

MovieMaking in the Classroom

Available online at: <http://talent.ed.uiuc.edu/tutorials/moviemaking/>

**Created by the
Office of Educational Technology
College of Education
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

Dear Teachers and School Personnel,

This help guide has been created to assist not just in the process of moviemaking, but also in the process of moviemaking **IN THE CLASSROOM**. For this reason, classroom tips and curriculum integration ideas have been interspersed throughout. We recognize that these suggestions may not be practical or feasible for every classroom. We also recognize that you know your students, their interests, and their capabilities better than we do. Therefore, please feel empowered to make the decisions and adjustments needed to make the process work in your classroom. Good luck, and we welcome any comments you may have about this help guide!

**Sincerely,
The OET Outreach Team
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Overview

This help guide will take you through the basic steps necessary for the integration of moviemaking in the classroom.

Overview of the Five Phases:

1. Development: Defining goals, creating student work groups, idea development, and script development.
2. Pre-production: Storyboarding, setting-up locations, and development and gathering of necessary items (equipment, props, costumes, etc.).
3. Production: The process of filming.
4. Post-Production: Editing, screening, and exporting the product to the distribution medium.
5. Distribution: Setting up a premiere & evaluating the project.

Phase 1: Development

Preparation is a major part of video creation; the development phase is the first part of this process. Although somewhat time consuming, working through this process may help your students develop skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration (not to mention the application of academic skills). The major steps in the development process include:

1. Curriculum Integration
2. Define Project Goals and Objectives
3. Project Teams
4. Idea Development
5. Idea Approval
6. Script Development
7. Project Approval

Curriculum Integration

Before discussing the actual stages of moviemaking we feel that it is appropriate to discuss how the process of moviemaking can be integrated into the curriculum. Similar to producing a tangible learning artifact, movies can allow your students to communicate and show their understanding of learned content, as well as demonstrate their mastery of technical skills. Writing a paper is a good analogy for the process of moviemaking. Writing a paper, like moviemaking, requires idea development, outlining, writing, editing, and distribution of a final product.

From a curriculum standpoint, moviemaking is just like any other classroom project. The process and products should be aligned to the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Therefore, both the process of moviemaking and the products can provide you with opportunities for assessment. This help guide will assist you in understanding how the moviemaking process can span the curriculum and allow for differentiated instruction and assessment.

Defining Project Goals & Objectives

The following questions may help you determine goals for the movie:

- How does the movie address the curriculum goals?
- What information needs to be conveyed?
- When does the movie need to be completed?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who will be involved in the stages of production?
- What resources are available?
- How will success be measured?

Once goals have been developed, they should be used to guide the rest of the moviemaking process.

Project Teams

Assigning individuals (students and staff) to roles or production teams makes the production of the movie run much smoother. When organizing teams remember to consider the total number students and staff participating, individual skills, amount of equipment available, and the perceived needs of the project. Possible teams include:

- Idea Development Team (brainstorming)
- Storyboarding & Scripting Team (writers and artists)
- Set Crew (costumes, make-up, & scenery)
- Director or Co-directors
- Actors
- Production Team (cameras, lighting, & sound)
- Editing Team

Idea Development

Often times, developing feasible ideas is one of the most difficult parts of movie development. During the development of ideas, it is essential that everyone participating on the team brainstorms and researches ideas. How will the story of the movie be told? Will there be a narrator? Will interviews be included? Within this process, remember to consider the audience, project timeline, budget, available equipment, and resources. Finally, make sure the final project idea blends with the original educational goals and objectives of the project.

Our experience has shown us that, during this process, it is useful to use tools such as a whiteboard with multiple colored markers and/or visual thinking software like Inspiration.

In his book *The Director in the Classroom*, Theodosakis (2001) offers a guide to designing great projects which includes defining the movie's: purpose, vision, subject, questions, production team, format, project length, due date, audience, venue, format, special instructions, and assessment—we suggest referring to his chapter on idea development and the companion CD for more information.

Idea Approval

As a natural part of the development process, have student team members “pitch” the movie ideas to faculty/staff team members. This presentation process should provide good feedback and, if necessary, can provide some ideas for change. This method will help students understand a collaborative development process.

This may be a good time for students to learn how to use presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple’s Keynote.

Script Development

Scripts are an essential part of any moviemaking process. Scripts should set the background for the scene as well as provide guidance for the director, but their main purpose is to establish the actors' lines. Grammar and voice inflections can be used to add meaning to words. Scripts should fully convey ideas, be error free, and use an agreed upon format or template.

