

Facilitating Exercises and Activities

Multimedia

Despite multimedia's technical complexity, it is the technology area that teachers are most excited to work with. The movement, sound, animation, and video featured in multimedia software and other multimedia programs are fun to explore. Additionally, some teachers may have some familiarity with multimedia technology, having had some experience using multimedia CDs.

Multimedia involves the use of many methods of communication (such as words, pictures, sound, animation, and video) to effectively convey information. By definition, many of the projects that teachers have already completed could be considered "multimedia" because they contain both words and pictures. However, most computer users think that other elements, such as music, sound, animation, and video, are needed to create a true multimedia project. Regardless of how many types of media are included in a presentation, multimedia technology helps teachers become active learners. It also increases interest and motivation.

The featured multimedia activities provide good opportunities for teachers to learn important multimedia skills, as well as practice many of the graphics and word processing skills that they have learned in the previous technology area. Conceptually, these activities are deceptively difficult because teachers must consider ways to organize and present their information on multiple slides, not on a single-page document. Additionally, teachers need to consider the most effective way to communicate different types of information. Sometimes, text alone is more effective than text, sound, pictures, and animation. Other times, animation and special effects are appropriate. By making multimedia design decisions, teachers develop critical thinking and evaluation skills.

General Strategies

The featured multimedia activities enable teachers to develop higher-order thinking skills while they learn important ways to use technology in their classrooms. Teachers begin by applying a variety of fundamental multimedia skills in the creation of the required Curriculum Preview activity. Teachers may then decide to complete the Student of the Week or Instructional Lesson activities, which provide opportunities to expand on basic multimedia skills by adding transitions and preset animation. However, teachers with more advanced multimedia skills may choose to complete the Classroom Rules and Expectations or Yearbook activities, in which action buttons are used to create branching presentations. Teachers who are ready for additional challenges also have opportunities to insert sound and music files, record their voices, adjust the timing of special effects, and create custom animation effects.

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When teachers complete multimedia activities, consider the following general strategies:

- Teachers will enjoy adding transitions, animation, sound effects, and other multimedia features to their presentations. In fact, the challenge with multimedia technology is less technical than aesthetic. Teachers may be inclined to add so many effects to their slides that their information may be hard to read and understand. For the purposes of learning and exploring, teachers should be allowed to include whatever features and effects they have the time and ability to add.
- In all preceding activities, teachers have completed products that consist of a document. In the multimedia activities, teachers must complete presentations with multiple slides. This might be difficult for some teachers because they are used to putting all of their information on a single page. During the planning stage, teachers must begin to think about how they might organize their information on multiple slides. As a result, the planning process should focus more on informational organization and structure (sometimes called storyboarding) and not on the actual appearance or design of each slide.
- To complete certain projects, teachers need to identify and include appropriate clip art, sound and music files, and perhaps animation and video clips. Because much of the artwork they will find in the clip art gallery/organizer or online may not be ideal for teachers, consider locating suitable multimedia files in advance. Then, save the files in an easy-to-locate folder on each computer's hard disk drive or on a shared network server. If using the Microsoft Windows* platform, many usable sound files can be found in the Media folder located in the Windows folder on a computer's hard disk drive.
- Be certain to adjust the volume on the computers' speakers so teachers will be able to hear the sound and music in their presentations. Even if the computers do not have external speakers, most have built-in speakers in the CPU or on the monitors that will play sound.
- In some activities, teachers have the opportunity to record their voices. If available, handheld microphones should be used because they produce the best recorded sound. Many computers also contain a built-in microphone (often on the monitor). These may be used, but the quality of any voice recordings may be poor. If no microphones are available, teachers should skip these steps.
- To help teachers add text and pictures to their slides, they are usually instructed to insert a specific type of slide. However, teachers may insert another type of slide instead. If needed, they can follow the same procedures they used during the previous word processing activities to create a text box or insert a picture. They can also delete any text or picture boxes that they do not need.
- When you transfer a presentation to a disk, CD, another computer, or an external storage device, all of the sound and video files must be saved with the presentation. Be certain to use the Pack and Go wizard (**File** ⇨ **Pack and Go**), or equivalent, to conveniently save all required media files with a presentation file.