

Session 13 Transcript: Ameerah Eaddy

- Greetings, my name is Ameerah Eaddy and I currently teach music at Atlanta Creative Arts and Science Magnet School in South Carolina. Today we are going to explore using Elementari with students to help introduce them to coding while preparing to publish an interactive book. Elementari is a program I am using with my grades three through five afterschool students to help them develop their writing skills. Elementari's interactive book template consists of four parts. We will delve into the first two sections, though all four will be listed in the handout. The first thing that students will do in Elementari is animate their names. And the second part is write an essay about themselves, their families, and their interests that will have a voiceover attached to it. This process encourages students to want to perfect their skills because others can see what they've created and they want to impress others by their page designs and animations. The first activity before delving into the writing component gives them ownership and accountability. They are to animate their names. Each letter of their name has to move. And they have to input the functions and events to make these objects do so. This simple coding process allows them to be creative at how we are introduced to them and their story. I found that this part of the activity has a powerful effect on their take of the second part of the book. The animated name process makes them invested in the essay process. Here's how we did it. Before the students did anything on their devices, I gave them the prompt and had them turn in their written compositions. I read them and conferenced with each student about what was written and how it was written. Individually and as a group, we discussed how and how not the writings were on topic, as well as discuss some of the main punctuation rules and key components of a written composition. We revisited this when they redid their essays in Elementari. As for their handwritten essays, I put them aside to be viewed again, after they completed their interactive "About Me" essay in Elementari, You have the freedom to make the essay as detailed as you want or focus on certain aspects of the writing process. For my kids, writing structure, grammar, and punctuation were key items of focus. Now for the first activity of the "About Me" interactive book, animate your name. You can create a free account if you don't have one. We are going to click on Write a Story, then Write a New Story. We're also going to skip the tutorials for now. The plus at the top is for adding pages and the trash can is for deleting them. And it's up to you how you want to use the first page, but I like leaving that one blank and adding a page. We will use the second page to put our animated name. There are several things the animated name must have before students can move on to the essay. Each letter is in its own text box to have its font changed, to have its color changed, to be animated. Using the toolbar on the right side of the screen, click on Text and choose the first type of text box. You will use a lot depending on the length of your name because each letter is to be typed in individual text boxes. I like to shorten the boxes like this because it makes the letters easier to move. You will notice that this top toolbar appears when you have a letter highlighted. Now I will change the font. Click on the font box on the left side of the screen to change the font of each letter. You can mix and match fonts. Click on the A on the same toolbar to change the font color. Then arrange the letters how you want them to appear onscreen. Let's bring these letters to life via coding. Click the Events Graph bar at the top of

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the page. See how it flipped to a black graph with layout design at the top of the page? This is where the magic happens. Because I am working with such varied grades in short spurts of time, and they are using devices different than what they use during the school day, I limit what functions and events they use, but it is up to you what your students use. Your students may be comfortable using the many options that are available. As you can see, the toolbar that you will be using is on the right side of your screen. We will be using Events, Functions, and Objects, click on Events. There are several from which to choose. We are using Page Start. Now click on Functions. I like the students to start with Fade, Blank, and Bounce. There are others that I encourage them to use also. Notice that the functions are in green, just as the events are in orange. Now that you have an event in function, you need an object to do the task. Go to Objects and choose one of your letters. Yes, purple equals objects. Go to your Event box, which is Page Start here, click on and hold the white arrow on the right side of the box and connect it to the start arrow on the Function box. Do the same with your Object box using the dot on the right side and connect it to the Object box on your function. Click Preview at the top right of the page to see what your letter does. To make it have more of an effect, you can change the start time in the Page Start box to one second. Continue with the other letters. If you are more adventurous or ambitious, you may want to try the functions Scale, Scroll, Flip, Rotate. Some of these require you to use math, but it makes light bulbs go off in your students' heads. You can always preview your work to see how you like it and make changes as they are needed. I gotta tell you that I could not have imagined the name animation would engage them to the extent that it did. Once they started and saw their first letter animated, they were hooked and forever changing something until it was their type of perfect. Over to the part two of what we're doing, the essay. I repeated the prompts and let them see my version. You need to tell us a little bit about you, your family and your interest. Remember, you will have to read what you wrote and recorded. Now all honesty, I didn't show them my version at the get-go. I needed them to start writing without copying what I did. I had some three-page writers and some three-sentence writers that I had to make sure didn't do that in Elementari. We are adding a page by clicking the plus sign and choosing a text box in which to write our story. For today's purpose, I will write a few sentences and you can too. Now that the sentences are done, they can be recorded. Using the toolbar on the right side of the screen, we will click on Sounds, then click Record a Voiceover. Get ready to record what you've written. I will show you here first. You need to tell us a little bit about you, your family and your interests. Remember, you will have to read what you wrote and recorded. You can listen to it, and save or delete it. You need to tell us a little bit about you, your family and your interests. Remember, you will have to read what you wrote and recorded. You can trim the beginning and end of it too, if you like. If you don't like it, you can record again. You need to tell us a little bit about you, your family and your interests. Remember, you will have to read what you wrote and recorded. Once you saved your recording, click on Event Graph. The page has now flipped to the black graph or Layout Design page. It's time to code the interaction. Click on Events, we're using Page Start. Now click on Functions and choose Play Recorded Sound. Here you will see Select the

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Sound, click on it, and you should see your recording that you saved. We will connect the boxes as we did when animating our names. Click Preview to see how it all goes together. You need to tell us a little bit about you, your family and your interests. Remember, you will have to read what you wrote and recorded. When students finish this, they are free to add backgrounds, pictures, music, et cetera, to their pages. They may want to create a title page and design that too. Make sure you are on the Event Graph side of your pages. So we'll click on Layout Design, and now we're back to Event Graph. The toolbar that is on the right side of the page has more than text. This toolbar has Images, Backgrounds, Sounds, Animations, Shapes, and Widgets. Let the students play around with these to design the pages they want to showcase to others. Now is your chance to play around with that too. Most students typed what they wanted to say in Elementari. A few asked about the essays they had written earlier, but I didn't give those back to the students at this time. They wrote the content and I checked it when they felt they were finished. The content was more on point than when they wrote the first time. Also, the students were very particular about the appearance of the work. This is something that we've struggled with, so this was definitely a pleasant consequence. Though the content and structure were better, a lot of the writing had grammar and punctuation issues. Because the students are showing me the work for approval to move to the next step, I was able to work with them repeatedly on the issues. It got to the point where they not only noticed, but were able to verbalize what issues needed to be changed and how. Though they had gone over the basics in class, this format allowed them to have meaningful interactions they needed with explanations that reach them where they are. Also, the students were more receptive to the corrections because the activity held a meaning and ownership for them. We've accomplished so much together in our time. Using Elementari, we've animated our names by coding the interactions. We know how to write a story and code the interaction for our voiceover. And we know how to add designs to our books. Now all you have to do is make each day your masterpiece and this project is one more way to encourage our kids to do so.