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Ensemble Video Enables Asynchronous Learning for 8th Grade Science Teacher

AMPLIFIED CASE STUDY



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At a Glance

Challenges

- Find K12-friendly alternative to YouTube for sharing video tutorials with students
- Facilitate student upload of video screencast projects
- Share video lessons with students in an undistracted space

Benefits

- Enabled asynchronous learning.
- Facilitated easy student and parent access to education materials
- Provided dynamic video playlist to archive digital field trips and online class sessions
- Prevented students from falling behind when they missed class
- Allowed teacher freedom to utilize class time for small group and one-on-one discussion

Summary

Jasper Fox, Sr. is an award-winning science teacher at Lakeland Copper Beech Middle School in Westchester County, NY. With more than a decade of classroom experience, Jasper promotes blended learning in his student-centered, asynchronous classroom. He currently teaches eighth-grade general science and Regents Earth Science courses.

Recipient of a Distinguished Technology Teacher Pioneer Award from the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC), Jasper hosts *The Learning Lab with Jasper Sr.* podcast on BAM Radio Pulse, a social radio network focused on education, and is nominated for a 2014 Bammy Award. Jasper blogs about his adventures at jasperfoxsr.blogspot.com and maintains an active Twitter presence at @jsprfox.

Jasper focuses on techniques that ensure technology use is engaging, exciting, and provides a transformative experience for students. He exemplifies what's possible when educators create simple, engaging videos to enhance teaching and learning. Jasper also empowers students to share knowledge and deepen understanding by creating their own instructional videos.

Ensemble Video - Jasper Fox, Sr.

Challenge

Like most teachers, Jasper began his career determined to get the most out of class time, and reach every student. But as he went on, he began to question whether the status-quo teaching model (lecture, homework, quiz, test – rinse and repeat) was the best way to accomplish his goals.

“I would sit at my desk on Fridays during test time, and I would be really bored,” Jasper said. He began to add up the time spent passively administering tests and quizzes.

“I thought about it, and I have a 40-week school year. So, that’s 40 days I’m missing of instructing or helping because of tests,” he said. “I saw it as wasted time, and I thought there’s got to be a better way. When you also factor in in a typical classroom format – Monday is lecture, Friday is quiz, right? That’s 80 days in a school year. That’s really profound, to me.”

Discovery

Around this time, Jasper discovered flipped learning. In a nutshell, classroom “flipping” is a teaching model that upends the traditional lecture/homework approach. Basic instructional content is provided in video format for students to consume at home, and class time is used to tackle assignments. This essentially moves the teacher from the front of the classroom, and into more of a coach or guide role, creating a student-centered learning experience.

“Over that summer, I just started



checking Twitter, and found the Flipped Learning Network Ning site,” said Jasper. “There were one or two videos on there that I watched on screencasting, so I started screencasting everything. And from there, I just started using whatever worked for me. I pick ideas from everywhere.”

Over time, Jasper moved beyond the flipped learning model, into more of an asynchronous approach (more on that later). But several flipclass tenets have stayed with him, namely the student-centered

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classroom environment, and the use of videos to enhance learning.

Jasper found that students connected better with the curriculum when he used video to illustrate how concepts learned in class are relevant outside the classroom. He began creating short videos on his way to work, to demonstrate weather patterns. “I was able to show the kids ‘When you see these high clouds, that means it’s going to rain in two days’. Then two days later I was able to show them it was raining.”

Students responded positively, and seemed more engaged in the curriculum, so Jasper ran with the idea. He has been adding to his video library ever since, and empowering students to create their own instructional videos to share their knowledge with the rest of the class. He maintains a categorized Ensemble Video Playlist, embedded on his teacher website, where students can easily access all his archived videos.

Why Not YouTube?

As Jasper began to incorporate more video in his classroom, his requirements for an online video platform expanded. He started out using YouTube, but soon ran into some common obstacles.

First, K-12 school districts are required by the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to implement filtering to block adult, illegal, or offensive content from minors. YouTube has videos that fall outside CIPA guidelines, forcing filters to block access to the site.

