publishing recommendation. If the submission does not abide by the guidelines, the Editor will communicate this information to you.
- When all reviews are returned to the Editor from the Editorial Board, the Editor will make the final decision regarding the manuscript's publication and will notify you about the submission's status.
- All manuscripts accepted for publication are subject to editing.

# Table of Contents

# Out of Bounds:
# Can a Professional Learning Community Thrive Outside of the Traditionally Defined Parameters?

MaryNoel Goetz

**Abstract:** This paper defines the characteristics of the traditional Professional Learning Community (PLC) and explores several published articles on non-traditional PLCs. This paper details the initial formation of a fledgling, non-traditional PLC by school districts in a mostly rural area of Washington County, New York. It questions the viability of the PLC among small, less affluent, rural schools lacking the resources found in successful PLC driven districts. It poses the question: In what ways, if any, can a PLC thrive outside of the traditionally defined parameters?

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is defined as a results-oriented collaborative effort with a fundamental purpose of ensuring that all students learn at high levels (Barth, et al., 2005). This paper will explore the traditional characteristics of the PLC, as well as the limited research available on non-traditional PLCs. It will detail the experiences of a group of professionals in need of a PLC that had to work outside of traditional design, aiming to answer the question: In what ways, if any, can a PLC thrive outside of the traditionally defined parameters?

Little (1982) believed that teacher isolation is not conducive to school improvement and that continuous professional development is achieved when teachers:

- engage in frequent, continuous dialogue about their practice,
- are frequently observed and provided feedback,
- plan, evaluate, and prepare materials together, and
- share their practices of teaching

These practices can be facilitated in successful PLCs. According to Bolam et al. (2005), effective PLCs exhibit five key characteristics: shared values and vision, collective responsibility for pupils' learning, collaboration focused on learning, individual and collective professional learning, and reflective professional enquiry. DuFour and Eaker (2004) held that shared practice required "team members to make public what has traditionally been private-goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results" (p.4) and that this community-based environment reduces the isolation of teachers by promoting productive interactions. They believed that within a PLC, the relationship between teachers and other school professionals is a key element affecting student learning. Thus, by working together, the school personnel move together in their commitment toward attaining the school's mission and goals.

Both supportive structural and supportive relational conditions must be met for a PLC to be successful. According to Huffman and Hipp (2003), relational conditions that are supportive include trust, respect, caring, celebration, reflective dialogue, and risk taking. Supportive structural conditions include time and space for collaboration. Because teachers reported that impediments to a strong learning community were lack of time and the pressure to meet the demands of their teaching job, it is important that time is valued and made available. The authors concluded that these supportive conditions were the "glue" that held the PLC together.

LeClerc, Moreau, DuMouchel, and Sallafranque-St. Louis (2012) used the terms initiation, implementation, and integration to describe the stages of development of a PLC. A typical PLC functions within a school building or district, with an administrator as its leader. The initiation stage is where the essential development of the culture of collaboration forms as the foundation for a PLC. In this stage, it is "crucial to ensure that team members share and accept the vision and expectations" (LeClerc et al., 2012, p.7). In order to progress at this stage, structured and productive meetings are essential. Thus, it is necessary that the administrator be present as a guide. During the initiation stage, it is the administrator who creates activities to foster the buy in of participants and clarify exactly what the expectations are of the PLC. The administrator's role is also crucial in the implementation stage of a PLC formation, with the administrator guiding and modeling questioning and introspection on educational issues. At the integration stage of a PLC, a noticeable shift occurs and there is greater commitment from and leadership of participants, with them taking "the initiative and... undertak[ing] activities without waiting for the agreement of the administration" (LeClerc et al., 2012, p.10). With these clear definitions of traditionally successful PLCs, this work will now explore the available research on PLCs that have emerged outside of traditional parameters.

### PLCs Outside of Traditional Parameters

Are PLCs able to thrive outside of these normally defined parameters? Tammets and Pata (2012) outlined a model for implementing an extended PLC in a reorganized fashion. Their work delved into the extended PLC made up of educators from differing school and subject areas as well as from universities and other professional associations. Barriers that emerged included motivational barriers, critical barriers, control processes such as roles and responsibilities, and organizational policy and culture. Their outlined obstacles are similar to those facing the traditional PLC. However, perhaps most interesting was that of control processes. The authors found barriers here to be the lack of leadership, hierarchical organizational structure, one-directional communication, and the use of rigid, position-based status. They introduced an innovative model that supported the development of the extended PLC using the "cyclical and continuous people-centered and bottom-up systems approach" (p. 141) to overcome obstacles such as the need for hierarchical structures and support from the different organizations and "make the PLC processes authentic for teachers" (p. 142).

Another non-traditional PLC type organization was outlined by Moore and Carter-Hicks (2014) and focused on the creation of a forum for seven faculty members representing all ranks and four departments in the college for "collegial conversations regarding pedagogical dilemmas in efforts of improving teaching practice and student achievement" (p.1). This group met regularly to discuss their practice and to improve student learning. Their group was guided by several protocols. Discussion was guided to examine student work, conduct peer observations, and discuss dilemmas. Their sessions were planned by a different facilitator at each meeting. The facilitator met with the person wishing to present their work to the group. Together they developed questions

that guided the discussion. Typically, the session offered time for warm and cool feedback and then a reflection by the presenter. A debriefing closed the session. The use of protocols served several purposes, including allowing for equity of voice, honoring members' time, and serving to keep the conversation focused. The conclusion was that the group's "energy, insights, and perspectives inevitably shaped our work and deepened our thinking" (p. 14), leading to the group learning best when they opened their learning environments to colleagues in a trusted environment.

**Gap in Available Literature**

While the available literature provides us structures for PLCs and some examples of non-traditional PLCS, the field needs studies of non-traditional PLCs that function outside the boundaries of a single school district. A further limitation of the available literature is in the assumption that the PLC will have an administrator as leader. Traditionally, this may be so, but in the world of rural schools, where resources are limited, teachers most likely will have to organize themselves. Finally, while evidence exists as to how participating in a collaborative group is beneficial in improving teaching, studies are lacking as to how the PLC will directly affect student achievement. This article aims to partially fill the gap in the available literature by exploring the experiences of a non-traditional PLC that developed as a county-wide answer to professional development needs.

