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MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATING
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
FOR LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AMIC CONFERENCE
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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...The Twentieth Century Fox fanfare on the computer goes off. It's 2:41 p.m. and students have five minutes to put away their equipment before the period is over. The beginning students are videotaping their single camera film style editing projects. One group is shooting a rap cooking show. They put on their costumes, set up their props, have a bad cable on the remote microphone. After fixing it, they have to wait until the second group in another part of the studio finishes playing music for their commercial. However, now it's time to break down. Oh well, Kanani tells me she will try to get her technical crew to set up a little faster tomorrow.

...Layne, in charge of publicity and sales for the Senior Video, hands me a very professional looking list of names, addresses, homerooms with the number of videos bought. He's entered all this information into the computer. I'm impressed! I ask him where he is with his Inter-active multi-media science project. He says he needs to scan some more pictures into the computer.

...Tiare says she wants to tape her grandparents this weekend for her family history documentary. It's a long weekend and she's going home to the Big Island. I tell her to be sure to take a remote mic so she can get good sound. She says she is afraid she won't be able to get it to work. I tell her to schedule time with our technician Chris so he can give her some pointers.

...Mel and Kristi have finished their project on their soccer team and Mel wants to know if she can do a music video on "couples & love." She hands me her treatment (narrative of her ideas), typed. "Wow! "I say. "This looks great!" She asks if she can chromakey (method of electronically
inserting the image from one video source into the picture from another video source) a scene tomorrow during 6th period. I say, “Yes, but Chris will be at lunch, and I have a meeting. No one will be able to help you.” She says, “Don’t worry. She knows how to work everything.” I’m delighted. (She’s a freshman and already has acquired all these skills, and she’s going to be around three more years!) Honi comes into the classroom to say that the Avid digital editor froze on her again. Sounds like the hard drive is too full. Something has to go. I ask her to tell Chris about the problem. On her way out, Carla says she doesn’t think she will have more than two songs composed for the Senior Video by the end of the quarter. She is working with a midi and a keyboard. I say, “Hey! Two’s wonderful. Maybe Jamie can use one for her memories section. Arista records called yesterday and told her we would have to pay $10,000. for the rights to use one of their songs!” She’s stunned, and runs off smiling. Katrina hands me her final draft for the script of her Beijing Opera documentary. I tell her that before she records her narration, we should send it to someone to check cultural accuracy.

Classes are over for the day, but the video club is coming in during activity period to talk about their fund raiser for their trip to L.A.. Some students need to finish up their section on the Ho’olaulea Video the club is producing for the Association of Parents & Teachers. Some will hang around after the meeting breaks up and work on the computer, trying to figure out how the new graphics program that allows titles to fly in works. I’m ecstatic! Another program a student can teach me because it will be quite a while before I get a free moment to learn it.

So it goes! I sit down on my chair and stare at the mess of papers,
notebooks and video tapes. I feel like a frazzled '90's version of our Miss Brooks! Here I am back in teaching after a nine year hiatus that involved moving from drama teacher, to video production specialist to television production teacher. Now I can incorporate all my interests and talents. The students are eager to learn and I'm loving every minute of teaching them. It's an exciting time for students and teachers alike, not just at Kamehameha but everywhere. Education in the 90's is being revolutionized by technology and students are excited by this new way learning. Right brained students are finally finding a niche in the learning process.

Students are making videos, quicktime movies, internet webpages, multi-media presentations not just for their television production class but other classes as well. Through the process of creating a video, students become more visually literate and in turn, more critical viewers of the television they watch. The writing they do for a video project becomes information that can be shared not just with the teacher, but with their peers within the classroom, as well as the community should they want to reach a wider audience and air their work on public access.

The focus of the TV Production program at Kamehameha is to teach students how to visually express themselves in an electronic medium. During the semester course, the beginning students learn this through experiencing the different stages of production: pre-production (which could include researching and planning; writing a narration of their production ideas called a treatment; writing the script; drawing the storyboard; casting the actors; reserving equipment; lining up crews and locations; scheduling interviews, securing music rights), production (the actual videotaping) and post-production (logging the numbers of each
shot, creating an edit decision list from the log sheet and the editing). All this is done through the use of camcorders, broadcast quality and studio equipment. Finally, editing on analog editing equipment. After one semester, the students can take TV Production again and use their acquired skills to work on a project where the final edit is done on a digital editor. The project could be a personal project, the senior video, a project for another class, a documentary, a drama or comedy, an Interactive Multi-Media project, or a music video. The skills students acquire through this process are preparing them for survival in the 21st century where modern technology is affecting every area of their lives and future career choices.

At Kamehameha we have been fortunate to take a huge leap into the technological age. In the professional production world computers and video have merged and digital has become a mainstay. A few years ago, we were very fortunate to be one of the few high schools in the country to purchase an Avid Media Suite Pro. It took a while to get it up to speed and many of my advanced students looked at it with skepticism. Editing on a computer. How boring! But once they saw what it could do and they tested it out, they were lining up to edit. Digital editing is taking the tedium out of editing and freeing students to creatively explore ways of expressing themselves visually.

Because we are a school for native Hawaiians, one emphasis of our television program has been cultural documentation. This can range anywhere from documenting family history to producing a video in a foreign country. For some students who have graduated from the music video stage, the documentary has provided powerful learning situations.
It's a big jump for a secondary school student to go from a video with images and music to a documentary which could include research, interviews, many hours of video footage, not to mention the necessity of being able to carry out a project from start to finish, including two or three rewrites. The process involves technical skills, organizational skills, people skills, and critical thinking skills to name just a few. Visually recording one's kapuna talking about their family genealogy is a means of empowerment for a student. They become the family historians, the documenters of traditions. They become the ones who will preserve and perpetuate their culture for future generations.

