

Three Propositions, Two Frameworks and an Indictment

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PROPOSITION ONE: Redefining Survival Skills

Understanding Media is a Basic Skill. The traditional three R's simply no longer constitute the core curriculum of things that kids need to know about if they are to make it in our society. There are entirely new sets of perceptual, critical and creative skills. No medium is more important for kids to understand than video.

PROPOSITION TWO: The Importance of Interface

Using video with kids means more than extending programs in the Communications Arts. Similarly, the interrelationship of video to existing instructional rubrics (and to the traditional basic skills) needs to be explored from a broader perspective than the familiar Audio-Visual frameworks have allowed. Video should be used to fuse separate disciplines and to reintegrate school and community.

PROPOSITION THREE: How You Teach Is What You Teach or Watch Out for Hidden Structures

We who teach media have a special thing going for us. The very discipline we are engaged in teaching provides important perceptions into how and what we should be teaching. We must use video to extend the options for learning.

FRAMEWORK I

Video as Something to Know About and as a Way of Knowing

This framework seeks to help a teacher in figuring out what kids should know about television and video. By outlining four broad teaching units, the framework points out concrete concerns from which learning experiences can be designed. Examples of specific activities are not included here.

1) Knowing Oneself: Defining a Video Self

A first priority in teaching video should be grounding each learner within his or her own realm of experience. Kids ought to be provided with activities that help them gauge their own facilities in video-related skills and that help them perceive the role television plays in their lives.

Gauging Facilities

Learning about any medium is, in a sense, contingent upon learning how one learns. The teacher, then, should design learning experiences that cover all facets of video communications. The goal here is for kids to try on many different video-making and video-studying roles - being a "critic," a "writer," a "cameraperson," a "director." But the teacher should also invent rituals through which kids can reflect upon the meanings of these experiences. Kids need to track their relative facility and interest in doing different tasks. From this they can fashion a realistic portrait of themselves as video people. It should be a tentative portrait however - continuing work will let kids test further their sense of proficiency; amplifying skills that are already good, strengthening those which are weak.

Here is a checklist of specific skill groupings that might be included: working with hardware, scripting-conceptualizing, interviewing, analyzing video productions, directing productions, measuring impact upon audience, acting, researching, editing videotape. And you could list more.

There are other important dimensions of working with video in which kids need to gauge their facility: working styles (tenacity, independence, resourcefulness), group-relations abilities (working alone, or with others, following and leading), observational skills (listening, being aware of the needs

