

In this section you will get an opportunity to read between the lines of what others are doing with video. We hope you took the quiz. Now we'd like to ask you to measure your answers against the conflicting arguments of others. Towards this end, we are supplying a primer to some of the "heavy contentions" that you can ferret out of the activities that follow. But you'll have to look carefully - the sides people have chosen on these important issues are inexplicit.

TV vs. VT

For some teachers, working with video tools is aimed at helping kids develop an understanding and respect for the broadcast formats of conventional television. "Know your enemy," they say. "De-mystify television by doing television." We must help kids develop skills that will help them deal with their video environment." (Agreement with question 1.)

Others are primarily concerned that kids come to know the unique qualities of video as opposed to television. They hold that because the equipment is simple, inexpensive, and portable there is a clear difference between small format and studio format mediums. They say things like this: "By learning what video is you learn what television isn't." "Video has to do with Self and you'd better have kids know something about themselves before they start laying numbers on others." Or even, "VT is TV inside out." (Disagreement with question 1.)

Prescription vs. Description

This has become a classic dilemma. The issue is one of heuristics and it shows up in the way one constructs activity for the use of others.

On one side it is argued that some people may understand more about teaching video than others, that they may have had greater experience and, consequently, they have figured out the better ways to do things with kids. Further, (goes the "prescriptive" argument), there is a quality of legitimacy within canonized curricula that helps get video studies accepted in many schools. Overworked and undertrained teachers need packaged materials. Finally, to the extent that they are "teacher-proof", prescriptions of what to do help the greatest number of kids. (Disagreement with question 2.)

Here are some arguments against prescription. The climate and success of the classroom is critically affected by the degree that a teacher participates in planning the curriculum. If you work with someone else's activities you may be trying on a style of teaching with which you have no congeniality. And just who is to say what is best or what should be left out? Because every classroom is different it is quite impossible to come even close to predicting what will work. Those who try to be descriptive point out how few years half-inch video systems have been around and that there are no real "video

experts." (Agreement with question 2.)

Adoption vs. Mutation

This bout is related to the preceding one. We have watched people get very exercised in what amounts to a political question - in getting video into the schools (Doing Good), how far can you go in meeting existing instructional goals and in accommodating administrative expectations before you debase the medium of what makes it worth teaching in the first place (Doing Bad)?

Judge yourself whether the activities that follow compromise the real strengths of video. (Also whether agreement/disagreement with question 3 represents a mutation of video or a practical adoption of it to schools.)

Inductive Bias vs. Deductive Bias

Here is a question of teaching style. Throughout the activities (and, of course, in other sections of this journal as well) you will find a pedagogical polarity. It is the old tension between structure and non-structure, between student-centered and teacher-centered priorities, between lectures and projects, between grades and no grades, between individual and group curricula, between short and long term "units."

We urge you to pay special attention in searching out assumptions among these conflicting positions as you study the Things To Do that follow. (Agreement with question 4 suggests a preference for the "inductive" process, disagreement for the "deductive" process.)

How to Teach vs. What to Teach

Some people think you can separate these two. Some don't. (If you disagreed in question 5, you are in the second group.)

Process vs. Product

How important is it that kids make good tapes?

For some, achieving a good product is the only legitimate and workable goal when kids make video. This position in yet another classic argument contends that the only way to learn how to communicate with video is by rigorously seeking to fashion an effective, artful message. "Product" becomes the central index and the primary feedback mechanism in the process of learning video. (Disagreement with question 6.)

Sharp disagreement on the other side. The compulsive, competitive focus on the end product corrupts the means to that end. Or: the only justification for bringing video into a classroom is that it will help kids learn. That is, we are teaching kids not teaching video. Some "process" people believe that the very nature of the medium itself is a cybernetic one - a process of information feedback where there can be, by definition, no final end point or product. (Agreement with question 6.)