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Week 1 Reflection

Using the video camera function on my Ipad, I created a video that allows me to introduce myself to my fellow classmates and teachers. This is necessary because online courses, most times, do not afford the class members to have face-to-face meetings that you would get in traditional classes. This is akin to the pen pal projects that are sometimes used (and used to be very common) in elementary classrooms today. Students write letters (we post reflections on readings/work) and sometimes exchange pictures (we have profile pictures) but, without an interactive exchange, it is very difficult to create a living, breathing person on the other side of those letters. Creating short videos let the viewers see a snippet of us – the us we want them to see. After deciding on the Web 2.0 tool to use to achieve the expected output (a mp4 file), we have to decide what we want to say in the allotted time. We need to decide on which device to use to create the file – Ipad, Flip camera, webcam, cell phone, etc. Then there is the staging – what is our background, is there enough light, what are we going to wear, how we will physically present ourselves. The next step is to bring all the pieces together in a set with the right atmosphere: is it quiet enough, are there outside noises that could distract from the video, do we want music in the background, what time will we do the taping. When all the pieces come together, we begin the video creation process, but unlike in real-life, face-to-face meetings we have the opportunity for do-overs. When the taping is done, we review what we’ve produced and make a determination of whether this video is accurately representing us in the way we want. We have less control of the image other people see in face-to-face meetings since we can’t “preview and edit” in real-time. When we are adequately satisfied with our video product, we upload it for others to see. Who can see it depends on many things: where we upload it, what permissions we grant or that are automatically granted, the form of the finished work and availability to viewers of compatible software, and how we publicize the work’s existence.

This is a difficult assignment for me, not because of the technology but because I am being asked to put myself on video and I really don’t like the way I look. It is hard enough knowing people see me like this every day but those images are not a lasting impression that can be replayed in harsh reality. The image people form of me from face-to-face contacts is tempered by the energy they receive during our interaction. That energy cannot be experienced in the vacuum of video much like texting and emailing do not include tone of voice, tempo, and inflection that audio contact relays. I have gone back and forth over which piece of technology to use: Ipad, webcam, flipcam; where to film; what should be in the camera’s eye; etc. I have even toyed with having someone stand in as my cameraperson thinking that they may be less critical than I am but then the question is: who to ask? It is Saturday night so I have 4 more days to complete this project and make those final decisions. Ultimately, I will have a video to submit because it is a requirement of the course, but I know I will have more pride in this reflection than in the video produced. I think this sheds a bit of light on one of the drawbacks of using technology to create a video of oneself – unless you can truly be proud of the “YOU” that is portrayed in the video, the core essence of your being will not truly be revealed to the viewers.

This key point needs to be held in the forefront when working with kids on creating videos of themselves as you will find some students flocking to be in front of the camera and others may be practically frozen with discomfort and fear. While repetition of the task may put to rest some of the problems, it is important to acknowledge their feelings and misgivings and find a way to help them practice in a way that builds confidence or fulfills the objectives without pushing them away from technology and video interactions. Whenever we use technology, it is important to show respect for individual preferences and allow alternate ways to reach the goals.

With all that said and done, it is time to get down to work on the assignment. Sixty seconds can feel like the blink of an eye or it can feel like time that will never end. I’ve created the script, revamped it, and tested how long it takes. I am just about at 60 seconds so it’s time to work on the setting and decisions about hair and clothing. That work took all my effort since I didn’t want to do the video and I procrastinated to the point that I was creating the actual video on Wednesday morning before heading to work for the day. I’m not happy with the product because I am severely disappointed with the image I present but there is only so much that I can do to change that at this moment. I uploaded the video from my Ipad to my dropbox . Viewing the video on my laptop, I was disappointed to find that it was upside down. I learned something new this morning – Apple products have embedded tags that tell the software how to orient the image/video and non-Apple products can’t read that tag! So it was off to Google to find out how to rotate my video right-side up so I could submit it for the assignment. After downloading some free software, I rotated my video and saved it, explicitly, as a MP4 file and uploaded it to the assignment area. Then it was off to work and hoping to finish the reflection and upload that before the 11pm deadline.