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Creating the Carrot

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CREATING THE CARROT

Implementing Media Arts as a

Motivational Strategy for Reaching

At Risk Youth in a Residential Treatment Center

By

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Introducing Media Arts as a Motivational and Educational Tool

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Drawing from a wide swath of fine arts disciplines, this project effectively deals with pulling music, movement, creative writing, video and collaborative learning experiences together. Leading other teachers in the direction of media arts is the additional goal, which continues to be a monumental challenge in the face of working with very difficult students at the Yellowstone Academy. The Yellowstone Academy is a K-12 school, which serves the Yellowstone Boys and Girl's Ranch (a treatment center for emotionally disturbed youth). Creating sound tracks and video projects has proven to be an effective motivator for many of the students in my music classes. Students engage in the subject matter, think creatively and produce culturally relevant artistic projects. Reaching out to the other teachers has run parallel to my own pursuits, as I see so many possibilities for affecting change through media arts. My pursuit of bringing media arts to the Yellowstone Academy has become a reality, in spite of the odds. The overall involvement and growth of individual students and the overall tone and culture of my music classes as a media arts component develops will be addressed within the scope of this paper. This project culminates many facets of the arts and brings my own development as an educator and artist into the technological realm. My greatest ambition is that over time, the motivational quality of integrating video technology to other areas of the Yellowstone Academy will create a positive influence on the *culture* of the student body.

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I.

A Brief History

The Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch located outside of Billings Montana, is a residential treatment center for at-risk youth. More specifically, the average child placed in the program has a diagnosis of being emotionally disturbed. The student population's background ranges from neglect and abandonment to all sorts of abuse such as mental, physical, sexual, self-harm and drug abuse. There are many different labels and diagnoses' which attempt to describe each individual from a medical model and direct them toward a therapeutic recovery. Among the various diagnoses and disorders are Bi-Polar, Reactive Attachment, Borderline Personality, Oppositional Defiant, Major Depression and Schizophrenia. Over the course of ten years teaching at the Yellowstone Academy, (Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch), my curriculum has morphed through many phases. What began as a somewhat traditional music program in a residential treatment center has evolved into a non-traditional multi-faceted music program designed to reach a difficult population. Through a process of trial and error, combined with determination and support for my ideas, the music program has continued to grow into an effective and meaningful creative outlet for many of our students. After ten years of working at the Yellowstone Academy, I have had the opportunity to work with a diverse population of students from all walks of life. While most of the staff work diligently to help our youth overcome their difficulties, I feel that many of the students are not being reached in a meaningful way. The task of teaching, re-directing, monitoring, addressing behaviors and doing the related paperwork consumes most of us completely, eliminating the likelihood

for teachers to change their approach. Becoming completely annoyed with some of our population often keeps us stuck in a pattern of survival, where change only comes by leaving the Ranch. Reluctance to change one's approach to teaching is engrained.

In order to find success working with our population, I have instituted changes in the music curriculum over my tenure at the Yellowstone Academy. My job description at the start included guitar class and whatever else I could come up with that would engage the students. Over the years, my approach to teaching music began much as the previous music teachers began; teaching music based in what we have been taught. I inquired about the music program in the years preceding my arrival. Traditional methodology had been applied since the beginning of the program less than ten years before. Choir class was at one time the main emphasis. There was a small collection of mostly unplayable ¾ size cheap classical guitars featuring missing strings, warped necks and bridges threatening to come off. Other equipment for the students to work with included a box of low-grade hand percussion, a sack of soprano recorders and a set of real nice hand bells. I contacted one of the previous music teachers who had a successful program consisting of a choir that included hand bells. This woman had used a color-code system to accommodate the student's lack of skill in reading standard music notation. After assessing the situation, I reluctantly signed my first contract to teach music half time at the Ranch.

After fumbling through my first semester, I looked back and quickly realized that inner-city gang types were so steeped in rap music, they had a real hard time engaging with singing, guitars, hand percussion, recorders or hand bells. *Their* background was so far removed from what I was prepared to teach them about music, the gap between us was

huge. My reluctance to continue was gnawing at me. The second semester I began teaching art, which filled out my position to full-time status. The combination of teaching music and art struck a chord with me, allowing me to apply my diverse skills and interests, which all led up to this project.

