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Lights, Camera, Student Voice: Using Technology to Address and Explore Economics Within the C3 Framework

Jennie M. Carr
Bridgewater College

John Kruggel
James Madison University

Abstract:

Instructional technology has been found to have a positive impact on many aspects of the academic experience, including student engagement, interest, student voice, and achievement. The aim of this study was to explore an elementary teacher's perceptions of the use of Flipgrid when teaching economics concepts using the C3 Framework. A qualitative methods approach was used to interview an elementary teacher to answer the following research questions on teaching economics in the elementary setting: 1) How does Flipgrid promote student voice? 2) How does Flipgrid assist teachers instructionally? 3) How does Flipgrid impact student engagement and student learning? The findings indicate that when teaching economics in an elementary setting, Flipgrid promotes student voice and positively impacts student engagement and learning. Second, Flipgrid's intuitive platform was easy for both students and teachers to use.

Key words: economics education, C3 Framework, 5Cs, instructional technology, Flipgrid

Introduction

3..2..1… Recording! This countdown displays on 20 2nd-graders' iPads during an economics social studies unit. The use of instructional technology has been found to have a positive impact on student engagement and achievement. Throughout this project, each 2nd grade student used Flipgrid to video record and express their daily personal understanding of economic concepts and vocabulary.

Corresponding author: jcarr@bridgewater.edu

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Flipgrid

Flipgrid is a free social learning platform designed to promote student learning, motivation, and engagement. In using Flipgrid, students respond by video to a teacher's discussion-based prompts. Utilized by over 10,000 teachers, Flipgrid's platform works with any internet-enabled device with a camera. A signature feature of the Flipgrid platform is the video response. Flipgrid promotes discussion and engagement by giving every student the opportunity to explain their understanding of the content. A distinctive feature of Flipgrid is social interaction through stickers, giphys, and emojis. After the student submission, the teacher reviews video responses to gauge student understanding while visually seeing facial expressions and hearing voice intonation. Research is limited on the interactive tool, so this project seeks to fill the gaps. Reported strengths of Flipgrid include access, convenience, participation, appeal, formative feedback, tracking, and compatibility. Reported potential barriers include confidence, impression management, equipment, and competitiveness (Stoszkowski, 2018).

Economics Education

Young children often have misconceptions about economics, and many teachers report feeling uncomfortable teaching economics content. Thus, they resort to implementing traditional learning exercises (Schug, 1994). Unfortunately, students may quickly become disengaged when economics instruction is limited to reading textbooks and responding to worksheets. Instead, it is recommended that teachers integrate real-life experience-based exercises that provide students with ample opportunities to explore and practice economics content (Kourilsky, 1987; Laney, 1993).

Providing elementary students with a foundational understanding of economics (including financial literacy) can generate significant life-altering benefits (Lusardi, 2015; White, Mistry, & Chow, 2013). In recent years, state curriculum writers have increasingly integrated economics, and all 50 states now include economics in K-12 standards (Council for Economic Education, 2018). There is a clear recent recognition of the importance and benefits of economics education, but elementary teachers nationwide are facing challenges in social studies education such as reduced instructional time, heightened pressure from high-stakes testing, and limited resources. This puts teachers in a predicament. So, when teaching economics, how can teachers implement quality resources that strengthen student learning, motivation, and engagement?

The answer to these questions began months prior to the economics Flipgrid project. The purpose of this project was to identify teacher perceptions of using experience-based exercises

Corresponding author: jcarr@bridgewater.edu

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with Flipgrid for teaching economics in a diverse elementary setting. This four-day project took place in an accredited public school classroom in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The researchers designed four Flipgrid resources including student facilitation guides aligned to 2nd grade curriculum on scarcity, goods and services, bartering, and resources as demonstrated in Figure 1. Each economics lesson was approximately 30-45 minutes in length. The students' Flipgrid video submission served as the formative assessment for each lesson. During an electronic interview, one 2nd grade teacher participant reflected on her experiences utilizing Flipgrid as a pedagogical tool specifically used to learn about state economics standards. This project focused on National Council for the Social Studies (2010) Curriculum Standard Theme 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption. The reflections of this project serve as qualitative data for the purpose of this article.

Figure 1. Examples of Flipgrid facilitation guides

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C3 Framework Application

The use of Flipgrid to teach economics pairs well with the C3 Framework for social studies education. The C3 Framework Inquiry Arc is "a set of interlocking and mutually reinforcing ideas that feature the four dimensions of informed inquiry in social studies" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Using Flipgrid as a method for teaching economics provides teachers with an easy means for satisfying each of the four dimensions while simultaneously offering experience-based learning.

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries. Flipgrid provides a platform for teachers to engage students and help students create useful questions. The Flipgrid platform gives students the opportunity to strengthen their voice by using a familiar recording process.