Since we are living in a multi-cultural society at the gateway to the Pacific and Asia, it seems appropriate for students here to look at their cultural ties to this area of the world. What better way for young people to learn about their own culture and cultures of others than through the eyes of their peers. This process involves research, interviewing experts in Hawai'i and foreign countries, cultural sensitivity, patience, flexibility and many hours of footage shot in another country where, perhaps, all the interviews are done in another language. On returning home, students take those many hours of footage and mold it into something other teens would want to see. Not an easy task for high school students, who, in addition to the production demands, might be experiencing culture shock with their first time out of Hawai'i. But amazingly, it is possible.

Three years ago when seven students, three teachers, our technician and I returned from shooting 60 hours of footage in China, that was our goal. * It was like taking a huge jigsaw puzzle and putting all the pieces together to create four videos which the Hawai'i International Film
Festival could use in their film and cultural literacy curriculum to teach students in Hawai‘i about China and the film "Heartstrings."

The students logged all the hours of footage and then isolated the footage pertaining to their particular topic. After reading over the hard copy of their interviews and high lighting the important parts, they then sat down at the computer and listed every shot and piece of information they thought important. The next step was to think of a lead in that would grab a channel surfer’s attention (see Katrina Souza lead in to “Welcome to the World of Xiqu,” a documentary about Beijing Opera) and to start writing the audio while keeping in mind the visuals that would cover it. (In technical terms, this is called “B” roll and a young filmmaker always has to keep this in mind when shooting an interview.) With high school students, it’s not easy convincing them that writing and re-writing is necessary to produce a quality product, that it’s better to show rather than tell, and that what ever they say, they must have an image that logically covers the words.

With a digital editor the final stages of creativity can easily flow. Students can arrange their images first in a bin that lets them experiment with placement. They can then drop those images into a timeline with narration. Add special effects such as page turns, dissolves, fly in or break up titles, and before you know it you have a short documentary that keeps the teenage channel surfer interested long enough to actually learn something about another country!

Projects like this one have allowed our students to look closely at their own culture and the cultures that influenced them as Hawaiians. Ties with host country filmmakers has provided an opportunity for our
young filmmakers to experience a country in a most unique way, while focusing on the goal of sharing this experience through video with other teenagers.

The impact of the final project can have a powerful influence on other teenagers. Mary Helen Kaser, a Roosevelt teacher who was one of the teachers on the China project, recently showed Honilani Newhouse’s “Balancing the Self: The Art of Chinese Medicine” to her English class of aspiring filmmakers. They were so inspired by what they saw that they wanted to invite Honi to come talk to them about how to make a video and they even came up with ideas for videos they could make here in Hawai’i!

I shut off the equipment, turn off the lights and I'm about to close the door when the phone rings. Should I answer it? It's already so late, I'll never get home. I drop my books, turn the light back on and rush to the phone before it goes to my audex. It's Leah at USC. "Hey 'G'! Guess what? I just got my term paper back on Balinese Hinduism. I got an "A." It was the most exciting term paper I ever wrote. You know, now I actually understand those ceremonies and traditions I was video taping two summers ago in Bali. I feel like a real expert!" As I grab my books, turn off the light, and close the door, I think, “Ah! A teacher’s reward!”

*Footnote: The Hawai'i/China Educational Connection was made up of five Hawai'i Video Curriculum Association teachers, Irene Yamashita, formally video teacher at Kapunahala Elementary and now Midas Project teacher, Mary Helen Kaser, publications teacher at Roosevelt High School, Lily Lu, Chinese teacher at Kamehameha Schools, Chris Brainerd, technician at Kamehameha Schools; and Patricia Gillespie, TV Production teacher, Kamehameha Schools. Students: Edward Lu, Roosevelt High School, Carlin Yamashita, Kapunahala Elementary, Kamehameha students: Eric Daley, Hoku Haiku, Katrina Souza, Nathan Yap, and Honilani Newhouse.
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF XIQUE
By Katrina Souza

VIDEO
The words: “What does this sound like to you?”
“Someone strangling a cat?”
“Or maybe it is just a lot of terrible noise.”
“Or maybe it is beautiful music to your ear”—all this in black & white.

“Welcome to the world of Xique” in vibrant colors.

C. G. Beijing Opera School
Tape #10
18.15.22.00-18.15.24.00 boy w/makeup
18.06.21.00-18.06.23.00 shaving head
18.07.10.25-18.07.12.00 2 boys putting on makeup

Tape #11
20.21.49.00-20.21.51.00 boys at Opera school flipping warm-ups
20.32.12.00-20.32.14.00 2 boy generals singing

Tape #8
14.15.34.00-14.15.36.00 woman general batting away poles

Tape #7
12.21.54.00-12.21.56.00 boy painting his own face

UH Tape
01.07.40.00 girl singing
On monitor then cut to footage
23.59.25.00 cartwheels across stage

AUDIO
I want to have slow Beijing Opera music—Mei Lan-Fang singing would be good.

On the downbeat of the slow music cut to this graphic in silence.

Start in with fast Opera music

Voice over with natural show sounds of footage
My first experience with Xiqu, or, as it is more commonly known here in the Western world, Chinese Opera, was at the University of Hawai‘i. The students at UH were performing a xique play called “A Spark Amidst the Reeds” directed by Elizabeth Wichman, who became famous for being the first foreigner to perform one kind of Chinese opera, which is Beijing Opera, in The People’s Republic of China.

Tiare’s treatment for her family documentary video.