Through the years that followed, I developed an alternative music program, which included singing with the main focus on playing guitars, keyboards, and drum sets. Over time, I built up the equipment by adding more guitars, drums, percussion, keyboards, P. A. gear and technology. I created a music class environment, which did *not* focus on learning to read music; the focus became learning to play music by ear while allowing for significant input by the students.

To clarify the technical process, the need for defining computer applications, devices and terminology is as follows: Sonar, Cakewalk Home Studio, Garage Band and Logic, are hard disk recording applications, which allows for the creation of music using both audio and MIDI files. MIDI is the language computers use to deal with music, an acronym for musical instrument digital interface. Loops are pre-recorded tracks or single sounds of various lengths, which can be imported to a recording and used repeatedly. Delta is the sound card which includes a breakout cable allowing for a variety of inputs and outputs, both audio and MIDI on the Windows computer. One (by Apogee) is a single input audio interface on the Apple computer. Premier and Photoshop refer to Adobe Premiere Elements (video editing), Adobe Photoshop Elements (still image editing) at the school Windows computer, as well as Premier and Photoshop on my personal computer. Final Cut Elements is the video editing application on the iMac. The term “plug-in” refers to sound

generating software commonly found within a hard disc recording application. My own background playing music in dance bands began to shape the program more than what I was taught in my teacher training. What I ended up with was primarily a rock and roll music program, with flexibility for other musical styles, accommodating various students and their varied abilities.

In addition to the instruments, I began to build a Windows computer music workstation, which caused me great amounts of frustration with extended periods of time when the workstation was completely un-useable. Among the problems I encountered was a lack of time to work through the trouble-shooting process, a faulty audio interface, students who would randomly alter the settings and ineffective technical support. The combination of my ignorance with Windows operating systems and the collective ignorance, (or was it reluctance?) of our MIS (computer tech) department created an on-going bad situation. When the workstation *was* functional, Acid Pro became the favorite program students would use. Acid Pro is designed for dragging and dropping pre-recorded loops of sound that snap to a grid, or timeline. The result of this fascination with Acid Pro was a lot of redundant sounds within the projects. Students who knew little about the formalities of music could easily create something they thought to be pretty cool. On one hand, I could appreciate their enthusiasm, but aesthetically, I felt the process and the product were lacking in musical integrity. The creation of an Acid file could easily be devoid of tonal understanding, have no connection to musical concepts being taught and have no connection to a group musical experience. In the previous year, I had the operating system upgraded and Acid Pro was left behind. Sonar replaced Acid and

Cakewalk Home Studio, which is primarily a MIDI sequencing program and had very limited appeal to the students. Sonar, which is similar to Cakewalk is more versatile and has a series of plug-ins, which sound better than anything we could do in Cakewalk. Sonar does everything that Acid can do while allowing the user to think in more creative ways through the use of MIDI sequencing and applying musical concepts such as melody and form. Re-enforcing the theory of music while creating music on the computer became a positive way to help students through their reluctance while learning something about the formalities of music.

We now have a functional guitar program, a keyboard program and enough gear to produce a rock and roll show. In spite of the success realized through developing such a fine program catering to a unique population, I felt the need to do more. I recall one of my students a few years back that continually asked, "Why don't we do a musical!" I responded with shaking my head and dismissing her pleas. There have been several students through the years who expressed interest in dance. Most of these students were allowed to create a jazz/hip hop type dance routine to a pre-existing recording. On rare occasions, I would offer some coaching for the dancers, while feeling inadequate, self-conscious and reluctant to play the role of choreographer.

Knowing there was more I could do with my music program continued to haunt me. Reluctance to do anything about it compounded my condition. Even though I had some theatre experience, a few dance classes and creative movement, I could not bring myself to include theatre or dance into my curriculum. Through the process of narrowing my focus within the Creative Pulse, I have illuminated the path to incorporate media arts into my

music program, while keeping the door open for creative movement and some theatric elements. This has opened up new possibilities for my students to work collaboratively, think creatively and produce culturally relevant personal expressions.

