



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 6 to 9
About the Author:	This unit was created by Stephanie M. Rusnak, B.S.Ed, of Charleston, South Carolina, as part of a Media Production Course.

Video Production of a Newscast

Overview

In this lesson, students will produce a 20 minute news broadcast. In teams of 4-5, students will create and film a two minute segment of a school news show. In the process of planning their segments, students will study news broadcasts; learn how to create a T-script for their audio and visuals; develop scripts; and utilise production and film techniques such as setting, presentation, props, camera angles, and editing.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- understand the techniques effective speakers use to make convincing presentations
- select an appropriate oral presentation form for a specific purpose and audience
- select and use the conventions of broadcast news and appropriate techniques to produce a news segment
- use appropriate production techniques to create a media work
- understand the various stages and responsibilities in the production of a news broadcast

Preparation and Materials

- a pre-recorded video tape of a television newscast or a portion of an evening news show with at least one interview in it.
- at least one video camcorder (I recommend you borrow an industrial strength camera if possible - for example, Panasonic's "AG" line. A camera with audio/video dubbing is also important. When I taught this class, we had two cameras for about 30 students. Check with your school board's media centre for camera equipment.)
- a sturdy tripod for your camcorder.
- a microphone for the video camera
- a TV and VCR (Preferably a 4-head VCR with the ability to freeze the picture clearly.)
- Handout 1: TV News Evaluation
- Handout 2: What are We Doing?
- Handout 3: Ideas for Extra Credit



Course Outline

- Formation of film teams - 1 day
- T-scripts - 3 days
- Filming - 2 days per team (1 - 2 weeks)
- Set and prop construction - concurrent with filming
- Preview video/select audio dubs - 1 day
- Show final cut - 1 day

Procedure

Day One

- Have students watch a pre-recorded video of yesterday's news, or a portion of an evening news show with at least one interview in it.
- Photocopy and distribute *Handout 1: TV News Evaluation*. Ask students to fill it out, and then discuss their answers.
- Explain that television is a media of close-ups. Ask students why this is so.
- Ask students how they take pictures with a camera. Do they just wave a 35 mm camera around and click as it's moving, or do they plan their picture, making sure the subject is centred and is close enough to deliver a nice photograph? Tell them that filming with a video camera should be done the same way. Students should plan their "pictures." Their shots should be balanced.
- Hook the camera up to the television. Use the microphone to interview students on what they thought of the news program they just saw. Pick a volunteer to operate the camera. Record five minutes or so of impromptu interviews and play it back. Remind the class that the volunteer is new at this, so they don't feel put on the spot. However, you do need to critique the filming.
- Ask students:
 - Are the main subjects visible on the television?
 - Did the camera zoom in or out too quickly?
 - Is the camera zoomed in close enough?
 - Is there anyone blocking the person speaking?
 - Did the microphone pick up any unwanted sounds?
 - What can we do to correct these problems?



Day Two

Write five topic headers for each newscast segment on the board. (...or 6, or 4, depending on how many segments you have.) Some of my topics have been:

- The Week in Review
- Weather
- Sports
- Student Interest
- Fashion
- Hot Issues (Racism, Sexism, Discipline)
- Student Tips
- Lunch-Time Opinion Poll.

You will need to divide your class into filming teams of 4 - 5 students and ask them to choose a topic. They will need time to discuss that topic and narrow it down. Photocopy and distribute *Handout 2: What Are We Doing?* and give students two days to fill it out before they prepare for filming.

Day Three

Give students class time to finish filling out the *What Are We Doing?* handout. Show students how to create a T-script.



Video	Audio
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kids lining up in the cafeteria 2. Close-up of student being handed a hamburger 3. Close-up of brand label on burger wrapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's another lunch hour at Riverview Secondary School. • As students eagerly line up for their lunches, hamburgers are a popular choice. • But not just any hamburgers. At Riverview, it's "McDougall's" fast food or nothing.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wide shot of cafeteria showing McDougall's posters, drink machines 2. Zoom in to students eating at a table, with McDougall's fries, burgers etc. 3. Close-up of first student as she speaks 4. Wide shot of student's faces listening 5. Close-up of second student student speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last September, McDougall's bought the rights to serve food in the cafeteria at Riverview. • Now, when students sit down to eat, they're surrounded by McDougall's branding and limited to McDougall's fast food and drinks. • Student reactions are mixed, with many students saying they like having McDougall's food for lunch, and others saying that they resent being used as a captive audience for one food company.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wide shot of Principal Smith standing in the music room listening to the varsity band. Zoom in to him talking. 2. Close-up of school nurse, standing by vending machines 3. Wide shot of parents discussing this at a school council meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It's a matter of funding" says Principal Smith. "The money we get from this concession pays for other school programs." • Nurse Baker agrees, but points out the importance of providing juice, milk and healthy snacks to students, in addition to fast food. • Parents also have their reservations. Riverview's parent council wants to revisit this topic at the end of the school year.

