



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Bringing Pixar Magic into the Classroom

In a classroom where imagination meets education, a groundbreaking teaching method is taking root, drawing inspiration from the storytelling giants at Pixar. At the forefront of this educational innovation is Timothy “Nate” McCue, a teacher with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) at Irwin Intermediate School, who has embraced the Pixar storyboard technique as a powerful tool for teaching and learning.

The method, which dovetails perfectly with DoDEA's teaching standards, is simple yet profound: using storyboards in the same vein as Pixar, where feelings are assigned to inanimate objects to tell rich, emotionally resonant stories. This approach is not just about teaching students to write or to animate but about unlocking a deeper level of emotional intelligence and creativity. "You can have some really deep conversations, even with 10-year-olds," McCue said, highlighting the method's effectiveness in engaging students on a more personal and emotional level.

One of the key elements of this approach is its emphasis on empathy. By exploring stories that tug at the heartstrings, similar to the opening scenes of Pixar's "Up," students learn to connect with emotions and experiences beyond their own. This not only enhances their understanding of narrative and character but also fosters a sense of empathy and understanding that extends beyond the classroom.



The benefits of this storytelling approach are multifaceted. For starters, it cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students analyze characters' motivations and plot developments. It also boosts creativity and imagination, encouraging students to envision their own stories and bringing them to life through the storyboard format. Moreover, the process of storyboarding promotes planning, collaboration, and communication, as students often work together to develop and refine their narratives.

McCue's enthusiasm for this innovative teaching method is contagious. "It's really meaningful," he said, emphasizing the profound impact that storytelling can have on young minds. By integrating the Pixar storyboard method into the curriculum, educators can tap into a universal language of storytelling, making lessons more engaging and impactful, promoting higher levels of understanding.

This approach also aligns with broader whole child educational goals, such as social and emotional learning. Through storytelling, students learn about resilience, perseverance, and the importance of perspective, valuable life skills that are increasingly recognized as critical components of a well-rounded education.



In embracing the Pixar-inspired method, educators are not just teaching students to write or to draw; they are nurturing a generation of thinkers, creators, and empathetic individuals. This method proves that storytelling and education can go hand in hand, transforming traditional learning environments into spaces where creativity, empathy, and innovation flourish.

As this Pixar-inspired educational approach continues to evolve, its potential to reshape learning is immense. It stands as a testament to the power of storytelling in education and the endless possibilities that arise when educators think outside the conventional teaching box. In a world where the ability to communicate and connect is more important than ever, this method offers a glimpse into the future—one storyboard at a time.

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