Second, free online video platforms like YouTube present distractions for students. Everyone knows how hard it is to stick with educational programming when cat videos and blooper reels are a click away.

And third, YouTube is not set up to allow easy management of multiple users uploading content to a single channel, which complicated Jasper's back-end process for student video projects. "What would have to happen was that somehow the student would have to get their video onto our local shared server. Then I would need to look at the raw file, upload, and name the file onto the district YouTube channel. So if I have 75 students, and I have them doing a few videos a year, it just becomes time-consuming."

Enter Ensemble Video.

In 2012, the Lakeland Central School District bought into Ensemble Video, a video content management and publishing



platform for education, brought to area school districts by the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center (LHRIC) since 2009.

LHRIC is a nonprofit consortium providing educational and administrative technology services to 62 school districts in Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties.

Ensemble Video is an easy-to-use online video platform, built by educators for use in K-12 and higher education settings across the globe. Ensemble offers a range of deployment options to fit the needs of each unique organization, and works in harmony with most mobile devices, lecture capture systems, screencast apps, video editing programs, and other complimentary video and web technologies.

LHRIC school districts uses Ensemble to meet all their video management and publishing needs, including school events like plays,

sports games, and holiday concerts; PR and marketing videos; school board meetings; event speakers, conferences, and award ceremonies; how-to videos to educate teachers and staff on new technology adopted by the districts; community events involving the schools; classroom guest speakers; informational videos about relevant policies; graduation and moving-up ceremonies; professional development and curriculum videos; student presentations; calls to action promoting school charity initiatives; and the list goes on.

Jasper is the first LHRIC teacher to use Ensemble to incorporate innovative teaching methods in his classroom. Using an online video platform built specifically for education has alleviated the pressure points Jasper experienced with YouTube, and provided a tool to enhance teaching, learning, and communication in his eighth grade science classroom.



Asynchronous Classroom

Jasper's classroom is always evolving as he incorporates and refines new ideas and techniques. Over the past several years, he has moved away from the flipped learning paradigm, into an asynchronous classroom model. Asynchronous learning uses digital and online tools to facilitate learning outside the constraints of time and place. It's a student-centered (rather than teacher-centered) approach, focused on peer-to-peer interactions.

Jasper creates a variety of instructional videos, which take the place of him lecturing in front of the classroom. Some provide explanations or demonstrations, while others relate the curriculum to the world outside the classroom.

"The most powerful change that I have made in the last ten years is completely removing whole-class direct instruction," said Jasper. "By using short, interesting, and engaging videos to provide instruction when needed, I'm able to focus my attention to small

groups or individuals in class who need feedback and help. Being freed up during class to circulate among the students allows formative assessment to be continually in place, and facilitates timely responses to student questions."

Jasper provides students with a "weekly menu" which lays out their activities for the week, and provides the freedom for them to move through their work at their own pace, during and outside of class. They are permitted to watch Jasper's instructional videos, and to take and retake their assessments whenever they need to, to be successful.

The videos are provided as resources. Students are not required to watch, and are free to access them whenever and wherever is best for them – at home, in class, on their mobile devices, and during Jasper's online class sessions. "Students love the free-flowing nature of the class," he said. "They really respect and appreciate the freedom to learn when it's best for them."

Digital Field Trips

Jasper inspires students to apply their knowledge outside the classroom with digital field trips. "When I go to interesting places, I make a video, so students can come along," he said. "It helps me model my interest in science. I can show them that on the weekend, I'm interested in this. I think that adds a lot to my students' experience."

Before winter break, this year, Jasper made DIY astrolabes (ancient astronomical instruments for measuring the altitude of stars) for his students, and then took one with him on vacation. "When I went to Florida, I used it, and the angle of the star that we were measuring was very different there [than back in New York]. So I made a video to show them. It was very cool to draw

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Student responses to video learning...

