This project has for purpose to build a bridge between a 5th and a 6th grade class (from different schools) by gathering them around a same research. To do so, MJC Image Center chose to use Cinema and more precisely a François Truffaut’s movie: *The 400 Blows* (1959)- The work undertaken with those two classes firstly stages on a theoretical learning of cinema, in other words a thinking on a specific scene chosen by each class. Then, the realisation of the film will mark the project second phase, where 5th and 6th grade pupils will work together on their respective scene.

As an objective, this company wants to strengthen the shift from 5th to 6th grade through a group project, which will push pupils to meet up and to work on a common scheme. This will lead them on a debate in order to compare their experiences, their approaches and their feedbacks. There is then a time of sharing and exchange between the pupils from a single class, between the two classes and with the speakers.

**First meeting - December the 8th of 2015**

As part of *College au cinema*, the linking project between the two classes began with a first meeting among the pupils while the projection *The 400 Blows* directed by François Truffaut (1959) at cinema *Le Colisée* in Montbéliard, France. Right after the projection, children were able to give their opinion about this film. In the end, what hooked them the most was the relationship teacher/pupils and how it is different from today: the beating, the prison, the correctional home…

Thereafter, we asked the teachers to see with their respective class which scene shocked the children the most and for which they would eventually like to redo. Each class shortlisted three scenes for which two of them were in common with the two classes.

Here are the extracts chosen by the pupils:

**Second meeting - January the 18th of 2016**

We met separately the children in their respective school. When this new intervention occurred we received the chosen scenes and debated about them: what they are dealing with, what we can see, how they are constructed, what the children think or feel while watching it… After this discussion we focussed on the teaching of the cinema’s vocabulary for:

* The shot / the scene
* Framework / “off camera” effect / reverse angle / depth of field
* The framing and the composition
* The scale plans
* Camera angle
* Camera movement
* film editing

**Third meeting with the 6th grade class - March the 7th of 2016**

This meeting at Guynemer high school proceeded as follows:

To begin, we had to make sure the pupils remembered the vocabulary we taught them; especially the plan scale, camera movement and angle. For that, a selection of photograms and video excerpts has been showed to the children from which they were supposed to tell me what was the exactly stylistic device. Through this exercise, we were able to note that they had difficulties to see the differences between those three elements.

Once this first exercise was over we worked on the analysis of the finally decided scene on which the pupils decided to redo: the sport session. In order fill in the blanks we watched a first time the scene so the pupils could remember what is happening, then a second and third time where we asked them to notice few elements:

* The number of shots
* The camera angles
* The camera movements
* The scale plans

When the third viewing was over we asked the pupils what they could notice. After we reexplained all the elements the resulted analysis was pretty conclusive for we did not have to add anything about the mentioned elements.

With a little bit of help from Mrs Magnin, the class was split in two groups constituted of two directors maximum, director’s assistants, and actors. By using the elements in the François Truffaut’s sport scene children had to redo it. Several difficulties were then revealed from the coordinator’s side as well as for the children:

During the practical application we noticed that a child didn’t want to participate in both directorship and acting. The reasons for unwilling involvement being unknown we had to come up with a solution for gaining his participation more or less direct in the project. For each problem lies a solution so we decided to employ the kid as the photographer assistant which allowed to fulfill this experiment with more picture.

This meeting was also the opportunity to interview pupils and their teacher. Three questions were asked:

* What did you think about the film The 400 Blows directed by François Truffaut?
* What do you think of working with 5th grade’s pupils for the continuation of the project?
* How does it feel to redo a mythic movie scene?

**Third meeting with the 5th grade class - March the 14th of 2016**

The appointment with the 5th grade class at Prairie school mainly dealt with the technical cut of the chosen scene. The children gathered and decided on which scene they wanted to work on\_ the robbery of the typewriter by Antoine in his father’s study. In order to analyze and cut the movie sequence, the robbery scene was firstly shown in its completeness before being studied shot by shot. It allowed us to re-explain the different scale plan, the camera’s movements and angles. Some pupils were asked to write down notes concerning this technical cut which will be useful when we will start shooting.

During this time of analysis and exchange with the kids, five volunteers came in a room apart so they could interview just like it was done with the 6th grade class.

After working on the analysis of the scene the children were able to decide if they wanted to do a homework for our next meeting. Those who wanted to have an extra work had to write, once again, how this scene was shot, cut by including technical elements they could see. To do so, we gave them an example of the first ground cut:

Shot 1: Medium shot, Antoine and René enter inside a building. -> Actors seen from the front: camera in the hall.

