

FÍS: Film in Schools 2016

The FÍS Film Project, coordinated by the National Film School at the Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT) and PDST Technology in Education, is a highly successful film project for primary schools that explores film as a medium of expression and introduces children to aspects of the film-making process.

“When I was a kid, there was no collaboration; it’s you with a camera bossing your friends around. But as an adult, filmmaking is all about appreciating the talents of the people you surround yourself with and knowing you could never have made any of these films by yourself.”

Steven Spielberg

The Fís Film Project does not aim to create the next blockbuster release but involvement in the Fís Film Project has succeeded in helping children to develop essential skills in digital literacy, communication and teamwork at an early age. Participating teachers have also spoken about the development of additional skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, investigation and analysis. Teachers in a variety of school contexts and children of varying abilities have all found the experience enriching and rewarding. “FÍS is an inspiring and heartwarming event which showcases the amazing creativity of school children across Ireland. Winning this award allowed us to show that although our children have additional needs, they are able to be successful on an equal standing with all of the children in Irish schools” Michael Fabiziak, Little Angels School, Letterkenny, Co Donegal

If you wish your school/class to become involved this year (or indeed you have been participating for a number of years), there is a variety of support materials for you at www.fisfilmproject.ie. A set of nine lesson plans and accompanying video tutorials offer you a structured approach to introducing film as a cross-curricular medium in the classroom. These lesson plans are not intended to be prescriptive but rather it is hoped they will provide support, guidance, tips, class activities and information to get you started and sustained with your filmmaking project.

“Great video comes from thinking humans, not equipment.”

Steve Stockman

The website and lesson plans also demonstrate that filmmaking is much more than simply using cameras and

editing software. There are three distinct phases in the process - pre-production; production and post-production.

1. Pre-production – the story

Character development can be brainstormed and genres of film explored with a clear link to genres of writing. This lesson culminates in the creation of plot diagrams with ideas generated as to how characters might be developed as changes happen in a basic story structure.

2. Pre-production – script and storyboard

Once the basic story structure has been established, the script and storyboard can be created thus creating a clear plan for all involved in the production phase. All actions and dialogue should contribute to the story. Of course, the story does not have to be created from scratch and may be an adaptation of an established story. Documentaries can also be created and this approach may be suited to the Decade of Centenaries category in Fís. Various types of camera shots are explored at this stage and all contribute to the drafting of the storyboards – a cartoon strip like visual representation of the action to be captured in the film

3. Pre-production – elements of a film

At this stage, various elements of film are explored including location (suitability and safety considerations), and production design if a set is being used. Costumes, make-up and hair styles might also be considered depending on the genre of film being made. The scenes should be rehearsed at this stage so everyone knows what part they are playing (in front of and behind the camera!)

4. Production – using smart devices

Cameras on smart devices are now powerful enough for good quality images to be recorded easily and, depending on available memory, can store many videos and photos. The lesson resources also explore a range of ways that

images can be captured and how accompanying sound can be recorded.

5. Production – basic lighting

As light can express meaning, the story will dictate how light might be used. Various light types are detailed in the lesson resource at this stage and this can contribute immensely to the quality of the completed film.

6. Production – the shoot

There are a lot of tips in the lesson plan at this stage detailing how the camera might be used to record the various scenes that will make up the film. Not all will apply to every film but are detailed to include as many genres of film as possible.

7. Post-production – picture editing

The amount of time spent at the picture editing stage can be minimised by the amount of time spent in the previous stages. This is where a lot of teamwork is involved as the best shots are selected and sequenced to optimise the telling of the story.

8. Post-production – sound editing

Sound effects, adding ambient sound as well as sound design can be considered here with the potential to enhance the film even more

9. Post-production – the soundtrack

With clear linkage to content objectives in the Music Curriculum, this lesson plan explores how music can add to the atmosphere of a variety of scenes.

Closing date for entries 2016

Once your class film has been created and you wish to submit it to the Fís Film Project, the closing date to submit your entries this year is Thursday 30 June 2016.

Written by Seán Gallagher, PDST Technology in Education, www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie
It is hoped that this article shows the resources that you can access to support you in your film making.

Although too late to be of assistance for Fís 2016, you might consider attending a ‘PDST TIE/Fís: developing literacy through film making’ or ‘PDST TIE/Fís: developing literacy through Animation’ summer course in your local education centre this summer.