66% Like the chance to review lessons with videos

80% Watch more than half the videos

84% Rewatch videos to enhance learning

100% Enjoy using technology in the classroom

100% Utilize videos, even when not required

those connections. Nobody is going to listen if I come back and say 'Well, I was in Florida, and...' Then I've lost the entire class."

Online Class

To provide students with extra support, Jasper offers online office hours in the evenings, using the GoToMeeting video conferencing platform.

"I've found that videos video can be incredibly isolating, especially for students who are struggling with the content. That can snowball into a kid really not knowing anything," he explained.

Jasper uses online class to further involve his students in collaborative learning. It's important to him that students are not alone in their education.

"What's cool about doing a video conference and watching the video with them is we can pause it, we can talk about it, we can go back. A discussion can build around it. We can go through practice question sets. We can also work collaboratively in Google Docs. It

becomes a little more interactive of a video, rather than a kid just sitting home watching by him or herself."

"He usually does online classes before tests, or just for extra help," said a student. "It really does help. It helps you understand better."

Jasper records the sessions using Camtasia from TechSmith, an Ensemble Video technology partner, and uploads them directly to his Media Library.

Using Ensemble's dynamic Video Playlist feature, Jasper has created a publishing "category" dedicated to online class sessions, allowing him to make them available for students at home, at school, and on their mobile devices.

"These archived sessions provide an additional resource for students to review content and discussion," he said. "Modern tools allow us to connect more frequently and engage in quality discussion at virtually any time and place. I'm proud that we are pushing the boundaries of what is possible in today's school environment in a thoughtful and productive way."

Student-Created Content

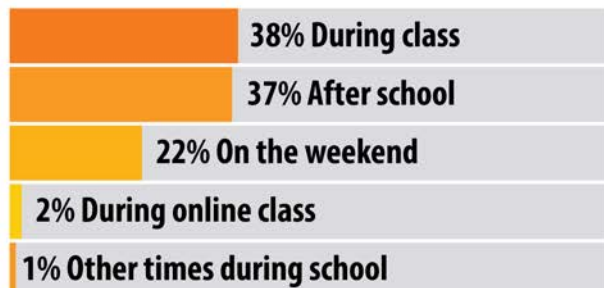
Jasper further involves students in active learning by giving them the opportunity to create their own course content using video technology. "This is when video instruction really becomes meaningful," he said. "When students become creators, they use higher-order thinking skills, and increase their understanding by being able to explain concepts and ideas."

When the class is studying rocks, for example, a student might use video to explain the characteristics of a particular rock they found outside of class. Students also complete ungraded "screencast challenge" projects, where they use tools like Google Presentations, iMovie, or Doceri to record an on-screen presentation about a particular topic.

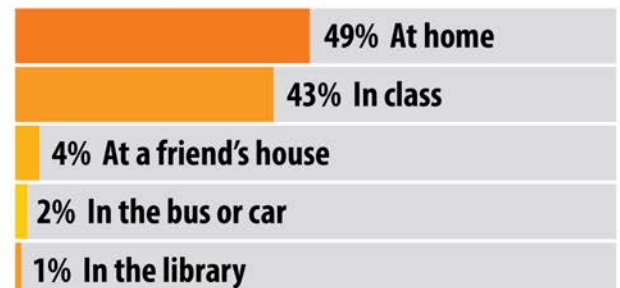
"During the process, a student will become able to explain a topic in



When do students watch?



Where do students watch?



their own words, which means they develop expertise," said Jasper. "This signals a deep amount of knowledge not normally found with more traditional, passive methods of instruction."

Jasper's students enjoy creating screencasts, and recognize how the process helps them learn. "Making your own screencast helps you learn and understand the topic more," said an eighth grade student. "I also feel like I am helping others understand something, which is a good feeling. It's also just fun to create something on my own."

Video Dropbox

One of Jasper's favorite Ensemble Video features is the mobile-friendly Video Dropbox, which provides an easy, secure way for students to upload their content from anywhere with an internet connection.

"The Ensemble Video Dropbox

application truly shines for transcoding, managing, and publishing student videos," said Jasper.

