

5 things you should know about...

Student-produced iMovies by Aurora, Lisa & Kristen EDCT 552

Scenario: This year, during a science unit about pathogens, eighth grade students took on the role of movie-makers. In order to share the information they researched, they made video public service announcements (PSAs). A PSA is a short, educational video—typically about a social issue—designed to educate viewers in an entertaining way.

First, students went on YouTube to find examples of PSAs, which they evaluated using a rubric. After discussing several “good” and “bad” examples as a whole class, they started the process of deconstructing the videos to look at things like music, dialog and setting. Students were excited to make movies for science class.

Next, students used iMovie to edit video clips and images, both student-produced and “found,” into a coherent PSA. Students added transitions, titles and text using the program. Background sounds were added from the iMovie library, student iTunes accounts and internet sources such as YouTube. Their teacher was concerned about issues of copyright and fair use but also wanted students to be able to express their creativity.

Finally, students shared their iMovies with other students, teachers and parents. Students loved the process and were proud of their work. Their teacher was delighted by their engagement and willingness to reflect critically and make revisions based on their reflections.



1 What is it?

iMovie is video-editing software from Apple. Like many other Apple products, it is well known for being user-friendly. The program lays out your video as a film strip; users can simply highlight a section of the strip and edit that section as they wish.

iMovie allows the user to do more than the basic editing of a video. The user can add in text, voiceover and music. Have an annoying person in the background of your video? You can crop him out. The program is linked with Apple’s iPhoto and iTunes, which makes it easy to add and edit images and music. iMovie also provides movie trailer themes to help new users create their videos with a template.

When you are finished with your video, iMovie offers a variety of ways to export and share it.

[What is iMovie? --Video](#)

2 Who's doing it?

A Pew Internet & American Life study found that "more than one half of all teens have created media content, and roughly one third of teens who use the internet have shared content they produced" (Lenhardt et al., 2005).

Because of the ease of uploading video to sites like Facebook and YouTube, students are more likely to share video and use it in their social and school lives. NETS student standard 1a notes the importance of providing opportunities for students to "apply existing knowledge to generate new...products."¹

Using iMovie, students are able to participate in a culture "with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and ...where members believe their contributions matter" (Jenkins, 2009).

Parker (2010) shares examples and ideas for incorporating student-produced videos into classrooms noting the importance of allowing students to choose topics that interest them and the importance of feedback from both peers and adults.

3 What are the downsides?

iMovie is an Apple product. While this software comes free with a purchase of an Apple laptop or desktop it is not available for PCs. Therefore it is not a viable option for schools that use primarily PCs and can be a challenge for students who have PCs at home.

Students with previous experience may dominate the process when movies are made in collaborative groups. This limitation can be used to an advantage if addressed beforehand. Students can plan out the different roles they

will need to fill in order to get a project done. Teachers may create an opportunity for peer-to-peer teaching.

There are larger issues like copyright law to address when working with students who may use content appropriated from the internet. Teachers need to address issues of copyright and fair use with students.

Teachers and students may simply view iMovie as a tool without contextualizing its use as a means to accomplish an authentic task (Beatham, 2008-2009).

4 Why is it significant?

The process of making movies emphasizes students' roles as producers of media and the importance of creation for an authentic audience beyond their teacher. Teachers and students may move from viewing movies as a "functional literacy" and neutral tool to seeing it as a means to develop "critical and creative abilities" (Buckingham, 2007).

The creation and editing of video also gives an outlet for student choice and creativity. NETS Creativity and Innovation standard 1c highlights the creation of "original works as a means of personal or group expression," which can be a part of any lesson involving student-produced iMovies.

5 What are the implications for teaching and learning?

iMovie and video editing software users are interested in telling a good story both in and outside of the classroom. Teachers use a collaborative process, which can help their students be successful, engaged and literate

¹ <http://www.iste.org/standards/nets-for-students/nets-student-standards-2007>

References

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not only at school but in their real world experiences.

Student-produced iMovies provide an entry into participatory culture. Jenkins (2009) notes benefits of participatory culture engagement include awareness of intellectual property, multiple modes of expression and the use of transferable skills. Ideally this process leads to an understanding of how media is produced, resulting in students reflecting on their own relationship to the media they interact with.

NETS student standards ranging from Communication and Collaboration (Standard 2) to Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making (Standard 4) are integral to the process of creating iMovies.

