



Unleash the Power of Digital Storytelling

By Miguel Guhlin, Director of Instructional Technology Services, San Antonio ISD

With Dr. Maria Kaylor, Assistant Professor, UT San Antonio

and Dr. JoAnne Ollerenshaw, Assistant Professor, UT San Antonio

Copyright © 2006

Children like to tell stories. Amid the push for high-test performance, that desire for storytelling and listening may be neglected in schools today. What if you could tap into that desire in a way that reinforces content-area essential knowledge and skills, as well as models appropriate technology use? Digital storytelling is one way to accomplish that. You can find a variety of resources on digital storytelling available on the web (refer to Sidebar #1).

Implementing digital storytelling in your classroom can be as easy as installing the appropriate software, crafting a story using the writing process, storyboarding, and then publication.

This article is the first of three that focuses on digital storytelling use in the classroom, as well as shares one school district's approach to a district-wide implementation of storytelling. Only time will

tell if this approach will work in your district. Once you have seen the engaging benefits of digital storytelling first-hand, you will want to unleash digital storytelling in your school district. Benefits of doing just that include the following:

- You can engage students, teachers in authentic ways that motivate reflection and revision at higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (e.g. Synthesis and evaluation).
- Content-area TEKS are addressed within the process students follow to create, transform their story from an idea to publication-ready product.
- Technology Applications:TEKS are addressed within the digital storytelling process.
- Digital storytelling software tools are free and available on both Windows and Macintosh platforms.

Sidebar #1

Resources for Digital Storytelling

Center for Digital Storytelling –
<http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>

Bernajean Porter's DigiTales –
<http://www.digitales.us/gallery/>

SAISD's and UTSA's SCRIBE Initiative: Digital StorySwap – <http://itls.saisd.net/scribe>

PhotoStory Tutorial –
<http://www.jakesonline.org/photostory.pdf>

Get the Free, MS PhotoStory –
<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.mspx>

Sidebar #2

Copyright Friendly Music

Wikipedia classics –
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Sound/list>
Tutorial on Converting/Playing OGG files –
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Media_help_\(Ogg\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Media_help_(Ogg))

Project Gutenberg Music –
<http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/categories/4>

- The sense of a larger audience compels students to do their best work in ways working for ONE teacher would not. Sharing student work with a worldwide audience is much easier. Teachers can use class blogs to make their students' work available and subscribable by a large audience. This enables teachers to have a repository of digital stories to use with their students in the future.

- Publishing students' digital stories only invites dialogue and home-school communication among readers, all safely controlled within blogging software's comment features.

- Safety issues can be addressed up front and controlled for in digital storytelling composition and publication.

To enhance the conversation, Dr. Maria Kaylor and Dr. JoAnne Ollerenshaw (University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)) will join in on the discussion of digital story-

telling in K-12 school districts. This series on "Unleashing the Power of Digital Storytelling" will explore the responses to the questions below:

- 1) How do I encourage my students to become digital storytellers?
- 2) How do I empower my district leadership to facilitate digital storytelling in my school district?
- 3) How do I assess the impact of digital storytelling on student achievement?
- 4) How can I use Read/Write Web technologies (like blogs and podcasts) to enhance the storytelling experience and story-swapping? and finally,
- 5) What can I do to connect with a larger community of storytellers outside my classroom and district?

Two Simple Actions to Get Started as a Classroom Teacher

As a classroom teacher, it's pretty easy to get started. However, ignorance of the digital storytelling process may seem daunting. I encourage you to jump in and experiment with the software and the storytelling process included in this article. This is only your first attempt, and we will explore the storytelling aspect in more detail later. For example, I experimented with Photo Story and created a "digital poem" using Kenneth Koch's "Rose, Where Did You Get that Red?" poem. Read more and view it online at http://www.mguhlin.net/blog/archives/2006/05/entry_1438.htm.

Your first step is to learn how to tell a digital story yourself. To get started, I would recommend you actually take the time to tell a story that is personal to you, but that you would not mind sharing with the world at large. It should also be a story that is age-appropriate for your students. For example, you could pick a story of a particular object/heirloom that has come into your possession. You can see an example of such a digital story online here (<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/learnshops/digital/movies/treasure.mov>).

After you've decided on the story, select a few photographs or drawing/images that will help illustrate your story for readers. Write your story and compress it down to three to five minutes of narration. If you storyboard your story and pictures — you can use the template at http://www.digitales.us/resources/storyboard_template.php — you will be able to match your text to images as you read.

If you have ever worked with PowerPoint and timing audio and images on the screen, you know how difficult PowerPoint can be. However, here's a tip that will save you time. Use PowerPoint slides to organize your content (images and text), then EXPORT the entire presentation as PNG graphic files (FILE:EXPORT).

Then, when you are ready to mix the images and narration together, you can easily use Photo Story on

Windows (iMovie on Mac) to bring the pieces together. A short tutorial on how to use Photo Story to accomplish this is available at the SCRIBE site mentioned in Sidebar #1. This process is fairly straightforward. One last aspect that you may want to consider is adding music to your story. There are a variety of places you can go for copyright-free music, among them Wikipedia's collection of classics <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Sound/list>. You can download these music files, open them with VLC Media Player, then use the wizard to convert them to MP3 files compatible with Photo Story or iMovie. There are many other places to find music (Sidebar #2).

Your second step is securing where you can publish your story — and that of your students online — that is approved by your school district. I recommend using blogging technology because it allows you to “text-cast” your story. That is, it allows you to share your published work with others on the web and one more important detail. The detail? — the ability for visitors to subscribe to your publications. The genius of blog technology is that people can subscribe to your web pages and easily see changes or updates without having to visit the web site. Let's call this ability for people to subscribe to your web pages *text-casting*, similar to podcasting or putting audio

on the web in subscribable format. With *text-casting*, we're making your text subscribable out on the 'net through the use of blogs. Not only can you make your text available, you can also share the video created by Photo Story with others.

While you can use a variety of free blogs available online (e.g. EduBlogs.org, Wordpress.com, ClassBlog meister.com are only three of many places), you will want to check with your district technology coordinator and/or director. Now, while I know blogs have a bad reputation, think of them as simply blank notebooks that make it easy for you to publish work on the web and easy for others to subscribe to those web pages.

Your homework for the next article is to become thoroughly comfortable with MS Photo Story or iMovie to create a poem or story. Use the tutorials (refer to Sidebar #1) available online to guide your experimentation. I guarantee that you will be pleasantly surprised as to how easy it is, just as this pre-service teacher discovered. You can see her digital story online at <http://www.mguhlin.net/blog/media/kmarcha.wmv>.

Miguel Guhlin currently is the Director of Instructional Technology Services (<http://itls.saisd.net>) for a large San Antonio school district. You can reach him at mguhlin@yahoo.com or peruse his other writings at <http://www.mguhlin.net>.

Maria Kaylor is an Assistant Professor at The University of Texas at San Antonio. Her research focuses on issues of teacher preparation and student achievement through the integration of technology. Her e-mail is maria.kaylor@utsa.edu

Dr. JoAnne Ollerenshaw is also an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

CTEN

**Central Texas
Education Network**

"Connecting to the World"

**Serving 22 School Districts
in the Central Texas Region**

Contact Us To Find Out How
You Can Become A Member

**CTEN is a Major
Internet Service Provider**

Visit Us At:
www.cten.net
or call
254•867•4830

Texas Computer Education Association

Contact us:

P.O. Box 141759

Austin, TX 78714-1759

800-282-8232

fax: 512-476-8574

tceaoffice@tcea.org

For the latest info:

www.tcea.org

Convention web site:

www.tcea2007.org