**Conference Presentation: Tech Tools for the Technophobic Teacher**

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**Conference Proposal**

Tech Tools for the Technophobic Teacher

The last two years have shown us how vital it is for students to have technology skills even at a very young age. I propose to introduce multiple ways for the technophobic teacher to use technology that will excite and engage elementary school students while they gain these necessary skills.

**Conference Presentation Script**

**Slide 1**: Introduction (2 min.)

Welcome all and thank you for attending my presentation on Tech Tools for the Technophobic Teacher. My name is Jennifer Smith, and I am a self-proclaimed technophobe myself. While taking a course in the production of instructional materials for my Masters in Library and Information Studies at Old Dominion University, I came across a concept that helped me feel more comfortable using technology with my students, and I felt compelled to share it with other technophobes like myself. Simply stated, we must recognize that “technology is a skill not a talent” (Szmodis, 2021). We need to learn to “be comfortable with the discomfort of taking risks and letting go of control” (Moen, 2016) as we familiarize ourselves with new technology and develop these necessary skills not only for ourselves but for our students.

**Slide 2**: About Myself (2 min.)

I’ll share just a little bit of information about myself. This year will be my 21st year teaching in the general education classroom. I have taught on the primary level, kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade in Virginia and Texas. I have two adult daughters and am an empty nester pretty much leaving me on my own to navigate technology challenges single handedly for the last four years. Of course, this coincided with the pandemic when education switched to a digital format so I had to learn to sink or swim. Admittedly, what I did was probably more akin to a dogpaddle, but I survived and that is what is important! I have been at my current school for 18 years and am fortunate to work with a great team of teachers. We helped each other get through our crash course in online teaching each to the best of our abilities. As we move back to in person learning, I want to encourage you all today to continue to embrace technology. You can learn to implement these tools in your classroom and not only will your students have fun but they will reinforce what they are learning in their core classes.

**Slide 3**: Overview of Tech Tools to be Covered (3 min.)

Today I wanted to introduce to you four tools that I experimented with during my class at ODU that I felt were fun and engaging and were ones that librarians and teachers could implement pretty easily with elementary students.

1. **Big Huge Labs** is an online tool that students can use to create things like motivational posters, trading cards, and magazine covers. https://bighugelabs.com/
2. **Canva** “is a media creation platform focused on designing and sharing presentations of all kinds” (Monticello Kievlan, 2021). It allows “novices to create eye-catching graphics…with little to no graphic design experience” (Monticello Kievlan, 2021). It is a great tool for creating slides, infographics, and graphic organizers. <https://www.canva.com/>
3. **Genially** is a “media creation platform focused on designing and sharing presentations” (Rogowski, 2019) andhas some of the same capabilities as Canva like slides and infographics, but it also allows students to gamify learning activities. <https://genial.ly/>
4. **Voki** is similar Flipgrid where students can record a video in response to an assignment, but instead of using a video of themselves, they “can create and alter a character's appearance on Voki and make it speak by adding a voice message” (Brereton, 2013). <https://l-www.voki.com/>

All of these tools are free, easy to use, and engaging. I hope that as we look at some of their applications in the upcoming slides, you will be inspired to think of ways that you could use them in your libraries or classrooms. I encourage you to check them out for yourselves, and I hope you will have fun as you gain confidence in your abilities to incorporate them into your teaching.

**Slide 4:** Big Huge Labs Pros (4 min.)

First, we will look at Big Huge Labs. It is a free website that allows users to make a variety of things using digital photos without the need to create an account. Some of the things students can create on this site are posters, trading cards, maps, and magazine covers. Creating motivational posters to illustrate character traits would be a good way to review behavior expectations at the beginning of the year while simultaneously introducing students to this tool. Want to help students get to know each other? Why not have them create a magazine cover about themselves. This would require some modeling on your part especially with younger students, but they will be excited to see their final product and hopefully excited to share them with you and the class as well.

