Using Technology in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom to Increase Student Motivation

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With new technology and its role in each of our lives daily; teachers are now challenged to provide multiple ways to teach the digital learners of today. Teachers must give technology thought in their daily lessons and engagement strategies for their students in the classroom. Social Studies teachers in particular are looking for ways to increase student motivation. Desperate to ensure the students are given the basics of government and citizenship, teachers turn to handout after handout in attempts to find that little piece of time they can spend in the daily classroom setting. The very basic goal of education, as elegantly explained by Carol Seefeldt, author and researcher at The Institute of Child Study at the University of Maryland, is: “The goal of all education is to prepare children to become citizens of a democratic society. The field of social studies is uniquely suited to prepare children with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to participate in, and contribute to, the small democracies of their homes, their preschool or primary groups, and their immediate neighborhoods today, as well as to become functioning citizens of society in general in the future” (Seefeldt, 1993, p. 2). For students to become functioning citizens and develop the understanding and knowledge about what this means; they must first become motivated to learn social studies. This paper serves to answer the question of how to motivate students in the social studies classroom through the integration of technology.

Review of the Literature

In this literature review there is clear and distinct consensus that social studies is an important academic subject for all students; that will benefit the entire society with its successful completion and student understanding in their lives; however, despite this importance, social studies is not given the appropriate instructional time or attention in the curriculum mapping as it loses its luster with students while teachers struggle to find time to “fit it in” to their school day. With the growing concerns and lack of time for this important subject, teachers must turn to alternative methods to create an engaging and time appropriate approach to incorporating the lost social studies lessons into their classrooms. The overall importance of this subject in the daily classroom schedule is constantly being diminished
and pedagogy is becoming second to effective teaching skills for this lost subject (Hill-Anderson, Harrison, & Tardino, 2012). The civic importance of social studies and its role in our students’ developments of citizenship and their willingness to function in our democratic society is left to the teachers that work with these students each day (Hostetler, 2009). “We are living in a world that is smaller, more connected, and better, yet, in some instances, social studies instruction looks and feels like it did 50 years ago” (Holcomb, Beal, & Lee, 2011, p.102). Research indicates that schools spend time, efforts and resources on the “tested subjects”; leaving very little time for social studies content (Schocker, Croft, Licwinko, Muthersbaugh, Rossetti, & Yeager, 2012).

**Effective Strategies: Teacher as the Model**

In Crowe’s (2014) article on integrating technology into social studies education courses, it was discovered that when teachers model how to use technology in their lessons it directly impacts the students’ motivation and willingness to try technology and they desire to learn more as they accomplish this integration. This setting the pace and clearly establishing how to teach by example. In Brugar’s (2012) article, we can see how integrating technology into the social studies classroom is introduced as she examines the effects of cooperative learning and “informal education” on her students’ motivation and engagement in the interactive museum exhibits accessible online. This interactive, informal type learning is intentional and engages the students as they become the facilitator of their learning. This could only happen after careful introduction and modeling from the teacher as they walk the students through the online exhibits and ties it all into the content at hand. Working with these students in a whole class virtual type field trip helps open the students’ eyes to the world of online resources and how to find, acknowledge and use these applications in their learning. In Heafner’s (2014) article the author recognizes that students have a prejudice against social studies before even entering its classroom. These classes are perceived as boring and dry. The author establishes the use of technology in the social studies classroom through a lens of motivational theory. Using examples from an actual social studies classroom of chaos, and lack of engagement, the author
sets forth to explain how technology can be used as a motivational tool in social studies. This article sheds light on the many educators that are actually feeding into the “dry and boring” perceptions that we have and continue to instill in our students about social studies as we assign worksheet after worksheet to them expecting them to somehow enjoy this curriculum. This again pointing to the teacher as the model; modeling a love, enjoyment and dedication to social studies through the use and time commitments with adding a technology based approach to the curriculum for all to enjoy; starting with the teacher.

