

PACIFIC VOICES

Kosrae Project Integrates Technology, Supports Culture

By Kathy Busick

It was a quiet Saturday morning in Kosrae. Most of the students at Sansrik Elementary School were on their way to practice athletics for Education Week. In the room that serves as a computer lab, four 8th graders and their teacher, Lipton Tilfas, were awaiting the arrival of a Pacific Voices staff member to begin producing their own iMovie. The students had committed their morning to the project, setting a noon deadline so that they could join the athletics practice in the afternoon.

It was Tilfas's decision to involve his students directly in all aspects of the project, from choosing the topic to postproduction. The day before, Tilfas had asked the group to think of something to demonstrate. They came up with the idea of doing a Kosraean chant. Early the next morning, one student came to school and repeated a chant his mother had taught him. Together, the students prepared to demonstrate how the chant would have been used in the past: to help people lift an object that could not be moved with normal human strength.

As a first step, students made titles or drawings related to the chant. As the students explained in their narration:

Very few today know the chants that were a large part of Kosraean culture in the past. The language used is ancient, the meaning behind specific chants uncertain. The chants were used with respect and great care, and each had a purpose and power. There is debate these days about whether chanting should be taught directly in school, or taught about, because each is much more than its words, and the knowledge of chanting is sacred.

The next step in the process was to spark ideas for their project. A question arose – could the iMovie be done in Kosraean? The answer was “yes.” The students' ideas for the project began to gel as they listed things to include in their movie.

Next, students went outside to pick a spot for their recording. They chattered back and forth, found props to use, and agreed on a location. They used a digital still camera to record scenes they might want to include later. After a quick demonstration of setup and operation of the video camera, the students began videotaping, making sure that each had a chance to take a turn behind the viewfinder.

Connecting the video camera to an iMac computer, the group sat down to watch their work. First came smiles, giggles, and a little teasing – then a second viewing as students began to take a more critical look at their product.

Next, the students learned how to edit video. They decided what to keep, where to cut, and what else might be needed. With the 12 o'clock deadline looming, the students took turns making the cuts while the others crowded around. Drawings, titles, credits, and music were added.

In the middle of this process noon came and went, and the students asked to stay longer. When they finally came up for air it was after 2 p.m. They were tired, happy, and already talking about what they wanted to do next.



Photo: Kavita Rao

▷ Pacific Voices projects integrate technology into projects that support Pacific island cultures. Here, students choose a setting for a video on Kosraean chants.

For this project, “integrating technology into learning” was more than an abstraction. It was reality. Technology became a set of tools for significant learning in social studies, language arts, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and mathematics. School and home cultures came together in the service of learning.

What began that morning as something to be completed quickly so that they could join their classmates on the practice field turned into a six-hour marathon. One key to students' engagement and successful learning is that the project was indeed *theirs*. Another is the open nature of Pacific Voices projects. Teachers and students bring their cultures with them into production, drawing upon school and community knowledge and working collaboratively to create a piece that reflects the strengths of both.

Kathy Busick is a PREL Senior Affiliate. She currently serves as an assessment resource for Pacific Voices projects.