(Call attention to the magazine cover on slide 4.) This is a magazine cover I created using a picture of me and my two daughters, Lee and Kassie. I love to read so I wrote about the type of genres I prefer, why I like to read, and why I think reading is important.

Another idea might be for a 3rd grade class that is learning about History SOL 3.2 which discusses the contributions of ancient China and ancient Egypt (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2015). Why not have them create vocabulary cards matching important words and images to their definition as a way to review? For elementary students, this would probably require that you download some images of these contributions prior to the lesson, but after that the process would be the same. They would upload the images and then type the information in the various boxes.

**Slide 5:** Big Huge Labs Cons (4 min.)

(Call attention to the example of a vocabulary card created with Big Huge Labs.) Here is an example of a vocabulary card that was just discussed. Students will upload an image; they will give it a title and then type the definition of the term. All that is left to do is select a background color, preview and edit if needed, and then download.

Big Huge Labs is fun and easy with the free version; however, be advised that there are a lot of ads that pop up on the screen and it can get a bit confusing. Students would need step by step modeling on the elementary level to see where to click to upload their images and type. I probably would recommend this for older elementary school students because the boxes where they type are small and because they need to be somewhat proficient in keyboarding. I think 3rd grade and up would enjoy using Big Huge Labs to show what they’ve learned.

**Slide 6:** Turn and Talk (5 min.)

At this point, I’d like to give you an opportunity to turn and talk with the people around you about how you see yourself using Big Huge Labs in your library or classroom. Please take about 5 minutes to discuss your ideas.

**Slide 7:** Canva Pros (3 min.)

The slide show I am presenting today was made using the second tool I am recommending you try and that is Canva. Like Big Huge Labs it is free; however, you will need to create an account to use it. When you attempt to begin your first design, you will be prompted to create an account which you can do quickly and easily using Google or Clever. By creating an account though, your projects will be saved which will allow you to come back and edit them at any time.

Canva has many features that students could use in a classroom setting like slides, infographics, and graphic organizers. There are many free templates to choose from and students can personalize them by adding or changing design elements like backgrounds, fonts, and images. You will need to show students how to recognize which are free to use and which are not.

(Call attention to the slide on the screen.) The image on this slide was created using one of the educational infographic templates. This would be something you could do to model using Canva as you and your students work together to create your library or classroom rules at the beginning of the year. Infographic templates could be used to create many anchor charts for math, science, or social studies. For 3rd grade and up, they would be a great way for students to complete research projects in these content areas as well.

**Slide 8:** Canva Cons (3 min.)

(Call attention to the slide on the screen.) Canva has many different graphic organizer templates that students could use to record responses to reading. If a 3rd grade class is working on Reading SOL 3.6 g and h, students will be able to identify main idea and supporting details in nonfiction texts, or SOL 3.4 g readers will expand vocabulary by using word reference resources they could use graphic organizers like the ones shown here to complete their work (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2017).

The cons to Canva are that you have to create an account which means you will receive emails from them. While they have many free templates and images, many more are for paid subscriptions only. You would need to show students how to identify which images are not free to avoid disappointment. You will also need to do some extensive modeling in the beginning especially for younger students. Some of the text boxes are a bit small when the full image is shown, for example, and you would need to show them how to zoom in and out accordingly. If you are having them complete a research project or template that requires a great deal of typing, like more than five or six bullet points, it would probably be more appropriate for older students. Be aware that “it's super easy to use the tool to connect via social media. Keep that in mind and make sure you outline expectations before you dive in with your students” (Monticello Kievlan, 2021).

**Slide 9:** Turn and Talk (5 min.)

Please take about 5 minutes to turn and talk with your neighbor and discuss your ideas about how you could use Canva in your libraries or classrooms.

**Slide 10:** Genially Pros (3 min.)

The next tool I wanted to share was Genially. It is very similar to Canva in that it has many templates for creating slides, infographics, and graphic organizers, but what I really like about Genially is they have templates that students can use to gamify learning.