Now in the tenth year of working with at-risk youth bearing a myriad of emotional, psychological, chemical and developmental issues, my perspective evolved. What innocence *I* lost through a relatively natural progression of growing up in a mostly normal home, is sharply contrasted with a drastic loss of innocence through various degrees of dysfunction in the lives of those whom I serve. The contrast is so great, in many of the treatment youth, the very idea of *play* as a child appears to have never occurred. Because this absence of *play* is so prevalent, I believe there is a direct correlation to reluctance, fear and avoiding the unknown, thus putting a damper on the creative process. As a fine arts educator, one of my central goals has always been to provide a learning environment conducive for a somewhat playful approach, which opens the door for creative thinking.

I constantly remind my students, "recognize your success, see possibilities, focus on the positive and have fun through the work." Keeping this goal at the forefront of my teaching allows for creativity, forcing all of us to take risks and consequently, confront our fears, while overcoming our collective reluctance to explore the unknown.

II.

Pizza and Ice Cream

Each year, I reflect on the past year, and other previous years to evaluate, analyze and re-invent, as suggested by Harry K. and Rosemary T. Wong in "*The First Days of School; How to Become an Effective Teacher."* This time is valuable, giving new life and insight to the coming school year.

Our student population is about one third day treatment (local students bussed in every day), and the rest are in residential treatment. Within the student day treatment population, approximately 25% exhibit oppositional-defiant behaviors. Since they go home at night to mostly dysfunctional homes, there would be very little if any consequences for their behaviors at school. Some of the residential youth are also oppositional-defiant as well, but they often have consequences for their school behaviors. The combination of day treatment and residential students in the same classroom can be challenging and frustrating when week after week, teachers must address the same disruptive behaviors.

Some of the teachers were advocating for I.S.S. (in school suspension). They went on about the need for isolating certain youth who refused to follow classroom expectations and were a constant source of grief. Our school is trying to adopt a way of dealing with our population that focuses on positive rewards when a child *does* do something right. Unfortunately, some of the teachers are still stuck in the old way of expecting our students to simply follow the rules because they are required to. After about fifteen minutes of venting, another teacher interjects, "In all the years I have worked here, punishment

doesn't work." Venting continues for another fifteen minutes when another teacher humbly raises his hand and states; "I think we would get more out these kids with pizza and ice cream."

I remained silent through the entire meeting as the heated debate continued about isolating certain students so they would not continue to adversely affect the learning environment. As I drove home, I kept hearing the statement about pizza and ice cream resonating in my mind. By the time the weekend was over, I had hatched a plan to create a media arts component in our school. Launching a media arts component at the ranch became my own version of pizza and ice cream or *carrot* to help keep students interested in staying engaged.

Introducing media arts to the Yellowstone Academy has been a challenge well worth the effort. Results of this undertaking have been realized most obviously in the demand for my classes. I have observed within my classes an increase in interest working with the two computers, increased level of staying on task and overall, a stronger sense of purpose. Students in my two keyboard classes, who would otherwise not see the relevance of learning piano keyboard skills, have been able to apply the most basic skills in a sequencing program combined with loops to create a piece of original music. Students in my two guitar classes have had a similar experience while I insisted they too, learn some basic piano keyboard skills and work with a simple recording project. I have observed various levels of interest in this technology. Some students are quite content to pursue their main instrument, while others are highly motivated to pursue the technology. Having only two computer workstations has had a profound effect on the situation as well. I have begun

looking into the possibility of donated computers as a way of improving the accessibility for more students. I would limit the donated PC computers to Adobe Photoshop and Premier. Sound tracks could be created on the other two original computers and transferred on a flash drive.

Augmenting sound recordings with motion and still image design has been a monumental undertaking. I was completely mistaken when I thought of my students as having some collective computer skills. The average student who is admitted to the Ranch has been in survival mode for much of their young lives. Computer skills have only developed in student's lives that had a mostly intact family, with the resources, time and the commitment to help their child learn about computers. In most of our student population, trauma and anxiety have ruled their minds, making engagement in the learning process difficult. In spite of this great difficulty, the level of interest in creating sound and video is significant.

Implementing media arts at the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch *is* a good idea, which *can* reach many more of the youth. This will only be possible if there is a much larger investment to acquire more computer workstations and have regular classes or even a lab offered to accommodate the idea. When and if this happens, over time other teachers *could* get on board with the idea and learn how to incorporate this technology into their curriculum. This would provide an opportunity for adding a motivational component they otherwise would not have.