## Our Experience

Beginning in April 2014, the need to bring professionals in the field together throughout the Washington County region to share and hone their craft knowledge was identified. These educators in the primarily rural, upstate New York districts were feeling isolated from peers in their discipline. In many instances, each school had only one teacher teaching a particular course nearly eliminating the need to consult with another language teacher in their school. It was very nearly the perfect isolation scenario. The chart in Table 1 depicts subjects and levels each participant taught. Notice that there was minimal overlap as to which classes and at which levels teachers in the same school taught. There existed little or no need to interact, to consult with fellow teachers, to share resources, align curriculum, or review data to improve instruction and student learning.

*I decided to reach out via email… "If you are feeling isolated or in need of sharing, please contact me. Perhaps we can learn and grow together". The responses demonstrated a resounding need for collegial support. Though I may have felt isolated, I was not alone!*

When I was a veteran educator with 15 years' experience, I changed schools, moving from a highly populated suburban school district, to small, remote, and rural district. This move entailed leaving a department of 35 fellow World Language teachers and transferring to a district with only one other language teacher. My new colleague and I taught no classes in common. Having previously had people around me in my departmental office with whom to share ideas or ask a question, my new school situation had me alone and, in a classroom, feeling isolated from other professionals in the language field. I decided to reach out via email to other World Language professionals in the area to explain my feelings of isolation and ended with a simple request, "If you are feeling isolated or in need of sharing, please contact me. Perhaps we can learn and grow together". The responses demonstrated a resounding need for collegial support. Though I may have

felt isolated, I was not alone! Together, the interested teachers from other Washington County schools and myself planned a date and time to meet. We chose to meet after school in my school's Meeting Room. As it was a warm summer, I reserved an air-conditioned meeting room and planned to have refreshments to foster a welcoming atmosphere. Together we paved the way forward. We originally named ourselves the Washington County PLC, but have since updated our name to the Adirondack PLC.

Table 1

District Teachers and Subjects Taught

| School District | | Languages and Levels |
|---|---|---|
| Argyle CSD | Teacher 1 | SP 7, 8<br>SUNY ADK SP 201, 202 |
| Cambridge CSD | Teacher 1 | SP 8, 2<br>SUNY ADK SP 201 |
| | Teacher 2 | SP 7, 8, 3 |
| Fort Ann CSD | Teacher 1 | SP/FR Exploratory, SP 1, 2, 3 |
| | Teacher 2 | SP/FR Exploratory, FR 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Granville CSD | Teacher 1 | SP 2, 3, 4<br>SUNY ADK SP 201 |
| | Teacher 2 | SP 8, 1 |
| Hudson Falls CSD | Teacher 1 | FR 2,3<br>SUNY ALB FR 221, 222 |
| | Teacher 2 | SP 1, 3<br>SUNY ALB SP 104 |
| | Teacher 3 | SP 1, 2 |

When we met for the first time, we established norms of collaboration that we still maintain to this day. They are a guideline for respectful behavior during a meeting. They include pausing, paraphrasing, posing questions, putting ideas on the table, providing data, paying attention to self and others, and presuming positive. During this meeting we also shared reasons we came together and brainstormed topics and areas of interest we felt the need to investigate, share, and learn. Without an administrator to guide and oversee the progress or provide information and impetus, the group was required to facilitate the PLC ourselves. Due to lack of familiarity with one another's strengths and weaknesses, roles were not immediately established, although it was agreed that one person would facilitate the organization and the communication of the group. Working by consensus and exploring various common concerns, meetings were organized based on an agreed upon time schedule and focus issue. Each participant would bring to the table her or his knowledge, research, and information on a focus topic to share and discuss with others.

For example, one of our first topics of focus was that of alternative assessment. To tackle this together, one of our members well versed in alternative assessment sketched out the major characteristics for the group. Then, each member chose a characteristic to further investigate during the time in between meetings. Upon reconvening the following month, group members reported back on the one facet of alternative assessment which they had studied, including common characteristics of alternative assessment, key features, assessing the process of learning, and

example rubrics. Each member shared his or her findings, skills, or materials. Then, to apply these concepts to our practice, we each explored ways to revamp an existing assessment to make it more student-centered and real world focused. We also discussed ways to immediately implement better use of these methods in our classrooms. Leaving a productive meeting empowered and refreshed with increased knowledge of alternative assessments, we looked forward to the time to put this all into practice. The next meeting would begin with sharing of how alternative assessment was employed by each participant and what we felt was successful or still needed improvement.

The group faced two major hurdles in the first year of the PLC, including trust building and time. The group spent the first year building an atmosphere of trust. In a survey conducted at the end of the first year, all of the participants reported that if they were given the option of no longer meeting as an established PLC, they would still want to continue meeting as a group. Also, six participants surveyed reported feeling a strong sense of attachment to the team. Clearly, a sense of trust and feeling of commitment was established. Lack of time has been demonstrated to be the largest impediment to PLC success. Our participants hailed from districts up to 45 minutes apart by a car ride and showed extreme dedication by taking up to one and a half hours to travel to and from meetings, actively participating in the two-hour meeting, and continuing to research and participate on their own time between meetings. Changes have been made to best accommodate our entire group, including rotating the meeting locations between our school districts so that each member has an opportunity to host a meeting in their school, alleviating the travel time for different participants for each meeting.

Can a PLC thrive outside of the traditional parameters? Let's consider the progress of the Adirondack PLC. After one year, the PLC had progressed from the initiation stage to the implementation stage (Le Clerc Et al., 2012). The teachers were showing more ownership and seeing themselves as an integral part of the group. By two years into existence, with a solid mission statement to describe our focus, the team reached the integration stage, in which the duties and guidance of the administrator was essentially replaced by the forward energies of the teachers. By the third year, many teachers from outside the borders of Washington County sought to participate with us because they valued the collaboration, sharing, and growth that the PLC provided, which was the impetus to change our name to the Adirondack PLC. To date, this professional group meets regularly to hone and grow their craft together, having done so now successfully for five years. We stretch outside the norm into new territory where we share professional literature, host guest speakers on a topic, and grow together in our trade. As we move forward, the group will continue to function and sustain itself with the qualities of a traditional PLC while existing outside of the typical parameters.

