

Using Microsoft Producer as a Tool to Enhance Critical Thinking At an HBCU

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Abstract: The purpose of this roundtable is to demonstrate how teaching faculty can use Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Producer as a tool to enhance special writing projects in a writing intensive course. Presenters will share issues evolving from the traditional writing of an article critique and a step by step process of how to effectively integrate Microsoft Producer as a part of the digital writing process.

Background

During the Fall Semester of 2007, students in UED 520 Education and Technology and UED 637 Curriculum Development and Technology at Norfolk State University, were required to write 5 three page article critiques as a course requirement. The objective of the article critique assignment was to demonstrate their ability to think critically and communicate their thoughts effectively.

Students were provided specific guidelines on how to write their critiques. However, the first two submissions were summaries that displayed little to no analysis. While providing feedback to the students, we observed the students were able to provide verbal analysis versus written analysis.

The Assignment

We elected to have each student to create a PowerPoint with specific instructions from the article critique guidelines. Students were given step-by-step instructions on how to use Microsoft Producer.

Article Critique Guidelines:

A. Analysis of the article:

1. Read the article completely. Highlight any unfamiliar words. Identify the author's main point.
2. Look up any unfamiliar words in the dictionary. Reread the article, looking for the main idea of each major section.
3. Write down the main ideas as you perceive them. This is an initial summary of the article.
4. Read the article a third time to analyze how the author supports his/her ideas (with examples, facts, opinions). Has the author convinced you of the main ideas of the article? Why and how?

B. Organize your findings in the form of an essay. The essay should contain these main sections.

1. INTRODUCTION: Identify the article and the author and briefly summarize the article in this section. Tell the reader whether you agree or disagree with the main point (this is your thesis statement). This section should be no longer than one paragraph.

2. BODY: State what you think about the author's points in this section, explaining the reasons for your opinions in detail. Use examples from the article to illustrate your comments. Use your knowledge of educational concepts to write this section. Consider using the following questions in this section.

- a. Is your reaction to the article based on your own experiences or other readings that you have done? Explain.
- b. Were you persuaded by the type of evidence the author used? Explain.
- c. Do you feel that the author ignored certain ideas or issues? Explain.
- d. Were you persuaded by the author's reasoning or do you think he/she made mistakes in logic? Explain.

3. CONCLUSION: Summarize your main points, restating your thesis in the ending of the paper. Another alternative is to point out the significance of the idea that the article is based on.

2(unacceptable)	3 (acceptable)	4 (target)
Student is uncomfortable with content and is unable to demonstrate basic concepts.	Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required).

Results

Prior classes have voiced their dismay in writing 5 three page article critiques. By incorporating Microsoft Producer and Microsoft PowerPoint as an integral part of the assignment, we have noticed a new excitement about the project.

Unexpected comments about using Microsoft Producer included "This is too cool... I am going to use this program for my other course presentations." and "I can create a lesson for my class that can be used by a substitute teacher when I am absent."

The expected results were confirmed by students creating a digital product that included increased and deeper analysis of the author's ideas. 90% of the class is at the 4 (target) level of the article critique rubric and demonstrate more than required.

A demonstration of how the lesson was taught and CDs of student's work will be provided at the session.