**Effective Strategies: Multimodal Applications**

Another effective strategy in technology integration in the classroom is highlighted in Dalton’s (2014) article is the use of multimodal applications; this ensuring that all levels of students can participate and benefit from the integration of technology into the classroom. In this article first-hand experiences with actual programs and software are discussed. Dalton examines the use of voice-to-text tools for those students that have challenges in writing, the use of virtual design software for those students that are challenged in design and art aspects, as well as various online interactive book creator software programs that allow students to record text and drop it into their book creation. These varying types of technology and their multimodal approach to learning styles are highlighted again in Holcomb, Beal, & Lee’s (2011) article as students begin using authentic situations in real time and utilizing a problem solving style of learning for students. The benefits of this are huge in the diverse classroom of learners that teachers are challenged to teach and motivate to learn year after year. The challenge becomes even more apparent in the social studies curriculum; where students perceptions are already scared with past experiences of lecture and worksheet after worksheet redundantly. As Holcomb, Beal, & Lee state, “Today, social studies teachers should address complex global issues by challenging students to use knowledge of social studies and 21st century skills to address and solve the world’s problems” (2011).
This “supersizing” of social studies and its content in our classroom can be accomplished in many ways. In Holcomb, Beal, & Lee’s (2011) article it states, “Rather, social studies should be a subject that teachers and students embrace.” Throughout the research of the literature, social studies has big potential to bridge the gap between old school teaching and modern digital age learning. The many applications and successful technology integration shared within this project can be used in cross curriculum approaches as well as in themes or units. Using technology in the classroom supersizes the classroom of learners into digital age learners with better understandings of the content, meaningful connections, and real 21st century skills.

**Effective Strategies: Implementation Process**

In an effort to understand how to implement these strategies the teacher-researcher turns to Debele, & Plevyak’s (2012) article and its great summation of the “three conditions for classroom technology innovation.” Keep in mind this article was written after a closer examination of 33 different “successful” cases of technology integration were completed in classrooms with real students, real teachers, real results. The authors broke the components for success into three conditions; the innovator, the project (or innovation), and the context. The innovator, or teacher is the one responsible for developing classroom projects that use technology. This innovator would need to have knowledge of the technology and its enabling conditions. The innovator would need to use their knowledge of the organizational and structural social culture of their school to ensure the pedagogy-technology compatibility. The innovation (or project) would need to be developed keeping the distance from school culture, distance from available sources, and the distance from innovator’s current practices in close consideration. The final or third condition, the context would examine and explore into the school’s technological infrastructure, to include; its networking and equipment. This would then tie into the human infrastructure including; support, policies, and procedures. During the review of the successful cases there was a general consensus that the innovator and the innovation (project) ranked in importance to the context; that seemingly fell into place as the first two conditions were established.
In other words, the teacher or innovator needed to establish the goals (objectives), the outline (the innovation to be used) and then linking this to the content produced learning outcomes that were measurable, defined and consistent with the content needed to achieve the desired learning outcomes for the projects. As the authors state, “Generally, clear and focused goals, well-aligned learning outcomes and activities, collaborative efforts, and shared goals among practitioners were visible strengths of successful projects” (Debele, & Plevyak, 2012, p. 295).

