Introduction:

Are you looking for a fun and engaging activity you can do with your child or student in these virtual times? Have you considered making your own cellphilm?

You may be asking yourself- what is a cellphilm? Well, a cellphilm uses everyday on hand technology like your tablet or smartphone to create your own video, so you do not need any special editing software and you most likely already are an expert in making your own videos or taking pictures. The idea here is that videos can be made by everyday citizens (of any age) using their own (or teacher’s/parents’) technology alongside their existing digital skill set!

But how is that different from taking a video with your phone? Well, it’s only different because it is more deliberate in the sense that you are not just capturing something you find cute or alarming or captivating. You can do that too. But in cellphilming you are addressing a particular issue, concern, or theme. For example, you could make a video about how a stop sign would improve safety and traffic in your neighborhood and send it to your local MP or simply it could be a video addressing the theme or concern. You could explore the question ‘what does well being look like to you?’ This can be shared with others, as a piece to reflection, or simply archived for later viewing.

This guide is specifically aimed at helping parents, teachers and other facilitator teach young children between the ages of 4 to 10 years of age how to create their own cellphilm. This guide will introduce the reader to the various steps involved in making and facilitating the process of creating a cellphilm with young participants.

Some topics that will be addressed in this guide are the following, introducing your participant to a cellphilm and steps in making one, introducing mobile technology to your child or young participant, filming 101 are just some topics that will be covered in this guide.

Introducing Your Child to a Mobile Device:

Introducing and or even letting your child or a young participant use a cellphone is a tricky and even controversial request, particularly when reading or hearing about the possible side effects of too much screen time, which is why it is important to find ways to properly introduce a digital device to your child or a young participant. Therefore, it is important to introduce your child or young participant to the idea of a cellphone as an educational tool and something that should only be used with and alongside a parent or facilitator. The idea here is to both to set boundaries and destigmatize the cellphone as something that is a ‘time-waster’ or ‘entertainment’ and re-signify as a learning/educational tool. This will also help parents who may be hesitant about introducing their children to cell phones. Explain the potential risks that come with a cellphone, but also teach them that in their hands they have an important and powerful device that allows them to learn, to express important messages to the world, and also stay connected and safe to people they care about.
What is Cellphilming?

Explain to your child or young participant that a cellphilm is a video made on any type of mobile device, whether it be a tablet, cell phone, or even iPod, made on purpose to express, share or explore an idea further for yourself or other people.

Tip: This can be a great place to introduce the idea of who their audience is, their family and friends or someone beyond their immediate circle of people, who is that and why?

Also take the time to watch some cellphilm videos with your young participants to familiarize them with what a cellphilm is and the variety of approaches people take up when creating their videos. Make sure they are short (so as to keep their attention) and age-appropriate. You can consult the McGill's International Cellphilm Festival website at https://internationalcellphilmfestival.com/ and there on the homepage if you scroll down, you will find an array of our past entries. Some fun and kid-friendly entries include 2019 Be Kind to Bees Produced by Vanessa Gold & Mitchell McLarnon, 2015 the Mountain by Patrick Richard, which is not to say that the others are not wonderful entries only that they deal with more involved themes or ideas.

What is a prompt?

Prompts are tricky for anyone to develop, work with, and even comprehend at times, which is why they must be clear and easy to grasp. Of course, they can't be prescriptive and are specific to context to context depending on the issue or matter being addressed.

When introducing a prompt to a young participant, mention that the prompt helps guide and shape what the video will be about, so it is important to have a fun discussion, keep it interactive and ask them questions surrounding the prompt to help them think about the prompt. Some examples can include, a) A day in the life of… , b) The best part of my day …

Steps in making a cellphilm: The following are the steps involved in making your own cellphilm

Step 1: Brainstorm

Step 2: Storyboard

Step 3: Film your cellphilm

Step 4: Upload & Screening

Step 5: Reflection & Future Action

I find that when working with young children the brainstorming activity, which can be a bit abstract for younger children to comprehend can be combined with the storyboarding activity to help them think through their ideas.
Using a No-Editing Required Approach:

Many people think you need to know or own editing software to create your own video, but you can create your very own cellphilm with a No-Editing-Required approach. That is as the name suggests, is making a cellphone video without having to edit it per se, but this requires carefully planned shots with the aid of a well-planned out storyboard.

