

The Production of a School District Video
for Promotional Purposes

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Introduction

Video production for educational purposes is becoming more popular in American schools today because of the advancement of technology. With the development of digital cameras, digital video, and various forms of digital-editing software for the computer, American schools can now tap into a new and growing form of media that will continue to grow in popularity as technology continues to advance in the future.

The video project for the Mason City Community School District in Mason City, Iowa was initiated as a graduate project through the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. This project was started because the Superintendent of Schools in Mason City needed a form of media that could serve several purposes for this school district. The school district decided that it needed a school video that would display the involvement of the students, staff, and Board of Education in order to promote positive community relations. This video would also be used to feature the talent and performance of all students who chose to pursue their education within the Mason City Community School District.

The main purpose for this video is to have a form of media that will add another level of accountability to the community and the surrounding area in order to become better informed about what Mason City Schools have to offer the community. The intention of creating this school video is to showcase the talents and performances of students in a way that has not been used previously within this school district. This video production will also be used to show members from the Iowa Department of Education what makes the Mason City Community School District a great place to educate our

young people. This production will also be displayed for class reunions as well as other social events where people from both within and outside of the community can become more informed about some of the great learning experiences that the Mason City Schools are currently offering its young people.

The rationale for this video project is to provide all of the stakeholders within the community a glimpse of what the Mason City Community School District has to offer those who pursue their education or who develop their skills for a trade. This video production will also be used as a marketing tool so that the school district can send it out to prospective employees who want to know more about the school district. As one can see, this production will be used for a variety of purposes in order to demonstrate what the Mason City Community School District has to offer everyone who is involved with this organization.

The approach for the development of this video production is to feature each building within the school district and the special and unique characteristics that students participate in while they are attending the Mason City Community School District. This video production will feature each of the school district buildings with each building focusing on different aspects from a variety of learning experiences so that the viewer can understand the wide range of opportunities that the school district provides for its students. Some of the learning experiences that are featured include the following: positive assets among youth, learning experiences inside and outside the classroom, taking responsibility, participation in all types of school activities, donating time for community service, taking care of the environment, and the development of the students' skills and talents. This production combines a wide variety of digital pictures with a

background of musical excellence showcased by the Mason City High School Concert Choir and the Mason City High School Symphonic Band. By incorporating both of these features into the video production, the viewers are immersed into the sights and sounds of learning within the Mason City Community School District.

Methodology

The production of visual media provides the audience with an accurate view or representation of reality. According to Velders (2001a), there are three modalities in visualized teaching. The most appropriate modality for this video production is the representation of reality. Velders states that images in the form of photographs serve to connect the subject matter with reality. This does not mean that the audience has access to reality, but it does help the audience to imagine what is taking place by seeing a glimpse of reality through the eyes of the photographer. The use of digital photographs for this video production helps to create a view of reality for the audience that will set the stage for the function that this video will serve in the school district.

Willow (cited in Velders, 2001a) in his book entitled “The Psychology of Illustration” states that images can take on a variety of functions when they are used to portray meaning within any type of media. This author identifies the motivation function under the category of the Affective-Motivational Function for illustrations in whatever type of capacity that they may serve. The motivation function is described as an increase in the learner’s interest within the subject matter. The function for this video clearly fits under these guidelines because the intention of this video is to motivate the audience with the message that describes the Mason City Community School District as a system of schools that is very proud of its heritage. In particular, the rich history of Meredith

Wilson and his famous musical entitled “The Music Man.” The Mason City Community School District has an excellent reputation for having both exceptional vocal and instrumental music departments. These two attributes were designed to be two of the cornerstones for this video production, as well as, a way in which to motivate the audience.