III.

LOGISTICS

As I began to formulate the logistics of this project, I first considered using our student laptop computers, which are stored in a large mobile cart. I thought the laptops would be the obvious answer to my computer needs. Upon exploring this option, my ideal computer usage was clearly not going to work. My plan involved disabling Internet access on six of the computers in order to have dedicated laptops for music and video applications. I quickly discovered the inherent flaw in my plan; most of the computer usage by the other teachers involved Internet access. Internet access opens the door for breach in confidentiality, especially when photos or video footage is involved.

Since our school is a residential treatment center we have to work within the limitations of the laws that limit our activities. H. I. P. P. A. (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is ever present in our school. The on-going concern for patient privacy drives many of the limitations from signing a piece of artwork to videotaping, photography and public exposure of any kind. In our school setting, appropriate Internet sites are a major concern. Our student population includes a high percentage of devious youth who need constant supervision. I knew that my own ability to supervise would be very limited due to the fact I would constantly be helping students with their projects. Another concern even greater is the possibility of students uploading images of themselves or their peers to My Space, Facebook, or Twitter, which would result in H.I.P.PA. violations. Even burning a video project onto a disk needs to be controlled to the point that I would

personally send out one copy to the parents of the students involved to gain final approval. Once approval has been granted, we have options for burning copies or posting the project on You Tube. If we don't gain parental approval, the project must remain in my control for exclusive class use.

Through a process of imagining what I could and could not do in our environment, I gave serious thought to the use of masks as a way of making our videos H.I.P.P.A. proof. I consulted with one of my colleagues about mask making since she offered this as a summer class. Although she agrees with the concept of including her self-contained students in mask making, the time constraints are very real. I had envisioned this as a motivational tool related directly to the "pizza and ice cream" theory.

Making the decision to pursue a media arts component within the context of music classes was first presented to my immediate supervisors. Once they agreed to support the idea, I researched the options for equipment and came up with a price tag for my boss. I studied an article on consumer level digital video cameras in Consumer Reports Electronics Buying Guide Winter 2010. My decision to purchase a Canon ZR960 mini DV camcorder has proved to be a good choice. Adobe Premier and Photoshop was purchased as an elements bundle, which is much more affordable and user friendly than a CS4 professional grade version. Since I am working on a Windows platform, Adobe Premier seemed like an obvious choice for video editing. The tech support from our campus has been greatly appreciated, as I know very little about maintaining a computer and they don't want anyone attempting alterations on their own. Within the last year, our campus tech support has provided all the necessary updates for my various needs including a fire wire card,

installing the Delta sound card, Sonar, the proper drivers and upgrading the operating system to Windows XP.

Following a sexual incident on the stage last summer, the Risk Management Committee made an executive decision ordering the stage to be cleared of all the music gear and not have students working up on the stage where supervision was difficult to maintain. At first, I felt as if my efforts developing a rock and roll workshop over the past ten years were being undermined and circumvented. I felt betrayed that my opinion did not matter since I was never consulted. After careful consideration and serious attitude adjustment, I directed my students to move everything off the stage into the auditorium open space. We set up everything against one wall and ran extension cords and power strips to power up the gear since there are no outlets on the wall where we ended up.

After seeing the bare stage, I began to see a new possibility; a space for videotaping had just been born. Initial screen tests were done using both blue paper and green paper to determine a suitable chrome-key background. Chroma- key means to key out the solid color used in video taping one subject, while adding a different background in the video editing software application. I quickly discovered blue to be the obvious choice since the green was too dark for the poorly lit stage area. I settled on developing a blue screen with massive amounts of blue paper, tape, glue and gumption. A real blue screen would cost thousands of dollars for one as big as the one I made from paper. The result of this effort was a space seven feet tall, twenty feet wide and thirty feet on the floor in front of the wall. This allows for complete blue screen video without compromising any full-on shots.