**Analysis**

It is agreed that technology can serve as a resource to teachers seeking to engage and motivate their students to learn. All studies seek to answer the question of how to motivate students in a social studies classroom through the use of technology. All study participants were in social studies classrooms. All study participants had some basic knowledge of technology and ideas for its use in social studies. In Crowe’s (2004) article, one social studies teacher education faculty member incorporates technology into her education courses for 23 student teachers, in Brugar’s (2014) article, a group of ten-year olds in an elementary school social studies class are highlighted, in Heafner’s (2004) article, 25 high school students in a social studies classroom are studied, in Dalton’s (2014) article, 25 students on various skill levels and varying needs were studied, in Schoker, Croft, Licwinko, Muthersbaugh, Rossetti, & Yeager’s (2012) study, a classroom of urban elementary school students were studied and compared. However, in three of the eight studies reviewed within, the authors choose to focus on the education and preparation of the teachers, instructional delivery methods, and the actual technology used. The studies were conducted openly with all participants involved interviewed, and observed daily. The students and teachers included were interviewed at various times and the data and recorded observations obtained; such as, paper interviews, verbal interviews, written recorded field notes, were all used as data sources for review. A common theme stood out; enhancing learning through the integration of technology is a definite motivator for students to engage and want to learn more; however, teacher preparation, technical background and knowledge play a vital role in
the successful implementation of technology into the social studies classroom. Crowe’s (2004) article does work to focus on the beginning of teacher preparation from the very beginning as student teachers. As we are in this digital age and technology is apparent and everywhere we go; teachers are looking for ways to use this as a tool to motivate their learners. This can be done by placing value and importance on the teacher first becoming comfortable and accepting of technology resources in the classroom. Without proper training and education the teacher will not fully embrace the technology and model its usefulness and ease of access into the curriculum, lesson and daily utilization within the classroom environment. Working from the angle that teachers must model and teach by example, as a guiding principle that is an ongoing reflection piece for teachers to utilize daily within any classroom not just specific to social studies. This is where Brugar’s article differs slightly from Crowe’s (2004) article as it serves to educate teachers on the importance of technology and field trips and simply taking students out of the formal type classroom lecture setting and allowing them to become active learners in their social studies classrooms; those same classes that bored them before will now amaze them as stories, people, and places come to life right before their eyes, interactive online or as modeled or demonstrated in plays. The rising cost of field trips, the legal implications of them, the time spent away from the classroom, all weigh heavy into the use and integration of technology to provide a means of taking our students places virtually that otherwise they might never see or connect with. Using this technology to enhance the student motivation in the social studies classroom for all students is a great way to embrace our digital age without sacrificing learning. Heafner’s (2004) article seeks to define motivation, listing available and solid resources in which to turn to in order to facilitate learning in the social studies classroom through student centered activities and learning. This can be accomplished as the teacher models the use and integration of the technology, the projects and the outcomes to all students; allowing time for them to experience the technology from the facilitator role. Working in small groups, partner pairs, or individually the students are responsible for their learning in an inquiry based classroom of highly motivated digital age learners. It becomes a real win-win
according to many of the teachers that have experienced successful integration of technology in their classrooms. The students feel more empowered to learn, to discuss, to ask questions. The classroom is now for everyone.

All articles report findings that are more than just favorable results for using technology and all articles support the use of technology as a motivating tool for teachers to use to engage, enlist and educate their students to the world around them. For example; Crowe’s (2004) article gives clear insight into the use of technology in social studies courses beginning with the teacher preparation courses for student teachers. Citing such wonderful resources as digital histories, Web Quests that simulate field trips without leaving your classroom, and many more technology tools to enhance, and motivate students to want to learn more about our world and our place within it today. While Brugar’s (2014) article links to the virtual world and takes interactive a bit farther as she examines life outside the typical or “formal” setting. She discusses the importance of taking the students outside their classroom when possible to real museums; but just like the other articles she supports the use of technology to help bring the real world in to the classroom to increase motivation and student learning. The common theme extends into how teachers can change our students into lifelong learners as they model how the students can facilitate their own learning through interactive online displays and real life examples of times and places; much like a visit to a real museum. On this same note, Heafner’s (2004) article walks us through the integration of technology; not only as a means of student motivation, but also to improve classroom management and thus facilitate student learning. She takes us through the integration of technology that engages the students, opens their eyes to the world around us as it creates interesting and meaningful connections for the students. The students begin to use problem solving methods, use collective data and communication skills that help promote self-worth. As the class becomes more organized and less structured for ability; competition lessens and social learning begins to improve; thus student motivation to learn is enhanced. This leading the researcher back to the very basics of social studies as stated by Carol Seefeldt and commonly agreed and
supported by all articles and research included within; “The goal of all education is to prepare children
to become citizens of a democratic society” (Seefeldt, 1993, p. 2).

Conclusion

In conclusion, technology has a definite place in the social studies classroom as a motivating
tool for students. This motivating tool can serve as a means to creating connections for the students
that lead to a deeper understanding of our world, our home, our country and how the students can play
a role in its development and growth. As technology becomes increasingly more popular with all
people, its use in the classroom becomes a much more apparent and realistic goal as well as a need.
Integrating technology into our classrooms to motivate our young people to learn is an incredibly
powerful tool that comes with clear and precise guidelines and implications. Based on the studies and
findings within, further research is needed on the integration, use and availability of technology in the
classroom on a school by school basis. Its overall effects on student performance in the social studies
curriculum are also needed to review to ensure that any negative issues or abnormalities are defined,
revamped and modeled appropriately for all young people today. Teacher training, school resources,
and administrative support are all areas that also need to be identified, defined and studied as future
research into this ongoing and increasingly important social studies curriculum need continue.