This third meeting carried out among the 5th and 6th grade pupils also allowed us to know how we could link the work done by these two classes. We thought it would be more convenient if each class shot their own movie sequence and afterwards an assembly of those two classes for during which the videos will be projected. An open discussion will then occur in order to exchange on their experiences, their feedbacks, etc.

**Fourth session**

**6th grade class – April 4th, 2016**

This new session with Mrs Magnin’s students was organised in four steps. First, we watched one of the videos shot during the third session, before watching again the scene/excerpt from François Truffaut’s movie. This exercise aimed at showing students what didn't work and had to be fixed/taken into account during the filming.

Thus, three important aspects which had been overlooked were identified :

-The length of the video (too short)

-Field size, camera angle and camera movements were all missing

-What was filmed didn't quite tell the same thing as the original sequence.

Once this comparative assessment was done, we worked all together on the cutting up of the said sequence, step by step. It could be noticed that even though the filming instructions were not followed, the students had however all understood the lesson on field sizes, camera movements and camera angles. The problem was to remember to incorporate them in the making of the picture and not to think only of what one can see in the picture.

One last time, we went over the important steps for the upcoming filming with the students, while taking notes on:

-what one can see on the picture and what happens in/inside the picture

-field sizes, camera movements, camera angles

-the length of each shot adding up the sequence

With Mrs Magnin’s help, we then gave each student their task for the shooting/filming for the next hour and a half. The sorting of tasks was thought through ahead of the session, taking into account the students for whom we did not have publicity rights authorization, who were accordingly given off screen technical tasks (see table below).

To end this last practical session with the 6th grade class, we shot once again the scene with all the students and the day was rather rewarding since these new takes have allowed a rather satisfying cut of their work.

**5th grade class – April 25th, 2016**

The workshop started with the reading of the scripts which the students were asked to write before Spring break, individually or in groups. The whole group then discussed the different texts to determine which of them matched best what was expected.

Two texts were chosen (original versions available in Appendix 2, page 17).

Jude:

Shot 1: medium shot of Antoine and René, actors seen from the back. Starting from outside.

Shot 2: high-angle shot then tracking shot of Antoine on the steps to the typewriter.

Shot 3: medium to close-up shot to see Antoine’s expression.

Shot 4: American shot of Antoine walking down the stairs then close-up shot on his feet then American shot again.

Shot 5: full to close-up shot, until Antoine and René are off camera.

Anaïs:

Shot 1: American shot of Antoine and René entering the building. Actors seen from the back. Camera outside.

Shot 2: American shot of Antoine walking up the stairs. Tracking shot to the typewriter.

Shot 3: close-up facing Antoine stealing the typewriter.

Shot 4: medium shot of Antoine walking down the stairs. Tracking shot.

Shot 5: Antoine and René run out of the building. Actors seen from the back.

The two students that came up with these scripts later became the directors. They were indeed the ones that decided on the position of the camera for the shooting and chose the frames. The 5th grade workshop organizer decided to add two shots at the start of the students’ video so that all of them appear at least once in the final cut, which was perfectly fine with them. The lead actor was chosen by the teacher Mr Gigon because he was the hardest working student, the most involved in this project within the elementary school.

**Last session: screening and wrap-up – May 17th, 2016**

The gathering was organized at Guynemer Middle school which agreed to welcome the 5th grade class, to show the short films directed by each class. Once everybody was settled, volunteer 5th and 6th grade students introduced the work done during the workshops with the organizers as well as the chosen sequence. Once this introduction was over, the students’ productions were screened and received a round of applause.

One of the organizers then started a debate with both classes to review what proved to be difficult during the shooting and what mattered, and to explain the tasks some of the students completed during the shooting etc.

The following elements were put forward:

-The writing process : “it takes work”, “it is important to know what you want to do”.

-It implies teamwork.

-Why several takes have to be made for each shot: “sometimes it is not done well”, “comparing” (chose the best take).

-“It is difficult for the actors and the camera crew”.

-Explain the role of the clapperboard assistant and the script assistant during filming.

-“A lot of work for such a short film”.

As a conclusion to this last meeting and this project with both classes, we watched one last time their very good work.

“I do not grow tired of shooting with children. Anything a child does on screen seems to be done for the first time and that is what makes the film roll devoted to filming young faces transforming so precious”. François Truffaut