FIS, the film project for primary schools, celebrated its tenth anniversary at the FIS Film Festival held in the Helix, DCU, on 4 November. Streamed live for the first time ever, analytics revealed that there were international audiences viewing from Perth, Hyderabad, Malacca and Brussels as well as from all around Ireland.

“Film making lets children become storytellers of the 21st century”, reflected Cormac Cahill, teacher in Carrigaline Educate Together, joint winners of the overall FIS Film Award 2014 with Behy National School, Ballina.

Presented by RTE stars Sinead Kennedy and Eoghan McDermott, the awards were attended by over 1,000 people including 940 primary school children from all over the country, their teachers and parents. This year’s very special guest was Jan O’Sullivan, Minister for Education and Skills, who presented the Aileen MacKeogh Award for Outstanding Achievement in Film-Making to Carrigaline Educate Together and Behy national schools.

Representing school and community at national level

The Film Festival is a great celebration for the lucky finalists who represent their schools with pride. To participate in an awards ceremony in the grandeur of the Mahony Hall is very special. FIS is a collaborative effort between PDST Technology in Education and IADT Dún Laoghaire. Second year students pursuing their Film Studies course produce the entire show – a true rich task carried out with all the demands and rigour of a full-scale production. From an IADT perspective, FIS is a key digital engagement project and college president Dr Annie Doona was on hand to present the prizes demonstrating support from the highest level.

FIS and learning

FIS enables children to learn about the techniques involved in telling a story through film, including; planning, scripting, storyboarding, cameras, lighting, audio, music, set design, post production editing, costume and of course acting. Throughout the process, children also develop skills in communicating, working in a team, taking responsibility, collaborating with others, making decisions and problem solving.

From a curricular perspective, FIS is a fantastic way to mediate a particular curricular strand/strand unit, while integrating a variety of subject areas. The Battle of Ardnaree was recreated by the pupils of Behy NS, Ballina, drawing on the input of local historian, Terry Reilly. The local community were surveyed regarding their awareness of the battle bringing data gathering and analysis to the fore. The other joint winners from Carrigaline Educate Together and their film, Power Up, brings the viewers on an action packed journey through a world created with Minecraft – creativity on so many levels.

"Projects like FIS engage children in new, exciting experiences that are great fun, that foster camaraderie, pride and self-esteem. The benefits of this tremendously enjoyable experience can be seen in a myriad of ways – in their development as a young person and in the positive way in which they engage in all aspects of school life,” Pat Cunnane, Principal, Behy NS.

Participate without entering the competition

It is possible to participate without ever entering the competition and many schools do this. Why not introduce film making to your class and when you and your pupils become more confident, consider entering the competition. PDST Technology in Education issued a grant to your local education centre to purchase film making equipment or software to be available for schools. With new multi purpose devices, scenes can be captured, edited and produced all on the one device.

Support for teachers

The FIS classroom resource pack offers a primary school teacher a structured approach to introducing film as a cross-curriculum medium into the classroom. It was developed by teachers for teachers and contains 16 lessons that support the development of children’s creativity and critical response. A FIS technical manual is also available with clear practical information about film making processes and techniques at www.fisfilmproject.ie/teacher-resources/resource-pack

PDST Technology in Education also designed a FIS summer course and this was scheduled in many education centres in the summer of 2014.

You can also avail of the FIS Interactive online course or approach your local education centre and ask if any face-to-face support sessions are taking place in your locality. If you know of other teachers in your school who are interested in FIS and considering implementing it in their classrooms, PDST Technology in Education, through the education centre network, can fund a tutor to deliver a whole school ICT training session (a minimum of 10 participants is required).

More information

Log on to www.fisfilmproject.ie for more information on all the above and view details of all the winners, including their films. The deadline for entry is the end of June in any school year, so there is no need to commit before then!

In considering the merits of any initiative like FIS, the student voice must be the strongest. “The film-making experience means a lot to me and I will remember it for years to come. Making our film was a great achievement for our class and we are very proud of it. We hope the classes to come will enjoy the film making as much as we did”. Jason, Behy NS, Ballina.

Written by Seán Gallagher, PDST Technology in Education