Demographic Data for the Proposed Project

Demographic Data

The research site for this proposal is an elementary school, grades PK – 5 serving a diverse
rural community. The population that feeds into this school is in a poverty area and the majority of
these students come from poverty stricken homes or homes in which both parents work long hours
sometimes two jobs each. This school is identified as a Title 1 school with 55 % of its students
receiving free and reduced breakfast and lunches. This site receives support and funding for its Title 1
status to include technology resources to enhance instruction and accommodate the diverse population
it serves; with 83 % of its population considered minority and of that 23 % are considered multiracial, and 8 % are “limited in English proficiency”. According to the 2014-2015 school year data, the ratio of students to teachers at this site is 14:1.

The students at this site are assigned a “homeroom” classroom teacher in their grade level, and the grade levels are broken into grade level teams. Each team consists of three to five teachers; depending on the number of students enrolled in that grade level; keeping a maximum number of students in any class at 22 students. The teachers work together as a team, along with one science teacher, to deliver all required daily instruction to all students in their grade level; to include the yearly required social studies curriculum. The students are broken into classes depending on their skill level and ability for math; at which time the students change teachers depending on their assigned math teacher. The students in grades 3rd – 5th also leave their “homeroom” teacher twice a week for science class with a science teacher; grades K- 2nd do not leave their classrooms for science. The “homeroom” classroom teacher is responsible for all other instruction, to include; reading, language arts, and social studies; as well as science for grades K-2nd.

Target Group

The target group of this research proposal is comprised of one fourth grade level team, to include; three fourth grade classrooms of students, classroom 1-22 students, classroom 2- 21 students, and classroom 3- 18 students; total population is 61 students, three fourth grade classroom teachers, teacher A- a fourth year teacher with advanced education and certification in technology, teacher B- a seasoned 15 year teacher with current educational credits in technology and curriculum instruction, and teacher C- a new teacher with advanced certification in technology and curriculum and instruction. The 61 students are the focus of this study. This student population is diverse; with 32 male students, 29 female students, and a population break down as follows; 28-African American students, 21-Multicultural students, and 12-white, non-Hispanic students.
In 83% of the target group, both parents worked. In a survey (see Appendix A) conducted at the beginning of their fourth grade school year, 82% of the students lived in homes that had access to the internet; 20% of this was via cell phone access from parents that used the cell phone also as the home phone. In the 18% that did not have computer or internet access 3% were students living with single parents, and 2% were living with grandparents. There are 11 students from this student population that are ESL students with their native language, Spanish, being the only language spoken in the home. From the total student population for the entire fourth grade target group of 61 students, 11 of these students report no computer or internet access is available at their home (this total represents the 11 ESL students). It is important to note that each of the three fourth grade classrooms are working on the same curriculum for social studies; this includes learning about the state of Maryland, its history and historical importance in the founding of the nation. The three classrooms that will be studied are supplied at the beginning of the year with individual laptops for each student that remain in the classroom at all times. Teachers are free to use these with the students as often as they deem appropriate and beneficial to instruction. One classroom will be the group that remains unchanged in their delivery of the social studies curriculum. This class will not use the technology integration during this action research implementation.

Baseline Data

In this digital native world in which we all live; the majority of the students entering our public school systems have had some type of exposure to technology, and many of them use technology in their everyday life. In reviewing initial surveys for computer access and use from both the parents and students at the beginning of the school year; it is overwhelmingly apparent that our students use, embrace and look forward to their time working with or using technology. It is also apparent from the student surveys done at the beginning of the year that social studies is not a favorite subject for the students in this target group. Most students reported that social studies is a “boring” subject that makes
them “want to go to sleep”. The experiences the students have had prior to this school year with social studies are mostly based on text readings, lectures, and homework consisting of multiple worksheets where they have to find the answers to multiple social studies questions in their large, heavy social studies text book they are forced to carry home twice a week to accomplish this task. Parents have also become dismayed by the mounds of worksheets that are sent home to be completed by their children; while also complaining of the heavy burdensome text that accompanies this task. Teachers rarely spend additional classroom instruction time discussing the worksheets that are then simply graded and sent home with check marks on them representing a social studies grade completed. Our students are not learning or experiencing what it is meant by being a responsible citizen in our great nation; therefore, being a responsible citizen in the classroom is becoming harder for students to accomplish as well.