## Our Future

The Adirondack PLC has demonstrated success in its ability to build a community of support and trust with commitment from its members while using a protocol of norms to guide our meetings. As we move into the future, our next steps include aligning basic curriculum, establishing SMART goals, and creating common formative assessments. These steps will be essential for the group to continue with this endeavor. Forming smaller factions of teachers of the same courses within the group will allow for the above goals to be met. They will align the curriculum at their levels while moving forward with the goal and assessment processes.

Administrative support in the form of time is essential for the continued success of this fledgling PLC. The next step will be to reach out to the various district leaders, present them with our successes to date and request their support. If administrators are not able to provide support in

the form of physical presence and guidance with the group, then, ideally, it will be in time. Regular curriculum release time in the form of one half-day once per academic quarter as well as release time for meetings would do much to sustain the already high morale of the group. Increased time for collaboration would positively impact each of these committed educators who wish to move forward together, improving their knowledge and creating a successful learning experiences for their students. In the current economic and academic reality, as more rural schools seek to share services and combine resources, PLCs are likely to be implemented among such districts, with our PLC being able to serve as a model to others. Therefore, it is important to continue to research ways to reduce obstacles impeding collaboration and progress in order to improve their ability to function and succeed outside of traditional parameters.

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# Addressing the Literacy Practices of Gifted and Talented Young Learners in the Foreign Language Classroom through Digital Stories

Jenny M. Castillo

**Abstract:** Despite the foreign language (FL) community's historical interest in employing technology to support language learning, few research studies have targeted the use of digital stories to address the writing needs and challenges of learners in a FL environment. This case study examines the effectiveness of digital stories in enhancing the literacy practices of gifted and talented learners at the secondary level. It focuses on an in-depth study of an Interactive Model Approach of the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) in its desire to address the writing needs, interests, and learning styles of gifted young learners in their Spanish class through the implementation of such digital platforms. Strategies for teaching writing in the target language, specifically Spanish, in a natural and flowing way and venues to increase the writing effectiveness in the content area are analyzed in detail.

**Keywords:** collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, digital stories, gifted and talented adolescent learners, Interactive Model Approach, literacy practices, Spanish

The objective of the present case study is to examine the effectiveness of digital stories in enhancing the literacy practices of gifted young learners in the foreign language (FL) classroom and to evaluate how the implementation of such digital platforms allow the integration of the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) as a venue to improve the writing skills in the target language of such a student population. This case study intends to explore the following questions:

1) In what ways, if any, does the integration of digital stories in a FL class help language teachers incorporate an Interactive Model Approach of the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) in order to intellectually challenge and address the writing needs and learning styles of gifted adolescent learners as they enhance their literacy practices?
2) What are the advantages and disadvantages for both teachers and students in employing such technological resources in a gifted adolescent language-learning environment?

In the sections that follow, I begin by providing brief definitions of three indispensable terms to this study: 1) gifted children, 2) digital stories, and 3) Interactive Model of Communication. Afterwards, a case study that focuses on the impact of implementing digital stories in the FL classroom of gifted children for the purpose of improving writing and communicative skills is explored. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages in employing these electronic resources in a gifted language learning class are evaluated.

**Giftedness**

Since the subject of our case study is a group of young adolescent gifted learners, it is imperative to define the population. This case study departs from the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) definition on giftedness. NAGC defines gifted individuals as:

> those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set sensor-motor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports). (NAGC, 2008)

While this work focuses on a classroom of students who have been categorized as gifted and talented, it should be acknowledged that all learners have gifts and talents of their own. This category is solely reflective of categorizations used by districts, not an inherent ability. This work serves as a jumping off point for other groups of learners as well.

**Digital Stories**

Currently, there is limited research on the relationship between the application of digital literacy, particularly digital stories, and the enhancement of literacy practices to meet the writing needs and communicative skills of gifted and talented students in the FL class. More and more digital stories are being used for instructional purposes in English as a New Language (ENL), in heritage speakers' settings, and in FL education (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). Through the integration of text, sound, and images, digital stories allow either first or second language learners to produce a multimodal artifact which strongly resembles media products they encounter during their everyday lives (Hafner & Miller, 2011). Additionally, digital stories are bridges that allow multiple modes—photographs, text, music, audio, narration, and video clips—to create compelling, emotional, and in-depth personal stories (Lambert, 2007). The personalized emotional story is then packaged digitally and shared with an audience.

Since FL learners need opportunities to use their abilities and to acquire new knowledge and skills (Shrum & Glisan, 2016), the employment of digital stories in the FL class could address the needs, learning styles, abilities, and communicative skills of students. Such digital tools can teach valuable technical skills, engage students, sharpen critical thinking skills, and expand the audience to whom students present, as well as advance cognitive development (Sadik, 2008). Creating a digital story involves choosing a topic, selecting images, and integrating sound appropriate to the story. The text is a venue for "deep language acquisition and meaningful practice" (Rance-Roney, 2008, p. 29). The process of selecting a meaningful topic and writing the story about the topic are the most important elements in the digital story telling process (Robin, 2008). Therefore, the focus by teachers and learners should be on the story itself and on issues of language use (Gregori-Signes, 2008). Digital stories allow learners to enhance their communicative skills by writing creatively, organizing thoughts in coherent ways, and constructing narratives (Gakhar & Thompson, 2007). As far as linguistic development is concerned, FL learners tend to apply more complex sentences and pay more attention to grammatical rules when creating digital stories. However, despite the aforementioned findings, most studies on digital stories have dealt with native speakers of English and with adolescents learning English as a New Language (Cloud, Lakin & Leininger, 2011). Very few researchers have examined the impact on the FL learner (e.g. Castañeda, 2013) and relatively no research on how digital stories may be employed to enhance the Spanish writing skills in gifted and talented students can be found.

**Interactive Model Approach**

Meaningful and contextualized communication in the FL classroom occurs when all three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) are used in concert (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). As such, digital stories may serve as productive electronic tools to accomplish the integration of these three modes of communication, also known as the Interactive Model Approach, as learners are prepared to enhance their writing skills in the target language through these technological sources. The interactive model of communication reflects the principles of contextualized instruction (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). In an interactive approach, students are guided through the text by means of a Preparation Phase, Comprehension Phase, Interpretation/Discussion Phase, and Creativity Phase. The Preparation Phase and Comprehension Phase serve as the basis for the interpretive mode of communication, where students comprehend, interpret, and acquire new information and perspectives of text. Through the interpersonal mode, students share information and inferences gathered in the interpretation phase and exchange their reactions with one another. In the presentational mode learners create a product based on the knowledge gained through the other two modes (Shrum & Glisan, 2016). The integration and interaction of the three modes of communication may be accomplished with the application of digital stories as students are guided through each of the communication modes in the writing process.

