

Creating an Elementary School Video Environment

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Open Channel is an independent, non-profit corporation established to promote the concept of access television and to develop models for community television systems in New York and other communities. In 1972 Open Channel began working in an urban, public, elementary school interested in exploring the uses of ½ inch video. P.S. 145, in upper Manhattan, has a middle and lower middleclass population: two-thirds Spanish; one quarter black; and the rest, white and Oriental. The school's environment is pleasant for teachers and students alike, due largely to the efforts of the principal, and the teachers who are using open classroom and bi-lingual education techniques in their classes.

Funded by a two-year grant from the Edward John Noble Foundation, the program began with using three Sony portapak in three fourth-grade classes (A, B, and C). A and B are open classrooms with most kids reading on or about grade level. Classroom C is a traditional, teacher-centered class with children who are less self-directed, and who have lower reading scores. The staff for this project included an educational consultant – two days a week, a technical consultant – three days a week, and an on-site trainer – four days a week.

Month By Month

An outline of our activities will give an idea of how this project progressed.

August - Held two week workshop with four teachers and two paraprofessionals to familiarize them with the equipment.

September-October - began in classrooms – planned with teachers – met administration and other teachers – introduced video into the classroom – recorded day-to-day activities – encouraged paraprofessional use – began training students – more activities taped by kids – began weekly workshops with teachers and paraprofessionals.

November-December - Groups of four children from Classroom A went outside to make a tape "My Block" – children finished learning how to operate the equipment – teachers taped their classes in action – tapes shown to parents on Open School night, to illustrate how the open classroom works – kids began interviewing in different areas of the classroom – kids went out in groups of four (director, camera, sound, interviewer) to explore the neighborhood around the school and the kinds of

jobs people had, using questions posed by the class.

January-February - Class planned four stories as video plays, made costumes and scenery, and did all the production work – kids planned, researched, illustrated, and produced a videotape about the arts and crafts of the early American settlers (weaving, candlemaking, etc.) – children continued with neighborhood project and showed their tapes to the whole class – work began with the guidance counselor, recording sessions as an evaluative and training tool.

March-April - Kids from A did a study of television commercials aimed at children – commercials recorded from TV – kids visited public hearings on children's commercials – kids made and evaluated their own commercials for fictional products – B children began working in their video corner, with storyboard or comments written for each tape



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and class showings for evaluation – C kids taped interview with police regarding incidents of crimes in the neighborhood of the school - tape shown to other classes in the school – C kids made a tape "How to Protect Yourself from Strangers" in Spanish and English – parents helped make a documentary about the school, shown over cable and to Parents Association meeting – concert taped at school by volunteer professionals and shown over cable – trained video helpers for each class to aid other children in setting up equipment.