As our classrooms become more diverse, teaching becomes more challenging; at the same time our students are not getting the education, experience, and historical background that would afford them the ability to become functioning citizens within a democracy designed for all to achieve. Behavior issues and overall concerns for classroom safety have risen over the past years for all schools. This research study sheds light into the possible solutions to integrate technology into the social studies curriculum as a win-win situation for the entire community. The very basic goal of education; as elegantly explained by Carol Seefeldt, author and researcher at The Institute of Child Study at the University of Maryland is, as she states, “The goal of all education is to prepare children to become citizens of a democratic society. The field of social studies is uniquely suited to prepare children with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to participate in, and contribute to, the small democracies of their homes, their preschool or primary groups, and their immediate neighborhoods today, as well as to become functioning citizens of society in general in the future”
(Seefeldt, 1993, p. 2). This study will benefit the entire community as it serves to bring motivation to learn social studies into the digital age of learning.

**Proposed Action**

**Possible Solutions in the Classroom**

One possible solution that can be implemented in the classroom is the use of teacher made Web Quests that can be accessed on the classroom computer as a center during center time each day. Using what the teacher-researcher learned from an article as the author states, “Knowing what technology is available and who can help with it is an important foundation” (Crowe, 2004, p.159), and comparing that with student teaching and undergraduate courses in technology this teacher-researcher developed a web quest using a totally free and safe educational site to use in the classroom. While working on making the social studies curriculum exciting the teacher-researcher turned to technology and the resulting web quest for the elementary students which covers a few of the objectives to be reached under one of the standard topics in the curriculum through the CCSS. When this web quest was implemented in the student teaching classroom, it was a great success; the students were actually able to use the site at home, and in the classroom, with all their completed work sent via the site to the teacher-researcher’s email. It was very engaging, easy to use, and easy to get the student work sent already graded, ready to record in the gradebook and even told the teacher-researcher what areas most students needed more work on and what areas they did well.

As a possible second solution; using the Smart Board and available lessons in Social Studies within that system to then add in Google Earth, virtual field trips, class interactive lessons right there together as a whole class or in small groups of students as a rotation during center time at guided reading is a great resource that is already present in the proposed classroom. As the teacher-researcher turns to technology in the social studies classroom the goal is to use resources that are readily available and already a large part of the school day. The Smart Board comes to mind as it is used for all the daily
announcements and posted schedules as the students enter each morning, the whole class reading interactive lessons, and many other math and science interactive lessons and games to enhance student learning. It made sense to incorporate its use in social studies as well. In researching its use in social studies; there are already so many wonderful social studies lessons created and free to use on this system. It also allows the option for the user (teacher) to add in other online resources like google Earth and google map services that can then take the whole class on virtual field trips, and brings the world into the classroom. Another great article that supports this proposed integration of technology as it states in broader terms, “Perhaps the most valuable lesson we learned came from students when we employed a cascading expert model. This positioned students as experts and allowed us to spread the workload to reach more students” (Dalton, 2014, p. 300).

