Our last column was aimed at secondary classroom teachers wishing to develop media-related units. This column is designed to help elementary school teachers.

In our personal experience conducting “Keiki Media Workshops”, we discovered a well of creative enthusiasm in younger students. As you may know, “keiki” is the Hawaiian word for children. Our after-school workshops for keikis included 5th – 8th graders. In our many years involved in the International Student Media Festival, we witnessed impressive media productions created by much younger students, including kindergarteners.

So, we offer this suggestion list of media production activities with the confidence that our elementary school colleagues can successfully pick one or more of these and adapt them for classroom use. As we brainstormed about this, the list seemed to divide itself into “animation types” and “live action types”

**Animation Types**

“Animation” productions grab the attention of all of us, but particularly children. Not too long ago, the technical gear for doing animation was available for only a few. Today, with many relatively inexpensive video cameras with features such as “frame recording”, and personal computers with animation-like programs, such gear is not so unobtainable for teachers. Another technique is to use a digital still camera and “animate” the frames in the computer.

Animation Math: There are 30 frames in each video second. Each still recording of an animation will be 2-6 frames long. It really doesn't matter if the camera or the computer sets that frame time.

**Magic Pen**

Magic pen is one of the easiest of animation productions. Aim, frame and focus the video camera, mounted on a steady tripod, at a blank piece of paper, or chalkboard. Make a small mark with a pen or piece of chalk. Record the movement. Then extend the original mark, record the movement. We liked to use this method for students to “magically” write their name. Or allow artistic students to create a painting or mural. (NOTE: all of the cameras used for animation require a steady tripod. The “animation” process is sequential recording of still pictures. Sony calls the feature on their cameras “frame recording”. Each of their recordings is 5 frames long (Remember: that's 5 frames--not seconds), followed by incremental moving of that which is being “animated” or “brought to life”)

**Pixilation**

Pixilation can be done with anything that can be moved. Among objects we have used are pencils, shoes, little matchbook cars and Legos. One time 3 of our students animated their lunch trays down the sidewalk. Below are three very popular versions of pixilation that have their own special names.

- **Claymation** combines the fun of animation with the fun of playing with clay. We often had our students make a set of shoes out of clay and then we not only made them move but we made them dance.
- **Cut Outs** is a good classroom-wide activity. Small teams cut out their figures from construction paper. When one group is finished they get to use the animation gear to animate their fish or ducks or whatever.
- **Live Pix** can be huge fun. Animating people is tricky because people are already animated. Look for things for the people to do that they couldn't really do in “real” life. Moving students around the room in chairs, scooting across the floor as if they were a car, or sitting on a wall where they magically slide along. Check out a great example of LivePix on YouTube called “Tony vs Paul”
• **Appearance/Disappearance** is a variation of Live Pix, where students appear and/or disappear. We have also used this technique with objects. In a story called “The Magic Ring”, when the hero was in trouble, a ring magically appeared on his hand, giving him super powers, such as being able to point at a villain, making him “disappear”. Another production took place on the beach. A geek sees a pretty girl sunning on the beach. He goes over to talk to her and as he reaches out to her, she disappears. He then falls in the sand where she had been.

• **Flip Book** was also a great class project. Our column in Mar/Apr 2008 goes into some detail about how to do a class flip book animation.

**Live Action Types**

These are more traditional media productions.

**Documentaries**

Documentaries can be about almost any topic related to the curriculum or the community or chosen by the students. These can be video productions, or still camera slide shows, or computer power point presentations. We have enjoyed the many versions we have seen at ISMF of “The ABCs of Savannah”. One of our favorite documentaries was a mid-western second grader’s documentary about the corn raising activity in his region. Another favorite of ours was a tongue-in-cheek production “Dogs are Better than Cats.”

**Stories**

Stories are good choices, original or adaptations of fairy tales, or traditional stories such as “Amelia Bedelia”. We liked a video where the students assumed the roles of the school personnel, principal, secretaries, librarians, etc and told a story of the school’s operation from their point of view.

**Music**

Music is often a popular topic for students. The production of an original music video can generate enthusiasm and enhance a music unit. We have seen music videos which illustrated the school’s song. Another class used a famous piece of Mozart’s music as the background of a fancy party for all the 1st graders in class where they talked about Mozart as if they knew him personally.

**How-To Activities**

How-to activities can also be instructive. We have seen successful productions where students teach, among other things, math skills, how to tie shoes, and how to bake a cake. There was even one that showed a 3rd grade class building an airplane under the tutelage of a grandfather who was a famous aviator.

**A Powerful Teaching Tool**

We have seen the powerful teaching tool that student produced media can be. We recommend it. And we further recommend that once productions are completed, serious thought be given to entering them in the International Student Media Festival.