As this sample shows, a T-script is a two column script, shaped like a "T". In the left vertical column, have students put the audio, what will be heard at any given moment. In the right column, students should put a description of what will be seen. (Or vice versa.) Students will need to get their T-script approved before they may begin filming.



Day Four

Students should turn in their *What Are We Doing?* handout and begin preparing a T-script. Tell students that they will be allotted only two days to film, so they will need to make plans accordingly.

Day Five

- Students get their T-scripts approved and sign up for filming times. They will begin making cue cards, practising lines, arranging interviews, and preparing their credits.
- Arranging times for all the students to film can be tricky. Some segments can be filmed in the classroom, but for shooting outside the classroom, try to get extra help from a teachers aid or a parent volunteer.
- You will find that students will reach a point where they are all ready to film but, because of supply limitations, have nothing to do but wait until their turn for the camera. In this case, pass out *Handout 3: Extra Credit Sheet*.
- As students finish this first filming session, they will need a TV and VCR to view their tapes before filming again the next day. You need to be patient as you watch their first attempts with the camera. A lot will be unusable and you will need to instruct students individually on camera techniques. You may need to arrange for students to come in before or after school with your supervision. Tell them you will not use their segment unless it meets high standards.
- Five segments will require a minimum of 10 days filming.
- You can edit your news show with two VCRs, or a VCR and your camcorder, but editing equipment would make things a lot easier. Check your school board and see if there is a secondary school with editing equipment you might use.
- Editing takes a lot of time. It took us three to six hours to edit a 20-minute show using two VCRs. You will have many small, 10 second-or-less clips that will be difficult to edit. There will also be artistic decisions regarding how to show the credits and what to use for the show's opening.
- Be sure your students see their news show before it is shown to the whole school, if that is your plan. They will be excited about being seen on TV but, at the same time, they will want to be prepared by knowing exactly what others will see.

Evaluation

Groups will receive marks for their completed T-scripts and *What Are We Doing?* handouts, as well as their completed video news segments.



TV News Evaluation

Name: _____

1. List the stories in the order presented. How many minutes were given to each topic?

	TOPIC	MINUTES
1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____

2. Listen to the reporters. Can you mimic their speech patterns? How would you describe their tone? Upbeat? Serious? Alarmed? Uncaring? Why do you think so?

3. Where do the reporters' eyes look when speaking?

4. What do the reporters do when they are finished their story?



5. When does the camera zoom in or out?



What Are We Doing?

Name: _____

1. What segment is your filming team creating?

2. Narrow down your topic. What specifically will your segment cover?

3. What props will you need?

4. What will you use for a backdrop? How does the background relate to your segment?



5. How do you plan to show your credits? Will someone write them on a poster that will later be videotaped? Do you have an "artist" in your group who will paint the names? Would you like to each hold a card with your name and film yourselves one at a time?

6. List all of your team members. Give each member an occupation. Choose from the following: Script Writer, Camera Operator, Set/Prop Designer, Credits, Cue Card Holder, Reporter. (You can have team members with more than one job and you can have several jobs used more than once.)



Ideas For Extra Credit

1. Design a magazine ad for one of the following items:
 - joining band, chorus, sports team
 - school lunch
 - the drink machine
 - Home and School Association
 - riding the bus to school
 - other _____
2. Write a 30 second television commercial for a product you use. Include a special effect that could be done with a camera in our classroom.
3. Write and record on a cassette a 30 second radio public service announcement with a positive message aimed at youth. (Such as "Stay in school, Don't do drugs, or Stop smoking" (you make up your own!) Include at least 3 different background sounds.