The final and third solution to implement in the classroom would be using IPads or Laptops that are also already in the classroom to give students partner, small group or whole class time to work on small projects in Power Point to end and/or begin one of the six required standards to be met each school year. During the literature review it was apparent that using a software that the majority of the class would be familiar with or should be familiar with in order to enter this digital age workforce; Power Point stood out as one great software that seem to be well used and a great resource tool for the students to learn to use more readily. As one author stated, “Students were excited about learning and displayed pride in the Power Point slides they created. The slides included; sound bytes, video clips, pictures, text, and animation. The product outcomes were impressive, but what was even more impressive was the level of engagement” (Heafner, 2004, p.46). At the beginning of the school year each student is issued a laptop that stays in the classroom at all times but is readily available during the school day. This laptop is preloaded with many educational software programs; to include Power Point. As the social studies curriculum is divided into six standards that are then supposed to be taught during the school year for the fourth graders; this would be a great tool to use these laptops and allow students to work individually, as partner pairs or small (3-4 people) groups to complete a Power Point
presentation either as an opening to what they are getting ready to learn to help activate prior knowledge or as an end of unit type summary report. Either way it helps the students form connections with the curriculum in a manner that engages them and motivates them to want to learn more by digging through the online research sources, creating presentations, asking questions, and working in this inquiry type learning style. It is through these three possible solutions and the integration of technology that each solution provides that the teacher-researcher seeks to motivate the social studies students to become engaged and excited about social studies and its role in our daily lives.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Triangulation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns to address when working to answer research question</th>
<th>Data Source #1 (Students)</th>
<th>Data Source #2 (Parents)</th>
<th>Data Source #3 (Teacher)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the correlation between student motivation (enjoyment) of social studies and the integration of technology?</td>
<td>Student Interest survey</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Compare previous social studies lessons without any technology integration for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parent introduction letter and responses</td>
<td>Teacher observations, recorded, videotaped and analyzed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways will the integration of technology impact the student?</td>
<td>Student pre and post-test</td>
<td>Parent responses</td>
<td>Comparing pre and post-test to different student groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways are the students motivated that is different than typical lecture style class lessons?</td>
<td>Student observations, interviews</td>
<td>Parent surveys throughout the integration process emails and sent home</td>
<td>Contrast between student groups that were lectured and student group that used technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to implement technology into the social studies classroom in a successful manner as to achieve the proposed goal to motivate the learners, several factors should be considered. Multiple sources of data will be collected throughout this process while considering each factor.

**Student Interest Surveys**

The students in this target group (61 students in total) will complete an interest survey prior to the implementation of the proposed technology integration. This student interest survey (see Appendix B) will be distributed and collected as a first step in the data collection for this proposal. The survey consists of ten questions that the students will answer in their own words (pictures have been added to increase the engagement and meet diversified levels of modification). The first two questions on this survey are fun and engaging to spark excitement in the students as they move on to the remaining eight questions. The remaining eight questions target class subjects, computer access and use, computer knowledge and skills, and are directed at the target of technology integration.

**Student Pre and Post-Test**

The student pre and post-test (see Appendix C) will be taken on day 1 of the integration of the technology as the starting point for the action research proposed implementation plan. This test will be given to the target group of students (total 61 students), to include those students that will be in the classroom that does not receive the technology integration. The test will be given on day 1 and the same test will be given on the final day as an exit slip. The tests will be grouped with both the pre and post-test for each student grouped together as one data tool. The results will be organized into a spreadsheet clearly labeling the two classes with technology integration and the one class without the technology integration. A key (see Appendix D) will be used to grade these pre and post-test and the grading will be done by switching teachers so the teacher will not be grading their own students’ tests. The results will then be compiled into one spreadsheet, reviewed and discussed as a team that will
include all classroom teachers as a part of the final data analysis upon completion of the action research.

**Student Interviews and Observations**

At the end of the action research project, teachers will meet with the students using an exit interview questionnaire (see Appendix E). These interviews will be recorded and will be done with the student being asked the questions by the teacher as the teacher records their answers on the paper. This will help prevent students from trying to impress, resemble or influence their peers in any way as to misrepresent the data collected. Throughout the interviews as the teachers are recording the student responses, they will also be making notations of the body language of the students while giving their answers. The same set of questions will be given to all groups included in this study; including the group that did not get technology integration. The recordings of the interviews will be viewed when all teachers are present with all other data alongside them and as part of a triangulation of the data.

