Using Videos to Transform Your Classroom

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**Introduction**:

This year I finally did something I’ve been wanting to do for years—put my lessons on video. And I am so mad I didn’t do it earlier. It has completely changed the way I teach, assign homework, and do makeup work. I save a great deal of time by following this method, and so can you. Videos are especially helpful if you are teaching computer applications—you can record your screen and not have to take any video of yourself. For the most part, I still teach all my lesson myself in class. The videos are there only for backup and late work. But you can use them in other ways as well. This is something new for me and I am still learning—I don’t have all the answers. But this is definitely something that has transformed the way I teach, and I look forward to continuing and improving what I’ve already done.

**Why should I do this?**

* Although it may seem time consuming to have to go and record your lessons, it saves you tons of time in the long run. You no longer have to re-teach it to every kid who was absent, and you can send it home as homework much easier
* Transparency—I find this is a great tool for parents. They can see that I have a functioning website. They can actually observe me teaching and know exactly what I’m covering and if I’m a good instructor. I actually added a signature on my email that says, “Assignments and step by step instructions available at <http://mrsreesrocks.weebly.com>”
* You are covered. When you have your work available and functional on a website, and you inform parents that it is there, it can really cover you if parents later complain about late work.

**How is it used in my classroom?**

1. **For Missing Work** - I recorded all my Word, Excel and Power Point assignments in CTE Intro in step by step videos. These videos are then put on my website, and also saved in out Student Common file. If students are absent, I can tell them they can do it at home by going to my website and downloading the instructions, starter files and then watch the videos. They can also come to my room before or after school or during our Wapiti Time and even then I set them up with the video. If they have questions I help them, of course, but most kids can figure it out with the video. I have headphones they can borrow so they don’t bother anyone else.
2. **Re-teaching** - I taught my kids how to do it myself, but then if they have questions, they can hurry and watch the video again. This is very helpful in something like power point. We have “wapiti time” for students who are behind—they come in needing to make up different assignments and it can be time consuming for me to get them all going. But with videos, all I have to do is direct them to the video and they can, for the most part, work on their own.
3. **Substitutes** - Sometimes you just have to be absent on a day when you have to teach a computer application. This way, the sub can play the video, stopping every few minutes for the kids to follow the directions, and then start it again. This is not, of course, as effective as if you taught it yourself, but at least you don’t lose a day and the kids still get it pretty well. You could also have the kids just do it independently at their desks on their own with headphones.
4. **Turn your class into an Online course** – I tried this 2nd semester with my 9th grade Computer Tech students. I don’t think 7th graders could handle it to the same extent, nor does it fit well with the purpose of CTE Intro. But for Computer Tech it was wonderful! To teach Word and Excel, and recorded a video they watch on their own at the start of each lesson, that shows them HOW to do certain features, but does NOT take them through the actual assignment step by step. After watching the video, they then pull up the directions and do the assignment—requiring them to retain and remember and re-apply what they learned from the video. The kids can go at their own pace, moving on to the next lesson as they finish the one before it. In this way, you don’t hold back the quicker kids, and the slower kids can go slower and not be penalized for it.

**What do I need?**

* **Video software** – There are probably a million programs for recording your computer, but the one that I started with is called *Snagit*. You can get a 30-day trial to try it out. This is a very simple and affordable program that will record your screen. BUT—it doesn’t allow you to edit AT ALL and limits you as to file types you can save in. I found it frustrating and limiting, so I got *Camtasia*, which is made by Techsmith as well. It’s a $300 program, but you can get a 30-day trial to try it out. It has been worth EVERY PENNY. It’s easy to use, gives you editing capabilities like cutting and combing clips and adding callouts, and you can save in any format or directly to Youtube. If you would like to use your iPad, there are apps like iFile and Screen Recorder that you can use, but I have never used them myself.
* **Microphone –** You must get a microphone, but they aren’t very expensive. You can get a microphone or for more money, a headset. These can range from $10 to $100+. I use a very cheap microphone and it works just great!
* **Headphones , Classroom Set –** (Optional) – This year I used my Grant money to purchase 40 sets of simple headphones—cost about $500. I keep them in a crate in my room. Then the kids can use them whenever they need to. Totally worth the investment!
* **Website with Video capabilities** (optional) – For me, putting my files on my website was one of my main concerns. I wanted my students to have access to them outside of school. If this is your goal, you need decide how you can make this happen. You could just post them on Youtube straight from Camtasia, but I wanted more control than that. I already had a free Weebly account, so I paid the $50 yearly subscription fee so that I would be a premium member and could post my videos easily. You can use many other avenues as well, such as a Wordpress site or a blog.

**What Mrs. Rees’ students are saying about her video methods:**

“I loved the video format, I could skip over what I already knew!”

“I liked how I could go back and watch the video again if I forgot how to do something. I also liked how we got to see how Mrs. Rees did the assignment and showed us exactly where to click and how to do things. It was a great example.”

“It is a very good way to teach, it helped me by showing how to perform a task and how I could do it at my own time, it was also nice to know that I could miss a day and not totally be behind on my work.”

“I think this is one of the best ways, because you are speaking to us AND showing what to do not only telling us like if you were teaching all the class together face to face. I think it was a bit easier doing it this way as well.”

“Using videos for teaching concepts worked wonderfully for me, because I could go back, and review the content again if I needed, or I could run it simultaneously while doing the work.”

“That was one of my favorite things from this class, it was good way of explaining a lot of information in an easy way!”

“I found it very useful to rewatch. It was probably what saved my grade, I owe those instruction videos.”