The production of audio media plays a very important role in the production of a video that is used for motivational and promotional purposes. Velders (2001b) identifies three categories or levels of audio media that serve various purposes within any media production. He identifies cultural sound as being the sound that is produced by instruments from orchestras, bands, or even church bells. It is this cultural sound that fits best for the audio portion of this production. As previously mentioned, it is only fitting that the entire audio portion of this video include selections from the Mason City High School Concert Choir, as well as, the Mason City High School Symphonic Band. It should be noted that these two musical groups produce and record their own CD albums each year so that they may be sold in order to raise money for future music trips, events, and activities. Therefore, the audio portion of this video incorporates a mellow tone of rich culture and a deep-rooted sense of motivation by showcasing two vocal music selections and three very traditional instrumental selections.

In regard to the use of a voice-over technique and narration for this video, it was debated whether or not this form of media would appear in the final production for this project. After an extensive debate with the video project committee, the project coordinator noted the “dead cadaver” principle presented by Velders (2001b). The dead cadaver principle states that if you have a situation where you tell the audience something

about what they are already seeing for themselves, then they will tend to lose interest in the production. That principle applies to this video production. Most of the informational brochures that are produced by the school district include numerous facts and statistics about the organization. This video was created intentionally in an affective and motivational format. For this reason, it was decided that the background music would be the only audio media for this video production. It should be noted that the main musical selection focuses on the seasons of love and caring. The song was written for the musical *Rent*, and it is entitled "Seasons of Love." The words of this song fit the content very well. The words help to create a year-long review of fond memories that were experienced within the school district through positive interaction among the students and the staff.

From a content perspective for this video production, there are two areas that are pertinent to the development of the visual portion of this media presentation. The first one is the importance of representing a variety of learning experiences that are innovative and show students actively engaged in every dimension of school life. The second is determining what other experiences should be included for promoting the school district.

Within the realm of the content to be displayed for this production, Gardner (1991) cites that education is an active part of life. An outdoor education uses the student's whole environment as a source of knowledge and the community is the context for learning. Boss (1999) adds some other relevant thoughts by stating that an outdoor education supplements learning by providing a natural or man-made environment that promotes experiential learning and the enrichment of nearly every subject within the

curriculum. Experiential learning helps students to respond effectively to problems by providing opportunities for them to apply their own knowledge in real-life situations.

According to Boss (1999), service learning is another form of outdoor education with numerous opportunities provided within the community. Proponents of service learning report that everyone reaps the benefits when the students, the school, and the community work together for a common purpose. Schools enjoy an increased support from the community, as well as, a closer working relationship with the parents of participating students. The community benefits from the services that are provided while, at the same time, students gain a greater sense of civic efficacy, responsibility, and pride when participating in a valuable and rewarding opportunity.

There is other important content that should be displayed outside of the academic environment. According to Matter (1989), one should represent the most complete and impartial picture of the school district to the students, the parents, and the community. For this reason, it is necessary not to show impartiality to any of the school events that take place within the school district. It should be noted that the only limitations that can exist are those that are due to a lack of resources. In particular, there are activities in certain areas that were not displayed within this video because of the lack of digital pictures.

Among the numerous statistics that can be reported to the community about the school district, Matter (1989) recommends the following activities that should be displayed for promoting any school district: vocal music, instrumental music, sports, and clubs. Due to the importance of these areas, it has been decided that all of these areas need to be included in order to promote learning from an extra-curricular perspective.

Because schools exist primarily for academic purposes, it should be noted that the involvement in extra-curricular activities should be sequenced toward the end of the video production.

By following the aforementioned organization of the content by building, it should be noted that the most appropriate method for addressing all of the buildings within the school district would be to progress from the early childhood center up through the high school building. This content sequence, not only provides a logical order from youngest to oldest students, but it is also symbolic of the gradual development process that takes place within students' thirteen or more years of education within the school district. There are numerous skills and talents that are being nurtured during this very memorable time of every child's life. It is the goal of this video to try to capture this exciting time in everyone's life that is looked upon, throughout one's lifetime, as a collection of memories that can never be taken away.

