

VIDEO “HOW TO” LESSONS

Teachers will learn to use the video camera to create “how to” mini-lessons that bridge the gap between contemporary education at school and traditional education at home and in the community.

Invitation for learning

Many Pacific island teachers want to bring the lessons of the community into the classroom, especially the lessons of elders. On many of the islands, more and more parents are working for money outside their homes and villages. This results in less time and energy to pass on to their children traditional practices, such as gardening and harvesting; caring for animals; preparing food and cooking; sewing, weaving, rope making, lashing, and knot tying; fishing, foraging, and hunting; making crafts, toys, and games; and canoe building. Teachers are being asked to teach both the Western curriculum and the language and culture of the community. This is a big responsibility. The video camera can serve as a bridge between home, community, and school.

This activity is most appropriate for young adults (high school or older), as it requires planning and some experience in handling a camera.

Directions

Working in teams of 2-3, teachers will produce a 10- to 15-minute mini-lesson featuring a community elder as he or she demonstrates a hands-on traditional activity. Teams will:

1. Plan with the elder the sequence of the lesson: identify key elements, determine concepts and vocabulary for students to acquire, and outline the plan on paper. The aim is not to produce an in-depth documentary, but rather a short hands-on lesson: how to clean a fish, how to cook a crab, or how to play a game.
2. Identify a location for the filming – a quiet place with appropriate front lighting. When indoors, ensure that no windows or open doors are behind the elder. When outdoors, ask the elder to stand in front of a wall, bush, or tree, or to kneel so that the camera angle is toward the ground.
3. Rehearse with the elder the importance of (a) holding small objects steady and pointing while speaking and (b) narrating in detail, adding language whenever appropriate to describe the activity. Remember that this video is being made for children. Ask the elder to talk about the activity, perhaps even singing a song or telling a story while doing it. The aim is for children to acquire the language that goes with the activity.
4. Video record the lesson, using a handheld camera, the built-in microphone, and natural light. Neither tripod nor external microphone is necessary, and in fact may get in the way.
 - Maintain the zoom at a wide angle to maximize light. Physically move the camera closer to the elder for close-ups.

- Optimize audio by shooting within 1 to 2 feet of the elder – even closer when shooting over the shoulder. In this way, no external microphone is required, leaving the elder’s hands free to teach the lesson.
 - Vary the camera angle as appropriate – over the shoulder, close-up of face and hands.
 - Begin the video with one team member as the host: welcoming the students (audience), introducing the elder, giving the date and place, describing the objectives of the lesson, and stating the vocabulary words and concepts to be illustrated. Consider including a short walkabout with the camera to show the setting.
 - End the video with the host: reviewing the concepts and vocabulary of the lesson, and acknowledging and thanking the elder.
5. Write a one-page summary of the video lesson (concepts and vocabulary) to be printed, laminated, and packaged with the video. Copy the video to VHS tape (camera-to-VCR editing) and label and lock the cassette. Put the tape and the summary sheet into a Ziploc bag for safekeeping. Share the tape with the elder so that he or she can enjoy it with family.
 6. Show the video to your students interactively by frequently pausing the video to engage them in dialogue regarding concepts and vocabulary. Ask the students to relate their own family experiences to the lesson. Using a 4-head VCR will permit pausing without distorting the still images, thus allowing students to observe, question, predict, and engage in quality dialogues.

Occasionally elders are not comfortable orating or narrating their work, making it difficult for them to both show and tell. In this case, one member of the recording team can be assigned as the narrator, using an external microphone to narrate and asking questions of the elder throughout the demonstration.

Classroom applications

Educators across the Pacific want to capture the cultural wisdom of their community elders. Traditional practices, songs, stories, and language are being lost. Unit 7 includes techniques to interview elders to gather songs, stories, and oral histories, which is a natural companion piece to this activity.

As noted above, computer-based editing in *iMovie* is not required; camera-to-VCR editing will suffice. However, these mini-lessons can be digitized into *iMovie* and saved in *QuickTime*, which in turn can be played directly on a computer.

Stretching our imaginations: Dare to dream

Video “how to” lessons touch the very core of school/community connections. For example, Uncle Walter Paolo showed children the old Hawaiian ways to practice aquaculture by grating and cooking pumpkin to feed the *opelu* (mackerel) on the reef. The children listened to Uncle Walter, learned new skills, and honored him with their attention and videography.