(Call attention to the true or false quiz on the screen.) On this slide, for example, I used a template for a true or false quiz to create a review game for Science SOL 3.10. The question shown on this slide reflects standard 3.10a which states that students will understand that plants and animals are interdependent. (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2010). Having students create their own questions allows them to apply what they have learned in a fun and meaningful way that would not only benefit themselves but also their classmates that could play them as a review. Templates can be accessed under the category of quizzes and come in a variety of formats such as true or false and multiple choice. There are also Jeopardy, Connect Four, and escape room formats.

**Slide 11:** Genially Cons (3 min.)

While these templates are classified as quizzes, they do not allow for teachers to see student responses, therefore they would be better used as a review type activity. Because of the keyboarding skills needed to type out the questions, this might be better suited for 3rd grade and up. Some game formats require a great many questions and therefore would probably not be an appropriate choice for elementary students to complete independently. If they worked collaboratively in groups, for example four groups of four, they might be able to amass the 16 questions for the Jeopardy game. Something like the Connect Four game would probably be something you and your team could work on together perhaps for an end of the year review.

(Call attention to the games pictured on this slide.) If you notice on this slide the Jeopardy game requires the creation of 16 questions and Connect Four would require 42!

**Slide 12:** Turn and Talk (5 min.)

Please take about 5 minutes to turn and talk with your neighbor and discuss your ideas about how you could use Genially to gamify learning in your library or classrooms.

**Slide 13:** Voki Pros (3 min.)

Voki is free and does not require an account. There are no pop-up ads which makes it relatively easy to use because there are less distractions on the screen. Though it would need modeling on the elementary level, 2nd grade and up could probably work independently to create their recordings after minimal instruction. After creating an avatar and selecting a background from the many free choices available, students can either record themselves in response to their assignment or type their answer to be read by a computer-generated voice. Being able to record their responses is another reason that this tool would be well suited for younger students. I know from experience that children have a hard time writing to explain how they know an answer especially in math.  This tool might be useful in having them first learn to articulate an answer verbally (King, 2016).

(Call attention to the images on the screen.) This first image is a screenshot of an avatar I created for an assignment about Digital Citizenship. After completing a series of tasks, students were asked to use Voki to explain how they could “act in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical” (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2020) while working online. Another idea for using Voki might go along with Science SOL 3.4. Students could select an animal and set them in an appropriate habitat. They could then record themselves as the animal explaining how they adapt to survive in their environment (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2010).

**Slide 14:** Voki Cons (3 min.)

There are cons to using Voki like recording times are limited to one minute. Also, while many of the backgrounds and avatars are free, many are not and require a paid subscription. You would again need to point out how students can tell which are free.

(Call attention to the image on the screen.) For example, all of the avatars with a star icon pictured here are for paying customers only.

Time could also be an issue. Because you do not create an account for the free version, progress is not saved so you need to give students enough time to complete their Voki during the school day or their work would be lost.

**Slide 15:** Turn and Talk (5 min.)

Please take about 5 minutes to turn and talk with your neighbor and discuss your ideas about how you could use Voki in your library or classrooms.

**Slide 16-18:** Closure and Resources (3 min.)

Did anyone have any questions or any really great ideas that they wanted to share with the group before we wrap up today? (Discuss as appropriate.)

I thank you all for coming. I hope that through this presentation and what you learned through sharing with those around you that you are feeling excited and empowered to use some of the tech tools like Big Huge Labs, Canva, Genially, and Voki in with your elementary school classes. I think the key is to not be intimidated by the technology or the skill levels of those around you. “Technology is constantly evolving, there will always be new things to learn. This can be a helpful reminder that we don’t necessarily need to become experts in certain programs and apps, but rather think of our digital skillset as adaptable to take on new challenges” (Szmodis, 2021). Play and have fun and then share what you have learned with your students. They are going to be so excited to learn in a way that is interactive and sparks their creativity. They might even forget they’re learning!

**Resources**

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All other images taken from Canva.