## The Case Study

For our purposes, this case study deals with an intensive investigation and in-depth examination of the language learning experiences of a group of gifted adolescent learners as it examines the integration of digital platforms for the enhancement of literacy practices in the Spanish class. Therefore, the present case study will describe the real conditions, complexity, and reactions of the participants. The project was conducted at one of New York City's most prestigious, highly competitive, and rigorous schools for gifted and intellectually talented students.

**Profile of Participants and Setting**

Participants in this case study were members of a Spanish class of 20 students, seven males and 13 females that met every day for 40 minutes. The study was conducted from September 2015 through June 2016. The participants were tenth graders of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. Ethnically the class was predominantly Asian: 12 of Chinese origin, two Middle Eastern descent, with the other six students being Caucasian. Seventy-five percent of these students came from a middle-class background and the other 25% from the upper-middle class. The classroom teacher, a native of Spain, has been teaching Spanish at the secondary and post-secondary levels for over ten years and had developed courses in the content area during her professional career. The instructor had been a teacher of gifted and talented learners for over five years. I, an Associate Professor of Teaching Languages Other than English at Hunter College, CUNY and Program Coordinator as well as Field Supervisor of the Foreign Language Education Program, have extensive expertise in FL methodologies and in the uses of computer technologies in language teaching. In the past, the language teacher and I have worked on other projects. The teacher expressed her desire to improve the literacy practices of her students and contacted me for support and guidance. Throughout the process, I served as an observer, collaborator, and consultant.

The Spanish III course that students were enrolled in during this study was the final year of FL sequence required. Their teacher explained:

After that, students may choose to continue taking the language as an elective for two more years, until they graduate. Tenth grade Spanish prepares students for the AP Spanish course, which is offered during the 11th grade, should they decide to continue. Spanish III begins with a review of previously learned material as students continue to build reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills through a variety of activities and exposure to new vocabulary, grammar, and verb tenses, both in the indicative and subjunctive moods, that enable students to express needs, preferences, emotions, and uncertainty in the target language. Cultural and literary elements are incorporated into this level through articles, films, short stories and other real materials (G.M.U, Teacher, personal communication, January 20, 2015).

Additionally, the Spanish instructor applied a Backward Design Approach in her planning of units and lessons and, as such, provided challenging activities, such as the application of authentic materials, prediction activities, the use of written journals, dramatizations, interviews, and comparisons, to keep her students motivated and spark their curiosity to learn. Furthermore, to ensure that learners worked in their Zone of Proximal Development, the teacher used student-based collaborative activities by pairing them with peers and had students work on activities that deepened their critical thinking skills, such as Think-Pair-Share, as well as asking them to reflect upon questions and concepts that required higher levels of intellectual behavior.

Throughout the academic year, students worked on units appropriate for their age, level of interests, and abilities such as cultural identity, environmental issues, immigration, relationships, bullying, love, destiny, and community. With such background knowledge and previous activities executed, such as keeping journals, prediction exercises, interviews, and writing brief compositions, the classroom teacher and I collaborated by using digital stories as culminating assessment pieces with the sole purpose of examining how this medium could serve as a stronger platform in the improvement of literacy practices of gifted learners. Students were informed from the very start of the academic year that by mid-June they would create and present digital stories based on a topic of their choice in order to encourage work in areas of their interest.

**Procedure: Integrating Digital Storytelling in the Classroom**

The yearlong project consisted of three phases. In phase one, learners were asked to brainstorm themes they found appealing and that would be appropriate to share with their peers and pen pals from Chile. A chart list with engaging topics was collaboratively created between students and teacher in mid-March. Additionally, learners were provided with a questionnaire to see how technologically savvy they were and how comfortable they would feel using digital tools for their final project. After all, digital stories imply knowledge of technological features such as the implementation of applications, software programs, hardware features, digital cameras, editing software, and podcasts. In order to make all students feel relatively at ease with the technological aspect of the project and to help them be successful with their final product as well as to save them time, students were brought to the computer laboratory on a regular basis and were shown brief reference videos that demonstrated the proper use of digital resources. Furthermore, students had the computer lab technician's assistance if they needed extra help in using the digital features for their summative project.

In the second phase, learners were exposed to digital stories from Uruguay, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia that served as models in the preparation process of their final original product (Appendix A). Both the classroom teacher and I wished to expose students to digital stories created by native speakers of Spain and Latin America as a way to expand students' vision of the Spanish-speaking world. These electronic stories provided many opportunities for pair activity

work, small group discussions, as well as whole-class interaction, which not only helped understanding different topics addressed in those stories, but also aided in establishing the purpose of such assignment. Moreover, these digital pieces helped present students with the cultural products, practices, and perspectives of some Spanish-speaking communities. In addition, these venues provided opportunities to integrate both the interpersonal and interpretive modes of communication as students shared information, ideas, inferences, author's intentions, and interpretation and reactions of the text material.

The culminating project was structured so it could be completed within a ten-week time frame. In the final phase, students were informed that they had to create a story line of 300-350 words for a seven to eight-minute video as their final assessment product (presentational mode of communication). Additionally, they were provided with the assessment rubric that was used in evaluating their creative piece, and with each criteria of the rubric explained for their understanding (Appendix B).

From the list of topics that had been previously facilitated by the teacher and co-constructed with learners, each student selected a specific theme of his/her interest. The input, creation, discussion, and feedback of list of topics took about a week. Students were given an entire week to work on their first draft of their story both at home and in class before submitting it to the teacher. Once the first draft was complete, learners began to edit and review their work in groups of four to provide feedback to their peers regarding content, structure, and organization. Students were divided into five groups. The groups were carefully divided taking into consideration: differentiated instruction, compacting, and cooperative learning as the classroom teacher and I tried to address the needs of these young learners. Every member of each group was assigned a specific segment in every story presented by each individual in its group. As each person read his/her story, each member in the group had to indicate three positive aspects of the story heard, one thing they learned from it, and one suggestion to be considered. Learners had to be willing to share their ideas within their groups as well as with the entire class. In this manner, students acquired information, shared, and exchanged ideas, which helped the process of integrating both interpretive and interpersonal modes of communication.