Lighting on our stage has always been marginal at best. We brought in two halogen work lights only to discover an awful yellow-orange hue on the faces. The next step in lighting was to resurrect my homemade plywood light boxes. Each box contains three floodlights and is controlled by a box with three dimmer switches gleaned from an auto salvage yard. With the help of one student, we found various methods of lighting as well as homemade camera stabilizers and dollies through online resouces. We did a number of screen tests and experimented with layers in Premiere, while having the blue keyed out.

Logistical problems continuously presented themselves as we worked at acquiring enough footage and freeing up enough disk space on the computer. Finding enough rehearsal time and not feeling completely overwhelmed seemed like an impossible task. As I tried to juggle the video project, hard disk recording projects and teach simultaneously, I began to question my sanity.

The bright side of all this self-induced insanity is the students are truly excited about creating music, movement and working together to accomplish their goals. I have witnessed a significant increase in interest in spite of the obvious lack of staying on-task, exacerbated by not having enough structure. Through this process of building excitement, the demand for access has also increased. Not being able to meet the demand because of having only one underpowered computer has contributed to the off-task behavior and a feeling of frustration among the students. They are showing considerable patience because they realize the limitations of working with only one old and underpowered PC.

I began fulfilling the plan we had agreed upon to develop two or three videos involving the youth at the Yellowstone Academy to see how well the idea worked. The videos could then be used as a promotional tool to pitch to the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation for a capital drive campaign to fund a computer lab designed for media arts. As with many challenges facing the unknown, I took my first step knowing full well I was tackling something I knew very little about, while trying to teach music at the same time.

IV.

Carol of the Bells

Once the technology was fully functional, I decided on "Carol of the Bells" as my first project. This was inspired by several factors: one of my students asked me about the bells, the pastor and his wife at YBGR (Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch) suggested a Christmas theme, I like the idea of a deadline, and I did not want to become bogged down in composing the entire sound track. I chose a piece of choral music from my files for the basis of the sound track and proceeded to assemble a MIDI structure using several different voices from Sonar. An additional section was improvised as an introduction using some of the thematic material played at a different tempo and re-phrased to give the listener a sense of the tonality without giving away the tune. A complimentary melody was played on the electric guitar, which developed independently of the MIDI tracks.

When the introduction and the main body of the tune were ready, I had students add guitar, xylophone and hand bells in a series of over-dubs. We used individual headphones powered by a headphone amplifier to facilitate the group audio recordings. Eight different students were involved in the recording process over a period of three weeks. After the sound track was complete (with the exception of final mix down), the role of choreographer became the focus.

Initially, I had asked two women who worked in the lodges to help me with the process of developing choreography. One of them went on leave and the other went on vacation. This serendipitous event forced me to confront one of my fears, teaching creative

movement. As with many other dreaded moments, the worst part is the dreading. When I began working with four interested girls after school, I let them listen to the sound track and talk about ideas. I encouraged their input as we began exploring what this could be all about. After listening to the music and discussing some possibilities, they improvised some movement on the stage. Shortly after this process began, I found myself improvising movement with them and coming up with concrete ideas, which had been lying dormant in my psyche. My perceptions of what was interesting, what appeared static and what was redundant began to unfold. A story evolved through the movement and our discussions in which one of the dancers was experiencing some sort of awakening through the music, movement, and the story of Christmas. The musical introduction lent itself to a group awakening followed by the tune acting as a catalyst for the slow rise of the fourth dancer. Problems continued throughout the choreography and rehearsal process. Interpersonal conflict among the students arose when a temporary substitute dancer was brought in. Scheduling problems and disagreeing on costume ideas added to the frustration. Finally the absolute impossibility of trying to run the sound, run the camera, keep them inside the parameters of the blue screen and direct the movement became readily apparent. After extensive schedule juggling and planning, the day of the taping arrived and one of the girls was not in school and we had to re-assign her role, which was less than desirable. We persevered in spite of our loss and completed the dance with three girls.

Collaborating with the sewing instructor gave insight into ideas, which included several shopping trips to the local thrift stores, craft stores, clothing stores and ultimately to Wall Mart. The end result was a white long sleeve tee shirt, black and white leggings,

white sheer curtain panels and white masquerade masks. There was great effort put into skirt wraps made from bed sheets, which did not work with the choreography and were consequently abandoned altogether.