The Project

The video project was approved for production and a committee was formed during December of 2001. The committee members were as follows: the superintendent, the secretary to the superintendent, a high school English teacher who helps with promotional media, and a project coordinator. The author was assigned the position of project coordinator. This video project committee held its first meeting in January of 2002. Since the purpose of this video is to promote the Mason City Community School District in a unique way, it was decided by this video project committee to have the entire video consist of digital pictures that were compiled from throughout the past year along

with two vocal music selections that feature the Mason City High School Concert Choir and three instrumental selections from the Mason City High School Symphonic Band.

During the first meeting that was conducted by this video project committee, it was decided that this video would feature all of the buildings within the Mason City Community School District. The following buildings would be included: Central Administration, Washington Early Childhood Center, Madison Elementary School, Roosevelt Elementary School, Hoover Elementary School, Harding Elementary School, Roosevelt Middle School, John Adams Middle School, Mason City Alternative School, and Mason City High School. The order in which these buildings would be featured was discussed and the following rationale was provided: it is important to begin the video with the Central Administration Office and the Board of Education because they oversee the operation of the entire school district. Then, as previously mentioned within the methodology, the Washington Early Childhood Center would be showcased followed by the elementary schools from oldest to newest, the two middle schools, from oldest to newest, and finally the alternative school and the high school. It was suggested that the alternative school be featured before the high school because the high school would require time to address the academics, as well as, the involvement in extra curricular activities. Some of the high school extra-curricular activities would include vocal music, instrumental music, and a wide range of sports that are offered within this building.

After the first planning session, the first step in producing this video was to talk to the North Trails Area Education Agency (i.e. NTAEA) about the feasibility of using digital pictures for a video production that would use the i-Movie software for creating this video. After an extensive discussion, it was decided that digital pictures would be

the best option because of the availability of digital pictures that were used for the school calendar and the high quality and resolution of the pictures that were already on file on the school district's server. In fact, there were over 1200 digital pictures that were available for use in this video project. It should be noted that there were no pictures of any of the buildings within this collection of digital pictures. Arrangements were made with the NTAEA to use the computer lab so that the project video could be produced and compiled by using the i-Movie software during the last week of March 2002.

The process of selecting digital pictures for this video was the next step in producing a promotional video for this school district. The rationale for selecting pictures was initially discussed within the methodology portion of this work, but there were other reasons for selecting the appropriate digital pictures for this video project. The main rationale for selecting digital pictures was the quality of the pictures that were available. Many of the digital pictures were too dark or had a poor contrast. These pictures were eliminated first during the picture-editing process. Next, pictures that were colorful and bright were noted as the best candidates for this video production because they would create the reality of a very pleasant atmosphere and learning environment for the audience. However, there were some clubs, sports, and other academics that were left out because there were no digital pictures for some of these areas. It should also be noted that the superintendent's secretary sent out a general e-mail to all school district staff members in December of 2001. This e-mail stated that digital pictures of students and staff were needed in order to obtain a wide variety of evidence for promoting the Mason City Community School District to the community.

The process for obtaining digital pictures of the school buildings was a learning experience in itself. The project coordinator took pictures of all of the buildings on two separate occasions. The first occasion was during the last week of March 2002. These digital pictures were great bright shots of the buildings. However, the trees were bare due to the late arrival of spring during this particular year. Therefore, digital pictures were taken again on a second occasion in June 2002. These pictures were again very colorful, but this time all of the trees, bushes, and flowers were in full bloom. It should be noted that a promotional video should contain pictures that are bright and colorful in order to promote the subject in a more positive light.

Once the digital pictures were selected for the video, it was decided what sequence should be followed within the predetermined order of each building. In order to maintain consistency throughout the video, it should be noted that the focus on academics was the first priority. Then, the focus on outside visitors and events was used in order to showcase a vast array of learning experiences that are provided by the Mason City Community School District. As previously mentioned within the methodology portion, the sequence is also consistent with the order in which every student progresses through his or her first thirteen years of formal education. This gradual progression demonstrates the many exciting activities that students can participate in while they are receiving a quality education.