*… students acquired information, shared, and exchanged ideas, which helped the process of integrating both interpretive and interpersonal modes of communication.*

In subsequent weeks, students continued working on the preparation phase before the teacher collected the first drafts and provided feedback as well. For further technological training, learners were brought once again to the computer lab. During the following weeks, the teacher presented an anonymous draft from each group to discuss class content, intention, comprehensibility, grammatical structures, language control and accuracy, communication strategies, and rationale. As a result of rich discussions among learners, the teacher was able to facilitate constructive feedback in a collaborative learning environment. Students were then asked to write a second draft and the teacher provided feedback regarding grammatical structures, vocabulary, and intention. Learners continued to work for the next two weeks on their final draft. The final draft served as the narrative of their final product, which contributed to the presentational mode of communication. Students continued to use the computer lab in the following weeks to finalize their e-stories before presenting them to their peers. Finally, students presented their digital stories in the target language followed by a question and answer session.

They were also given a questionnaire regarding their experience and thoughts on how they perceived the effectiveness of the project in the development of their Spanish writing skills. Additionally, learners were asked to maintain a journal about their daily experiences during the entire process, write a final reflection, and answer a culminating questionnaire about their final product.

## Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of the current case study was to examine the impact of digital storytelling in the literacy practices of young gifted tenth grade students in the FL classroom and the potential benefits to the language learner. For this purpose, descriptive qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from multiple sources, including pre- and post-questionnaire surveys as well as short-answer-questions expanding on the surveys' items dealing with technology experience and efficacy, impact of teacher and peer feedback, writing competence, and attitudes toward the digital story project. Moreover, student reflections and journals, interviews of classroom teacher, and field notes played an additional role in our evaluation of the effectiveness of digital stories in the FL classroom for the student population. This case study followed a thematic analysis. Four themes emerged regarding the implementation of digital storytelling from the thematic analysis, including enabling students with technological self-efficacy, creating awareness of the value of teacher and peer feedback, establishing positive attitudes toward the creation of digital stories as summative projects, and reinforcing the importance of self-assessment of writing competence. From the onset of the study, the teacher and I decided to focus on the aforementioned themes, which were at the heart of this particular case. Additionally, the themes emerged from the way we conducted and implemented the digital platforms in the classroom. A brief explanation of the data material created, gathered, and implemented during the process follows.

### Questionnaires.

The pre- and post-surveys asked the same questions and were grouped under four major headings: 1) information about technology experience and efficacy; 2) impact of teacher and peer feedback, 3) attitudes toward the summative project; and 4) writing competence self-assessment including self-perspectives and reflections on literacy practices and communicative language skills in the Spanish class before and after the project. The pre-questionnaires were administered in phase one and the post-surveys in the final phase. A scale of one to three was used in both surveys, where one indicated uncomfortable, two indicated comfortable and three meant very comfortable with respect to specific questions under the four categories previously mentioned. A mean average of students' responses for each question within each category was calculated.

### Language Teacher Interviews.

During the study, monthly interviews with the classroom teacher were conducted. At times, predetermined questions were used and on other occasions, the interviews focused on dialogues reflecting on the prior month. The class instructor was asked many pertinent questions, such as the specific steps she took to incorporate the three modes of communication with her learners during their writing of their digital stories, the challenges faced from a pedagogical perspective to meet the needs, interest, and learning styles of students while preparing for the project, and time consumption in planning, organizing, supervising, and evaluating the digital projects. Furthermore, she was questioned about her perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of implementing digital stories in a language classroom.

### Student journals and reflections.

Throughout the three phases of the project students were required to maintain bi-weekly journal entries about their personal feelings of their learning experiences, attitudes, challenges, self-perception of their writing competence, technology experience, and communicative skills while planning, developing, and creating their digital stories. Every two weeks students would share their ideas and express their feelings of the process. Analysis of student journals and reflections further corroborated our findings regarding learner's experience and attitudes toward the entire process.

**Field notes.**

I visited the Spanish class twice a week. The fieldwork component included interviews of students and teacher, class observations, jottings, weekly logs, descriptive, and analytic notes. Students were interviewed during the three phases of the project, in other words, at the beginning, at midpoint and at the end of the culminating product. As previously mentioned, the teacher was interviewed on a monthly basis and detailed notes were kept of her responses. To have a better understanding of the student population, diligent records were kept of students' skills, abilities, social behavior, cognitive, and emotional characteristics. During class observations, I focused on the teacher's pedagogical and motivational techniques and methodologies that she employed during the study.

## Findings

Upon analysis of all data sources mentioned in the above section, four themes emerged regarding the implementation of digital storytelling, including enabling students with technological self-efficacy, creating awareness of the value of teacher and peer feedback, establishing positive attitudes toward the creation of digital stories as summative projects, and reinforcing the importance of self-assessment of writing competence. Explanations of the findings based on all data sources and themes previously indicated for this case study follow.

**Technology efficacy**

According to the survey responses, teacher interviews, journal reflections, and field notes, participants perceived an increase in their abilities to use technology. For example, 12 out of 15 questions in the technology section of the survey indicated an increase of students' confidence in their digital abilities from pre- to post-evaluation, with respect to skills in applying new software programs, such as Photo Story and iMovie, uploading and downloading music to the Wiki site, inserting audio-recorded files, and video editing software. As seen in the questionnaires and journals, learners became more personally involved with the digital story process because of the use of electronic sources, which for many of them made the project more enticing and fun. However, the questionnaires and students' reflections also revealed that not all participants achieved motivation in the same manner through the application of digital tools. Although students had constant support from the lab technician and many had extensive technological background, working with digital platforms was not always easy for some learners, and it was a process that participants needed to be relatively skillful in to fulfill their tasks. For some, this digital task became difficult and challenging to understand, requiring them to adjust and adapt to as a new means of oral and written expression. But for the most part (17 out of 20 students), learners became active creators of a meaningful digital literacy task as they became more technological savvy and efficient. Some expressed great pride in becoming technologically literate as seen not only from their responses in the surveys but during student and teacher interviews as well as in their postings and reflections in their journals. A participant stated, "towards the end of the project I realized that my digital story helped me achieve something magical, where I was the creator of something I

never thought I was going to do. I am proud of my work and of being able to use such great technology. My digital story has helped me to better be informed about the educational technologies of the 21st century".

