Meridian Stories

Rachel Pollinger, Class of 2015

Meridian Stories is a series of digital storytelling competitions for middle and high school students that harnesses the continued surge in digital content creation by today’s youth for a new purpose: curricular goals. Each competition challenges teams to create short-form stories using images, words, video, and music in the service of core curricular objectives and 21st-century skills. This summer, I worked under the direction of both my faculty adviser, Professor Eric Gaze, as well as the creator of Meridian Stories, Brett Pierce, a producer based in Freeport, Maine. My task was to prepare for the second pilot year of this project, with an emphasis on mathematics. First and foremost, I developed 5 new challenges in the area of mathematics that directly correspond to mathematical core curricular goals for both middle and high school. The challenges I developed were:

- An interview with the number pi about its identity as a number, its applications in geometry, and its appearances in the real world.
- An exponential growth game show, where 3 so-called math experts must persuade the contestant/viewer that their answer choice is the correct one.
- A commercial marketing the Pythagorean Theorem to middle schoolers, as well as arguing why their chosen proof is the best one.
- A storyboard displaying a student-created story about solving a geometry problem given little information.
- A design using interesting mathematics, for an empty space in the students’ community.

In addition to challenge descriptions, I developed essential questions, student outcomes, 3-week timelines, and student checklists. We conducted a focus group with math teachers about the efficacy and engagement of the proposed challenges. My project also involved writing up support documents to assist students in the completion of these challenges. I wrote documents on creative brainstorming techniques, time management, and how to use the program Geogebra. Along with another student working in the IT department this summer, Stephanie Bond (Class of 2013), I developed documents on using Scratch and SketchUp and the basics of working with Creative Commons Licensing. Finally, along with Stephanie, and another student, Jared Morneau from the New England School of Communications, I assisted in the coordination, shooting, and editing of four-minute interviews featuring people in the media, mathematics, and storytelling communities, with a focus on Bowdoin faculty. These will be featured on the Meridian Stories website. We interviewed Aviva Briefel of the English and Film Departments, Mary Hunter of the Music Department, Eric Gaze of the Math Department, and Charlotte Griffin of the Dance Department. We also interviewed Tom Pierce, a producer, editor, and cinematographer, Kent Pierce, a screenplay writer, and Scott Nash, an illustrator and short story writer.

Faculty Mentor: Eric Gaze

Funded by the Gibbons Summer Research Internship