

GARAGEBAND IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM*

Maggie Farmer

This work is produced by OpenStax-CNX and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License 2.0[†]

Abstract

Nowadays, students are always looking for the quick solutions to problems by taking advantage of today's technology. At a young age, students are expecting technology to assist them in their studies. Integrating technology into the elementary curriculum is becoming inevitable. In the elementary classroom, GarageBand is a useful tool for teachers to create an original podcast to provide specific information aimed for specific students.

1 Introduction

According to Wikipedia, GarageBand is “a software application that allows users to create music or podcasts.” GarageBand was developed by Apple, with its newest version released in 2008. The main use of GarageBand is as a personal recording studio for musicians to record, edit, and mix songs how they wish. An artist can use his/her instruments or the software instruments available in the program. GarageBand also helps with organizing songs into verse, bridges, choruses, or however the musician wants. However, the main use of GarageBand in the elementary classroom is as a tool to create podcasts.

2 GarageBand 101

When opening GarageBand, there are four options: create new music project, open an existing project, create new podcast episode, and magic GarageBand. Create new music project allows you to create new music tracks using instruments plugged into the computer or the software instruments. And as the name implies, open an existing project allows the musician to continue on already saved work. The music projects can record from a solo instrument to up to eight different instruments. You can select the virtual instruments or connect instruments to your computer through the computer's auto-input. When working in a music project, the musician can rearrange the song, change the key or tempo, copy selections of the song, add new instruments, and multitrack recordings.

Magic GarageBand allows those who are not professional musicians to make music. Here, you can choose a song selection and the instruments that play the song. There are over 300 different combinations of instruments within each genre. In this feature, even an amateur of music can create his or her own unique sound.

While the main purpose of GarageBand is to work as a music recording and editing program, it is most useful in the classroom to create podcasts. Students and teachers alike can create podcasts that can be

*Version 1.4: Nov 17, 2008 5:41 pm -0600

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

enhanced with vocals enhancement, music, sound clips, and pictures. In GarageBand, you can organize the podcast by chapters to help the viewer know the outline of the podcast. This can also help the viewer find specific sections in the podcast they wish to view. Both the teacher and the students can easily make a podcast.

GarageBand can be used by the teacher to provide information to the students through a podcast. The teacher would make the podcast, and therefore the information would be specific and exact to what the teacher wants and needs. The presentation of the information can be differentiated to the needs and essentials of a specific class. Creating your own podcast would also allow you the assurance of correct information. This would eliminate the students' risk of finding wrong information from an unreliable internet website.

Having the students creating their own podcast would be also very beneficial in the classroom, or outside the classroom. The students could work as a group and create specific jobs for each group member, building communication and cooperation skills. This could also help eliminate stage fright for those students who may be shy in classroom presentations. Creating the podcast would allow multiple takes, assuring the top performances out of all your students.

To begin working on a podcast, select the choice "Create New Podcast Episode." Select the proper male or female voice, clip the record button, and begin speaking. You can use an external microphone or your computer's internal mic. You can add jingles to your podcast by selecting the loop browser and selecting a jingle within. You can also add for your personal music collection by searching through the media browser. Here, you can also add pictures or movies into your podcast by simply dragging a picture or movie clip from the media browser onto the podcast track.

Guide for GarageBand

When learning about and exploring GarageBand, Apple offers many great instructional tutorials for all sections. With about 12 tutorials, Apple can take you through different features step by step with oral instruction along side visual screen shots. For a detailed instruction on creating a new podcast, visit this website and select "Creating a Podcast" listed under the Browse Tutorial on the left side of the screen. www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#garageband

Help and Support

Along with providing guides, Apple also provides help and support. Here, you can learn about how to get started and also look up issues you might be having. Common problems are listed along with an advance search option. <http://www.apple.com/support/garageband/>

Understanding Podcasting

Since the many focus of the educational use of GarageBand is creating podcasts, here is a link introducing what a podcast is. <http://www.commoncraft.com/podcasting>

3 GarageBand in the Classroom

Introduction to a Unit

GarageBand in the elementary classroom would be a useful tool for the teacher to create an introduction to the unit of which s/he is about to teach. A podcast can be the perfect presentation to grab the students' attention and give them a quick overview of what they should expect in the upcoming unit. In the introduction, you can include pictures and music clips to engage the students in the future discipline. Making the introduction available online for the students can also provide a tool for the student to self-assess themselves later on in their own time. They can review the introduction to see if the objectives and goals were met. Here is an example of a quick introduction to a unit: <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=12063>