## Impact of Teacher and Peer Feedback

Participants' responses on the questionnaire regarding the impact of teacher feedback revealed a slight change or improvement in grammar accuracy, complexity, and lexical variation in their Spanish writing. The average score for all three items increased on the post-questionnaire. For the most part, participants expressed their overall satisfaction with their teacher feedback and with using digital stories as a medium to further improve their writing skills in the target language. Furthermore, the language teacher and I observed positive results with the culminating project. All participants completed an intellectual challenging, diverse, enjoyable, and substantial stories that provided them with evidence of mastery experience and in turn reinforced the learner's self-efficacy. Also, this sense of self-efficacy was further emphasized as students shared information and exchanged ideas, inferences, and author's intent as well as read peer's written submission and observed their digital stories in class. Moreover, the positive collaborative learning environment created by the classroom teacher through different organizational venues and observed during field observations further contributed to the implementation of digital stories through an Interactive Model Approach of Communication. A sense of collaboration and teamwork as well as independent highly creative products written in the target language resulted from such digital platforms.

Based on students' responses, reflections, class observations, and field notes, learners expressed their surprise in the different ways they were able to communicate with one another through pair-sharing, group work, and whole-class activities that provided opportunities to validate their ideas and input. Such tasks provided venues where interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes were integrated. Students' responses regarding the impact of their peer feedback reflected a practical way to establish a sense of a learning community that allowed a low anxiety environment. Both teacher and peer feedback were valued just about the same. These findings were further corroborated by their journal reflections and field notes. A learner indicated, "I always thought that only my teacher's comments should count, but I loved that Ms. M let us express our opinions about our work with one another. I thought that was so cool. I loved it.".

## Attitudes Toward Summative Project

At the beginning of the academic year in the pre-questionnaire survey and in their journals, participants were asked to reflect and to articulate their opinions on how they felt about creating their own digital story in Spanish. Some students expressed nervousness about doing such a project in the target language. By the end of the project, participants were asked again to reflect in their journal and answer survey questions on whether the summative project promoted their writing development. Seventeen out of 20 agreed that the digital story activity did develop their writing skills. Some described the project as a "great instrument to improve writing skills". Some students commented that working on digital stories helped develop narrative writing skills in a "fun and cool way that challenged us to make our stories interesting and purposeful for a real audience". Many participants stated that they enjoyed working with the summative project very much and were proud of being able to manage digital programs and to have created videos that combined narration with images and complementary music, although some had expressed doubts when they began the project that they would be able to do it. Furthermore, some participants stated, "(d)espite its challenges, this project was very rewarding. We created more than writing pieces or digital stories, we created a tight learning community".

For most students (16 out of 20), their culminating project contributed to a dynamic learning experience, which stimulated their desire to continue studying the Spanish language, as they expressed their willingness to take AP Spanish the following year. According to the questionnaire, 74% of students found that the culminating project facilitated their writing experience in Spanish. Students reported that after completing the project, when writing in the target language, they were better able to state their opinions and give supporting reasons and arguments using connected sentences. Additionally, they also felt more confident in writing their points of view in the target language and believed they had better ability to state their viewpoints and give supporting reasons using connected, detailed paragraphs. Eighty-three percent of the learners felt that these technologies provided them opportunities of managing their own learning. Sixty-seven percent thought that these electronic communication tools encouraged them to identify their own needs and take risks and provided ways to address those needs within the context of the FL program. The surveys showed that most students were familiar with the digital aspects of the project, such as creating digital videos, using editing software, uploading and downloading photos, music, using podcasts, mp3 files, KM Players, iTunes, iMovie, audio recording, and Photo Story, although a relatively small percentage showed a below average technological background before the project. Also, they found the workshops, video references, and the assistance of the computer lab technician very favorable towards the success of the project. Nearly all students believed that a productive and positive learning environment had been created where everyone could share ideas, suggestions, opinions, as each person learned from one another. Eighty-six percent indicated that their proficiency skills in the FL had significantly improved because of the digital story task and that their sense of accomplishment was a direct result of the summative project as well. Furthermore, nearly 72% of these gifted young learners indicated that the culminating tasks had addressed their specific needs and interests in an interesting, challenging, and innovative ways. The majority of students (92%) indicated that the entire project facilitated a communicative and standard-oriented instruction as well as a medium for beneficial pedagogical social interaction with the target language and culture. Eighty-two percent indicated that an attractive feature of the project was the relative ease of the entire process as every component and phase was effectively and strategically planned.

*The majority of students (92%) indicated that the entire project facilitated a communicative and standard-oriented instruction as well as a medium for beneficial pedagogical social interaction with the target language and culture.*

**Writing Competence**

As seen in the post-implemented questionnaire, field notes, language teacher interviews, and students' journal entries and reflections, learners showed a significant positive change. Participants (16 out of 20) felt that after the project, when writing in Spanish, they were better able to state their opinions and give supporting reasons using connected sentences. Seventeen out of 20 also reported a better ability to state their viewpoints and give supporting reasons using connected, detailed paragraphs. By using creativity via the digital platform, students expressed that they "have the possibility to visualize, give dynamism and sound to our ideas transforming them into our own work of art". As some learners stated, digital stories were a "great instrument to improve writing skills". Some students indicated that such electronic tools helped develop their writing skills in an

engaging manner that "challenged us to make our stories interesting, fun, educational, and meaningful for a real audience". Other participants stated, "(d)espite its challenges, this project was very rewarding because it was more than writing; it was a window to the outside world". Furthermore, a sense of self-confidence and positive attitude towards communicating in all three modes of communication were expressed, where one mode served as the basis for the other as indicated by the language teacher and the journal entries of her students. This led to a positive attitude toward the target language and culture as students improved their writing skills.