The committee decided that the first section of this video should open with the Mason City Community School District sign as well as the Central Administration Building. The rationale for this is that the Board of Education meets within this building. The Board of Education symbolizes the direct connection and communication between

the school district and the community of Mason City. It should be noted that many subtitles were used throughout this video in order to complement the scenes that were displayed. The main subtitle and the theme for this video is “Mason City Community School District: Providing a Quality Education in a Caring and Responsive Environment.” This theme is the mission statement for the Mason City Community School District. It is very important that the mission statement be the focus of this promotional video because all of the educational opportunities and the learning activities inside and outside the classroom demonstrate evidence of a quality education. The positive interaction among peers, as well as, the interaction between the students and the staff exemplifies a responsive environment within this school district.

Within the Central Administration Building, the scene begins with a formal picture of all the current school board members followed by the Mayor of Mason City recognizing the board during School Board Recognition Week. This segment is approximately forty-five seconds in length. Some of the activities showcased include interaction among the school board members and the students, as well as, interaction between the students and the central office staff. One particular activity that is featured is CITY Government Day. This picture shows a high school senior job shadowing the superintendent. This acronym for CITY stands for Citizens Involving Teenage Youth. Seniors in high school take one day at the end of the year to job shadow business leaders within the community. This is an excellent example of demonstrating partnerships between the school district and the community. Activities such as this one also promote good relationships and support from the community when school students are actively involved.

Washington Early Childhood Education Center is the next building that is featured, and it is located on the northwest side of Mason City. This building serves students who are three to five years old and involved with a program entitled “Headstart”. This segment is approximately one minute in length. The pictures that were selected for this section of the video include interaction among the staff and students, as well as, interaction with high school students who volunteer in this program through various activities. Some of the important subtitles within this section include the demonstration of high school students being positive role models for this age group. Also, there are some real-life experiences that this program provides, such as exploring nature by going on nature walks and experiencing interaction with animals. Some of the animals that are displayed for interaction are sheep, horses, pigs, and calves. These are good examples of experiential learning. This section ends with students exploring the outdoor classroom by looking for pumpkins and other interesting discoveries.

Madison Elementary School is the oldest elementary building within the school district and is located on the southwest side of Mason City. It serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. This segment of the video is approximately thirty-five seconds in length. The only good pictures that were collected from the teachers in this building were those that focused on reading. The main subtitle for this section of the video is improving reading skills. This section of the video fits right into one of the three main goals from the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. This goal is to improve reading skills at all levels within the school district.

Roosevelt Elementary School is the next elementary school that is featured, and it is located in the center of Mason City. It serves students from kindergarten through fifth

grade. This segment is approximately forty-five seconds in length. Two of the main activities that are featured within this building are promoting responsible citizens and the Dr. Suess Assembly. All of the elementary schools participate in simulated elections for social studies within each building. This is just one way in which students learn to understand how public officials are elected and is another example of experiential learning at its best. Another important celebration that is observed by all of the elementary schools is the Dr. Suess Assembly. This celebration is in honor of Dr. Suess' birthday. Students dress up like characters from some of Dr. Suess' books. This celebration helps students to understand the need for reading good books, as well as, a history lesson about the author of these books.

Hoover Elementary School is the next elementary school that is featured, and it is located on the northwest side of Mason City. This school serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. This segment is approximately forty seconds in length. The two main learning experiences that are featured within this building are a visit from the Lieutenant Governor and the use of dance that is incorporated within the physical education program of the Mason City Community School District. Some of the students from the Hoover Elementary School wrote a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Iowa, and they invited her to speak to the students at their school. This section symbolizes the individuality of each building. Each elementary school provides learning experiences that are consistent throughout the district, as well as, individual learning experiences that are displayed. The incorporation of dance into the physical education curriculum is just one more example of consistency among all of the elementary schools within the school district. Dance allows students to realize that there are more creative

and more cultured ways to get physical exercise. This segment not only promotes good physical health, but it also incorporates the importance of culture and expressing the arts.