In the middle of the "Carol of the Bells" project, our guidance counselor approached me on the possibility of taking on a student for an independent study in media arts. The student already had solid experience in creating videos using Final Cut and a rather expensive Sony video camera. I agreed to take on this student, sacrificing my prep hour to accommodate him. In short order, he had written a storyboard for his vision of Carol of the Bells and we worked out our differences. A key component to his vision was footage of Pastor J. (the resident pastor), telling the Christmas story around a campfire. By the time Christmas break was upon us, we had successfully captured the most crucial footage, the dance (minus one dancer), and the campfire scene, both in the same day. Following the Christmas break, we gathered more footage and proceeded to create the video.

More challenges lay waiting as our outdated and underpowered PC was continually failing to render clips. The playback was jerky and the application would randomly crash. We added an 8 GIG flash drive to access the media; this helped tremendously as we were able to finish the project and save it as a Quick Time movie. Adding up all of the obstacles began to wear us down as the time drew near for my independent study student to discharge from the Ranch. At one point when we were having a better day capturing some footage, he looked at me and said; "Wouldn't it be cool if you could have a separate film class, a separate dance class and a separate music class so the different classes could work together to come up with the videos." I wholeheartedly agreed with him.

The final result was completed on the last day of the quarter. We were able to show the video to groups of students as well as Pastor J, who was pleased with the outcome and thought the video turned out better than he had anticipated. All in all, the project was very successful and my independent student felt good about having to think creatively to solve problems on unfamiliar equipment, which he was opposed to using in the beginning of this project. My independent study student worked through the project using his artistic sensibilities to alter images when necessary and create a video using the footage we had and doing the best he could.

V.

Mannequin Girl

Before the "Carol of the Bells" video was completed, one of my students began to record three different pieces of music on the computer. One in particular became his focus for several weeks. "Mannequin Girl" was created using many of the available functions in Sonar. The file had so many plug-ins, processes and audio tracks the computer could not play the file back without major audio dropout and simply freezing up. We managed to finish the sound track in spite of the over-burdened and underpowered computer. As we narrowed the final version, we kept rendering out the file in a compressed format in order to hear the final mix.

Once the sound track was finished, the two students involved were able to take an MP3 copy to the group home where they lived and work on the video project over the Christmas holiday. The same student who did the independent study did this video work as well and used his own camera and computer, making this video project possible on his own time. The theme behind "Mannequin Girl" is a sort of tongue in cheek reference to a girl friend of his who happens to be an artist. They included flexible drawing models in a stop-motion sequence and a real mannequin I just happened to have in my attic. Initially, I helped get the project started using the blue screen space on the stage. More footage was taped off campus. I only heard the description of their process, which included taking the mannequin into a restaurant to obtain more footage. After the effort that went into

“Mannequin Girl”, the student who did the taping and editing was discharged and took all of the footage with him.

VI.

Expanding My Horizons

As I approached this project, I came to the realization that I needed to bring myself up to date and push myself outside of my comfort zone. In order to effectively understand and relate to modern popular culture in the music industry, I created my own rap just to see if I could do it. Several years back, I had a few students who made an effort to do a rap. One in particular refused to listen to me when I tried to teach him something about rhythm and how crucial the rhythmic element is to driving a rap. As a jazz musician, I always knew I had skill in improvising and thought this ability could be transferred into rap. Even though I don't care for rap in general, I always felt obligated to know something about the genre.

I took on the challenge of creating a rap video. I began an essay on overcoming the fear of computers. Having lived this story most of my life, the initial writing came naturally. I quickly found myself having a lot of fun coming up with ridiculous rhyming schemes and continued to write in rap style to the best of my ability. One morning I spent nearly two hours watching rap videos on You Tube. I could clearly see I was on the right path and knew the idiom lends itself to great flexibility of form. I set up a simple beat in Logic playing all the parts on my keyboard controller. The rap itself was recorded at my sister's ranch near Riverton, Wyoming. I waited until I had the house to myself so any trace of self-consciousness was absent.

