Teaching Tips/Notes NACTA Journal

The Facebook Experience: Creating Small Engine Parts Profiles to Increase Higher Order Thinking Skills

Introduction

The way young people communicate and learn has changed (Wyld, 2011). Unlike generations before them, members of the Millennia generation spend nearly seven hours in front of some type of media per day (Phipps et al., 2008). The advancement and integration of technology today poses new opportunities for teachers and learners (Clark, 2008). Computers and electronic resources in classrooms allow learning to shift from a teacher-focused to learner-focused environment, requiring students to seek out information as opposed to being presented information (Simonson and Thompson, 1997).

One electronic media source popular with young people is social media networks. Social media sites allow members to present themselves through a profile and establish or maintain contact with others (Wyld, 2011). Social media sites have been identified as the preferred method of communication among teenagers, creating a unique avenue to diffuse and present information to audiences (Lenhart et al., 2007). The largest social media outlet, Facebook, allows members to create profiles, add photos, and share links with acquaintances (Wyld, 2011). In 2006 Facebook had nearly 500 million users, was the seventh most popular website on the internet, and its members generated 1.6 billion page views each day (Ellison et al., 2007). Capitalizing on the pre-organized outline of Facebook profiles and the amount of students currently using Facebook, this social network is a viable educational tool.

How it Works

When teaching topics such as small engine parts identification, typical instruction requires students to utilize rote memorization or lower level thinking skills. Designing a lesson where students learn about an individual part and teach their peers by creating Facebook profile pages enhances higher order thinking skills. First, the teachers should provide students with a worksheet that mimics a Facebook profile with headings such as “interests,” “about me,” “contact information” and “profile picture” and allow students to seek out information on their specific small engine part using textbooks, the Internet, and small engine manuals (as seen in Table 1). Second step, once information has been attained, students should present their small engine part and their Facebook profile to the rest of the students in the class.

Third step, after the teacher has approved the information on the profile worksheet, allow students to create an email address associated with their small engine part. Using the small engine part’s email address, students can create a real Facebook profile online and add a profile picture using a picture they found of their small engine part. The Facebook profile should explain the purpose and the function of the small engine part and provide a visual. Once initial set-up is complete students can upload additional photos/albums, add videos of their small engine part, and link useful websites to their profile page. Finally, the students add all of the other small engine parts as friends, allowing them to view other profiles and learn about all of the parts of a small engine. Thus, allowing the instructors to capitalize on the student’s interest of Facebook to create an online study guide for them to review prior to an exam.

Table 1. Example Small Engine Parts Identification Facebook Page; Piston

Facebook Section	Description of Section	Student Example: Piston
Basic Information	Provide general information about the small engine part. Complete the "about me" section and add any applicable quotations.	*I spend most of my day transferring force from expanding gas in the cylinder to the crankshaft.*
Activities and Interests	Students list any special interests of the small engine part, specifically the purpose of the part, where it's located, and the main function(s).	*Spending time with the Connecting Rod and Bearing.*
Contact Information	Students can list the email address they created for the profile, websites and videos that better explain the small engine part, add a class website, etc.	Email: *piston@yahoo.com*
Featured People	As profiles are developed students can link other profiles to their own when appropriate.	In a relationship with *Piston Rings*
Status Update	Students can write a brief statement that will help others associate the engine part to the function.	Piston: *it's been a day full of ups and downs.*
Wall Posts	Students research websites to find new innovations, while others can post additional questions related to the part	Student posted *a link for a new piston innovation* on the wall

Future Plans/ Advice to Others

Safety and privacy of users should always be considered when using the internet. It is recommended that educators provide a worksheet designed similar to a Facebook profile for students to complete prior to creating a profile online. This will allow teachers to verify profile information, ensuring accuracy and appropriateness. The creation of a profile worksheet will also allow teachers to utilize the Facebook profile concept if firewalls prevent students from gaining access to the Facebook website. It is also highly recommended that teachers have access to the passwords of each profile to monitor inappropriate materials being placed on each profile. A study should be conducted to assess student learning using a traditional parts identification lecture compared to a lesson infused with the Facebook profiles.

Costs/Resources Needed

Costs associated with this educational technique are minimal. Facebook is available at no cost to users but requires an active email address. Students and teachers will need internet access to run Facebook as well as to collect information for their profile page. It is recommended that before going online with the content, teachers provide students with a worksheet to complete that is designed like a Facebook profile, allowing teachers to verify the information before students create an actual Facebook profile.

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