

Teacher Spotlight: North Dover educator uses technology to make history come alive



*Editor's Note: This guest piece is by Lena Hall, fourth grade teacher at **North Dover Elementary** in the **Capital School District**.*

A few years ago, my school was fortunate enough to receive funding for four iPads per classroom teacher. We were all excited to receive this new technology however most teachers were unsure how to incorporate the iPads into meaningful lessons and standard-based activities. The staff strived to find resources and activities that would truly enrich the students' learning and not just use technology for the sake of using technology.

In my classroom, I started using the iPads to allow students to tap into their creativity and use their imaginations to show what they have learned in new and exciting ways. I took several trainings and researched the process called App-Smashing. App-Smashing is the process of using multiple iPad applications to create a single project. I loved the idea that my students could use multiple apps and combine them together into one final presentation. For me, the best part was that not only was App-Smashing fun and engaging for the students, but it was not a time-consuming process.

One of my favorite App-Smashing projects I developed for my students revolved around our unit on the Revolutionary War. In previous years, when teaching the Revolutionary War, my students were naturally excited to learn about the events and the battles associated with this pivotal period in American history. For me, the difficulty arose when discussing the important individuals associated with these events. That was, until I found a way to integrate technology into a research project that allowed my students to be creative while requiring them to dig deeply into the lives and actions of the significant participants in the American Revolution.

I decided to break this project up into steps that could be incorporated into other curricular areas that I teach. As an elementary school teacher, the time allotted for social studies instruction can be very limited. For this reason, I decided to have my students do the bulk of this activity during their Reading

Center time. Students were given the opportunity to explore a site that offers brief biographies of important people from the Revolutionary War. I found the web site <http://mrnussbaum.com/ampeople/> to be very useful for this part of the activity.

They then conducted research using a variety of online resources and websites while completing a graphic organizer. There are many sites that offer background information in both text and videos. The following are a few that I found particularly helpful for my students:

- <http://www.biography.com/people/groups/american-revolution>
- <http://www.theamericanrevolution.org/people.aspx>
- <http://www.revolutionary-war.net/famous-americans.html>
- https://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/revolutionary_people.html

Once students completed the research, they then moved into the writing portion of the activity. Students were tasked with the job of writing a two-person interview detailing the significance of the individual they had researched. The interview was to be conducted by the student and he/she was to provide the response that he/she would receive from their person. I encouraged my students to try to



think like their person and to imagine what their personality would be like based off of what they now know about him or her.

The final step of the project was the App-Smashing. Students were expected to record several video clips of themselves using the iPad camera in which they were the interviewer, asking each individual question they had written. Next, students used a free iPad app called ChatterKid (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chatterpix-kids-by-duck-duck/id734046126?mt=8>) to create “talking” pictures of the person being interviewed answering each question. Once all of the questions and answers were recorded, students used iMovie (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/imovie/id377298193?mt=8>) to put all of the clips together to create a back and forth interview between themselves and their person.

The results were amazing! My students loved not only creating the videos but watching the videos that other students created. My students had a far better understanding of the people involved in the Revolutionary War, and I was able to more thoroughly evaluate their understanding of the unit.