The result of this recording process was not entirely easy and admittedly, there are times when the flow of the rap rhythm is less than brilliant. Overall, I was very pleased with the recording and it is truly funny. My sisters, who do *not* listen to rap, had some good laughs. With the collective advice of my two sisters, we arrived at an image appropriate for the video. A somewhat ratty sport coat from a local thrift store and a turtleneck from Wall Mart became the costume, I grew a beard, let my hair be wild and we created the image of the absent-minded professor about to lose his mind.

Since our small rental house in Billings was empty at the time of Christmas break, my son and I set up the living room to shoot the initial video with a blue bed sheet for the backdrop. Still images were borrowed from Google searches. Some of the images were altered in Photoshop while most of the images were left intact, dispersed throughout the video to add a visual gag element and cover some of the bad lip-syncing. After several weeks of early morning editing sessions, a video was produced and the results were quite satisfying.

When my independent study student saw it, he immediately wanted to create a short version of the video, which would have broader appeal to the general public. I agreed and turned him loose on this; he finished the short cut version the next morning. After looking through some title possibilities, I settled on posting this on You Tube under "Old Man Computer Rap." Both versions are now posted on You Tube. Going through this solo performance process with the available technology was a great learning experience. I gained through this project more confidence with writing lyrics, rap, recording, video taping, editing and finally, exposing myself to the wide world of the Internet. An

unexpected benefit occurred; many of the students in our school gained a new level of acceptance for me.

VII.

More Projects

By the time we started the fourth quarter of our school year, I was fortunate to be working with a new 27" iMac. Returning from spring break, I was even more fortunate to bring some great footage of two Sandhill Cranes in a mating dance ritual. After creating the pilot project and posting the video on You Tube under the title "Sandhill Crane Boogie", I assigned all of my students the same project; they were to create sound tracks in Garage Band for the footage and edit the clip in Final Cut however they wish, skill allowing. I settled into a format, which includes images in Photoshop for opening and closing shots. One of my students worked outside of the assignment and developed an alternative video using some gymnastic movements with various backgrounds.

Another one of my students who had created eight different projects using Garage Band asked if he could play his work at the spring talent show. I encouraged him to make a video using one of his Garage Band files for the sound track. A combination of being pressed for time and not knowing what to do for the video component inspired me to show him how to use Photo Booth in the Mac to create some video shots using the built-in web cam. Considering the limitations of H.I.P.P.A., he applied a wide variety of filters to the images to make the faces unrecognizable. Some of the clips were converted to freeze-frames, exported to Photoshop and brought back in as still images with more alterations. The project was titled "Burn It Till the End", and was played at the spring talent show along with one of the student versions of the Sandhill Crane videos and "Carol of the Bells". A

major accomplishment had taken place as these videos were viewed. This was the first time student-generated videos had been burned onto a disc and projected onto the big screen in the auditorium. Nearly everyone in the school, including my boss, could see the finished product; this was truly a great moment in the course of this project.

As this past school year was underway and the obstacles were overcome one by one, I found myself caught up in trying to balance the excitement for technology with the reality of not having a full-blown computer lab. Most of the students in any given class, had to occupy their time with learning their instrument and work independently or in small groups when that option made sense. Trying to juggle all of the demands in a given class period has been extremely difficult. The demand for more computer workstations has become apparent, and in time a computer lab for media arts is a much stronger possibility. Until that point in time, I will persevere in trying to organize my music classes into a combination of studio learning time, creative writing, composing original music and video production. Students are able to see what my vision is all about and are more likely to engage in the creative process. Because there is so much cultural relevance in this multi-faceted approach, my students are more motivated to take a risk in their learning, and work with each other in collaborative efforts.

IX.

Outreach and Conclusion

As the school year rolled into the second semester, I began talking with my colleagues about what I was doing and invited them to consider implementing the video idea into their classes. I spoke with them one by one trying to get a feel for each of their perceptions toward what I was doing. My suspicion was correct; most of the teachers were already overwhelmed and this video idea seemed impossible. They never came out and said as much, but the proof is in the action; only one teacher took the idea seriously.

My first attempt to extend the motivational video plan into other areas of the school began the first week of January. Our Spanish teacher had one class with only one student. I saw this as the perfect opportunity to begin the outreach. We threw together some ideas about how this one student could describe something in Spanish while sitting in front of a small blue screen. Initially, I thought this would be a great tool for self-evaluation to hear the quality of pronunciation and delivery. We quickly started to see possibilities for what could be done beyond just taping the student. I left them alone to write a script and plan out their project. This idea died when the lone student was discharged before the project began. Subsequent attempts by the Spanish teacher were continuously thwarted by youth's behaviors in her classes, preventing the idea from becoming a reality.

