Digital Communication and Collaboration Scenarios

Read the following scenarios to learn more about how digital communication and collaboration can be used in the classroom in meaningful ways, engaging students and helping them to think critically about the content. As you read each scenario, you may wish to make notes about any tools that would enhance something you currently do or could be doing in your classroom.

Scenario 1: What's the Weather Like Today?

Quick Look

Students observe and record the daily weather conditions to create weather reports.

Tools used in this scenario:

- Voice recorders on cell phones
- Photo-sharing site
- Class Web site

"Weather Teams, it's time for your Friday reports," the teacher calls out. Every morning this week, students have been working in small groups to keep track of daily general weather information, including such items as clouds, wind, temperature and precipitation. Each day, the student groups record their weather findings using digital voice recorders on their cell phones to create a weather report. They also upload their digital weather photos to a photo-sharing site and annotate the photos with important information, including the date, location, and descriptive weather words.

"Which team would like to share first?" The Cloud Team reports that Monday and Tuesday had dark rain clouds. Wednesday and Thursday had lots of puffy white clouds, but there were no clouds today, just lots of sunshine. The team uses the photo-sharing site to share the digital images that they took each morning, and the class hears a playback of the daily audio recording. The Wind, Temperature, and Precipitation Groups also share their aspects of the days' weather.

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After each group has shared using a projection system for all to see, the teacher adds the digital images of the weather and audio files to the class weather Web page. The class dictates to the teacher a brief weather summary, including a description of how the weather affected their choice of clothing and activities during the past week. She adds this narrative information to the class Web site for others to see.

Scenario 2: Cultural Investigations

Quick Look

Students work together to research aspects of their country's culture. They use digital communication to share with other students and families relocating to the area.

Tools used in this scenario:

- Social bookmarking
- Graphic organizer
- Photo-sharing site
- E-book

A teacher leads a group discussion about the changing population in their school and community as the result of refugee resettlement, the changing economy, and other factors. Questions arise as to whether or not people from neighboring areas celebrate the same holidays, observe the same religions, receive the same education, have the same government, and more. Students also begin to wonder, "How is our country similar to and different from other countries?" They develop a genuine interest in learning more about other countries in general, as well as the countries of origin of their classmates.

The students are divided into teams, each of which selects a country to study. The students work collaboratively with their teammates to research aspects of the country's culture, including education, religion, politics, government, and holidays/cultural traditions in comparison to their own country. Members of each team select which cultural aspect they wish to study, and they begin researching information on the Internet. They use a social bookmarking tool to highlight, annotate, and tag useful information with keywords, such as "education" and "religion." Each team member uses the bookmarking tool to collect useful links and share information with each other.

Using an online graphic organizer tool, the students create collaborative graphic organizers to compare and contrast aspects of their research countries' culture with their own culture. Each student group also uses a photo-sharing site to collect pictures from other countries and share pictures with their gourp. They assemble collections of photos that illustrate their countries' cultures, with annotations to explain each photo. The students' classmates can go online to view and comment on the photos.

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To demonstrate their learning, student teams work together to create an e-book that explains what they have discovered about their chosen country and how it compares to their own culture. They use photos, audio narration, and text to compile their cultural research into an engaging book that can be viewed and distributed online. These resources are shared with families who move to the school from another country and are also distributed through refugee resettlement programs. In addition, the e-books are shared by teams at a school cultural fair and posted online for parents to view.

Scenario 3: What's Up with the Frogs?

Quick Look

Students in several schools around the world collaboratively explore the health of amphibian populations.

Tools used in this scenario:

- Online discussion board
- Concept Map
- Blog
- Email

Sarah is concerned when she finds a video online that shows frogs with extra legs and other deformities. After a quick Internet search, she discovers that amphibians are not only suffering from unexplained deformities, but are also experiencing significant population declines. She posts a question on her classroom discussion board, asking her peers if they've heard about these problems. She invites them to join her in learning more, as part of the class's upcoming group research project.

Five other students decide to join Sarah. They create an online concept map so that they can all brainstorm and collaboratively edit it while they are discussing the project in a small group. The initial brainstorming session goes very well. The students decide to build a blog site to document what they learn and share their findings. Sarah creates a new blog for this project and invites her teammates to join the blog as editors, so that everyone can share the responsibility for creating new pages and managing the blog as needed.

One of the group members emails a prominent amphibian biologist from a local university and explains their project. The biologist shares information about his research and his thoughts on the students' data collection plan.

Next, Sarah and her group members conduct their field study. They collect and analyze their data, combining historical and current data to generate population trend lines. They also analyze their data to search for correlations between the environmental data they have collected and the amphibian population numbers and/or frequency of amphibian deformities, to determine any trends or differences that are significant.

When their analysis is complete, the students post their best pictures, graphs, and research results on their blog to share with their peers and others.

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