The teacher felt that a productive, communicative, and collaborative learning environment was fostered. Based on the digital story videos created by her students and the corresponding rubrics, she informed me that there had been very favorable improvements in her learners' language proficiency skills, particularly in their overall writing skills. This was due not only to the appropriateness of the technologies employed, but also due to the use of concrete objectives and organization of the entire project. She also indicated that the time and attention devoted to the summative task was well worth the positive results of her students' experiences with the FL. The classroom instructor felt that this project had augmented these young learners' interaction with the target language and culture, and, therefore, the 5Cs of FL learning of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2014) were better addressed, especially through the integration of the Interactive Model Approach and the implementation of digital stories from Spain and Latin America. Above all, the teacher observed improvement in her students' Spanish writing skills. Although the format and technologies used proved challenging at times, she found the implementation of the digital platforms better addressed and accommodated her students' diverse learning styles and helped further elaborate their critical thinking skills. The teacher felt the summative project encouraged pedagogical social growth and provided challenging opportunities for intellectual growth. Digital stories provided opportunities to encourage further exploration of the FL and culture with authentic, dynamic, and contextualized content. In addition to helping students improve their writing skills, the teacher also indicated that the summative project increased her students' interest in the FL language and culture, helped learners identify and connect main ideas and details as well as identify key discourse markers (word order, transitional words, parts of speech) and/or specific linguistic features. Participants' responses on the questionnaires and their reflections corroborated their teacher's conclusions. Furthermore, the project was favorable in aiding students to acquire new information about the target content. Finally, it provided a bridge for learners to read, interpret, and make inferences as they enhanced their writing skills in the FL.

## Discussion

Given the increasing interest by FL teachers in finding ways to help their language learners become proficient writers in the 21st century FL class, the purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of digital storytelling in the FL classroom of young gifted learners for the purpose of evaluating its impact on the enhancement of literacy practices of the gifted learner. Data collected through questionnaires, journals, reflections, interviews, and field notes provided positive evidence on the literacy practices of the student population. Digital stories strengthened a FL classroom-based curriculum. The integration of an electronic medium was beneficial to this highly motivated student population who were able to successfully apply a responsible approach to such challenging summative-creative tasks. The solely conventional Bottom-Up approach to teaching a FL was replaced with a more exciting, enticing, and creative mechanism that contributed to enhancing learners' critical thinking skills, as most students indicated.

The first question of this study concerned in what ways, if any, digital stories served as bridges to integrate the three modes of communication. The findings of the study confirmed that a collaborative learning environment was created with the implementation of these e-tools as teacher and learners were able to merge all three modes of communication, interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational, allowing a successful Interactive Model Approach to FL learning. Accordingly, students were also held responsible for their own learning. The modeled digital stories, as well as those created by learners, kept students' interest at pique throughout the entire process, whether through the preparation phase (interpretive mode), the comprehension phase (interpretive mode), interpretation/discussion phase (interpretive and interpersonal modes), and creativity phase (interpersonal and presentational modes). In their interactions with one another, learners exchanged ideas and information while interpreting and negotiating in these three modes of communication as they prepared through the writing process and during and after the creation of the culminating product.

Regarding the second question, pertaining to some of the advantages and disadvantages of employing digital stories as summative projects, one can affirm that they constituted, for the most part, important, reliable, effective, and positive vehicles in promoting a dynamic, interdisciplinary, contextualized, and standard-oriented FL environment that allowed these young gifted learners to enhance their writing skills in the target language. However, it must be stated that despite its positive outcome, for a few students, the digital project was overwhelming and difficult at times. In general, the classroom teacher expressed an overall positive experience with the entire project and had a strong perception of the outcomes, creative products, and accomplishments of her students.

**Limitations of Study**

There are some limitations to the study. First, the study consisted of a small group of students and a limited number of instructors and was carried out within a relatively short time frame. Second, demographically, the participant group was relatively homogenous with respect to intellectual skills and academic abilities as well as economic and cultural backgrounds. Perhaps the outcomes and findings of this study would have been different with a more diverse student population. Third, the study dealt with only one language, Spanish. Since all languages have their own intricacies and complexities, not all activities suggested could apply to other languages. Finally, given the nature of the survey forms—an attempt to gauge the level of success of the summative project—it should be noted that "successful" is rather an elusive concept because it is a state of mind, and one, therefore, for which no relative measures between individuals exist. Finally, since a person's needs and learning style vary from individual to individual, it is difficult to objectively quantify how diverse learning styles affect the development of core FL skills. It is extremely challenging for any process of education to meet the needs of all learners.

## Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of implementing digital stories in enhancing the literacy practices of gifted young learners in a FL environment. By integrating digital stories in the FL arena, students can be encouraged to tell and write even richer stories. These digital platforms may serve as bridges where learners learn how to deal with information from different sources; in other words, FL learners develop their information literacy along with their communicative abilities. Because most digital storytelling is done by students in pairs or small groups, they can learn teaming, collaboration, and other interpersonal skills deemed by the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages in its World-Readiness Standards for

Learning Languages (ACTFL, 2014) to be key elements in developing essential literacy skills. Also, by asking students to collect information from different sources, FL teachers have opportunities to get their learners to reflect on and explain why they made their selections, encouraging them to become more critically aware of the learning and writing process and their own choices therein. Furthermore, in groups where there may be high levels of anxiety about writing, starting with a progressive process in a collaborative and cooperative learning environment can certainly lower the affective filter. Digital stories in the FL arena can be a rewarding and motivating activity for students and teachers alike that also serve to present to students in an enticing way the cultural practices, products, and perspectives of the target language.

Although the findings and interpretations of this study should be taken with caution due to the data of a small group, it should be noted that overall the electronic project was a pedagogically beneficial task for both the FL learners and teacher. This study supports the idea that using a digital storytelling project can afford multiple benefits to the learner as he/she intends to enhance his/her writing skills. Among the many benefits to learners, this study suggests that implementing a digital storytelling project can facilitate the overall development of self-efficacy. Digital stories in the FL arena, for the most part, make learners feel successful, confident and willing to experiment. Digital storytelling is a means to provide students with a project to create meaningfully with language as it allows both learners and teachers to integrate the three modes of communication in meaningful, contextualized, and purposeful ways. The value of this project resides in its ability to give FL learners confidence to succeed in foreign language classrooms and provides opportunities to use the language in rich, productive, and creative venues. The learning experiences and process required to complete the project, namely writing multiple drafts, receiving peer and teacher feedback, working with digital media and presenting to an audience, can help to interact and integrate the three modes of communication and can help foster literacy and communicative skills.

