K-12 Educator's Guide to
PODCASTING

Do you have a favorite list of podcasts you listen to? In the last few years, podcasting has become a very popular communication medium for everything from tutorials to thrilling headlines (any *Serial* listeners out there?).

You can find free podcasts on every topic under the sun: from finance to weight loss and everything in between. People enjoy being able to download a podcast and listen to it in their car, on their run, or while they're making dinner. It's portable radio that is customized to your individual tastes.

What is a Podcast?

Essentially, a podcast is simply an audio or video transcription of information that can be downloaded and played anywhere and anytime. It's kind of like satellite radio, but in pre-packaged, time-limited formats.

Podcasts are recorded using software or online recording programs (they don't have to be fancy), exported to a digital warehouse (such as iTunes), and then downloaded by anyone who searches for that topic or anyone who has a direct link to the podcast itself.

Using Podcasts In and Out of the Classroom

But podcasts for educators go beyond just passive listening. You can use this communication tool in your own classroom. Podcasts can be used to:

- **provide** information in a fun and entertaining way (thus, increasing student engagement)
- **extend** student learning with critical links between content areas
- **synthesize** student learning through podcast creation and
- **communicate** with parents and the community

Let's take a look at each one of these in depth to explore their uses and possibilities.

IDEAS FOR USING PODCASTS IN THE CLASSROOM

SUGGESTED PODCASTS FOR TEACHERS

- Teaching Trailblazers
- Art Made Easy
- Build Math Minds
- The Cult of Pedagogy
- Truth for Teachers
- The House of EdTech
- Inside Innovation

SUGGESTED PODCASTS FOR STUDENTS

- Story Pirates
- Wow in the World
- Classics for Kids
- RadioLab
- Stuff You Should Know
- StoryCorps

PURPOSE OF PODCASTS FOR EDUCATION:

1. Provide information in a fun and entertaining way (thus, increasing student engagement)

2. Extend student learning with critical links between content areas

3. Synthesize student learning through podcast creation and

4. Communicate with parents and the community

PODCASTING IDEAS

1. Try using podcasts as a center - either for listening to previous content or new information

2. Ask students to create a podcast based on a research project, interview or tutorial.

3. Incorporate stories! Podcasts can be a great way for students to learn and share through storytelling.

4. Use podcasts as a way to share your own insights and information, either with other educators or as a communication tool for the community.

Informational Podcasts

Informational podcasts are podcasts that you, the teacher, create. You record the information that you want to provide either audibly or visually and then have your students download it. You can use this as a center for students during a reading or math rotation, or as part of a homework assignment. Or, if you recorded a video for students, you can easily download just the audio and turn that into a podcast they can listen to later as a reminder.

These types of podcasts are really one- way in scope. You are feeding the students the information. Obviously, there is an appropriate time for this in a learning environment – it is the standard method of teaching. However now, instead of being tethered to a classroom, students can learn the information you want to share anytime and anywhere.

For instance, if you happened to be absent for a class, you could pre-record a podcast and have the substitute share it during class. Or, if you're nervous about a sub in your classroom not knowing what to do, you could put it up on your class blog and have students listen to it for homework. This actually frees up a lot of classroom time. By having students listen to the information at home, in a center, or otherwise, you can then take precious classroom time to use the information through projects, assessments, or portfolios.

Informational podcasts should include some way of keeping track or assessing the information that was learned. For example, I created a podcast about synesthesia and used it as a center rotation. I also provided several worksheets for students to use to apply what I taught during the podcast. This way, your students are being engaged in active, rather than passive, listening.

Extensions

Podcasts can also be used to extend and connect what you've taught in the classroom to other meaningful content areas that are relevant to your students. For instance, if you are teaching a math unit on measurement, you can create a podcast about the use of measurement in architecture and design.

Students can listen to how designers create monuments such as the Washington Monument, the Eiffel Tower, and the Taj Mahal. What would have happened if their measurements were off? Why is math so important in these designs? What patterns can they find? Podcasts can provide critical links to the world beyond the classroom using the information that students are learning.

Podcasts are also very useful if you are looking to connect music and the content areas. For a lot of people who are not musicians or music teachers, music is the last artform that they want to try to use within the content area due to a fear of exposure. Many people say "I can't sing – I'm not doing that in front of my students!" yet music is more than singing or playing an instrument.

It's also about listening, rhythmic and melodic structure and aesthetics. Using a podcast to connect a content area like math or reading to music is a fantastic way to weave two objectives together.

For instance, if you were to take that math objective of measurement and teach the musical concept of patterns simultaneously, you could create a podcast wherein you teach the math concept of measurement and use for your examples snippets of songs that demonstrate the use of specific patterns through measurement (Bach is great at that; so is Kesha).

By using music as your example for the math concept, students then understand why they are learning the material and become invested in their learning.

Synthesizing

One of the best ways to use podcasting is through student creation. Rather than the teacher doing all of the work, train your students how to create a podcast and have them do the work themselves.

Assign students to create podcasts that demonstrate their learning of a particular concept(s) by linking their information to a current problem or issue. Their podcast should then be available for other students to download so that the students become the teachers.

We want our students to be independent and make meaning out of their knowledge. By becoming the teachers, they must not only know about the topic, but they must be able to make the connections that will allow them to explain it to someone else. Podcasts provide them with an opportunity to do this with ease.

Students can create their own worksheets to go with the podcasts and then the other students can complete the worksheets after listening to their peer podcasts. Students can be assessed on how well they taught the information based upon the feedback by their peers, or can be assessed on what their own synthesis of the information conveyed. Suddenly, the classroom becomes an environment where everyone is a learner and a teacher – the old hierarchy is gone. Welcome to 21st century learning!