Harding Elementary School is the next elementary school that is featured; it is located on the northeast side of Mason City. This segment is approximately one minute in length. This school serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. The two main activities featured in this building are students who work cooperatively and students who are actively engaged in learning experiences while discovering nature. All students within the school district learn to work cooperatively together both in the context of learning new academic material, as well as, in the context of play and recreation. This segment symbolizes the importance of getting along with others and interacting with people. Another activity that is featured is the excitement of discovering nature. Students learn about nature inside and outside the classroom. They are encouraged to expand their own boundaries by trying to make more sense of the world around them. One of the many exciting contributions from a very strong and active Parent-Teacher Organization is the donation of an entire playground facility at this school. Parents and teachers worked very hard in order to raise money for a new playground when this school was built two years ago.

Jefferson Elementary School is the last elementary school that is featured, and it is located on the southeast side of Mason City. This school serves students from kindergarten through fifth grade. This segment is approximately one minute in length. The three main activities that are featured in this building are Grandparent's Day, a visit by First Lady Vilsack, and the celebration of important events. Grandparent's Day is a learning experience that involves all of the elementary schools within the school district.

Each student brings in a grandparent or significant older adult. During the day, the guests participate in learning activities with the children during a regular day of school. This is another experiential learning opportunity that is valued by all participants. This year, First Lady Christie Vilsack visited this building while she was on a tour of the State of Iowa in order to promote reading to elementary school children and was recognized as an honored guest to Mason City within this building. This event took place at the same time as the Dr. Seuss Assembly. Musical celebrations are performed throughout the year in order to recognize important events. Some of the celebrations that are showcased musically are the following: the Fall Festival, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Historical Heroes. These learning experiences allow the students to dress up like significant historical figures and gives them the opportunity to sing and celebrate the historical significance of each particular season.

Roosevelt Middle School is the first middle school featured, and it is located in the center of Mason City. This school serves students from sixth grade to eighth grade. This segment is approximately forty-five seconds in length. The three main activities in this section focus on exploring creative arts, summer band practice at the Music Man Square, and planting trees on Earth Day. One of the most unique characteristics of the school district is the learning experience that is created in exploring visual arts. This segment demonstrates how all students within the school district are allowed to be creative and to express themselves through their own artwork. Another exciting and inspiring experience for all middle school students is practicing summer band at the Music Man Square in downtown Mason City. Mason City is the home of Meredith Wilson who wrote the famous musical entitled "The Music Man". A museum was built

to honor his many accomplishments as a distinguished musician. This facility was built with funds that were provided by his wife and the City of Mason City, and it is formally called "The Music Man Square." Earth Day is an exciting learning experience for all students within the school district because it is an opportunity to clean up the environment and plant trees in order to improve the environment. This learning experience is a service learning project that all students participate in whether they plant trees, give trees away to residents of Mason City, or clean up park and recreation areas within the city. This is an opportunity for students to give back their time and energy in order to make the community a better place in which to live for everyone.

John Adams Middle School is the second middle school that is featured, and it is located on the east side of Mason City. This school serves students from sixth grade to eighth grade. This segment is approximately forty seconds in length. The two main activities for this section focus on math and science activities, and building friendships through fun activities, such as mini courses that are offered. As previously mentioned, there are three main goals in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The first goal is to improve reading scores. The second one is to improve mathematics scores, and the third one is to improve science scores. One of the activities that the two middle schools participate in every year is the Math Counts contest. This contest tests students' mathematics skills and their use of problem solving in practical situations. This is just one learning opportunity that is provided in order to help students improve their mathematics scores. Another opportunity that is provided for all students within the school district is a more active approach to science education. Students are allowed to learn about science both inside and outside the classroom. Students actively engage in

hands-on activities while they try to make sense out of nature and the world around them. This is another opportunity that is provided as an experiential learning approach to education. Middle school students learn to build positive relationships with each other when they participate in mini courses, such as skiing and canoeing. Students learn to enjoy the great outdoors while learning a new skill. These experiential learning opportunities foster cooperation, patience, and perseverance while students learn to work together in order to help each other within new learning environments.