Digital storytelling can meet best practices in the classroom by providing a natural space for learners to practice writing using a multiple draft approach. Because digital stories are personal stories, they are pedagogically sound tools to practice language meaningfully. Learners share information, interpretation of themes and topics, ideas, inferences, and author's intent as they integrate and interact in the interpersonal and interpretational modes of communication in more intellectual and challenging manners during the creative process. Furthermore, these digital platforms allow FL learners to practice language functions by narrating stories in the target language as they engage in the presentational mode of communication as their project is presented to an audience of peers.

25

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Appendix A

Websites

https://vimeo.com/hduy A website for teachers to find high definition (HD) videos of high-quality on topics, such as sports, music, travel, documentaries, arts and design, comedy, fashion, food, narrative, and animation. It also provides a 4K Ultra HD player for free that ensures an optimal digital experience across devices.

http://storytelling.greav.net/es/ A digital storytelling community where people and institutions from Andorra, Spain, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, among others, share their work and creations. The digital stories and activities are in Spanish available by the Virtual Teaching and Learning Research Group of the University of Barcelona.

https://www.educ.ar/recursos An indispensable website that presents an array collection of pedagogical material that may be used by elementary and secondary teachers and students. It includes programming and robotics.

Appendix B

Digital Storytelling Project Grading Rubric

| | Excellent (4 points) | Good (3 points) | Fair (2 points) | Poor (1 point) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Story Purpose and Originality* | Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout. Complete detailed evidence of planning throughout the entire story, including sketches, sequencing, pacing, and consistent storytelling. Clearly articulates all essential aspects of the story's theme. It is evident that the author cares about the video and feels s/he has something important to communicate. Story demonstrates excellent originality in composition and delivery. | Establishes a purpose early on and maintains focus for most of the presentation. Evidence of planning for the most part including sketches, sequencing, pacing and storytelling. Articulates some aspects of story's theme. Story shows good originality in composition and delivery. | There are a few lapses in focus, but the purpose is fairly clear. Makes some connection to the main themes. Some evidence of planning including sketches, sequencing, pacing, and storytelling. Story shows mediocre originality in composition and delivery. | It is difficult to figure out the purpose of the presentation. Very little or no connection to the main theme and/or aspects of story. No originality in composition and delivery. Little to no evidence of planning including minimally completed sketches, sequencing, pacing, and storytelling. |
| *Creativity* | Strong evidence of creativity in composition and delivery and highly effective use of critical thinking skills. | Evidence of effective creativity in composition and delivery and some evidence of critical thinking skills. | Composition and delivery demonstrate very low level of creativity. Little evidence of critical thinking skills. | Composition and delivery are non-existent. No evidence of critical thinking skills. |
| *Comprehensibility* | Highly effective communication; task performed very competently. Functions | Communication generally effective; task performed competently. | Communication somewhat effective; task performed somewhat | No effective communication; no evidence of ability to perform task. No evidence |

| | performed very clearly. Appropriate response to audience/situation. Coherent, with effective use of cohesive devices. Use of linguistic features almost always effective. Native-like pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, word endings, intonation, and rhythm. Native-like fluency; speaks smoothly without hesitation and with ease. | Functions generally performed clearly and effectively. Generally appropriate response to audience/situation. Generally coherent. Use of linguistic features generally effective. Accurate pronunciation. Pronunciation rarely impedes communication. | competently. Functions performed somewhat clearly and effectively. Somewhat appropriate response to audience/situation. Somewhat coherent. Use of linguistic features somewhat effective; communication sometimes affected by errors. | of ability to respond appropriately to audience/situation. Poor use of linguistic features. Ineffective and incoherent communication. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Choice of Script Content* | Engaging, compelling and well written-concise use of words to make essential points. Deftly integrates important themes, details, ideas, information, and multiple perspectives on topic in to the video. | Well written-makes important points. Speaks to some of the themes and ideas. | Adequately written, but may be confusing at times. Themes and ideas are vaguely addressed. | Difficult to understand the essential ideas and/or themes. |
| *Language Control / Grammar Accuracy* | Speaks very clearly with high control and command of the target language. Makes no grammatical errors. | Speaks relatively clear in the target language but mispronounces up to four words or terms. Makes one to three major grammatical errors. | Speaks somewhat clear in the target language but mispronounces more than five words or terms with four or more major grammatical errors. | Very difficult to understand with many major grammatical errors. |
| *Communication Strategies* | Use of highly effective communications approaches and strategies that | Effective communications approaches and strategies that to some extent | Some use of communications approaches and strategies that integrate at least | Poor communication strategies and approaches. Lacks integration of the |

| | fully integrate all three modes of communication in the target language. | integrate all three modes of communication in the target language. | two modes of communication in the target language. | modes of communication in the target language. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Creative Tension* | Content is engaging-viewer is left with thought-provoking ideas and/or the story develops in a way that's different from initial expectations. Useful for promoting discussion and dialogue. | Content is interesting-viewer is left with thought-provoking ideas and/or the story develops in a way that's different from initial expectations. | Some surprises and/or insights, but realization barely differs from the expectation. | Predictable and not very interesting. Realization and expectation do not differ. |
| *Sound and Visual Quality* | Highly effective quality of sound and visual images used to add to the overall impact of presentation. Transitions, effects, audio, images add to the flow of the video. | Effective quality of sound and visual images used to add to the overall impact of presentation. Some transitions, effects, audio, images add to the flow of the video. | Fair and average quality of sound and visual images used to add to the overall impact of presentation. Very few transitions, effects, audio, images add to the flow of the video. | Poor quality of sound and visual images used to add to the overall impact of presentation. Little or no transitions, effects, audio, images add to the flow of the video. |
| *Selection of Digital Resources* | Strong selection of sophisticated digital tools that contributed to a high quality summative product. | Adequate and appropriate selection of digital tools that contributed to a good quality summative product. | Average selection of digital tools that contributed to a mediocre summative product. | Poor selection of digital tools that resulted to an unacceptable summative product. |
| *Economy* | The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout. It does not seem too short nor does it seem too long. | The story composition is generally effective and good, though at times the pacing may drag or lack more detail in one or two sections. | The story needs more editing. It is noticeably too long or too short in more than one section. | The story needs extensive editing. It is too long or too short to be stimulating, engaging, and/or interesting. |