Dimension 2: Connections to Disciplinary Tools and Concepts. The C3 Framework encourages students to identify concepts as well as describe, evaluate, explain, and analyze how concepts are connected to each other. Flipgrid provides a platform for students to express their thoughts in an entertaining and impactful manner.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources Using Evidence. Flipgrid gives students the freedom to make supporting arguments without the fear that sometimes accompanies speaking in front of peers. With secure privacy settings, teachers can create locked grids so only the student and teacher can view, which may encourage students to respond more freely. Using attachments, teachers can also present evidence to enhance the learning experience.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. The recordings in Flipgrid provide students with the opportunity to freely and creatively communicate their conclusions while providing a convenient means of formative assessment for teachers.

	Dimension 1: Developing and Planning Inquiries	Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts	Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence	Dimension 4: Communicating conclusions and taking informed actions
Activities and Subject Areas	Class discussions	Civics, Economics, History, Geography	Gathering and evaluating sources; Developing Claims	Reflecting on the process and reporting results

Table 1. C3 Framework

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Student Learning

One of the primary goals of a teacher is to assist and support students' learning and development. As federal and state governments continue to push curricular standards, there has been increased emphasis nationwide on the 5Cs life skills: communication, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and citizenship. When using Flipgrid, students have the opportunity to practice and build upon these critical life skills. This is unlike a traditional learning exercise in which a teacher asks a question and one or two students respond. With Flipgrid, every student has the opportunity to communicate and respond to the activity. Thus, there is greater opportunity for experience-based student learning and stronger documentation of student learning for the teacher.

According to the teacher participant, "Flipgrid allowed my students to put the economic terms that they used into their own words," thereby emphasizing each student's communication skills. The student's ability to restate academic vocabulary in their own words is part of the six steps to effectively teaching vocabulary (Marzano, 2009). This strategy is effective for any grade level and content area. Building a strong vocabulary requires learning a multitude of words, which can be challenging for students (Graves, Schneider, & Ringstaff, 2018). Particularly, students who are learning English as a second or third language in the elementary setting benefit from interdisciplinary teaching and balanced instruction when they learn English and economic content simultaneously (Rodriguez-Valls, 2012). The researchers found this as well; the teacher participant explained, "Flipgrid has been wonderful for my ELL learners! They are often hesitant to speak up in class and sometimes require longer think time... Flipgrid allows them the time to prepare and… it is more comfortable to create a video than it is to speak on the spot in public." A teacher's instructional choices can promote a safe and supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable. Students are better able to focus on their learning and are more willing to take academic risks (Guzman-Ingram, 2017).

Using Flipgrid to teach economics increases a student's exposure to economics education without overwhelming the teacher participant's valuable lesson planning and preparation time. The teacher participant noted, "It was great because the prep was pretty minimal, and once they finished, there weren't any papers to collect, and then students stayed engaged by watching and commenting on their classmate's videos," providing the opportunity to practice their citizenship skills. The researchers found that technology like Flipgrid complements the C3 Framework by giving students the experience of voicing their understanding when recording their responses.

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The teacher participant echoed these sentiments when discussing assessing student comprehension for the economics lessons:

In the past, I have done multiple-choice assessments in order to check for understanding. This was a quick yes or no grade. They chose an answer and it was right or wrong. When using Flipgrid, I was able to listen to each student explain their thought process and see what made sense and what they were still confused with. This made it a lot easier to go back and remediate with students because I knew exactly what they were thinking. The built-in assessment of Flipgrid provides a formative assessment, and the creative social features maintain student attention and responsiveness.

