

From one Media teacher to another:

SpaceDraft. Get on it.

ACTIVELY KILLING THE VIBE.

Picture this:

You have just introduced the term's production task to your Year 9 Media class. You've shown them examples, thrown out excellent ideas, hyped them up to create masterpieces, and they are super excited to get started. You bring out the printed storyboards/open the digital version and announce

"Ok! Time to start ... PLANNING!"

Eyes glaze over.

Excited chatter stops.

Idea globes fade out.

Mood drops.



Planning.

The word middle schoolers roll their eyes at. Hard. It is the stage of any educational project that derails the student's creative momentum.

Obviously as Media teachers we understand the importance of the pre-production stage of filmmaking. Which is why we insist on students slogging through the planning phase. And don't get me wrong – I know there are some types of learners that love producing an intricate, well-thought-out storyboard.

But I also know (as I know you do too) that students approach their learning in different ways. Many of our students find that making storyboards or creating shot lists blocks their creative flow. It disengages their interest and takes up precious class time.

Yet pre-production has to happen.



"A programme that gamifies pre-production for students? Sign. Me. Up."

Students are engaging with learning content in very different ways to those we taught ten, even five years ago.

This has been observed, discussed, and researched to some degree within the sphere of educational academia. Yet, in the classroom, teachers have experienced this change first-hand, and are feeling it keenly. One of the most noticeable changes has been students' lack of perseverance at tasks that don't offer instant gratification like of which they receive in other activities.

We all know that it has become increasingly difficult to compete with their favourite online gaming / social media/ streaming platforms.

Many educators baulk at the concept that education must even contemplate competing with these platforms. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the last two years has expediated the online presence of schools' teaching and learning programmes.



It has become - increasingly apparent that we are already competing within the online space, as education is being provided more and more, well, online. Covid lockdowns, restrictions to public locations, isolation regulations have forced schools to offer their learning programmes in an online format, to ensure they are 'remote ready'. So, whether we like it or not, whether we are ready or not, we are competing for student attention and retention. We are fighting to keep them engaged.



Back in the early days of the pandemic, Lucy and I first met in a Zoom meeting. She described the concept of SpaceDraft as a tool for planning across space and time. Within the first minute of our discussion, I knew this would be perfect for Media students. A programme that gamifies pre-production for students?

Sign. Me. Up.

"It's literally like the students make a film before they make a film."

And three years later it has delivered exactly what Lucy said it would in our first meeting. It's interactive, fast, simple to learn, easy to use, and provides an instant visual representation of what students are planning. They drop in a pin, map it from point A to point B, and hit play. It's literally like the students make a film before they make a film.

LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

One of the other applications that SpaceDraft provides has been a game changer in our Media teaching and learning programmes. The SpaceDraft team has enabled the use of Google Maps within the programme, thus facilitating location scouting for students who want to shoot outside of the school. However (obviously), students can't leave school to go location scouting and must do it in their own time, relying on family or friends to drive them, and without a teacher to guide them through this important step of pre-production.



SUPPORTING THE NEURODIVERSE LEARNER

Once we had our students using SpaceDraft for their pre-production, it became apparent very quickly that there are other applications within the Media curriculum this programme is perfect for.

We have branched out in our department and have used for assessments such as producing podcasts, vodcasts/video essays, and Media analysis. We also use it as a teaching tool to present filmmaking concepts and practical techniques. But it has been the unexpected success of engaging our neurodiverse students from the beginning of our course. Historically in my classroom, the neurodiverse students in Media struggle with two main components of the content; timelines and communication in collaboration. Yet using SpaceDraft, these students move through the planning stage quickly and communicate far more effectively with their team than ever before. This enables them to engage deeply with a practical activity and gives them more time to hone their filmmaking skills.

"A game changer in our Media teaching & learning programmes."