

Integrating Technology Into The Middle School Language Arts Curriculum

In the Information Age functional literacy has come to include the ability to participate in society through all kinds of traditional and electronic media. Middle school Language Arts embraces all of these facets of literacy by instilling a life-long love of reading and writing for many different audiences and purposes. The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) address these needs in terms of oral language, reading and literature, writing and research with a particular emphasis of the integration of technology into instruction. In this six week course we will explore strategies and resources that transform the middle school Language Arts classroom into a vibrant, thriving, literate community of learners.

Week 1

Literacy in the Information Age

Overview

In the Information Age functional literacy has come to include the ability to participate in society through all kinds of traditional and electronic media. Middle school Language Arts embraces all of these facets of literacy by instilling a life-long love of reading and writing for many different audiences and purposes. The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) address these needs in terms of oral language, reading and literature, writing and research with a particular emphasis of the integration of technology into instruction. In this six week course we will explore strategies and resources that transform the middle school Language Arts classroom into a vibrant, thriving, literate community of learners.

Objectives

The learner will:

- examine the qualities of functional literacy within the context of the Virginia state Standards of Learning
- explore Web-based resources for the Language Arts
- consider the value of online collaboration in the language arts

Week 2

Promoting Independent Readers

Overview

By the time students reach middle school they have had several years of instruction in phonics, decoding and word study. While students still need support in developing word attack strategies, the shift in middle school is towards reading critically for understanding. This week you will explore ways to promote independent reading through a variety of strategies.

Objectives

The learner will:

- explore the Reading Workshop model
- consider the use of Literature Circles
- develop a practical, real world reading task that will be incorporated into his or her final project

Week 3

Writing as a Craft

Overview

Since Donald Graves groundbreaking research of twenty-years ago writing is now seen as a craft that students learn to hone through a rigorous process that mirrors the writing method of professional authors: prewriting, writing, editing, revising and publishing. This workshop approach to writing meshes nicely with the holistic reading approach discussed in Week 2 of the course. This week we will examine how to support your language artisans as writers.

Objectives

The learner will:

- explore the reading and writing connection in learning
- consider strategies for setting up a classroom writing program
- develop a practical, real world writing task that complements the reading task developed in Week 2 and can be incorporated into his or her final project

Week 4

Speaking and Listening

Overview

Language development research has long held that it is the reciprocal processes of speaking and listening that lead to eventual literacy in print. Children with strong oral language skills are more successful readers and writers earlier. In middle school students come full circle, as they have been immersed in print for several years and they are ready to rediscover more sophisticated types of verbal communication. This week we will consider the role of speaking and listening in a holistic language arts program.

Objectives

The learner will:

- consider strategies to promote good listening skills
- explore methods that promote student oral expression
- develop practical, real world speaking and listening tasks that complement the reading and writing tasks developed in Weeks 2 and 3 so that they can be incorporated into his or her final project

Week 5

Research projects

Overview

The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) name research as the final component of middle school language arts. Research brings together the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening into comprehensive acts of higher level thinking. This week we will employ effective strategies for promoting student research in the language arts classroom.

Objectives

The learner will:

- consider approaches for conducting online research
- explore methods for teaching information literacy
- develop practical, real world research component that can be incorporated into his or her final project

Week 6

A Holistic Project

Overview

Now that you have all the components of a holistic language arts program, you can assemble them together and upload it as one document to the course site so that your classmates can review your work and offer you feedback. By posting your project early in the week, you will ensure plenty of time for your peers to give you input for your consideration. You then will have time to make any revisions you think are necessary and then upload your final draft to the course for credit.

Objectives

The learner will:

- assemble his or her project components into one document
- post the project to the course site
- provide feedback to peers on their projects
- make final revisions and post final draft for credit