

continues.

– Young prisoners in both the Young Study Center and Women's House of Detention who have great difficulty talking about their situations and feelings, are taped in role play situations of their own design. Attitudes, feelings, and perceptions come pouring out and, because they are on tape, can be discussed and understood and hopefully transferred to their own lives.

– Tape exchanges are developed to share perceptions: between rival gangs; between prisoners from one neighborhood and the people from that neighborhood; between inner-city and suburban students; between teachers and students in the same classroom; between citizens in remote areas and their legislators.

– Using non-network formats, mixed aged elementary students produce a weekly closed-circuit show about their interests.

– Institutionalized emotionally disturbed adolescent boys write and develop stories for taping. The tapes are used to develop self-concept and inner control.

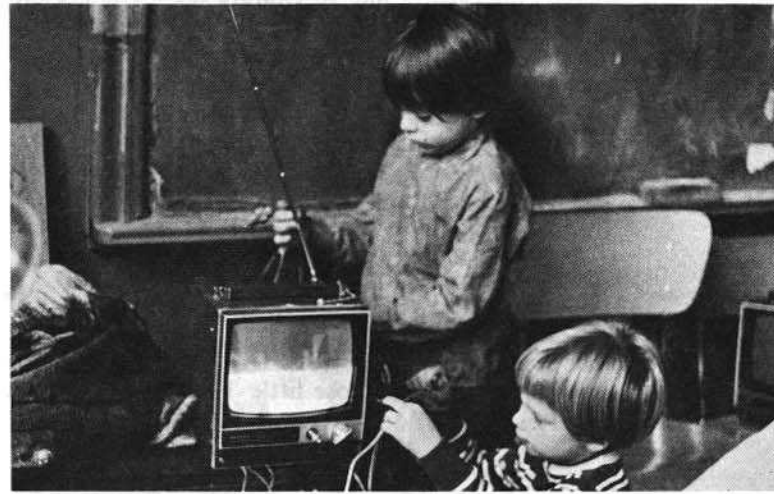
– First graders role-play and play back so they can see how they appear to others in decision making situations. Then they do the same for the principal.

– Video is used as an evaluation tool with interns of the Parkway Program. Three two minute situations are acted out by a student, a teacher, an intern, who have switched roles, (e.g., a student playing a teacher.) The group then decode the various perceptions, problems, viewpoints, etc. which arose through the taped situations.

– High school students combine a sociology and a community health course by going out to neighborhood facilities, videotaping them, then returning for analysis, argument, etc.

– Staff and students develop games and exercises which metaphorically reveal learning processes and problems.

These few examples only begin to tap the range of possibilities of educating through, with and about video. One truth, at least, comes apparent. What we learn is the "how" we learn. What we legitimize as valid learning processes is what students retain. Even if they never remember the "content," they retain for form. So it seems important not to allow media to harden into a new orthodoxy but to help people to be open to the new tools that are coming at us with increased frequency.



Kids Today: A Cable Project

PAUL RABIN AND MYLES HALSBAND

They peek through the viewfinder of a camera, push buttons in the control room and see themselves on television. They weave, compose songs and pet strange animals; they produce plays; they learn about pantomime.

For the elementary school children of Malden, Massachusetts, it's all part of their school program through field trips to the television studios of Warner Cable of Malden to take part in an experimental television project called Kids Today.

Producer Myles Halsband and Program Director Paul Rabin conceived of the series as an ideal use of a community cable television station by a public school system. Kids Today was designed to make the educational experience of Malden's children an

entertaining as well as informative process, supplementing classroom fare with an entirely new environment replete with people, ideas and experiences that children could not normally receive in a conventional classroom.

Participation is the key – and each program in the series invites the maximum interaction between guest (there is no host) and students. Subjects covered in each episode are often arranged prior to the videotaping by the producer and the classroom teacher; the program itself is telecast on the local community station at a time convenient for parents, teachers, and educators.

Since the show began in February 1972, almost 1300 elementary school students have participated.

Some children on the show have broken eggs, mixed batter, and helped Al-the-Chef cook French toast. Others have sung Woody Guthrie songs with folksinger Bill Staines, learned about clowns, animals, weaving, leathermaking, origami, pantomime and architecture.

Testimonials

Thomas Cosgrove, one of Malden's Assistant Superintendents, has lauded the show for giving students "an insight into what really makes a television program tick." And one of the teachers whose class participated in the show has stated that the program "extends to the community a bond of friendship in a personal sense which they should be unwilling to turn their backs on." The greatest praise for the show has come from students themselves. "Thank you very, very much for inviting me to Cablevision 13," writes third grader Hari Reddy. "I liked it because I like to explore the world around me. I always wished I could go on TV and now my wish came true and you are the one who made it come true." Dougie Ell of the Maplewood School wrote us that he and his classmates "liked the animals and I think that the animals liked us too. Mr. Meyers and Mr. Frochlick we all liked them very much. I think I liked the biggest snake the best."

Jimmy Burns was impressed with another aspect of his Channel 13 experience. "I liked the control room and all those buttons. You sure must have to work hard. I liked those little TV sets too. It must be fun working in the control room and when I grow up I'm going to work in a control room like you."

Myles Halsband



John Le Baron

Studio Tours

According to Producer Halsband, who is a former teacher with expertise in innovative teaching methods, the tour of the studio and control room is as important as the show itself. "What we are doing," he says, "is building visual literacy. For my generation television was a passive experience. We just stared at the tube for hours on end. We'd like to teach today's children how to make shows themselves; they should know how to run cameras, control audio levels and select the proper video source. Television for them will then become a medium of participation and communication rather than one of the first steps in stimulating children to be visually active and literate human beings."

Kids Today is now in its second year of production. Paul Rabin, the station's programming manager, feels that the show is an ideal model for the educational use of cable channels. "This is exactly the kind of cooperative effort we need to encourage," he says. "Parents enjoy the program because it allows them to see their children on TV and to vicariously experience what their children are feeling and thinking."

Teachers and educators feel that the show helps to extend the curriculum and to bring education outside the classroom. Children themselves seem to be watching the show avidly. The cable company welcomes the show because it stimulates more people to subscribe to cable television. Every child who appears on the show probably creates eight or ten viewers including parents, grandparents, friends and relatives.

