

Apple Learning Interchange

Podcasting: An Exciting Innovation

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<http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/item.php?itemID=9988>

Introduction

What is podcasting?



[\[http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/galleryfiles/9988/thumbnail.jpg\]](http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/galleryfiles/9988/thumbnail.jpg)

Here's my perspective from the classroom!

"Can we do this all the time?" exclaimed Kendall excitedly.

"Can we video our teachers' classes and podcast them for later?" queried Morgan thoughtfully.

"Can we talk about anything we want?" asked Amy warily.

I never had to answer these questions with anything other than, "Yes, but..." The students figured it out themselves, limiting themselves as they worked, and listening to their own voices as they worked to produce their first podcasts.

As part of their study of computers and computer applications in my class, eighth graders at Kinkaid Middle School, an independent school in Houston, Texas, recycled classroom chatter into lively podcasts that they shared with interested audiences. Podcasting is like radio or TV broadcasting that can be saved to a computer, uploaded to the World Wide Web, and downloaded to a multimedia player such as an iPod. It is broadcasting that can be subscribed to like a newspaper or a magazine, with each new episode delivered each time the delivery program (iTunes) is opened.

What makes it exciting:

Over many weeks in January through March, my students interviewed their peers, shot pictures and video,

researched online, wrote scripts, and composed music to accompany their broadcasts. By exploring the components of communication, the project taught students music composition, photography, and videography, as well as vocal communication skills.

The students not only were learning these skills, but they were teaching them as well. Many interesting interviews have been conducted and presented that expose their audiences to myriad topics: "What's it like to be the Student Council president?"; "What's it like to have your mom as a teacher at your school?"; "How do you train your dog to shake?"; "How do you throw a curve ball?"; "How do you take an underhand shot in lacrosse?" Students gave tours of the school, which was celebrating its 100th –year birthday. They reviewed for upcoming tests and taught new vocabulary words to listeners. The Science Fair was reported as well as community service projects, class news, and spring sports. Book and music reviews were shared, along with advice to the seventh graders about what to expect on their upcoming trip around Texas. A group of eighth–grade girls in the class created their own spirited and dramatic show that entertained their audience. Learning to podcast now had a clear purpose.

After the initial success using podcasts during the third quarter, several eighth graders continued to think innovatively about podcasting to describe their class trip. In March on the Washington/Philadelphia/Baltimore trip, I took my computer to download digital photos and to send them back to our web master to post for the parents to see their children having fun. Some of the students and their friends wanted to podcast to the world. So in a quick thirty–minute break at the hotel, a few girls met in my room to provide a comprehensive accounting of the first few days' events--and ended by singing a song they had learned along the way. I added pictures I'd taken, music from GarageBand loops, and uploaded it to the school's web page. They were very proud of their broadcast and anxious to see it when they were at home on their own computers. At the airport on arrival in Houston, parents commented on how they had enjoyed seeing and hearing their kids' podcast of the trip.

Later, I introduced media elements that students could use to enhance their podcasts. GarageBand, a software application used to create music, is part of Apple Computer's iLife suite of applications that are used to create, organize, and manipulate digital content. After a tutorial on the newer Apple "iApp," the students realized they could make their own music, which they liked as much or more than the downloads they initially wanted from iTunes. Already familiar with iPhoto and iMovie, I encouraged the students to include visuals in their podcasts, along with their recorded voices and music. They learned to time photo changes with script changes. Working in groups of two to four, they researched different aspects of middle–schoolers' interests, which ranged from movies and music to sports and studies, before they were allowed to record. Their first podcasts consisted of only audio and had no visuals. They were deemed boring and too long. Digital photos and their own artwork, created using PowerPoint, were added. They critiqued each episode before starting a new one. I helped individuals put the parts together and uploaded their new, improved podcasts to the school's Middle School Web site.

Using digital photos inspired my students to want to include video in their podcasts. Video podcasts are called vodcasts. They interviewed students, the school's principal, and teachers. They videoed "talking heads." ("Talking heads" is tech–talk for a video of the head of a person talking.) To avoid embarrassing some of my colleagues, I reviewed and cut some of the video, but for the most part the kids did a great job. They took video of a corn snake eating a mouse, narrated it, and broadcasted it to us all. (Thank you very much!) Two seventh graders, at their teacher's suggestion, took the camera to Lower School to video a docent guiding a group through the "Old Kinkaid" exhibit, part of the Centennial Celebration. So, podcasting began to involve others outside of the eighth–grade computer class.

Word about podcasting spread quickly among my colleagues. A sixth grade art teacher was in my lab one day as I was showing podcasts from other schools to the students. She soon had the idea to display her students' artwork

by making an iMovie slideshow of their Rousseau-istic jungle scenes that she had photographed, narrated by one of her sixth graders reading a script that explained the project. Her podcast was the first teacher's podcast at Kinkaid. A few more teachers became interested. The more they listened and watched, the more they inquired about doing it themselves. The French teacher showcased her students' mastery of the language by giving weather reports and vacation interviews in French. The fifth grade Perspectives teacher had his students perform puppet shows to illustrate the main points of their anti-bullying statement. He also had his seventh-grade students in his Human Development class create public service announcements about human relationships. The music teacher used podcasting to share games and performances with students, parents, and a colleague in Mexico. The English teacher wants to have her students read their essays in podcasts. The Spanish and French teachers have asked for iPods to store podcasts of their students' conversations to assess at home. It was wonderful to witness their enthusiasm.

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Teachers and students alike are realizing the value of podcasting. Podcasts are convenient to use; there is no need to wait for a traditional radio or TV schedule to present a video. They can be burned onto a CD and popped into any computer or downloaded to an iPod or any other MP3 player. Many schools and colleges have adopted podcasting so that students may download lectures to replay them later, and according to Dan Schmidt in Education Week, many K-12 school have found that podcasts help "hone students' vocabulary, writing, editing, public speaking, and presentation skills" (Podcasting Craze Comes to K-12 Schools, December 7, 2005). Podcasting has found a home in our middle school curriculum. It is technology integration at its best.

I learned about podcasting from reading *Raw Materials for the Mind* and *Classroom Blogging*, books by David Warlick, attending courses with Apple educators, and participating in the Texas Computer Education Association convention on educational technology. Instructors Dr. Tim Tyson, Marco Torres, and Maria and Don Henderson conducted amazing classes that motivated me. I realized I had to take this technology back to my own students and to other teachers at my school. I could not ignore it any longer. This year we are providing even more training for teachers who are committed to using this technology in the classroom. Podcasting is an exciting innovation for students and teachers alike. As Middle School Technology Coordinator and as a teacher who has worked in education for 33 years, my most important task is to help teachers use technology in their curriculum to heighten the interest of students in learning.

Since effective communication is the crux of most of our pursuits today, learning how to use a multimedia approach to enhance successful communication is vital. Students enjoy using technology and are very comfortable using it to communicate their efforts in class. Podcasting stimulates teachers to use technology and to become comfortable using it and assessing its use by their students. They like to show off their students' achievements and activities to large audiences--parents, friends, relatives, colleagues, and the world. Now, teachers are talking students' language! The next quest will be using podcasts to communicate with schools, teachers, and students around the world. Could this be Kinkaid's first step toward distance learning? Podcasting is an innovative communication tool for you and your students.

So...what's in your pocket?

To find out more about podcasting, visit <http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting/>
[<http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting/>]