The Mason City Alternative School is the next building that is featured, and it is located on the northeast side of Mason City. This school serves at-risk students from ninth grade through twelfth grade. This segment is approximately one minute in length. The main activities focus on a caring school climate, developing community awareness, thinking creatively, and participating in community activities. All high students within the school district focus on the forty developmental assets that teens need to succeed as established by the school district. These assets have been proven to help teens to better deal with whatever life will throw at them. Students develop a stronger community awareness by volunteering at the local community kitchen, as well as, receiving regular visits from the fire department and other community groups in order to inform them about what the community has to offer. Students also participate in numerous opportunities that help them to think more creatively. An example of experiential learning is when students created projects for competing in the local and state Physics Olympics. Other experiential learning opportunities include creating a large mural in art class in order to honor Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History Month and listening to the Mayor of Des Moines discuss the need for learning to live together harmoniously

within the Great American Melting Pot of Society. The Mason City High School also participated in the same learning opportunities so this experience was used in order to transition the video from the alternative school to the high school.

The Mason City High School is the last building that is featured within this video and is located on the northeast side of Mason City. This school serves students from ninth grade through twelfth grade. This segment is about three minutes in length. The main activities that are showcased include many avenues for pursuing academics, student government, positive relationships among students, staff and parents, and the wide range of homecoming and extra-curricular activities. This segment features many of the academic options that students can pursue as they obtain their education. Some of the options that are featured are Advanced Placement courses, such as accounting or calculus, Technical Preparation (i.e. Tech Prep) courses, such as electronics or tool and die, or vocational careers, such as automotive, metallurgy, or carpentry. The Student Senate Picnic is presented in order to represent clubs and student government activities that students can participate in as extra-curricular activities while attending school at the Mason City High School. It is necessary to address the importance of positive relationships with teachers in the classroom, with parents at Parent-Teacher Conferences, and with other peers within the academics and extra-curricular activities.

Two of the main extra-curricular activities are vocal and instrumental music. The Mason City High School Vocal Music Department and Instrumental Music Department have a long and rich history of quality musical performance. Both of these two groups produce their own CD's for purchase each year by the community, as well as, the parents and supporters of these departments. Because of this rich history, the video project

committee felt that it was appropriate to showcase these talents by having the background music be two non-traditional vocal music selections and three very traditional instrumental music selections for the audio portion of this video. The vocal music selections are “Seasons of Love” from *Rent* and “Freedom” by Bandari. These selections describe a collection of fond memories that both touch the heart as well as inspire the soul. The three traditional instrumental selections are “The Star Spangled Banner”, “Mason City Go”, and “Alma Mater”. The first selection helps to complement the video by setting the tone for homecoming activities, and the second one builds up the suspense as students take the role of athletes and display their “Mohawk” pride in numerous sports activities. The third selection sets the tone for graduation and provides a mellow ending for the scrolling credits.

Homecoming is a time of the year when students have a sense of pride in their school, and they come together to celebrate this pride within the entire school district. This is especially evident at the high school level. After the homecoming activities are featured from the parade, the football team is shown at the homecoming pep rally. All of the members of the team are huddled together at the center of the gymnasium in order to symbolize the unity that exists within this school district. An appropriate subtitle is provided which states “Promoting Good Sportsmanship”. This is symbolized and evidenced by two sportsmanship awards that were awarded to Mason City High School at the State Tournament in the late 1990’s. Other extra-curricular activities are featured within the context of the homecoming game, such as, cheerleading and the marching band. Basketball is featured next with the boy’s team being featured first followed by the girl’s team. Scenes from the State Tournament are showcased with the pep band playing

at the State Tournament. Volleyball follows with two great shots: one shot displays a hand-slap which symbolizes unity among the players while the other shot displays two players above the net for a block which displays good teamwork. Wrestling is featured with three shots that signify the regular season, sectionals, and the state tournament. After wrestling, cross-country running is featured with the coach at the center of a team huddle followed by four teammates running together during a race. Next, the girls' track team is showcased with an informal huddle shot that symbolizes the fun that is involved when one participates in extra-curricular activities. The last sport pictured is a cross-country runner being greeted by the superintendent at the end of the race.