Communication

We want our students and our schools to have a voice within their community. We want to be active participants in what is happening and contribute to the community as a whole. We need to teach our students the tools of communication and how to let their voices be heard in a positive and constructive way. Podcasts allow students to communicate in this manner.

Let's take a look at some examples. If there is a community issue – have your students create a podcast with their opinions and potential solutions. Then post it to the blog and send it to your community leaders. Do you have a subject going on in your classroom that you would like the parents and community members to know about? Would you like to invite them in to participate in an event? Creating a podcast to share this information is a great way to get them excited about coming.

Part of podcasting is in teaching our students how to be productive and creative citizens that use language as a tool for positive change and increasing collaboration. By allowing our students the opportunity to use podcasts for these goals and by educating them on how to communicate well, we are preparing them for their changing roles in the 21st century.

Podcasts have so many benefits and can be used in a variety of ways. In the end, it all comes down to communication with each other. Don't be afraid of the podcast – embrace it and it can save you time and change your classroom environment for good!

PODCAST RECORDING STEPS

The Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM

USING GARAGEBAND

1. Open GarageBand.

If a previous project opens, close it, and then in the window that appears, either double-click Podcast (GarageBand 09) or choose New Podcast Episode (previous versions).

2. Next to "Save As", give the podcast episode a name, and then click Create.

3. To ensure sound levels are adequate, speak into the microphone. Watch the green bars that appear next to the Voice option you selected. If the green bars don't move clear across, or they frequently bounce into the red, adjust the volume of your voice or adjust the GarageBand settings.

Note: If your sound levels are not adequate, you may need to adjust your computer's sound and speech levels from within your System Preferences.

4. To begin recording, click the red button, and then speak clearly into your microphone.
To stop recording, click the red button again. The waveforms of the recorded sound will be displayed in the "Timeline" area of the GarageBand window.

5. To listen to the recording, either drag the playhead to the beginning of the track, or click one of the backward arrow buttons ("Go to the beginning of the song." or "Move back one measure."), and then click the forward arrow button ("Start or stop playback.").

6. Click File, Save to save your project.

7. To export the project as a podcast file, from the Share menu, select Export and then select either AAC or MP4 for the file type. Name your podcast and export the file to your desktop or folder.

USING AUDACITY

1. Download and Open Audacity.

2. Use the dropdown menus to select your recording device and your recording mode (you can choose either mono or stereo- mono is recommended for podcasts).

3. Click on the top numbered bar to check the input levels of your microphone. Try to keep at least a foot of space between yourself and the microphone, and speak clearly and at a moderate volume. The ideal range is a fully green bar. Avoid orange and red levels- that means you are too close or too loud!

3. Press the red circle button to begin your recording. (Helpful hint: leave a few seconds of empty noise at the start of the recording to sample during the noise reduction process later.) As you record, a waveform will appear on the track. Try to keep your waveform at a relatively similar level throughout, so that the volume is not fluctuating. Avoid very small waveforms which might be too soft to hear, as well as very large waveforms which might be so loud you get feedback.

4. You can move the clip around the track by selecting the "timeshift" tool (which looks like a double-headed arrow), clicking the clip, and dragging it to the desired position. You can also reorder the tracks by clicking and holding in the blank space of the left hand track menu and dragging up or down.

5. Use the select tool to highlight the part of the recording you want to delete. (Helpful hint: use the zoom tool () to magnify the waveform and zero in on the word or phrase you wish to remove) Press the "Delete" button to remove the selected recording.

6. To export your project as a final sound file, navigate to File>export> and select your preferred file type.

How and Where to Share

Now that you have a podcast episode recorded, how do you share it? It depends on how you want to use it. If you're just creating a podcast for your students or having students create a podcast for practice, you can keep it all internal. This is the simplest way forward.

If you're keeping it internal, I suggest having a specific file on your computer or on your cloud service (Google Drive, Dropbox, iCloud, etc). Then, just export the episodes directly to that folder and listen as you choose.

If you're planning to share your episodes online, you'll want to take an additional step of uploading your episodes to a specific podcast hosting service. This will make it easier to share it on your website or on iTunes.

We recommend two hosts to try: Podbean and Buzzsprout. Both offer free plans for educators with between 2 and 5 hours of content. If it takes off, you can always look at upgrading to their paid programs, but that's not necessary right away.

Once you register with a host, you can then upload your audio file to that service. The service will then allow you to embed an audio player in your website or class blog to share the podcast episodes.

And if you want to share it to iTunes, those services will even help you upload it there with the click of a button.

Truly, you are in complete control of how far and wide you want to broadcast your podcasts. It's just up to you and your intentions for use.

Podcasting is a powerful way to assist you in using technology within your classroom to weave the content areas and the fine arts together. Enjoy creating rich, meaningful learning experiences for all of your students with this communication tool.

UPLOAD & SHARE

YOUR PODCAST

UPLOAD TO GOOGLE DRIVE

Perfect if you want to keep your podcast private. This is great for classroom presentations or selected school websites/newsletters.

UPLOAD TO PODBEAN

Podbean has free plans available to help you host your podcast and get it streaming on iTunes and Google Podcasts.

UPLOAD TO BUZZSPROUT

Buzzsprout is one of the easiest tools to use for sharing your podcasts, but is a bit more pricey. This is good for when you're ready to go pro with your podcast or if you're creating one of your own.

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