

At the Movies, Green Screen Style

Beijing BISS International School's elementary students embrace green screen technology

By Shannon O'Dwyer

At Beijing BISS International School, students often produce movies to document and reflect on their learning. "Quiet on the set!" "Recording!" and "We've got it!" are common cries, as young children direct and film their own productions. These students are not passive consumers of media, but capable creators of multi-media texts.

Through movies, students can construct meaning and communicate understanding with greater creativity than ever before. They develop digital and visual literacy across every subject, as they engage in research, planning, editing, and collaboration to achieve the intended result. Once finalized, students share their message with a global audience by embedding movies in blogs.

Most recently, our students have embraced green screen technology. The ability to transport themselves anywhere in the world has facilitated even greater creativity and higher-level content in their films. Students select visuals more discerningly, and write sophisticated scripts to complement, explain or engage with the background.

Here is a sampler of six Green Screen Projects from the elementary school:

1. Story telling: Pre-K students wrote an adaptation of the much-loved book *Brown Bear, Brown*



Beijing BISS elementary students have put the green screen to work, for everything from music videos (above) to scientific pedagogy (below—photos courtesy of Beijing BISS/S. O'Dwyer).



Bear, What Do You See? Using a green screen, our youngest students jumped inside the book to narrate the text and act out their drawings. Each page came to life as the authors dramatized their work.

2. Sports reports: In PE, teams of students designed original games,

played them in class, and filmed each match. They then assumed the role of sports reporters, explaining the rules, equipment and scoring system, as the video rolled behind them.

3. Documentaries: During a science inquiry, students were

fascinated by images of natural disasters. They took on the role of television scientists, explaining cause and impact while crouching in front of active volcanoes, tsunamis and avalanches.

4. Reflections: Following a field trip, students collated photos and videos from their day at a farm. With these as backgrounds, they interviewed each other about new learning, connections and memorable moments.

5. Pop culture satire: During a food inquiry, students stepped onto the set of *MasterChef*. Standing before a judge, they explained how each ingredient was grown, harvested, transported and preserved before service.

6. Music videos: As part of an environmental unit, students created a music video to persuade the audience to reduce, reuse, and recycle paper. They recorded vocals and delivered the message in a whimsical, computer-generated forest.

In each project, there are several common elements. Most impor-

tantly, the movie itself is not the end goal. The purpose is always to create meaning and communicate understanding. Green screen technology is a powerful tool, which adds flexibility to the product and places creative control firmly in the hands of the students.

There are also other core skills involved, such as story-boarding, script-writing, and verbal communication, which are critical to the success of each product. Finally, while a painted (or draped) wall is the only requirement, and bright light is recommended, it is our e-learning coordinators who provided the mentoring, hands-on support and troubleshooting for truly effective technology integration.

With this model, every idea is possible, creativity flourishes, and learning is enhanced. And that's a wrap, folks! ●

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