



TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH
COMMITTEE

2008 – 2009 Grant Project Report

Project Title: A Vodcast For Review Can Help More Than A Few

Project Creator(s): Michael Breed

School District: Chenango Valley CSD

Grant Award: \$2498.00

Contact: mbreed@cvcasd.stier.org

Broome-Tioga BOCES TRC Grant Summary Report
2008/2009 Academic Year
Michael Breed - Chenango Valley Central Schools
“A Vodcast For Review Can Help More Than A Few”

I would like to begin this summary report by thanking the Broome-Tioga BOCES Technology Research Committee for the generous funding of my grant request this year. This program has proven invaluable to many teachers in the Southern Tier and has most certainly changed my teaching markedly. I would never have been able to carry out the projects with my students over the past several years without your generous support of technology education. A heartfelt thanks is to be extended to you.

The grant funded this year involved student-centered production of video segments intended to serve as a series of review tips that will assist students with their preparations for the Earth Science Regents Examination. These tips will be combined on a website for sharing with students from all areas of New York State. The goal was to keep the focus of the project upon student-generated content, which is perhaps one of the most powerful forms of learning students can experience. One of the sections of Earth Science that I teach this year was selected for participation in the project. The class was divided up into eight groups, each of which representing one of the major units of study in the Regents Earth Science curriculum. At the conclusion of each unit of study, the group of students to which that unit was assigned had to prepare a short video segment offering study tips to improve students' scores on that particular section of the Earth Science exam. Preparation for production was one of the most difficult aspects of the project. The student groups arranged a meeting with me during remediation period to plan out the content of their video segments. During those meetings, I helped the students organize their thoughts and to brainstorm ideas for the video segment.

Another essential element of the project involved inviting Deb Stephens from Broome-Tioga BOCES to visit my students for several hours to teach them some of the essential aspects of video production. She emphasized the importance of elements such as story boarding, using the camcorders properly, maintaining the integrity of the video, shot angles, importing the video, etc. She was extremely helpful and the kids tried to keep her tips in mind throughout their productions. I highly encourage other teachers to utilize her knowledge and expertise in their own classes.

The grant funded the purchase of several important pieces of equipment that the students needed to produce the video segments. Most importantly, the grant funded the purchase of a Canon Mini-DV Camcorder (Model ZR930) for \$310.00. These camcorders have proven to be durable and dependable, with Mini-DV tapes being relatively inexpensive. The only drawback for some might be the requirement of a firewire cable for importing the video content from the camcorder to a computer for editing. It is important to select the right computer for editing the video content, and I

can't recommend a computer better suited for this purpose than a Mac. The iLife suite of software that comes with every Mac purchase is without equal when it comes to functionality and ease of use, important considerations to make when involving students in such activities. We purchased a new unibody 15-inch MacBook Pro notebook computer from Apple, Inc. The computer has dual graphics processors, which make quick work of compressing and encoding video content. This is perhaps the most processor-intensive work that can be asked of a computer, and the MacBook Pro made quick work of it. I highly recommend that anyone purchasing such a computer consider getting as much RAM memory as you can afford and to purchase the "Apple Care" extended warranty with the computer. It is worthy of the investment, and will definitely pay for itself if anything goes wrong with the monitor, hard drive, or motherboard of the computer. We also purchased a one-year subscription to Apple's MobileMe service. It allows for the online storage of documents and photographs and serves as a host for user-created websites. At the conclusion of the project, the student videos will be uploaded to MobileMe via a website created with Apple's iWeb software, a part of the iLife suite of applications. An extra battery pack for the camcorder, a firewire-800 cable, and a supply of mini-DV tapes were also purchased with grant funds.

The project was initiated near the end of September, 2008 with a 2-hour presentation by Deb Stephens of Broome-Tioga BOCES. I took advantage of a double-period lab class separated by a lunch block to give the students an intensive review of essential video-production techniques, including story boarding, planning shots, editing footage, etc. Enticing the students with pizza during the presentation proved to be an effective motivator. At this time, student groups were created and the units for which they would create review videos were assigned. Project objectives and requirements were also reviewed.

Throughout the school year, as each unit of study concluded, I met with student groups during 9th period remediation to brainstorm ideas and content that should be included in the student productions. The biggest hurdle in the project proved to be finding time to complete the videos in a timely manner. Producing even 3-4 minutes of video that is as content-intensive as these projects requires a great deal of planning time, time to film, and editing time. Time is the biggest factor to contend with. With my encouragement and, at times, my stern reminders of deadlines to be met, students managed to complete their videos, with the last one being completed during the very last week of the school year.

In hindsight, my first impressions of the student productions are that they could be a bit more "creative." It's very easy to be bland while stating important topics to review. I would have liked to see the videos become more entertaining to watch, but I think it provides me with some things to work on with future student groups. Overall, however, I think the students did a fine job using the equipment and producing videos that will be of some use to students preparing the the Earth Science Regents Examination.

I feel that the students producing the videos learned a lot about the topics they were presenting. Their regents scores are indicative of this. I don't think I've ever had as many students from a single class achieve scores in the 90's like this class did. I was impressed with their performances and I believe that the production of the videos helped make this possible. Projects such as this, where students are the creators of content, truly prove themselves to be the best teaching experiences students can go through. If they can teach it, they must have learned it as well!

To summarize, if you're interested in finding a way to generate student interest in your topics of study while exposing them to the latest in technology along the way, having your kids create short, content-intensive, review videos may just be something to consider for your own classroom. The videos they produce will be of value and interest to students in future classes for years to come.