I approached the History teacher about doing some video work with his classes. We came up with a great plan involving an interview. He had thought of doing a project involving interviews with one or two of the founders of the Yellowstone Boys and Girls

Ranch. Exploring local history with Franklin Robbie and Bob McFarlane was to become one of our spring projects, which again died on the vine.

Once the iMac was up and running with all of the necessary accessories, I felt more confident in trying to introduce this technology to some other staff in our school. In an effort to make my project more inclusive in nature, I approached the other art teacher, the computer teacher, the English teacher and one of the self-contained special ed teachers, trying to get more of the school involved.

The art teacher seemed to take my offer seriously and began to imagine a project based in creative writing, leading to painting and finishing with a video. Before the art teacher started this process, she took maternity leave. I consulted with the computer teacher to investigate the possibility for collaboration. The results of said investigation were concluded in one word, "reluctance." She quit before the school year ended. As the fourth quarter was well underway, the Spanish teacher met with me on a weekend to go through some training with the video camera and Final Cut. She is excited about the possibilities and is now the one individual who is taking me up on this idea of media arts and education as a motivational tool. She is in her first year of teaching. The old expression "you can't teach an old dog new tricks," has rung true throughout my attempts to inspire my colleagues.

I have tried to lead by example with the intention of inspiring others; embrace the challenge and take advantage of what is possible as video technology and education intersect. I have always hoped other teachers would push themselves beyond web

searches, Word documents, email, spreadsheets, grade programs and Power Point. Allowing for the opportunity to include students in curriculum design, really listening to what students have to offer, *especially* when the topic is technology, *could* force all of us to become more effective educators.

Concluding this project and reflecting back on the successes and failures, the most obvious error was to think this technology could be taught without a computer in front of every student. There is no way to effectively teach *anything* about computers without each student physically going through the steps of creating a media arts project while instructions are being given. Even when a student goes through the steps, if a week or more goes by without getting back to the project, the student forgets what they had learned and loses interest.

Trying to include media arts within the context of a music class was a questionable idea given the fact there are two computers available to work with and they are both different; one PC and one Mac. Most of my students have great difficulty being self-directed. Without the ability to be self-directed, I found it impossible to be effective in either music *or* media arts. Only a small percentage of the students were benefitting from this project. To make this venture successful, several possibilities for improvement came to light. Simply having more computer workstations would make all the difference. Having another instructor in the room at the same time would help greatly. Having a separate class time would help as well, assuming there were enough computers.

I made a pact with myself to follow my dreams, no matter how unusual or unpopular they may be perceived in my mind, or the minds of those whom I encounter on my journey. There is a magical connection with our creative souls, which often is clouded by our fears, grief, and sadness. Even our overwhelming joy can take us far off course on some delusional idea, but we have to start somewhere. Like any video clip, you need to "set your in point."

Appendix A

Video Project Outline

Creating a sound track to an existing video clip

- Open Garage Band or Sonar, learn how to drag and drop loops
- Listen for what loops sound good together
- Create and edit a sequence
- Record an audio track using a microphone or guitar
- Export the project as an MP3 file

Editing the video

- Open Final Cut or Premier
- Copy existing video clip or still images into a file
- Add sound track made in Garage Band or Sonar
- Create introduction and closing clips in Photoshop
- Learn key frames and cross-fades
- Pull still frames from the video clip
- Make decisions throughout the process regarding length
- Adjust the speed of the clip if desired to synchronize with sound

Video Storyboard

TITLE of Project: _____

SUBJECT: _____

VIDEO	**AUDIO**
Rough sketch of the shot. Stick figures acceptable.	Narration, voiceover script, dialogue, sound effects, music, etc.

VIDEO	**AUDIO**

Appendix B

Web Links

You Tube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1THLQHoo4KQ

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0lPDB7RKQ0&feature=related

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi7HRSUttaU

Note* All of the public videos are accessible through You Tube under the user name: improviser 747

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