Some movie and play scripts can be found online. Furthermore, if there is money available software, such as Final Draft, can help in the script writing process.

Time Code	Visual	Narrative/Dialogue	Effect/Sound/Lighting
15 seconds	Close-up hallway clock, nearly 3:00pm, graffiti under clock indicates dislike for school	No narrative	Ticking of clock
15 seconds	Teacher lecturing same time noted on classroom clock as the hallway clock in pervious scene.	No narrative	Muted mumble of teacher lecturing
10 seconds	Close-up student having trouble staying awake	No narrative	Ticking of clock slows
15 seconds	Close-up student having trouble staying awake	Narrator, over sound: “Do you have days like this?”	Muted mumble of teacher lecturing

Project Approval

Once everything has been organized in the development process it is again time for students to solicit input from staff members and get final approval for pre-production and production. In

addition to presenting the overall idea for the movie, students should share their script. Again, this should be viewed as a collaborative process. Provide critical feedback for students to help improve their projects.

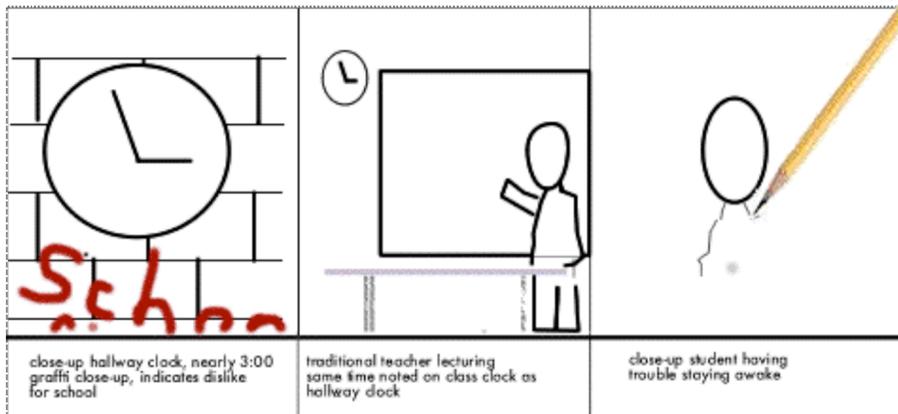
Phase 2: Pre-Production

The pre-production phase of moviemaking is often overlooked, but includes two steps that can greatly reduce the amount of time and energy spent on the production phase. Storyboarding and planning the shoot are ways to verify that all members of the production team have the same vision for the movie. In the end, pre-production can help to promote team unity and reduce costs. The two steps of the pre-production process are:

1. Storyboarding
2. Planning the Shoot

What is Storyboarding?

Providing a visual sense of the how the movie will look once complete is an often overlooked but vital aspect of classroom movie development. A storyboard is simply a series of drawings that represent what each scene should look like. For example, a storyboard would denote the angle of the shot, how close the camera will be to the actors, and how the scene will be cropped. Additionally, storyboards can also include text that further specifies what is to go on in each scene.



Storyboarding in Practice

When preparing your storyboards, remember the old saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words”. While the script is important to provide content, the visual aspect of a movie is also key in providing the viewer with an enlightened understanding. Together, the script and the storyboards provide a holistic plan that allows the production team to begin the filming process.

As discussed on the prior page, storyboards should depict the shots and angles you desire throughout the movie. They can be done by hand or using computer software such as PowerProduction's Storyboard Quick. Most graphics software packages may be used to create storyboards.

Planning the Shoot

Taking time to prepare the shoot will make the filming go much smoother. In essence, this process should be similar to preparing a well thought-out lesson plan, except in this case the students are actually doing the planning. The purpose of planning the shoot is to attempt to workout details and potential problems before actually carrying out the filming. The following are some examples of tasks that should be done in this phase:

- Verify that you have all of the props and costumes called for in the script.
- Make sure that filming locations are available.
- Collect and inventory all available equipment.
- Assign students roles and verify that they are available during the filming time.
- Be sure that all batteries are charged and equipment is ready to be used.

The final product of this process should be a firm schedule and plan for filming. The Director in the Classroom provides a detailed section on Planning to Shoot.

Important! Make sure you have the necessary permissions for your students to act in the movie.