The district faculty and staff are shown in a large-group meeting followed by two other shots of small-group collaboration among teachers that symbolizes the planning that goes into running a successful school district. It should be noted that the small-group meetings focus on Comprehensive School Improvement Planning within the school district and the three main goals that were mentioned previously. The video concludes with two shots of graduation: one shot displays the graduates waiting in line for their diplomas and the other shot displays a gym full of graduates tossing their hats into the air. The closing subtitle is very appropriate as the video breaks to the scrolling credits. It states "Leaving a Legacy of Excellence" and "Investing in the Future of Our Young People."

As previously stated in the methodology, the video project committee debated whether or not to have background music with the use of a voice-over or just the use of background music for the audio portion of this video. After much discussion, it was decided that the only audio media for this video presentation would be the two vocal

music selections and the three instrumental music selections in order to showcase the musicianship of the vocal music department and the instrumental music department. It was determined that any other audio would detract the audience's attention away from the quality of the music and the meaning of the words within these musical selections.

The sequencing for the musical selections were discussed extensively. Since this video would be used for a promotional video, it was determined that the purpose would need to be affective and motivational as cited by Velders (2001b). It was then decided that the song entitled "Seasons of Love" would be played through three times in the video because of the meaning of the words. This song would cover all of the buildings up to the celebration of Black History Month. It was then decided that since "Freedom" by Bandari is an African-American selection that it would be used for the portion throughout the entire high school segment up to the end of the choir performance with the flag in the background. The "Star Spangled Banner" was specifically selected in order to complement the homecoming activities and the football game because of the pride that is displayed at this special time of year. The "Mason City Go" fight song was coordinated with basketball because of the renewed success of the basketball team and their recent appearance in the state tournament within the past five years. This song was featured again because of the similar success with the wrestling team that had also found recent success and participation in the state tournament. The "Alma Mater" song was selected because its name symbolizes the new graduates as completing a chapter within their lives. This song was a mellow way in which to end the video and complement the scrolling credits.

The scrolling credits included the school board members first because they are the important link between the school district and the community. Next, the superintendent of the school district was recognized because he was one of the most important members on this video project committee. The Mason City High School Concert Choir and the Mason City High School Symphonic Band along with their directors were then listed because these groups provided the music for the video and the directors provided the legal permission for these selections to be used for this video. The secretary to the superintendent was then recognized because she was part of the planning committee and provided all of the digital pictures for this video. A computer specialist at the North Trails Area Education Agency provided technical assistance for the project coordinator when he had questions. Finally, the project coordinator was recognized for his efforts along with a statement that acknowledged that the music copyrights were provided by the vocal music department and the instrumental music department.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, video production is becoming more popular in American schools today due to advances in technology. As this technology continues to become more sophisticated, it is this author's opinion that more school districts will take advantage of this form of media for promoting their school districts to the community and the surrounding area. Video production adds a dimension of promotion and information to the community that has not been utilized in the past. Capturing the exciting sights and sounds of experiential and service learning along with extra-curricular activities helps to promote a positive relationship between the school district and the community.

There are some very interesting insights that became evident as this video production project progressed to its completion and release. The first insight to be addressed is the importance of creating a planning committee made up of stakeholders who are interested in promoting their school district. This author would suggest four or five members. Within this group, there should be at least one administrator, one teacher, and any other individuals who are interested and have some experience in public relations or design. This planning committee is necessary for deciding the purpose of the video, as well as, the type of content that should be included within the video. Based upon this video production, it is important that this committee be open and honest about discussing what should be included and what should be left out.

