

Understanding by Design Rationale:

*Chocolate Fever* Novel Study

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One of the challenges in today's educational environment is to connect with students in a way that is engaging and exciting. Subjects such as reading, which has always been a vital part of the American school system, are constrained in the new era of "teaching to the test." This project describes a novel study that utilizes technology to engage and challenge students. As part as this *Chocolate Fever* novel study, students are required to develop a candy bar commercial and a character interview, as well as other activities. While these projects could be completed by students without the use of technology, students can be better involved when using a Flip Camera. As Campbell (2012) explains, "A device records what the students think, see and understand [...] mobile video devices can also engage and motivate students in a way that other tools cannot" (p. 33).

The use of Flip Cameras to record students' work is not a new phenomenon. A study conducted at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Pacific, found that student presentations were more professional than they would have been had they not been recorded (Hargis & Marotta, 2011). As the authors explain, "providing students with an object such as a Flip Camera engages their senses and holds their attention in a unique and enduring way" (Hargis & Marotta, 2011, p. 36).

One of the challenges of today's classroom is to build a relationship between traditional literacy, such as reading and writing skills, with twenty-first literacy skills (Cummins, Brown, & Sayers, 2007). In a study of ten culturally and linguistically diverse K-12 students in California and Maine, Cummins, et. al (2007) looked at using technology as a way to include media in literacy learning activities. The authors found that students incorporating multimedia into their projects demonstrated highly creative work (Cummins, et. al, 2007). Not only do students have a

chance to use their kinesthetic, visual, and creative strengths, but they are able to share their product with a global audience.

As Richardson (2010) points out, “the Read/Write Web makes it easy for students to produce work in truly collaborative ways for large audiences” (p. 151). Knowing that a global audience may be viewing their ideas and projects can give students a greater pride and ownership in their work. In this project, students have a chance to share their work through their class blog, and this can increase the motivation of students to create quality work. Students can be increasingly motivated to read and write when connected with audiences beyond their classroom, and even beyond the country (Lambert & Sanchez, 2007).

Likewise, as students work collaboratively throughout the novel study, they are expected to respect and identify with ideas other than their own. Cooperative learning provides supportive atmosphere lets all students voice their opinions to feel valued, as well as challenges students to explore at a higher level of thinking (Lambert & Sanchez, 2007). Students are also encouraged to bring their varied perspectives to the group. It is important to remember that the personal and academic experiences a student brings to their group can significantly impact the learning processes of all students involved (Chen, 2007). This cannot be overlooked in discussions of technology. As McLoughlin (1999) reminds educators, “the use and application of communication technologies can influence the microculture of the classroom” (p. 233).

Wyd & Eklund (1997) completed a study of Year 6 students in a Sydney, Australia primary school. The students in the school were participating in an internet-based project called “Project Atmosphere Australia.” The intent of the project was to use the internet to study weather patterns across their country, as well as to connect to meteorologists around the globe. The authors found the students to be highly motivated throughout the project, and found global

communications with real people not only increased cultural understandings, but also provided more ideas and information to the students (Wyd & Eklund, 1997). This study is an example of how useful it can be to connect students with a global audience. As Richardson aptly states, our students' work is "meant for the world" (Richardson, 2010).

"Technology supports powerful literacy instruction and offers multiple opportunities to collaborate with more knowledgeable learners" (Brown, Bryan & Brown, 2005). Opening up the world through use of the internet and technology can greatly enhance literacy in an elementary setting. Using a novel study provides an opportunity for students to experience reading comprehension and fluency in a realistic setting. Incorporating technology into that novel study not only helps to increase student engagement, it also creates a global audience for students to share their work with.

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