Phase 3: Production

The stage of production is the actual process of filming. Throughout this phase your production team is going to be using the equipment to film the movie. During production, try to stick with initial concepts, but don't be afraid to make the necessary changes in order to make the film a success. The key to this success is to blend the curriculum goals and objectives, the script, the storyboards, and pre-production plan with the changing needs of your actors, shooting location, equipment, and other production team members. In addition to filming, this phase involves:

- Logging Footage
- Managing Equipment

Logging Footage

During production it is very beneficial to log footage as it is being recorded. Have students complete work logs or journals recording when, on what tape, and in what order scenes are filmed, as well as whether the scene is useable or not. The template below can help you get started.

Managing Equipment

To help prevent lost equipment, we recommend that you devise a system for checking out and tracking equipment use by students. As for what equipment you may need, the Digital Video Portal created by the Office of Educational Technology at the University of Illinois provides a nice resource for the tools needed. Below is a list of equipment that will be useful during and after filming. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should help you get started.

- Video Camera
- Tape
- Tripod
- Lights
- Microphones
- Costumes
- Props
- Computer
- Firewire Cable(s)

Phase 4: Post-Production

Post-production is where the movie is actually created. During this phase, the team will put together the pieces of the movie puzzle. The eight steps of post-production are:

1. Creating a Master Log
2. Sequencing Footage
3. Edit List
4. Visual Editing
5. Sound Editing
6. Adding Titles & Credits
7. Screenings
8. Exporting

Although, slightly different in verbiage and sequence of steps, the book by Theodosakis (2001) *The Director in the Classroom*, offers a detailed layout and description of the Post-Production phase of movie production.

Creating a Master Log

You should already have logs that were started during the production phase. In post-production the first step is to gather all of your logs and footage together. Use the separate logs to create a master log. The master log should include a list of the film footage and sound associated with your movie. This list can be organized by date, scene, take, or total time of clip. Students can create the log form during the pre-production phase.

Sequencing Footage

Now that all of the footage is logged it is a good idea to start to sequentially lay out your story using the available clips. This process will likely be done digitally. Video and sound clips from

the various scenes should be placed into one electronic, editable file. At this point, don't worry about the needed edits, cuts, or transitions.

The Edit List

After you have an idea of how the movie is going to come together, work with your team to develop an edit list. Your edit list should consist of a list of foreseen edits (cuts, transitions, and other items) that the team feels is necessary to tell your story. Taking the time to create an edit list ensures that all team members are on the same page, and it avoids unnecessary editing. Without this direction, experience has shown that students tend to over-edit and consume large amounts of time in the editing process.

Visual Editing

Once the edit list is complete, it is time to start editing the visual aspects of the film. Many software applications provide a means to edit both the visual track and the sound track together. If possible, editing both of these tracks together makes for easier editing and avoids problems such as voice not matching with video. Nonetheless, editing the tracks separately provides for greater flexibility.

Depending on the timeline, computer platform, budget, and team technical expertise there are multiple software applications that can be utilized in this process. If you go to the resources section of this help guide a list of applications are provided.

Furthermore, the Digital Video Portal created by the Office of Educational Technology at the University of Illinois provides a great resource for the tools needed in this process.

Sound Editing

There are three main components of a movie soundtrack: dialogue, sound effects, and music. The goal of the sound editing phase is to blend the three aspects of the soundtrack with the visual aspects of the movie to portray the desired story.

Again, depending on the timeline, computer platform, budget, and team technical expertise there are multiple software applications that can be utilized in this process. If you go to the resources section of this help guide a list of applications are provided.

Dialogue

The dialogue soundtrack is the actual talking that is taking place in the film. For the most part, dialogue is captured with microphones in the production process. Dialogue may also be modified or even rerecorded during the sound edit phase of post-production. As discussed earlier, the easiest way to deal with dialogue is to record it during the production phase and edit it along with the visual aspects of the film.

During production, using the proper microphone setup to capture dialogue is essential to being able to produce the best results.

Sound Effects

Sound effects are the sounds that make the audio of the movie come together with the storyline. For instance, if you have ever viewed a movie in surround sound, you have probably noticed that when a car drives by, or a spaceship flies off the screen the sound travels from one end of the room to the other—these are examples of sound effects. Adding sound effects in the production or post-production phases of your movie development will provide the final product with a more professional feel. For example, a sound effect in your movie may be the school bell ringing, or a locker slamming in the hallway.

Before creating them from scratch, remember that many software editing applications offer a variety of built-in sound effects. Additionally, sound effects may be captured using a microphone in the production or post-production phase, and added during editing.

Music

Although music is not essential for every scene, the use of music provides a powerful way to convey an idea or set the mood for a scene. For instance, the distant sound of some classical music, or even some jazz many represent happiness, whereas the louder sounds of rock or hip-hop music may provide a sense of energy or determination.

