

INSPIRATION TECH EXPERT MODULE*

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Abstract

This is a general overview of how the Inspiration software program can be used in upper elementary classroom. There are tutorial links, pros and cons listed, classroom examples, and tips for teachers. There are numerous possibilities for using Inspiration in the classroom, which allow students and teachers to be creative.

Introduction

Inspiration is a software program that allows students to make diagrams and outlines. This program is great for creating webs before writing, and graphic organizers that diagrams events, ideas, and anything else students can think of creating. The outline feature is an electronic way to put ideas on paper without having to hand draw an outline. There are thousands of symbols available to students to incorporate in their diagrams. Students can also important symbols they find elsewhere into the symbol folder. Over one thousand templates are available for students and teachers to use to get started on their diagrams. Teachers can use Inspiration to create their own graphic organizer for what their students are studying. The Inspiration website has a introductory video new users can watch in about eight minutes to get a good overview of how they can use the software (<http://www.inspiration.com/Videos/Inspiration>¹).

There are also two features some users may not know about. The first one is that students or teachers can export their work into a Word document or a PowerPoint presentation. This allows users to incorporate what they did using the Inspiration software into a whole project or presentation they might be doing using Word or PowerPoint. The second feature some users may not know about is that sound can be added to the diagrams. The addition of sound allows students and teachers to add effects that their audience can appreciate, and that add meaning to their diagram or outline.

Inspiration is a really unique software program that gives students a great starting point, and then allows them the creativity to design a diagram or outline that works for them. This program is user-friendly and easy to use for students as young as fourth grade, but can also be used by middle and high school children. Teachers can use Inspiration as part of their lessons, or they can allow their students the chance to take ownership of their learning and create something they can have fun with, but be an educational experience as well.

Technical Assistance

Inspiration Quick Start Tutorial has some basic beginning advice, but if you scroll down to the end of the tutorial there are two sections that have more advanced options, like adding sound to diagrams and exporting to Microsoft Word.

http://cf.inspiration.com/download/pdf/insp_quick_start.pdf²

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[†]<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

¹<http://www.inspiration.com/Videos/Inspiration>

²http://cf.inspiration.com/download/pdf/insp_quick_start.pdf

Learning Electric is a great website that has many different tutorials on how to use Inspiration. One of the best videos shows users how to save their diagram or outline as a webpage, so others can access their work online.

<http://www.learningelectric.com/inspiration7.htm>³

4teachers is another great website that has Inspiration tutorials. There is one specific tutorial that shows/tells readers how to print their diagram or outline as a poster. This is especially useful for students or teachers that want to present their work.

<http://www.4teachers.org/testimony/inspiration/inspirationposter.htm>⁴

Inspiration in the Classroom

Affordances

Inspiration is a great tool for students that have a lot of ideas they want to get down on paper. Since this is a software program students and teachers can more easily edit and add to their diagrams and outlines than writing the same thing on paper. Another useful aspect of Inspiration is the symbols available for use. The symbols add meaning and color to what could be a boring or uninteresting diagram or outline. Inspiration is also a great place for students to start their thinking because there are so many templates available to them. There are all kinds of possibilities when using Inspiration that will allow students and teachers to be creative. One of the most unique and exciting features of Inspiration is the ability to save the person's work as a webpage that others can access. A student can look at all their classmates' diagrams and outlines to get a bigger picture of what they have been learning. There are subject templates for each content area, but Inspiration is really great for language arts, particularly writing. The webs students can make allows them to get their ideas typed out for them to see, and the electronic aspect of adding boxes and symbols can really enrich students' writing experiences and products. Another really great use of the diagrams is for science. Students can make food chains that are detailed and easy to read by using Inspiration because everything is readily available at their fingertips.

