

VIDEO PLAYS

Teachers and students will learn how to write and produce skits and plays using dialogue frameworks.

Invitation for learning

Producing movies of skits and plays is a powerful video application. Children love to act and they love to watch themselves doing it. There is probably no better way for children to explore the meaning of stories than through drama and theater. Because the video camera celebrates collage, all of the visual, performing, and language arts can be included: art, music, drama, writing, and public speaking.

Directions

Working in teams of 5-7, students will produce video plays without writing a script or memorizing lines. Teams will:

1. Develop a storyboard (a visual map) of events in the play, including the sequence of scenes and how each will look, titles, acknowledgements, and credits.
2. Assign roles:
 - *Camera operator.* The camera operator handholds the camera, shooting the role players intimately and sweeping the camera to each role player to cue them to speak. Although this procedure slows down the rhythm of the conversation, it does not interrupt it.
 - *Role players.* Skits should involve 5 or 6 role players, who rehearse their conversations but are not expected to memorize lines.
3. Develop dialogue frameworks for the scenes. Dialogue frameworks establish the communication goals for each of the scenes, allowing the players to speak spontaneously to achieve the goals. They encourage spontaneity, creativity, and fluency.

For example, in a play produced at 'Ele'ele School on Kaua'i, the director set up scenes like this: "In this scene, Bill will complain that his wrist is hurting. All of you will sound caring and supportive. Tom will suggest that we visit the kupuna to see if she can help. Mary will encourage us to hurry up. Bill will remind everyone to get the salt from the salt beds. Several of you will offer to go get the salt. So, let's start the scene with Bill telling us about his wrist..."
4. Handhold the camera as close as 12 to 18 inches from the speaker as lines are spoken, which permits use of the built-in microphone.
5. Allow for re-takes of individual dialogues, immediately following any mistakes. If a player falters, pause the camera, re-set the players, and begin the new take. The goal is to start the re-take before the rhythm and spontaneity of the scene is lost.

6. Choose and design sets that minimize backlighting and background noise, without depending on additional lighting or an external microphone. Shooting out-of-doors in a quiet location with bushes or greenery behind the actors may be preferable to inside the classroom.
7. Edit and dub the tape to VHS format, using camera-to-VCR editing techniques.
8. Time and energy permitting, edit the video digitally in *iMovie* to convert to *QuickTime* for sharing with others.

Classroom applications

Video plays can be adapted to the silent film genre, in which children perform without delivering dialogue. Scenes can be introduced with title cards. This genre can be friendlier for some children, because they can concentrate on acting rather than saying lines.

Stretching our imaginations: Dare to dream

In Pacific churches, role plays are common forms of teaching and entertainment. Lines are not written. They are spontaneously and joyfully created and shared, oftentimes amid great laughter.

Video plays are a great way to include elders and honor the lessons they want their children and grandchildren to learn. Recently in American Samoa, adults and children produced a video play about moral lessons in village life, specifically the correct way of asking to borrow from neighbors. The experience was educational and fun.