THE FLIP CAMERA IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM*

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Abstract

This module explores the uses of the Flip Camera in the elementary school classroom. It starts by introducing the features of the camera and suggests a fraction of the many uses it has for instructional purposes. Furthermore, it provides the pros and cons of the Flip camera and some specific classroom usages from classrooms around the United States. Lastly, it provides some helpful hints for teachers planning on using this product in their own classroom.

1 Introduction and Uses of the Flip Camera

The Flip Camera by Pure Digital is currently the best selling camcorder in the United States. Prices range from \$150-\$200 each depending on the model. They are now available in HD models and they are highly customizable. It comes with preinstalled software (flipshare) that makes it easy to show films with friends, family, and in the classroom. It offers anywhere from 2-8 gigabites of memory and anywhere form 60-120 minutes of recording time. The LCD screen is between 1.5-2.0 inches. It has a fixed focus lense and works well in low-light environments. It takes two AA batteries or rechargeable ones, making it easy to use in the classroom. Lastly, it weights between 3.3 and 6 ounces and has a built in wide-range microphone.

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Figure 1

The Flip Camera is great for the classroom for many different reasons. It is useful for teachers to track students' progress and present lessons and presentations about their classroom to administrators. For example, teachers could use the camera while taking a running record of a students' reading to ensure that the original assessment scores are accurate. Furthermore, they can chart fluency of their students' and go back and show students' their progress later in the year. Furthermore, it can be used to film student presentation and creative work for use in following years as models or as examples of lessons. Teachers can also record themselves and post their lessons on a class website to help students study and with their homework after school. It can also be great for recording and documenting field trips.

This camera is also great for countless activites for students. The Flip camera is great for all sorts of projects throughout all disciples. Just a few ideas for student use include making trailers for books or movies, recording skits from plays or books they have read or written themselves, making documentaries on science issues discussed in the classroom, or demonstrations of how to solve a math problem. There are so many ways this camera can be incorporated into the classroom and it's a fun way for students to get involved in their own learning and even some teaching!

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2 How to Get Started With the Flip Camera



Figure 2

To operate the Flip camera, you need two AA batteries or a rechargeable one. Then turn the camera one with the right side button. To record, press the red button in the center of the camera and then press it again to stop recording.

To download your video, pop open the handy usb adapter from the top of the camera and plug it into the usb outlet in your computer. Follow the prompts from your computer to install the software. It will automatically catalogue the video from the camera. After this, a home screen for editing will pop up (it will automatically pop up the next time you plug in your camera). Screen shots of your videos will show up and you can edit them by clicking the scissor button. You can drag the start and end button over to trim the beginning and end of a clip. You can save over clips or save them as new clips. Generally, you want to save them to your computer, as the camera can only hold 60 minutes of



Figure 3

video. If you're having trouble you can go to theflip.com and click on support.

If you want to take it a step further and upload your flip video to youtube or other online sharing sites, you first choose a movie and push the share button on the bottom of the screen. They choose the online button and then "online service." Enter your account information and password, login, and then you can choose to upload it as public or private. If you want to upload it to sites such as blackboard, you want to choose public, if its just for friends, choose private. After this, the video will upload on its own and the site will generally take a few hours to fully process the video.

3 Classroom Examples

3.1 Finding Nemo, 2!

Mr. Warner used the Flip Camera for creating a sequel to "Finding Nemo" in his 5th grade classroom. Students were introduced to the camera early in the week and had a chance to play around with it and figure out how to use it. Students then got into groups and wrote scripts for their own sequels and created stick puppets. They then stood the camera up on the table and filmed their movies, later presenting them to the entire class. This use of the camera is practical in almost every classroom! Not only are students practicing their writing skills, but they are also learning about oceans and animals in a fun and creative way.

http://www.mrwarner.com/2008/07/using-flip-video-in-the-classroom/1

3.2 Administrators in the Act

Cindy, the instructional technologist from a school in Northeastern North Carolina sees administrators using the flip camera in creative ways all the time. One principal takes her flip camera on her daily walk-through

 $^{^{1}}$ http://www.mrwarner.com/2008/07/using-flip-video-in-the-classroom/

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through her school. When she sees great interaction between students, unique teaching methods, or an overall great experience in a classroom she pulls out her handy camera and records the experience. Then, during faculty meetings and staff development she shares her videos with the staff as great examples of what is and should continue to happen in her school.

http://tnttips.blogspot.com/2008/10/flip-video-cameras-in-classroom.html²

3.3 Self and Class Evaluation

One PE teacher used the flip camera to record students' progress throughout the year. He recorded his students doing handstands and other gymnastics. This helps the teacher and student come to an agreement on the students' grades as they can rewatch their performance after the fact from a different perspective. This is also useful for students to rewatch later in the year to see their progress and what they have improved upon and still need to work on. It was also used for music class to record performances for later assessment and for tracking progess.