**Parent Surveys**

The parent surveys will be sent home at the beginning of the school year as an introduction into technology use in any and all parts of the classroom. It provides a general guideline of the access the students have at home, their background skills and exposure, and will offer some information into the possible obstacles this project may face with parental support and at home access to computers for any student use as needed during this project. These surveys (see Appendix A) have been completed already and the results are on file at the school with originals of the documents readily available to review as needed.
Anticipated Themes

Throughout the literature review and centered on the teacher-researcher’s understanding of the research read and discussed thus far, there are several themes that are expected to emerge as the data unfolds. The first theme, students in the technology integrated classrooms will have a highly increased desire to participate in social studies class. The students already show great interest in using or working on computers; even during their own recess time they would opt to stay indoors and get those few extra minutes of computer access. When the social studies class becomes one that uses technology in every lesson the students will begin to desire that class more. This increased engagement will lead to increased learning about social studies and its connections to our lives. The teacher-researcher also anticipates a growing respect for the classroom of learners from the learners within as they begin to work side by side, in partner pairs, or small groups to research, report and present new information to the rest of the class. The students will become active learners in an inquiry style approach that enables the instruction to become student-directed.

As the student directed lessons grow, the teacher-researcher expects the theme of classroom respect to also produce a theme of positive classroom environment for all other subjects of study as well. Students will open up more and become more accessible, asking more questions, working with other students, and creating a learning environment where all students’ questions, responses, and ideas are held valuable and important. This positive theme centers on the premise that technology can bring a larger scope of study to the classroom. Through the ongoing research and resources readily at their fingertips, students have become problem solvers, inventors, history makers of their own. Through the Power Point presentations students now have an active and exciting voice in their classroom; one that speaks for them, moves for them, and opens up their lives to those around them.

A final theme that the teacher-researcher expects to emerge is one of classroom unity. When all students can learn using technology that can bridge the gap for so many differing levels of
modification and extensions, the students feel empowered, all students. This empowerment also brings a sense of pride, and confidence that they can be a part of the classroom, not despite their disabilities or skill levels, but inclusive of them. Technology has been used for many years as a means of helping others overcome physical barriers, now it can be used as a tool to bridge educational and cultural ones simply by integrating it into the daily classroom. Technology as a motivator to learn can be a successful resource for our classrooms in this digital age of learning.

Ideas for Shared Findings

The teacher-researcher plans to share the findings of this research proposal beginning with the administration within the research site. Upon sharing with the administration, the teacher-researcher would like to explore the possibilities of continuing the mapping of the web quests that would coincide with the remaining standards to compliment the state mandated CCSS (Common Core State Standards); as they now follow under the College and Career Readiness Standards. This shift to college and career readiness makes the social studies curriculum even more important as our students must learn what it means to be functioning and active citizens in this nation. Social studies serves to create classrooms of active, responsible, and educated members of the community. Following this guidance the technology enhanced lessons as outlined in this action research proposal would work hand in hand with the CCSS and the goals of our state to educate our students to the highest potential with the latest technology at their fingertips. With an end goal of publishing this research proposal and its findings after implementation; the teacher-researcher also plans to form a PLC (Professional Learning Community) within the research site. This PLC will be a focus group, designed to address possible solutions to ongoing problems as they arise through the collaboration of peer teachers, administration, and staff that are committed to the learning community in which we teach and one in which our students thrive.
References


Appendix A   COMPUTER USE SURVEY

Please fill out the following questionnaire to help us in developing our computer technology programs in your child’s classroom. Thank you for your cooperation!

Parent(s) Name(s): _________________________   Child’s Name: __________________________

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE AT HOME

1. How many working computers are there in your home? _____ None   _____ One or more

2. How often do your children use software in your home? (Circle one for each type)
   a. Games
      Never        Less than once               At least once                    More than once a month
   b. Word processing
      Never        Less than once               At least once                    More than once a month
   c. Educational
      Never        Less than once               At least once                    More than once a month

3. Do you have Internet access and electronic mail (email) service at your home? _____ No _____ Yes.

4. Does your child have internet access using any other device?
   a. Cell Phone   _____________   Yes    __________ No
   b. IPad              _____________   Yes    __________ No
   c. IPod                _____ ________ Yes     _________ No

5. If homework for your child required access to the internet would he/she be able to complete this homework at home?
   _____________ Yes   ___________ No

