



'My Future' -Video developments in transition

James Rennie School, Cumbria



Summary

We are aware, as young people finish their time with us and begin to look towards their next step beyond school, that the local authority paper work is not set up to fully capture the young person's views, desires and passions particularly with their life outside of School. Although our student's literacy skills may be limited compared to their mainstream peers they are however very good at showing people the things that are important to them. Our project explores and exploits the use of digital media and film making to bring the voice of young people and their families into transition planning.

Introduction

About us

James Rennie School is an all age School for pupils with severe and profound needs – we are a specialist communication college. We take young people from across Rural North Cumbria and through the City of Carlisle. A significant number of our pupils are at risk from social exclusion due to their learning needs as well rurality and urban issues.

What we wanted to explore

This project intended to enable pupils and their family to share their views and aspirations through the use of video, forming a major element of the students review and being the point from which we begin to explore options with them.

The videos were filmed by students, and their families with each person involved talking about the young person (what they enjoy, are good at and worry about, things they need and need to do every day, as well as their hopes and fears for the future).

The film was also intended to enable students to have a smoother transition as they move to other institutions, who will be able to learn about the young person from their own personal video,

Implementation

Planning our approach

Key stakeholders engaged

- Students, parents, siblings, post-16 staff

Teams/groups established to take forward the activity

- Head Teacher, Post-16 staff & 1 leader for the projects

Roles and responsibilities

- Kris Williams (Head) – Overview of project, Rachel Woolley – Project Leader, Irene Scott (Head of Post-16) project member and advice

Actions and timescales defined

- Staff discussion – December 12
- Project Leader appointed – December 12
- Trial group of students established and family contacted – January 13
- Purchase of video equipment – February 13
- Discussions with student's families - March 13
- Video equipment sent home – April / May
- Video editing with students - June 13
- Annual Reviews – June 13
- Review of project – July 13

Resources/technologies used

- Video Cameras
- Personal Computer (PC) with video editing capabilities

Our key question:

“Is this approach viable for student reviews given ‘normal’ time and staff resource- could we build this into normal timetabling?”

Producing the films

We invested significant time here and allocated a member of staff to work with families. This included:

- Promotion/engagement of relevant target groups/audiences
 - Direct contact via phone and face to face contact with stakeholders
- Considering how specific tasks/activities were structured and carried out
 - Making initial contact with students and their families after first talking through the process with staff to look at challenges and viability – key personnel and budgets agreed
 - The preparation of support materials
 - Issuing video cameras to students and families

Involving students and families in the editing of the films was a key premise, providing ownership of the content, how their ‘story’ was told and developing ongoing skills in using digital media.

How it went

- Staff were enthusiastic about the project but with some reservations about the legacy and time taken for process
- Some parents did wish to engage because of the technology (support was offered in these cases but rejected), some didn't want to be on screen and some did not wish to respond / engage with process.
- Those that did respond to the idea were very enthusiastic, and liked the idea of the whole picture that a video could produce for their child, in particular the idea that grandparents and siblings could have input into the process.
- Students that were part of the project were also enthusiastic, especially during the editing procedures, with very set ideas about what they did and did not want included. There was a definite pride in the video they produced.
- The time to edit each video was considerable - circa 6 hours with 1:1 support for students for 3 hours of that – we will and are reconsidering the way approach annual reviews to potentially take this into account with a greater proportion of timetabled study attached to these reviews.

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

Each student and family involved in the project produced a short video about the student, including **his or her hopes and aspirations** for the project; this was shared as the starting point for the student's annual review.

From our perspective **the video was constantly referred to throughout the meeting**; when parents (in particular) wanted to stress an issue for the future, when others did not fully know the student and wanted clarification or to make a suggestion. In addition it **placed the student in place of power from the very start of the meeting in that they were in charge of the video**, and in their eyes they could clearly see that everyone was focussed on them.

Institutionally it has made us **refocus on what our annual reviews (in particular at ages 16-19) look like from our student perspective** and we have begun a process of reshaping these.

What we learned

- Parent's that engaged with the process were very enthusiastic, especially when other family members such as siblings or grandparents were involved too.
- Being involved in the whole process was very important to students
- The video was used as a talking and clarification point by all at the review
- The time taken to edit the video probably equated to 7 hours of 1:1 staff support
- Students were inordinately proud of their work
- We need to revisit our review process
- Not all parents will engage with this kind of review

What we are taking forward

- We will definitely be using the movie as a transition tool to be given to the next provider of training, education or employment; so a fuller understanding of the young person's needs is imparted.
- Remodelling our reviews to possibly include an approach like this for all students; this will necessitate a significant change to P-16 students' time table.

How we are sharing it

Through LSIS project review

What advice we would give to others

- A video camera that looks like a video camera (as opposed to a stills camera with a video facility) gives the movie a more *serious* feel
- Involve the whole family in giving their views; siblings can give real and very honest insights into the young persons life
- Tripods make life much easier
- The PC you use needs to be up to the job otherwise you will cry!
- Use the movie as the opening to an annual review then people at the review will use it as a reference
- Let the young person introduce and play the movie- it gives them ownership of the movie and then the review
- It will take longer to edit the video than film it

‘My Future’ Films

Please contact Kris Williams at James Rennie School for further information and a copy of the films....they are well worth a look!!!

Thank you to all those who took part in this project.

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Contact information [r]: Kris Williams, James Rennie School, California Road, Carlisle, CA3 0BX. Tel. 01228 554280. E-mail adminoffice@jamesrennie.cumbria.sch.uk