Reading Fluency

In elementary classroom, GarageBand can be used to help strengthen reading fluency. The students can record themselves reading text with a voice recorder and then edit the content in the GarageBand. This allows the students to listen to themselves later for a self-evaluation. Also, by recording the students' readings and saving them, the teacher can go back and listen to the reading later. This can help with time constraint in the classroom since it can be difficult to see all of the students in a timely fashion. You can also use the readings to show the growth of the students reading fluency throughout

the year. Here is an example of using GarageBand to create podcasts to assist with reading fluency: <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=10804>

Presentations

Students can use GarageBand to create presentations. The students can include models, tables, or diagrams throughout the presentation to support their information. This can give the students a chance to give more life to their reports. They can make reference to pictures or documents during their presentation and have them show in their podcast. The presentation can be a personal narrative or a report for history. Podcasts would allow the students to provide pictorial support along side their oral presentation. Here is an example of a family tradition report form first grade: <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/item.php?itemID=10581>

Creative Writing

Students can present their creative writings as a podcast, using GarageBand. The writing can be accompanied by jingles, sound effects, or music to help the students express their creativity. The students can also take original pictures or draw illustrations to add to the podcast through GarageBand. Here is an example of a five sense creative writing project: <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=14031>

Studying Tools Through Raps

GarageBand can also be used to record raps or songs the students created. This can be very useful as a studying tool. Creating a rap or song can assist the students in retaining information. And by recording the rap or song onto a podcast through GarageBand, students can review the song later if they had forgotten it. Students creating a song or rap is a powerful study tool. Here is an example of a rap song about Ancient Egyptian music: <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=300>

4 Affordances and Constraints

4.1 Affordances

By giving the students projects that involve making a podcast through GarageBand, this allows the student to have an oral presentation that can be viewed by the teacher at a later time. There is never enough time in the classroom. Having the students create podcasts can free up class time while still having the students orally presenting projects.

Using GarageBand to provide podcasts for the students online is also useful because it allows the students the option to listen to information more than once. This way, the students can listen to specific material that they may be struggling with numerous times. Since students study most effectively in different ways, providing oral information is one way you can help increase the students' understand of information. This provides them one more way to reinforce material before a test or quiz.

Creating a podcast also provides the students with a tool that can use later on. This can be a useful study tool. It can also be helpful when trying to help students improve. The teacher would be able to show exactly where in the podcast the student needs to work on, instead of hoping the student would remember from an oral presentation presented earlier with no record.

Creating a podcasts in GarageBand can be made appropriate for any grade level. The information can be presented to students simply or in a more complicated fashion, making this a useful tool for all of elementary.

4.2 Constraints

When working with GarageBand, there has to be a real understanding of how it works. It is not a simple program. A sufficient amount of time must be spent on understanding the tool as well as explaining it. Although Apple does provide a good tutorial to begin with, experience with GarageBand is the best way to learn it and understand it. And unfortunately, time is a valuable thing in the classroom. If you are planning on using this tool frequently, this is a useful way to spend your time. However, if this is just for one or two projects, the time put in may not be worth it.

Also, the age-appropriateness of creating podcast in GarageBand would be the upper elementary students. The program is too complicated for primary grade level students to be able to make a project. So the podcast projects for the primary grade would require much more work from the teacher with the students.

Additionally, GarageBand could be distracting to some students. Since part of the GarageBand's focus is creating and editing music, students may begin playing around with the music projects instead of staying focused on the podcast(s) they are creating.

And finally, accidental deletions of tracks on the podcast are hard to avoid. When moving the tracks around, if placed in the wrong spot, another track on the podcast can be deleted. This could confuse many students. And unless it is undone right away, the child might have to redo or rerecord a track.

5 Tips and Considerations for Teachers

Insert paragraph text here.

1. If you are creating a podcast and plan to use music in the background, be sure to record what you are saying first. Once you place the music into the podcast, it can be difficult trying to concentrate on speaking over it.
2. Have a well-rounded understanding of the technology before assigning anything to the students. They must be able to turn to you for any assistance they might need. There are many tools and short cuts that may not be visible right away to a new user.
3. GarageBand is available for Macs. If your school has PC, GarageBand would not be something available.
4. When creating a podcast, it is best to have a script or reading with you. While you can go back and edit your material, have an outline of what the podcast should contain would be most useful to maintain consistency.
5. When a group of students are using GarageBand to create a podcast, the responsibilities of who is doing what should be clearly stated and evenly divided. Each student in the group needs to have a part in the plan and executing.
6. It would probably be best to have a full class dedicated to making a podcast for the students to develop a full understanding of the program and its capabilities. There are so many options and tips; it is not reasonable to expect the students to figure everything out on their own. This class could simply have the students working on a practice podcast, so the students can explore and practice without the pressure of a grade.