



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: The "Gill Challenge" Program
Program Category: Communications

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Program Overview

The purpose of the "Gill Challenge" program at Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) was to address curriculum challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program employed a virtual teaching partnership between teachers at the Center for Communications and Media Relations at Varina High School and the Television Services staff within HCPS' Department of Communications and Public Relations.

The program created new ways to teach 10th-grade students in the Communications Writing and Production I class critical editing skills. When the school year became virtual due to the pandemic, instructors needed to teach students how to edit video footage safely from their homes without requiring them to film video in their communities. This virtual partnership ensured the safety of students and teachers while enabling students to learn necessary skills.

Six projects were developed and executed between October 2020 and February 2021. The projects took their name from John Gill of Television Services, who conceived and introduced them. He joined classes using Microsoft Teams to teach background information, and provided "challenge" assignments. Teachers supplemented the challenges by teaching software skills and video editing tips. Through the partnership with HCPS Television Services, students in the class gained a myriad of crucial video editing skills.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

When the global pandemic hit the U.S. in March 2020, Henrico County Public Schools, like so many school divisions across the nation, shuttered its doors to in-person learning and turned to virtual instruction. As the 2020-21 school year approached, it was clear that virtual learning would become a staple of the school year. Challenged with the task of teaching journalism students who

were learning from home — without access to video editing equipment or video cameras — teachers in HCPS’ Center for Communications and Media Relations sought ways to keep the program relevant to instruct students using limited resources. As part of the approved curriculum, sophomores learn how to properly frame a shot, shoot interviews, edit interviews, incorporate sound bites, learn how to shoot, and edit B-roll footage, create and edit voice-overs, and eliminate and avoid jump cuts while editing. Normally, the teachers use a variety of hands-on classroom projects to help teach students these skills.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The program is worthy of a VACo Award because it is innovative. It blends hands-on concepts with virtual teaching while addressing curriculum voids created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program was the result of collaboration among existing employees at a minimal cost to Henrico County while improving student results. Participating students will be prepared for the next level of the communications curriculum as high school juniors and have had a unique opportunity during the pandemic to work with communications professionals in the field. These students are learning how to shoot video with later edits in mind, which will, in turn, make them stronger videographers.

How Program Was Carried Out

The HCPS Center for Communications and Media Relations at Varina High School in Henrico County, Virginia, is a specialty program for high school students in grades 9-12. Admittance to this specialty program is by application only, and it is an honor to be selected. Qualified students pursue a rigorous college-preparatory program of studies. Ordinarily, the Center’s students learn in traditional classrooms, as well as in a modern television studio, two computer labs and a

presentation studio. Students master skills in writing, speaking, TV broadcasting, multimedia, social media, photography, graphic design, journalism, advertising, and public relations.

The COVID-19 pandemic and virtual teaching challenged the ability to teach the specialty center's required skills, the director contacted John Gill, video production coordinator with the school division's Department of Communications and Public Relations, to brainstorm ways to teach the skills presented in the approved curriculum. The director and her team had previously worked with the Department of Communications and Public Relations on various projects, including livestreaming sports events.

The program's objectives were to give students the opportunity to communicate visually through video while building on and expanding their video editing knowledge.

The program series started in fall 2020 and will conclude in June 2021. While the development of the program did not take long to develop or implement, the benefits and impact have been instrumental to the program and the students' learning. To date, there have been six "challenges" developed, which are listed below. Gill joined classes using Microsoft Teams to teach background information and provide a challenge (a scenario or problem and tasked the sophomores with solving). Center teachers supplemented the challenges by teaching necessary software skills and offering editing tips and tricks. The Center teachers also graded the challenges. To date, the Gill Challenge projects are:

- **Challenge 1: Sports montage.** In this lesson students paired music with sports footage to create an engaging sports montage.
- **Challenge 2: Sports promo.** Students focused on photo or video shot selection, teaching them to be more critical about the shots they use. The challenge was to create a

promotional segment using the same footage from the sports montage. Students added shots to the beginning of the promo that support their desired concept. For example, one says "Home of the Hits" while another says, "We know how to celebrate."

- **Challenge 3: Sequence editing.** Students were provided with various video segments. The challenge was to combine two or three shots to create a sequence. The illusion created by the sequence tricks the brain into thinking there were multiple cameras present at an event. The footage included a mix of wide shots and close-ups of an action. Examples included sawing wood, hammering a nail, and shooting a basketball.
- **Challenge 4: Sound bites.** In this challenge, students assembled multiple sound bites to create a common theme.
- **Challenge 5: "Teachers Are Super."** In this challenge, students blended "nat pops" (natural bursts of sound), interview audio and music levels to create a teacher spotlight piece. They had to follow a storyboard and set audio tracks at appropriate levels, according to the direction of the storyboard.
- **Challenge 6: "The Conversation."** In this project, students assembled a multi-camera interview of a conversation recorded in multiple takes. The challenge was to select the best takes and edit them to create a seamless conversation using wide and tight shots

The financial constraints in education have affected the Center's program, curricula and equipment procurement. These constraints have hit the program especially hard during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the school year became entirely virtual, the Center was forced to find a video software editing solution that would be equitable equity to all students. The software

needed to be affordable yet robust enough to handle the files, editing commands and desires of our teachers and students. In our normal classroom setting, students use Macintosh computers equipped with FinalCut Pro software. However, since each high school student in Henrico County is provided with a school-division-owned Windows laptop, the Center teaching staff decided to use the equipment the students would have access to at home. Teachers selected a web-based editing program called WeVideo.