There are two variations of this approach are as follows

1. No-Editing-Required: Shoot, pause, shoot, pause, shoot (carefully planned out shots)
2. One-Shot Shoot: Shoot the entire cellphilm without pausing (carefully storyboarding and planning)

When working with images with a participant of any age it always requires the careful consideration of protecting their identity and ensuring their safety, which of course requires a careful discussion informing them about the risks of sharing or uploading any videos. Also depending on age this step of sharing or uploading a video should be left to the parent or teacher’s discretion. If you want to learn more about issues of Visual Ethics consult: Wiles, R., Prosser, J., Bagnoli, A., Clark, A., Davies, K., Holland, S., & Renold, E. (2008). Visual ethics: Ethical issues in visual research.

Facilitators like parents or teachers will also be concerned with trying to protect and secure their child or young participants’ identity. Some ways of doing this can include using pseudonyms or making a video that does not actually show the young participant that is a no face video, it could be hands making something or it could be drawings with a voice-over. Also, participation does not mean having to be in the video, the young participant can be filming you, or developing the storyboard, so it is important to also understand and explain that participation takes on many forms. Plus, this way you can ensure greater safety of your participants or child.

Tip: Keep the device on airplane mode or offline to ensure that the young participant cannot go online unnecessarily or accidently
Storyboarding:

The storyboarding of a cellphilm is one of the most critical elements to developing a good cellphilm. This requires careful discussion, brainstorming, and planning of the shots and overall message of the philm.

The storyboard is perhaps one of the most involved steps in the cellphilming process because it requires one to think of your cellphilm in a more tangible and visual way that is from an abstract idea to a more concrete vision. Remember you can’t film ideas, but you can however film people, places or things which can help you express that idea or vision.

Here are some questions to keep in mind when teaching your child or young participant to help them think of the visual elements in their cellphilm:

1. What? (theme, idea)  Who? (interview), where? (Location), When (present or past), why? (raison d'etre- what is the purpose of or for your film)
2. Will you use narrations, subtitles, music?
4. Genre (PSA, Talk-show, Documentary, music video, stop motion animation) and who is your Audience
The second step here is to take a piece of paper and divide it into four to six boxes for each scene. Also, just as importantly when working with kids, keep this step lighthearted, interactive and fun, make sure to ask lots of questions to help them think out their ideas. Depending on how old your participant is, but you can also help them draw out their images, which you can combine with brainstorming the prompt and planning out their vision. Also, don’t forget to number each scene in order help map out the actual next step of filming each scene- think of this as a visual map! Lastly when doing a no editing required approach make sure the title of your film comes first and the credits are your last shot. You can simply use a paper to do both or you can get creative.

**Familiarizing Your Participant with the Mobile Device and How to Philm:**

Most children have at some point whether on purpose or not have held a cellphone to either watch a video or play a game or simply because they are curious. However, it is important to take a moment to show your child or young participant how to hold a cellphone when making a cellphilm, which can take some practice and a little patience. Keep in mind small hands at times tend to block the lens, so be mindful of this by standing behind them while making their film.

Second, instruct them how to hold the camera horizontally and to stay as still as possible when filming. Also remind the child not to walk when taking their shots, walking will only result in a shaking or grainy video, so try and find a good angle before, which is why it is important to frame or practice your shot before you press record.

Third, instruct your participant how to switch the camera function on/off; start and stop filming, review their footage and find out how many seconds they filmed.

Try not to hold the cellphone, give it to the child. It is important for the participant to do this themselves to get familiar and comfortable with the process of filming. Also, remind the participant to hold the phone horizontally, so as to get a bigger image and avoid having a film blocked in by two black lines.

Ask the person to film the person opposite him/her and ask the person 2 questions, such as what is your name? What do you like to do for fun?

Watch the videos and then repeat the process until the young participant is comfortable and confident to film a shot or two themselves. Also watch the video to see what can be improved, perhaps the sound quality needs to be enhanced, so if this is the case remind the participant to stand closer to the scene, they are filming to ensure the best quality of sound.
Screening and Reviewing and Thinking about Your cellphilm:

Now that you have successfully created a cellphilm, following the steps outlined in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZFSCsIDL4c&t=1408s you will want to screen or watch it together. In this step you will want to get your child or young participant to think about their cellphilm asking them such questions about their work. Here are some guiding questions…

1. What did they like about it? Why?
2. What did they not like about it? Why?
3. How would you improve it?
4. Who do they want to see their work? Why? And why not?

If working with younger children perhaps make a chart with two columns, one with a smiley face and the other with a sad face, so that they can more easily express what they liked or did not like about the video and how they can improve it. Again, here also ask who they want to see the video and or why? Here you can discuss with parents or guardians of the young participants, what to do with the footage, whether to upload it, archive it or simply erase it. In this step, you can also ask the children whether they enjoyed the activity if so why? If not, why not?

Have fun and enjoy the process of making your own cellphilm!