

1) The simple fact that children are actively engaged in television production in the first place is a reflection of the contemporary culture. The typical fifth grader spends more time watching television than he does attending school. Child-created television changes the normally passive-recipient relationship to one of active and creative control.

2) Our communications environment is becoming increasingly visual, at least as far as media use is concerned. In our more print-oriented past, no one doubted the importance of knowing how to write. Today, however, there is considerable skepticism about the need for children to learn to communicate visually. When one knows how only to receive messages in the dominant medium of mass communication and not to send them, he is inevitably subject to manipulation by the few who are so skilled. This situation applies to most of today's kids - and adults.

The production of this documentary also builds other functioning skills: collaboration, questioning, information and resource retrieval, problem-solving, self-analysis, decision-making, and communication.

3) All the technical and most of the organizational responsibilities of production are assumed by the children. The tools of learning are certainly in their hands.

4) Ample opportunity is provided for learning in individual ways: collective and individual; visual and verbal; technical, organization and aesthetic.

5) Most of the old subject areas and some new are unified through work on this project: written and oral communication, computation, art, and environmental study. The science and technology of television production are investigated through action and study.

6) The wide range of production activities allows each child to do a job at which he or she can succeed and which is also enjoyable. In later productions children can move on to less familiar and more challenging tasks, building on the confidence gained from past success.

7) The project encourages a productive sharing between school and community. Community resources are brought heavily into play.

8) A feeling of community involvement and pride arises when the work of children is broadcast throughout their communities on local cable TV systems. The community benefits, too, when this great but underused community resource is opened to kids; the community gains fresh insights into the lives of children from the perspective of the children themselves.

This project provides a structure, but it is a structure of encounters, not one designed to lead to predetermined "outcomes." Video is used as a tool of exploration and discovery, helping children gather information and express ideas freely and creatively. Most open educators would agree that this is as it should be.

The Great Plastic Weekly Video Magazine

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An important payoff in making your own video programs comes in their presentation to others in your school. This can be easily achieved if there is a closed-circuit television system - CCTV. Even without a built-in distribution system, it is easy (and sometimes more effective) to arrange to show tapes to a large audience of kids by means of normal playback procedures. Select a central meeting place (the cafeteria, a "student commons," a major hallway will often do), choose a regularly scheduled time, get permission from the administration, do some publicity and you will find an eager audience.

Now that you know something about television-making, let's talk about doing it. You probably have a number of ideas to present, and a variety



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