Financing and Staffing

There was very little cost to implement the program, as the lessons are taught by current staff members employed by the school division. Students used the web-based “WeVideo” editing software to enable students to edit from home during virtual learning. WeVideo’s licenses cost \$3.50 per student, at a total cost of \$430.50. The Gill Challenge program creation allowed the students to become quite familiar with WeVideo.

Program Results

The best evidence of results has come through student growth. While completing a student reflection assignment in January, students responded with comments regarding their work using WeVideo as well as their work with the Gill Challenge program. Here are some student comments:

- “My work has improved because I learned how to manipulate sounds and different clips. I liked the B-roll assignment because it made me feel like I was making a professional ad.”
— J. Martin
- “I’ve learned how to cut clips more precisely instead of having a little too much, which makes the video look choppy and awkward. I liked the football [assignment] just because I liked matching the sound effects to what was playing on the video, like whenever they scored a point, to have victory music.” — R. Pandel

- “I know how to do a lot of it on my own and my blending of clips together has gotten better. The sports montage [has been my favorite] because I’ve always wanted to edit a montage of some sort. With football there are a lot of tackles and nice catches to match with beat drops.” — C.Welcher
- “I have evolved my skill to a better advancement with WeVideo. [My favorite challenge was] probably the one-person and multi-person videos, because they challenged us to get a video as short as possible while still remaining continuous.” — L. Betancourt

Compared to other virtual assignments participating teachers have taught, the Gill Challenge program’s growth is consistently higher and includes more student engagement.

Brief Summary

With a virtual start to the 2020-21 school year, the teachers in HCPS’ Center for Communications and Media Relations were challenged with the task of teaching journalism students who were learning from home — without access to video editing equipment or video cameras. They sought ways to keep the program relevant to instruct students using limited resources while still including key areas of instruction. This included how to properly frame a shot, shoot interviews, edit interviews, incorporating sound bites, learning how to shoot and edit B-roll footage, creating and editing voice-overs, and eliminating and avoiding jump cuts while editing. Normally, the teachers use a variety of hands-on classroom projects to help teach students these skills.

Employing a virtual teaching partnership between teachers at the Center for Communications and Media Relations at Varina High School and the Television Services staff within HCPS’ Department of Communications and Public Relations, staff created a program that incorporated new ways to

teach 10th-grade students in the Communications Writing and Production I class critical editing skills.

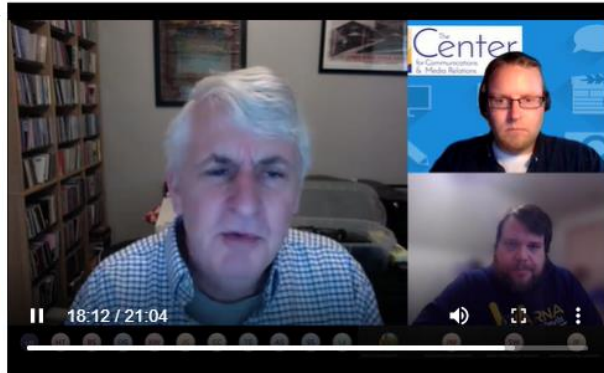
Six projects were developed and executed between October 2020 and February 2021. The projects took their name from John Gill of Television Services, who conceived and introduced them. He joined classes using Microsoft Teams to teach background information, and provided "challenge" assignments. Teachers supplemented the challenges by teaching software skills and video editing tips. Through the partnership with HCPS Television Services, students in the class gained a myriad of crucial video editing skills. As evidenced by student reflections and teacher assessment of student learning, the innovative approach that was developed was most successful in engaging students and ensuring that they developed the skills necessary for their continued development as journalists.

The “Gill Challenge” Program Supplemental Material

Craft's Comm 10 class.mp4



Gill 5 - Class video



Screenshots of John Gill teaching sophomores in the HCPS Center for Communications and Media Relations. Due to student privacy concerns, only teachers are featured during class recordings, therefore, no students are featured in these pictures.

Link to a Google folder of a few student work samples from “Gill Challenge” projects:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1I3GvxqDvSml3mFkJQZWBizAhk_mxtVB?usp=sharing

Included are two video examples of Challenge 1 (the sports montage); Challenge 5 (“Teachers are Super”); and Challenge 6 (“The Conversation”). These student work samples were not public and were not viewed by an audience — they are purely for student practice and teaching purposes.