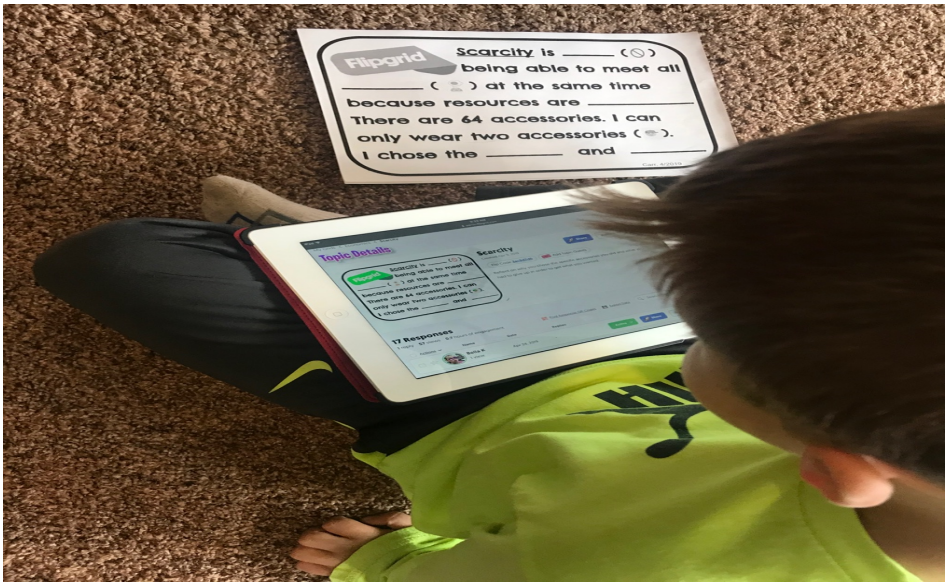

Figure 2. Student using Flipgrid

Student Engagement

The loss of instructional time due to off-task behavior is clearly recognized by the field, and teachers at all levels are concerned about decreasing levels of student engagement (Godwin et al., 2016). Student engagement is pivotal in the classroom for teachers and students. Using Flipgrid to provide information to students and gauge their level of understanding provides teachers with a method for maintaining students' attention. Teachers frequently grumble about distracted students and seek avenues to keep students on task (Barshay, 2018). As the teacher participant reflected, the students are "more engaged when they get to make a [Flipgrid] video

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over something else." Having previously used posters or presentations to teach economics, she continued, "these were good, but students often mumble, ramble, or get nervous. I think [when using Flipgrid] the students were more confident." Flipgrid encourages student involvement and engagement through the use of social media formatting for student video recording as well as additional stickers, giphys, emojis and other graphic features. As the teacher participant noted, "my students love to make their videos unique... They love to show off their creativity! [and] pretend to be a famous YouTube star." The researchers observed that students were actively engaged and highly energetic when creating videos and viewing their classmates' responses. In addition, students practiced their collaboration skills by assisting their classmates in taping using creative video angles and integrating fun stickers.

Using intrinsic interest is one way to engage students; if an activity is seen as intrinsically valuable to the students, it can enhance levels of motivation and engagement (Augustyniak et al., 2016). It is significant to teachers that "what a student finds interesting often depends not simply upon the subjects of topics but upon the way the topics are presented" (Newmann, 1989, p. 35). In this project, by differentiating through student interest in technology and interpersonal learning with Flipgrid, the participating teacher reported students' excitement to explain their bartering experiences using Flipgrid. Student interest is further enhanced when the learning task affords students a diverse form of talent and expression (Gardner, 2000). When using Flipgrid, students can pretend to be a famous YouTuber or newscaster, explain their response using illustrations, or write a response and simply read it. Flipgrid is highly versatile in allowing students to demonstrate content in a manner that supports their learning preferences. Table 2 highlights reasons to utilize Fliprgrid when teaching economics.

Promotes Student Voice	X
Engages and motivates students	X
Promotes Digital Citizenship	X
Instructional tool for ELL	X
Critical thinking and problem solving	X

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Deeper understanding of economic concepts	X
Saves time	X
Ability to differentiate and remediate	X
Ingrates the C3 Inquiry Arc	X

Table 2. Reasons to use Flipgrid to teach economics

Conclusion

Simply using Flipgrid will not guarantee the results indicated in this article. Chen, Star, Dede and Tutwiler (2018) caution that there are more factors to consider prior to integrating technology that claims to engage, motivate, and enhance student learning. Teachers should use professional judgement and their knowledge of individual and collective student needs prior to implementing any instructional or technological tool.

The researchers found that attempting to use Flipgrid in whole class instruction presented minor hurdles. Flipgrid is not ideally suited for large groups or even several small groups. The engaging nature of this technology loses out to the cacophony of noise that is created when the whole class is recording at once. According to the teacher participant, "It is almost better to use Flipgrid as a station." The use of stations and small group instruction has repeatedly been found to increase student comprehension, engagement, and motivation, and could be implemented to teach economics (Barshay, 2018; Newmann, 1989; Strong, Amendum, & Conradi Smith, 2018).

Through this project, 2nd graders were able to voice their understanding of economics content. As they planned their responses, recorded, and watched their videos with their classmates, the 2nd graders engaged in meaningful learning. The teacher participant agreed and said that Flipgrid is a "simple way for kids to share their ideas, as well as what they have learned. Most of my students prefer sharing their ideas orally instead of writing. Flipgrid allows them to share openly and with more description." We encourage you to consider utilizing Flipgrid as an instructional tool to support your students in their learning, interest, and engagement with economic concepts.

Corresponding author: jcarr@bridgewater.edu

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Corresponding author: jcarr@bridgewater.edu

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About the Authors:

Jennie M. Carr - Associate Professor of Education, Elementary Education Program Coordinator at Bridgewater College, Virginia.

John Kruggel - Associate Director of the Center for Economics Education, James Madison University

Corresponding author: jcarr@bridgewater.edu

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