https://docs.google.com/present/view?pli=1&id=dhn2vcv5_6tv55j7g93

3.4 Grade 4 Music Video

Students from Australia created a music video on animal raps. They learned a poem about cats and then created their own lyrics a funky beat in garage band. After this, they got in groups, choreographed some steps to create this rap music video. Afterwards, they edited it and presented it to the class. This helped them learn more about lyrics and poems and the way English works as well as some music elements such as keeping time with a beat. It was a great way to share their hard work with the class and even the world!

http://willie42.globalteacher.org.au/2009/03/21/having-fun-with-the-flip-camera/4

3.5 Advantages of the Flip Camera in the Classroom

There are many benefits for using the Flip Camera in the classroom. First of all, it's a great creative outlet for students. Students can express themselves by creating projects, ads, movies, trailers, and many more video projects for class. Too often students are forced to do worksheets and take tests in the classroom. The flip camera is a great way to liven up a classroom and make learning accessible to students in a fun and creative way.

It's easy use makes it kid friendly and practical for the classroom. It's small size and weight are also very practical for use and storage in the classroom. Students (and teachers) won't have any difficulty operating it, carrying it, or using the software. Learning how to operate the Flip Camera should only take one minute without consulting the instruction manual and the buttons are minimal. Also, video can be uploaded directly to youtube. Posting their projects on youtube is a great way to encourage kids to do their best and to share their work with friends and family.

It's also great for use across all subjects. Video projects can incorporate multiple subjects at once while encouraging students to think creatively while also having fun. It can be used for simple things such as recording a presentation to more complex things like making a trailer for a book, documenting a field trip, doing a demonstration, or performing a skit. Again, it's small nature make it convenient for all the above situations, and many more!

3.6 Disadvantages of the Flip Camera in the Classroom

There are some difficulties to face if you want to incorporate the Flip camera into your classroom. For one, it is a rather big investment for a school to make. Schools are already strapped for cash in our failing economy, and cuts are often being made in the area of technology. One costs between \$150-\$200 depending on the

 $^{^2} http://tnttips.blogspot.com/2008/10/flip-video-cameras-in-classroom.html$

³ https://docs.google.com/present/view?pli=1&id=dhn2vcv5 6tv55j7g9

⁴http://willie42.globalteacher.org.au/2009/03/21/having-fun-with-the-flip-camera/

model, and if an entire class is using them many will be needed. Furthermore, they are easily droppable, flushable, throwable, etc, and therefore a few are likely to be broken in the process of use. Replacement, therefore, can also add up.

Secondly, they aren't the best option for capturing good audio. The camera picks up other voices and noises around it and therefore it can be difficult to hear the narration. This can be rather frustrating for students who have spent a lot of time working on their projects if the audio doesn't work to their liking. Furthermore, it's not a professional camera, and therefore doesn't produce the world's best quality film. Though this is usually ok for classroom use, if the students wanted to use them for something more formal, such as a state or national competition, this camera might not be appropriate.

Lastly, making films can be incredibly time-consuming. Teachers are already pressed for time everday and it's difficult to allot the proper amount of time for students to create quality projects. Between planning, practicing, filming and editing, making a film can take many hours that just aren't available in the classroom. While students will certainly have more fun making a video, sometimes a worksheet can teach the same amount of material in a fraction of the amount of time.

4 Considerations for Teachers

Some Useful Tips:

- 1) Currently the website "Digital Wish" has a two-for-one offer for the Flip Ultra camcorder.
- 2) Send home permission slips for parents to ensure all students are allowed to be filmed and use cameras.
- 3) There are a lot of great ideas posted by other teachers on the web- just google classroom uses and tons will pop up! https://docs.google.com/present/view?pli=1&id=dhn2vcv5_6tv55j7g9⁵ is one of the great resources out there!
- 4) Give a tutorial for students before they use it (even if they've used it in previous classrooms). This will cut down on time spent figuring out how to use it and also let students feel more comfortable.
- 5) Give the students some guidelines. If a project is too open-ended it can be overwhelming or take way too much time! A temple or model of a good example will help cut back on time in the classroom.
 - 6) Buy a tripod if you want to avoid shaky videos!
- 7) Make sure to delete videos after uploading them to the computer- the camera only holds 60 minutes of recording!

Citations

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 $^{^5} https://docs.google.com/present/view?pli=1\&id=dhn2vcv5_6tv55j7g9$

 $^{^6 \}mathrm{http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121252356921542405.htm}$

⁷http://www.theflip.com/

 $^{^8 \, \}mathrm{http://www.mrwarner.com/2008/07/using-flip-video-in-the-classro$