Storytelling, Claymation, and Performance
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As part of a team teaching summer program, two other teachers and I created and taught a unit for seven- and eight-year-olds that introduced technology and issues of communication. Young children, with their limited vocabularies, can sometimes find it hard to express to others what they are thinking and feeling. Our unit facilitates a spiraling process of student-generated storytelling through image and action for students to communicate their ideas and emotions. This unit not only introduces technology

and its many uses for art and communication, but also draws attention to how images and objects of the students' everyday lives also communicate messages.

Introducing Stories
To begin, we introduced graphic narratives by showing examples such as text-free comic strips and discussing how the images combined symbolism, color, and expressions to communicate the story. Students then wrote their own stories with a series of illustrations, similar to storyboard drawings prepared for movies. Next, students created the characters in their stories using modeling clay. Later the students would have their characters perform for a camera in claymation projects.

Students learned ways to communicate through art and technology. The students were very excited to be creating their own movies.

Letting the Students Direct
Students created story lines for the interaction of their characters and performed the manipulation of the characters in the step-by-step process involved in the digital video recording process. We also let the students control the camera's stop and record features so that they directed their own projects.

Performance
Throughout the next few weeks we discussed costuming and performance art with students. We brought in clothes and various materials to give the students the opportunity to create their own costumes. We had students form groups in which they created story lines for the movies that they would be digitally recording using the costumes they had designed. Students made the sets, backgrounds, and props that they would need for their movies. The team of teachers took turns recording the students' performances.

Editing
The next lesson involved introducing students to the editing process. We imported the digital movies into iMovie software from the minitapes in the play mode in the camera using a cable connected from camera to computer. As we imported, we divided the videos into numbered clips. The students were then able to easily drag and drop the clips into the timeline

to create their stories. We set up the computer lab so that each student had his or her own computer with a DVD-R in place for burning the finished products. Using a computer that was hooked up to a projector, we were able to review the following list of demos in order presented with the students:

1. Dragging and dropping video clips into timeline
2. Adding a transition between video clips
3. Adding effects to the video (slow or speed-up video)
4. Adding special effects to the video (black and white, rain, aging effects, etc.)
5. Adding audio to the project
6. Adding text and titles to the project

Through the progression of this unit, students learned ways to communicate through art and technology. The students were very excited to be creating their own movies. They were glad to be given responsibility and control over their artwork and truly enjoyed

working with the nontraditional art medium. I feel that this unit served to broaden not only the students' perspective of how people communicate, but also that of technology's role in art-making process. ✎

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