With just a few clicks, he can configure a Dropbox and enable students to submit videos from their phones, iPads, laptops, or desktop computers – at home, at school, or on the go.

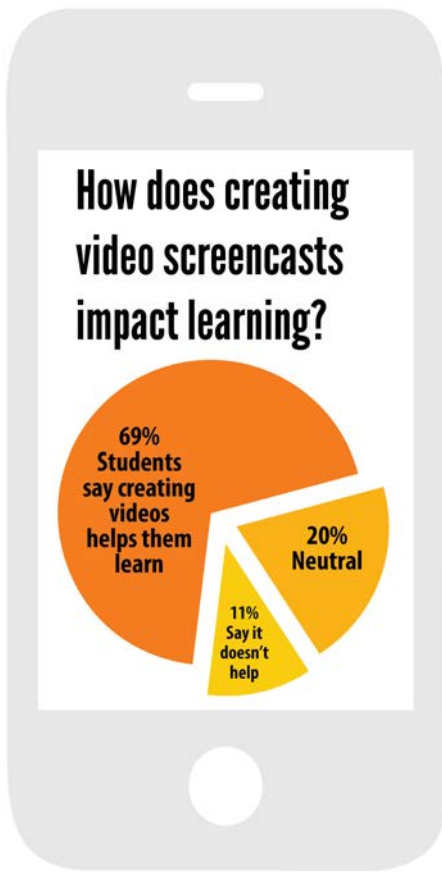
"The Video Dropbox feature encourages anytime, anywhere, intrinsic learning because it is always available. Ensemble is able to ingest just about any file type, from just about any device students can throw at it. And providing the Video Dropbox link on the same page as my student Video Playlist keeps everything centralized."

"With minimal hassle, each student can upload his or her unique content, easily and quickly," said Jasper. "Once uploaded to my Media Library, I moderate the videos and publish them. This

removes many hours of uploading the videos myself, which usually would need to be done on-site due to students saving the files on school servers."

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Results

"I strive to provide a learning environment that is interesting enough to students that they want to continue exploring on their own," said Jasper. "Ensemble Video has eased a lot of pressure points for me in doing that."

"Ensemble enables me to share my own content with my students in an uncluttered space," said Jasper. "There's a lot to be said about that. On the Internet, your attention is drawn in so many different directions. I really like how the Ensemble Playlist is focused and customizable."

100 percent of Jasper's students say they take advantage of his instructional videos to some degree. 80 percent watch more

than half the videos, which speaks to their usefulness as learning resources, considering students aren't required to watch them.

"Designing engaging activities where students create their own content is essential," said Jasper. "Placing these activities within the context of modern, web-based tools and mobile technology ensure students can showcase their learning and growth, 24/7."

Jasper's student screencast challenge empowers students to use video tools to deepen their knowledge and share it with their peers. The Ensemble Video Dropbox provides an easy way for them to submit their videos.

"Before, the student would somehow have to get onto our local shared server, and then I would need to look at the raw file, upload, and name the file onto the district channel," said Jasper. "But this Video Dropbox feature just blows it away."

Future

Jasper plans to continue building his video library. He feels strongly that educators should create their own videos, rather than using canned content from the Internet.

"It builds a better connection with students when they hear their own teacher's voice using examples from their own classroom, and the right vocabulary," he said. "If I'm using a video I get off the Internet, there may be mistakes in it, state standards from a different state, or different problem-solving methods,

and that might create confusion instead of understanding. So to me it's essential to create your own videos."

Jasper also plans to livestream more of his digital fieldtrips. "It's something that's been on my to-do list for a while. I can let the students know I'm going to be streaming on Saturday morning, and put a link on my website. They can follow along with me, and I can archive it in Ensemble Video for later, which is really cool."

Anyone can put an iPad in a student's hands. But Jasper understands the importance of employing technology in a deliberate way, as a tool to layer the classroom experience to reach more students, rather than to sit back while kids zone out with screens.



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This report is part of the amplified case study:

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