6. Would you like to see more technology used in the classroom with the students having access to their own computers and/or IPads?
   _____________ Yes   ___________ No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire to help us in developing our computer technology programs in your child’s classroom. We appreciate your continued support! Please read and complete the attached Internet User agreement for internet access in the classroom for your student. Please return both of these forms to school as soon as possible. Thank you!
J.P. Ryon Elementary School

Student Acceptable Use Agreement-Internet

Student Name

To access J.P. Ryon Elementary School internet, I agree to the following rules:

- I will not give anyone my name, address, telephone number, parents’ work address/telephone number or the name and location of my school without a supervisor’s permission.
- I will not give anyone names, address, or telephone numbers of family and friends.
- I will not install any software.
- I will not “Lend” my username and password to others.
- I will tell the supervisors right away if I come across any information, pictures, etc. that is against school rules/guidelines.
- I will not access or participate in any chat systems.
- I will not threaten anyone or use any improper language.
- If I get a message with threats or improper language, I will tell the supervisors and/or my parents right away.
- I will not send any unwanted threatening or harassing e-mails to individuals on the system or otherwise. No chain letters (either creating or passing on).
- I will follow school rules about how long I can be online and the areas I can visit.
- I will not access U-Tube/You Tube, My Space or similar web sites.

I have read, understand and agree to abide by the terms of the foregoing Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy. Should I commit any violation or in any way misuse my access to the School District’s computer network and the internet, I understand and agree that my access privilege may be revoked and school disciplinary action may be taken against me. By signing this list of guidelines, I agree to follow them.

By signing this list of guidelines, I agree to follow them.

Student Signature _________________________________ Grade ___________

As the parent or legal guardian of the above student, I have read, understand and agree that my child or ward shall comply with terms of the school district’s Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy. Further, I hereby give permission for my child or ward to use the school district’s computer network and the Internet.

Parent or Guardian Name(s) ___________________________ Home Phone _______________

Parent or Guardian Signature(s) ______________________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________ Date ___________
Appendix B

Student Interest Survey

Name ________________________________

1. What is your favorite game to play?
   ____________________________________________

2. If you could have one wish what would you wish for?
   ____________________________________________

3. What is your favorite subject in school?
   ____________________________________________

4. Why do you like that subject the best?
   ____________________________________________

5. Do you have a computer at home? _________________

6. Do you ever go on the internet? _________________

7. What is your favorite thing to do on the computer?
   ____________________________________________

8. Do you know what Power Point is? _________________

9. Please tell me what you know about Power Point?
   ____________________________________________

10. Choose five things you would like to do in your classroom every day. Please place a check mark next to those five things.

    ___ P.E. Time or Extra Recess  ___ Coloring/Drawing Time
    ___ Computer Time            ___ Help other students
    ___ Time With Friends       ___ LEGOS
    ___ Read a book             ___ Read a book to the class
    ___ Partner Reading         ___ Stickers
Appendix C

Student Pre and Post-Test

1. What is the title of this map? _______________________________

2. Find the Key on the map and name one symbol it lists? _______________________________

3. What distance does the scale represent for this map? _______________________________

4. Find the compass rose and name one city that is north of Annapolis? __________________

5. Using the Key tell me what city is the State Capital of Maryland? ____________________

*****Bonus: Create one question using what you now know about map elements. Make sure to include the answer to the question too!

Question: _____________________________________________

Answer: __________________________
1. What is the title of this map? Maryland

2. Find the Key and name one symbol it lists? State Capital, City, Water, or State Boundary

3. What distance does the scale represent for this map? 100 miles

4. Find the compass rose and name one city that is north of Annapolis? Baltimore

5. Using the Key tell me what city is the State Capital of Maryland? Annapolis

*****Bonus: Create one question using what you now know about map elements. Make sure to include the answer to the question too!

Question:

Question must include a map element

Answer: Matches map element
Exit Interview Questionnaire

Student Name ___________________    Group _____________
Teacher __________________   Interviewer _______________

1. What is your favorite part of the social studies class?
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

2. What did you like the least?
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

3. If you could add/change any part of class what would it be?
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

4. Name one thing that you learned from social studies.
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

5. Name one thing that you learned that relates to your life now.
_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________