

Connellys' Classroom Cutaway

Tips for K-12 educators for helping students communicate and create using visual motion media, photography, and technology

By John and Marilyn Connelly



The mission of this column is to give educators tips about including the teaching tool of student produced media in their curriculum. Over 35 years of teaching students grades 5-12 Marilyn and I have found that that tool to be especially effective. For more than 10 years we shared our knowledge with educators through workshops and seminars. Many of them reported similar success.

But this edition of the column will discuss the next potential step for educators whose students have created media productions. After sharing the productions with the class and perhaps the entire school and at a special parents' night, educators might consider entering the piece in media festivals. Such efforts can yield benefits for the students, the school, the community, and for the teacher.

For the students

As our students worked hard to learn and apply new skills to create their media productions they felt a sense of accomplishment. This was enhanced as the production was shared with peers. Marilyn and I arranged with our school to play these media productions to the entire school over the closed circuit system. The students were very proud.

In Hawaii, we received invitations to enter local student film festivals. Over the years, as our students' films were honored for their excellence, we found the students' self-esteem and self-confidence increased.

One year we heard about the International Student Media Festival. With great nervousness our best pieces were sent off to this prestigious festival. And when we received a long-distance phone call informing us of our winning entries, our students' self esteem skyrocketed. In addition to the awards, which came from ISMF, in Hawaii the State Superintendent of Education office issued individual commendations to students who were recognized for excellence outside of the state. This was a very big deal for students in our small state.

For the school

As word got out that students from Kalaheo's Communication Arts Learning Center had won national awards, reporters from newspapers and television stations came to our campus. Hawaii is a small state and news about schools, good or bad, gets around. Kalaheo High School parents loved seeing our school in the news. Our fellow teachers and our principal were proud. Our district superintendent was proud and encouraged our school to continue to excel.

For the community

Have you seen the bumper stickers that say something like "We are proud that our children are students at ABC School"? That was the kind of pride that was generated within the Kailua community when our students were recognized for excellent work at the International Student Media Festival. There are two high schools in Kailua. After our national awards became known, we had an increase of requests from parents wishing their children to attend Kalaheo High School.

For the teacher

When a student wins a spelling bee, her English teacher justifiably receives recognition for helping the student prepare. The same is true when students win a national award for their media creation. The teacher's media production curriculum is validated. In our case, one of the benefits that accrued to us was a significant increase in resources for our program. Another informal but fun benefit was when people were introduced to us and would say something like, "Oh yes, you are the ones with the famous program."

There are many benefits possible when entering your students' media work in the International Student Media Festival. We strongly urge you to consider it. Check it out at their fun website www.ismf.net. Good luck to you!



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