Another interesting insight is for the committee to decide how the visual and audio media will be collected and produced. For visual media, some thoughts to consider may be whether to use digital video or digital images. Throughout the course of this project, it was decided that images from digital cameras are more convenient and easier to obtain. Digital video cameras can be very tricky to use when one is trying to collect high quality video for promotional purposes. It should be noted that a tripod is almost essential for obtaining clear, smooth panning shots. In regard to audio media, the committee should also decide whether to use a combination of voice-over narration with background music or only background music. Each circumstance is different, but it is very important that the use of copyright is not violated. For this video, the copyrights for the music were covered by the high school music department through an independent recording studio that produced the CD's. Also, informative narration can be very helpful

when creating a video, but it is important to remember not to violate the “dead cadaver” principle as cited by Velders (2001b).

A final insight that was discovered during this process is to have the committee review and critique the video as it progresses in order to provide some valuable input along the way. For this video project, there were three different versions that were made during this video production process. The planning committee critiqued it and provided input each time with changes being made as the video was created. This input was very valuable, and it helped the production process to progress more smoothly. As the old adage goes, sometimes it is harder to see the forest when you are in the trees. This means that sometimes one can get so caught up with the details that one does not look at the entire production as a whole. This was a very valuable lesson that was learned in the context of producing this video.

The only recommendation that became evident from the production of this school video is that the high school should consider offering a class in video production in order to allow students to produce an annual video. Almost every high school across the country has a yearbook that is produced by high school students. So, it is only logical that any high school could start a class that involves video production for the purpose of promoting the school district to the community, if there are facilities that are available and accessible. Upon completion of this video, the superintendent from this school district recommended that the alternative school offer a course in video production in order to produce a school district video every year.

According to Cuban (1986), teachers need to use whatever technology is available to them in order to make the most of learning experiences. If there are facilities and

software available for students to take a video production course, then this type of course should be offered. The rationale for implementing this new course into the curriculum is best cited by Brown (1997) when she states that kids within Generation X have grown up on remote control, entertainment, and quick response activities. They need to learn strategies that will fit into their lifestyle. Brown suggests that students need experiential learning opportunities. In other words, students need experiences where they have to put information to work for them in the context of real life. What could be more real than producing a video that will be seen by hundreds of people within the community? Brown also indicates the need to focus on outcomes. Students need authentic experiences that require them to communicate an in-depth understanding within a particular context. Students will learn to evaluate what makes a good video, as well as, to use the correct terminology in order to communicate intelligently about video production. Finally, Brown states that teachers need to be able to respect the learner's ability to engage in parallel thinking. Students need the opportunity to explore options in order to find the best possible way to accomplish a task. Individuality is a great asset because everyone in a video production class should have the freedom to take pictures in their own unique way, as well as, to provide ideas for compiling the video in a manner that may have not been already discussed within the context of the classroom.

Steps are being taken so that this new video course can be offered in the near future. The idea that is being considered is to have students use digital cameras to collect images from activities related to academics, clubs, musical programs, special events, and extra-curricular activities, such as vocal music, instrumental music, and sporting events. Students would use class time to edit pictures by using Photoshop, and they would save

only the best pictures that would be colorful, bright, and appealing to an audience.

Notification of important classroom demonstrations could be e-mailed to the instructor through intra-district e-mail. The assignment would be made to have either students from the video production class take the pictures or have the digital pictures from the classroom demonstration sent by e-mail so that the pictures could be collected for the video. A shared folder on the server would be available for saving these pictures, as well as, a backup copy produced on CD. The video would be compiled, at the end of May and the beginning of June, after graduation had taken place so that all of the events were contained in each yearly video.

Many valuable lessons were learned from creating a promotional video for the Mason City Community School District. By implementing a new class in video production at the alternative school, students will become more focused on experiential learning, focus on outcomes for learning, and learn to engage in parallel thinking. This course will appeal to students who are more in tune with real life experiences. They will see the fruits of their labor when they see how the video is progressing, as well as, when they view the final product. As stated by Brown (1997), students will learn to better reflect on their own life experiences when educators promote learning that has application to school, work, and the community.

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