

Using Computers in the Early Elementary Classroom

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Option B: Implementation Schedule took a close look at my classroom schedule, my classroom space, computer availability within our school and in my classroom, and my teaching beliefs and technology skills in order to develop a plan to further integrate technology into my teaching and my classroom. I came up with these goals:

- Increase student usage of my classroom computer
- Continue use of 16 computer lab in the Media Center
- Increase use of teacher computer for classroom instruction VIA the connection to the classroom TV monitor
- Explore the use of other technology devices that students can use in the classroom such as Geosafari, Leap Frog Math games, and Geobooks.

I know that taking small steps is the best way for me to carry through with my goals, especially when trying to implement a plan once the school year is underway. So a conservative plan that is “doable” with the potential for expansion is better for me than revolutionizing my teaching methods and classroom.

I looked at some of the suggestions on the Manage It part of our course material to see if any of them would be workable for me. I saw some I liked and others that I didn't like.

To implement my first goal I have developed a flexible schedule for students to use the classroom computer. I have 21 students this year so I found 25 fifteen minute blocks where students could use the computer. This provides each student in my classroom at least one 15 minute opportunity to work on the computer during the week. Having four extra slots makes the schedule more flexible. These slots are during language arts center times, read aloud times, D.E.A.R. time, and during school store work time - times when the students who would be scheduled for to use the computer would not be involved in direct instruction.

FLEXIBLE COMPUTER LAB SCHEDULING

Light Gray shading = 15 minute student blocks

Dark Gray = Unavailable for scheduling

Medium Gray = Computer Lab Time

TIME	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
9:00 - 9:15					
9:15 - 9:30					
9:30 - 9:45					
9:45 - 10:00					
10:00 - 10:15					
10:15 - 10:30					
10:30 - 10:45					
10:45 - 11:00					
11:00 - 11:15					
11:15 - 11:30					
11:30 - 11:45					
11:45 - 12:00					
LUNCH					
12:45 - 1:00					
1:00 - 1:15					
1:15 - 1:30					
1:30 - 1:45					
1:45 - 2:00					
2:00 - 2:15					
2:15 - 2:30					
2:30 - 2:45					
2:45 - 3:00	COMPUTER				
3:00 - 3:15	LAB				
3:15 - 3:30	TIME				

Although it is a management plan that many teachers use, I prefer that my students don't use the computer during direct instruction time. I try to limit the amount of time that I use direct teaching in my classroom so when I am, I feel it is important for them to have their attention focused on the instruction that is taking place. I don't think that it is enough to just have students "in" the room while I am instructing.

My plan is to schedule students for the open slots by using a pocket chart with times and student name cards and posting them on a daily basis. I also plan on putting a sign up sheet with time slots at the computer so that kids can sign in when they work on the computer so that I can keep track of who has really got to use the computer. I also plan on having the students use a timer so that they stay within the 15 minute time limit.

I have not been satisfied (although I do it) with the system of students using the computer as a free time activity because it seems that the same students get the free time all the time and it creates a have/have not situation. By adding "free time" computer time to the flexible schedule I have created I can see how this will increase the amount of time all students have available to work on computer. Now when a student uses the computer during an unscheduled block in the computer schedule, it counts as their 15 minute block of computer time for the week. It then frees up a block of time in the schedule for another student to use. I plan on limiting "free time" use to two 15 minute blocks per student each week to avoid unequal use of the computer. It may turn out that if enough students use the computer during free time that I could even fit two 15 minute blocks of computer use for each student during the week.

During their scheduled computer time students would work on planned activities. Some examples of these activities might include:

- Completing projects that were introduced/started during weekly computer lab time
 - Kid Pix – State Maps
 - Kid Pix – Story Retelling
 - Kid Pix – All About Me – Slide Show
 - Power Point – All About Matter
- Internet research at preselected websites for classroom projects and learning topics

- Practicing computer skills such as saving and retrieving data to floppy disks and to the network.
- Practicing Word processing skills involving layout (tabbing, justification, font changes, etc.).
- Publishing writing pieces
- Explore curricular appropriate software

To meet my second goal I would continue signing up each week for a 45 minute block in the computer lab. I use that time for instruction, research, and for working on curriculum related projects. This year I have scheduled this time on Monday afternoon.

I would like to take my students to the lab for a second 45 minute block each week, but I don't want to be a lab "pig". My plan is to look at the lab schedule every Thursday night after school and if there is an available block in the computer lab on Friday to sign up for another 45 minute block. If I wait until Thursday to sign up for a second block of time, all the other teachers have had a chance and I wouldn't be taking more than my fair share of time.

My students have media once each week on Tuesday and this often involves a technology lesson from the media specialist, as well as checking out books and working on research and library skills. This is another opportunity during the week for my students to work on computers. Our media specialist is very co-operative and I know that she would be willing to work with me. This way the lessons she teaches and the projects she works on could be coordinated with my lessons and projects. This would be a more efficient and effective way to use the computers.

My third goal is to increase the use of the teacher computer in my classroom that is connected to a large screen TV for student learning. Currently I use it for preteaching skills that I want the students to work on in the computer lab so that we can maximize our time in the lab. For example I use it to teach my students software programs and how to access websites. I also use it as an electronic bulletin board for displaying learning information and classroom photo albums. I am using this media more and more, especially now that I am getting to be a better PowerPoint user. I hope to create some files this summer that I can use during the next school year for example states and capitals flash cards and math facts flash cards.

My last goal is to explore the use of other technology devices that students can use in the classroom such as Geosafari, Leap Frog Math games, and Geobooks. These smaller technology devices are less expensive and are things that would be possible to obtain the funding for through minigrants and the Parent Teacher Club. (I would love to have a center with 4 – 6 m130 Palm Pilots for my students to use. I saw a presentation at MACUL this year where a third grade class in Allen Park was using Palm Pilots. There is software available through the University of Michigan website for this project). With some upfront instruction students could use these smaller devices independently in the classroom to enhance their learning. I hope to have at least 4 of these devices in my classroom when school starts this fall. I will use a scheduling system similar to the one I have planned for the classroom computer to insure equitable use.

If I implement the plans that I have outlined here and use some of the skills and resources I have obtained from this class, I feel I would have made a big step forward in integrating technology in my teaching. I am finding that the more I think about this topic, the more creative I am becoming. Thank you (I think) for making me do some in depth thinking on this subject.