Warning!! Do not let the music overpower the other aspects of sound or the film itself.

Adding Titles & Credits

After the visuals and sound are edited it is time to add the title and credit sequences. Most digital movie computer applications have built-in title and credit templates. Some important points to remember when creating titles and credits:

- The text should remain on the screen long enough for the audience to read it.
- The text should stand out from the background enough so that it is easy to read.
- The title should be short, clear, and to the point.
- The credits should include everyone involved in making the movie.
- Remember to thank people or businesses who loaned their time, space, or equipment.

The Test Screening

The screening is like having someone proof-read your written work. Once editing is completed, invite friends, family, and intended audience members to view the film. Prior to the screening, develop a list a questions you would like to answer during the screening:

Some examples include:

- Did the movie put them to sleep?
- Did the movie put them on the edge of their seat?
- How were the viewers' attitudes, beliefs, or knowledge impacted by the film?
- What the viewers get from the movie that was not intended?

During the screening, observe the audience's reaction to the film. After the screening, elicit feedback from the audience by asking them questions about your movie. After receiving their feedback, make the needed adjustments, but always remember that not everyone will be happy all of the time.

Exporting

After the final cuts and edits are made it is time to finalize the movie and export it to a viable media for distribution. Currently, most movies at the school level are going to be exported to the Web, VHS, or DVD (some small movies may even be placed CD-ROM). Exporting condenses your draft movie to a smaller file that can be saved to the appropriate medium. Once exported, it is difficult if not impossible to edit the movie. Therefore, be sure to save the original file as well as the exported movie. Beware! the original file will consume a large amount of space, which will be determined based on the length and complexity of your film, and will likely not fit on a CD or DVD. Therefore, store the original file on your computer's hard drive.

Note: Exporting the movie to CD or DVD may require external software and/or hardware.

Warning!! Before exporting and publishing, look into your school district's policy on use of children's images. For instance, some districts currently do not allow children's images to be placed on the Internet.

Having Fun with DVDs

As well as producing a professional looking product, DVDs may provide an excellent medium for your students to express their humor as well as discuss the actual intent of the movie. Similar to high-end productions, using a DVD can allow your students to include outtakes, deleted scenes, and director commentary on the movie. Please remember that additional software or hardware will be required to produce a DVD.

Phase 5: Distribution

Congratulations! You have completed your movie. It is now time to take the final step and distribute the movie to your audience, as well as evaluate the project's success. The two steps in the distribution phase are:

1. Movie Premieres
2. Project Evaluation

Premieres

Celebrate the students' work! Organize movie premieres. Include press releases, posters, and possibly even ticket sales. Contact a local movie theater to see if they will provide you with a venue for the premiere. Call your local news outlets to tell them about the innovative projects your school/class has done.

Have fun, and don't forget the popcorn!

Project Evaluation

Finally, remember that this is class project. It is essential that you evaluate your students' progress through the curriculum. Bear in mind that your students' academic needs should have been integrated with the goals and objectives of the project. Much of the evaluation will probably take place as your students move through project, but be sure to provide students with adequate feedback on the final product.

Resources

Theodosakis, N. (2001). *The Director in the Classroom: How Filmmaking Inspires Learning*. San Diego, CA: Tech4Learning Publishing.

Digital Video Portal (<http://dvp.ed.uiuc.edu>)

Developed by Scott Wennerdahl, Faculty Development Coordinator & Evangeline Pianfetti, Director, Office of Educational Technology

The Digital Video Portal is an introductory resource related to the understanding of integrating digital video into the P-16 classroom. The portal is designed to provide general information about digital video for users who are new to working with digital video, and to answer many of the questions that arise when first working with digital video such as: What equipment is needed? What software is needed? How do you make professional quality video? What are the steps for digitizing and editing video? How can digital video be shared with others?

Development Software

- Inspiration (Mac/Win) (<http://www.inspiration.com/>)

Pre-production Software

- StoryBoard Quick (Mac/Win) (<http://www.storyboardartist.com/>)

Post-production

- iMovie (Mac - FREE) (<http://www.apple.com/imovie/>)
- Movie Maker (Win - FREE) (<http://www.microsoft.com/moviemaker/>)
- Adobe Premiere (Mac/Win) (<http://www.adobe.com/motion/main.html>)
- Final Cut Pro (Mac) (<http://www.apple.com/finalcutpro/>)
- Avid Xpress Pro (Mac/Win) (<http://www.avid.com/products/xpresspro/>)

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