Constraints

Although Inspiration is user-friendly getting started can be tricky if users do not look at the tutorials. Some children might also have trouble with the visual stimulation of having their work on the computer. A student that wanted to use symbols and text to make their food chain might spend too much time searching for symbols, and not enough time actually typing out the food chain order. Obviously Inspiration is a software program that must be done on the computer. This can pose a problem for classrooms that either do not have computers available, or has only a few computers available at a time. Not all students would be able to work on their projects at the same time, and sometimes teachers find it difficult to split their attention for multiple class projects. One other thing to mention about Inspiration that could really be a problem is that it is fairly expensive. The updates are also expensive, and the advantages of updating and paying the price should be weighed against keeping what already exists. Inspiration may not fit into the teacher's budget, but some schools are willing to purchase things for classrooms that can be re-used.

Classroom Examples

Fairfield Middle School in Central Virginia has a sixth-grade website that showcases the different lessons plans they have developed using Inspiration. One of the social studies lessons has students pick a historical figure they want to write a biography about. Students use the diagram version of Inspiration to create a biography web of a person they choose. The teacher suggests allowing students to use symbols and pictures to depict important events in that person's life. This lesson is a prewriting activity that incorporates social studies as well.

http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/fairfield/marshall_g/InspirationTemplates/06-insp-american-idols/6_American-Idols_Act.pdf⁵

5th grade teacher Jennifer Jensen from Coyote Creek Elementary has a lesson plan that integrates many different technologies. Her lesson uses Inspiration for its webs, and connects language arts (writing) and

³<http://www.learningelectric.com/inspiration7.htm>

⁴<http://www.4teachers.org/testimony/inspiration/inspirationposter.htm>

⁵http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/fairfield/marshall_g/InspirationTemplates/06-insp-american-idols/6_American-Idols_Act.pdf

science. Children formulate ideas in a web for a short story they will write later. The writing prompt is “A day in the life of _____” where students write about a vegetable from their classroom garden. After using Inspiration to create and print their idea web, students then use Appleworks to type and illustrate their short story.

<http://www.theteacherscorner.net/lesson-plans/technology/hitenter.pdf>⁶

Juliane Little is a 5th grade teacher that developed a lesson plan for science using Inspiration. Students are put into groups of 2-3 to work at the computer using Inspiration. Each group is to create a diagram of animals, and whether they are herbivores, omnivores, or carnivores. After each group has completed that diagram, they are to use the list of animals provided and create a food chain web. Inspiration allows the students to use symbols/pictures instead of words to visually represent their diagrams.

<http://students.ou.edu/L/Juliane.D.Little-1/TIPInspiration.pdf>⁷

Another Fairfield Middle School sixth-grade lesson plan that integrates Inspiration is for science. This is a really great lesson that focuses on the Scientific Method. This lesson is a way for students to organize their information for an experiment. Students use Inspiration to diagram the steps of the Scientific Method. Each student’s diagram starts with “state the problem”, then “form a problem”, “state a hypothesis”, “test the hypothesis”, and finally “draw conclusion.” The example diagram on the lesson plan has great symbols that go with each category, so students can see what kind of information needs to go in each category.

http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/fairfield/marshall_g/InspirationTemplates/10-insp-sci-method/10_Sci-Inv_Act.pdf⁸

Tips for Teachers

1. Make sure students know how to use Inspiration before they are given full-reign of the software program.
2. Have one group a day use Inspiration is there is a limited number of computers available at one time.
3. Encourage your school to buy the software for the whole grade, not just your classroom.
4. Allow students to work and start at their own pace. Some students may want to start from scratch completely on their own, while others may need a template to get started.
5. Upload and save each student’s project to the internet to allow students to see what their classmates have learned from the same material. When students see their classmates’ work they can make collaborative assignments that span a variety of topics with one content area.

⁶<http://www.theteacherscorner.net/lesson-plans/technology/hitenter.pdf>

⁷<http://students.ou.edu/L/Juliane.D.Little-1/TIPInspiration.pdf>

⁸http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/fairfield/marshall_g/InspirationTemplates/10-insp-sci-method/10_Sci-Inv_Act.pdf