

Video Viewing 7.15

It is the policy of Liberty Common School to instruct the approved curriculum of the school without the use of video presentations.

This policy is supported by the attached report from the Academic Advisory Committee (November 17, 2005), which is incorporated herein by reference.

In rare instances with the written approval of the Headmaster, videos may be used to compliment the instruction of the approved curriculum. The presentation of videos is particularly discouraged for younger students who are developing reading skills. When an approved video is shown, it will be done interactively and with frequent stops in order that students make connections and inferences, are prompted for questions and are discouraged from daydreaming. When explicit visual images are not critical, audio presentations (story narration and music) are preferred. When motion is not critical (e.g. art, architecture), slides, photos, and posters are preferred.

No videos which represent literature taught at school will be shown to support the instruction of that literature. No videos will be shown for 'entertainment' purposes.

Teachers wanting to use video presentations in their instruction of the approved curriculum will complete the incorporated video presentation request form and submit it to the Headmaster for approval. The Headmaster may approve the following material:

- Video presentations of performances or works of art which are intended to be viewed (e.g. plays, operas, orchestras, ballets)
- Video presentations of actual events not geographically, temporally or practically accessible
 - (e.g. A rocket launch or volcano eruption)
 - Historically accurate documentaries - factual story telling which is not animated or dramatized (e.g. WWII documentary)
 - Science "dry labs" which explain and demonstrate principles not practical in a school setting
- Video presentations produced or dubbed in a foreign language where viewing is critical for comprehension.

(Adopted 032306)

Academic Advisory Report to the Board
Use of Videos at Liberty Common School
November 17, 2005

Seven members of the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) and Headmaster Spicer met on November 8 to review the teachers' video lists and the use of videos at the school. We first referred to some of the school's founding books and relevant research to establish a basis for discussion and decision-making.

In Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, a review of 2800 studies on the general topic of television's influence on behavior, including cognitive processing, was unable to point to persuasive evidence that "learning increases when information is presented in a dramatic setting." Instead, the studies suggest the opposite conclusion is justified, i.e. retention drops. Marie Winn describes similar results in *The Plug-In Drug*.

A few of the rather striking findings cited by Postman and Winn include:

- √ Only 3.5 % of viewers were able to answer successfully twelve true/false questions concerning two 30-second segments of commercial television programs and advertisements.
- √ In comparison to TV and radio, print media significantly increased correct responses regarding names of people and numbers contained in news programs.
- √ 51% of viewers could not recall a single item of news a few minutes after viewing a news program on television.
- √ The average television viewer will retain 20% of the information contained in a televised news story.
- √ Children who were read a story were better able to recall details, repeat exact words or phrases, and make inferences drawing on personal experience and real world knowledge in comparison to children who watched the story being read on TV (with the same narrator). The "TV children" relied overwhelmingly on the visual aspects of the story as seen on the screen.

These studies concluded:

- √ The meaning secured from television is more likely to be segmented, concrete and less inferential, and those secured by reading have a higher likelihood of being better tied to one's stored knowledge and thus more likely to be inferential.
- √ Television viewing does not increase learning, is inferior to and less likely than print to cultivate higher-order, inferential thinking.
- √ Television emerges as a much more self-contained experience for children. The visual component emerges as paramount. The book experience allows for greater access to the story's language and encourages readers to make connections with other realms of life.
- √ While television appears to have the potential to provide useful information to viewers – and is celebrated for its educational function – the inherent nature of the viewing experience actually inhibits learning as we usually think about it. Very little cognitive, recallable, analyzable, thought-based learning takes place while watching TV.

- √ The continuous trance-like fixation of the TV viewer is not attention but distraction – a form akin to daydreaming. The AAC adds that this may explain why it takes time to get children refocused on learning after video viewing.

In *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, Jerry Mander cites brain research which helps explain the phenomena. “Since the television information is taking place where the viewer is not, it cannot be acted upon. The viewer must deliberately inhibit neural pathways between visual data and the automatic nervous system, which stimulates movement and mental attention.” The left-brain, “centre of logic, logical human communication and analysis, integration of sensory components and memory, the basis of man’s conscious, purposeful, and time free abilities and actions” effectively quits processing, and “goes into a kind of holding pattern.” The AAC adds that this is the *opposite* of reading.

The brain research cited by Mander goes on to explain “The right half of the brain, which deals with more subjective cognitive processes – dream images, fantasy, intuition – continues to receive the television images. But because the bridge between the right and left brains has been effectively shattered, all cross processing, the making conscious of the unconscious data and bringing it to usability, is eliminated.”

So how does this research fit with our goals at Liberty?

The AAC concurs with Neil Postman’s conclusion that video viewing largely undermines the traditional idea of what schooling represents, i.e. the educational environment prescribed by our Charter. Postman notes, “Whereas a classroom is a place of social interaction, a television is a private reserve... Whereas a school (should be) centered on the development of language, television demands attention to images.”

In addition to the evidence that video viewing is not an effective learning tool, there is also evidence that it adversely affects reading. Studies by occupational therapists suggest that the nature of video technology contributes to horizontal visual tracking problems in some children. More generally, video viewing contributes to the inability in children to create personal mental pictures (i.e. imagine) while reading, as well as the habit of reading with less thought and reasoning. In *The Plug-In Drug*, Winn notes “Inferential reasoning is the ability beyond the mere mechanics of reading, to draw conclusions, form judgments, and interpret and create new ideas out of what one reads. It is the crucial factor that underpins meaningful reading in literature, history, science, and other subjects. Without this complex ability reading becomes a superficial exercise.”

Finally, the AAC is concerned that the practice of showing a video version of a story, before or after students have read it, may be counterproductive and undermine the value of reading the story. As Mander discusses at length, the detailed mental pictures created in the reader’s mind from the author’s deliberate word choice are replaced with video images generated from a third party interpretation. Often the video producer’s goal is to elicit an emotional response which permanently replaces the reader’s intellectual response. Mander suggests “Television is capable of dominating personally derived imagery – from books or imagination – and it is also capable,

at least some of the time, of causing confusion as to what is real experience and what is television experience.”

Given these arguments against video viewing the obvious question is: Are there any reasons to show videos at Liberty? The AAC believes the answer is yes.

When are videos beneficial?

1. Performances which are intended to be viewed and never meant to be read (e.g. plays, operas, orchestras, ballets)
2. Actual events not geographically, temporally, or practically accessible
 - a. Rocket launch, volcano eruption
 - b. Historically accurate documentaries - factual story telling, not animated, not dramatized. (e.g. WWII documentary)
 - c. Science “dry labs” which explain and demonstrate principles not practical in a school setting
3. Videos produced or dubbed in a foreign language where viewing is critical for comprehension

Video Viewing Permission Slip

In very rare instances consistent with the Video Viewing Policy 7.15, video presentations may be used to support the approved curriculum. Videos used in class must meet a specific curricular objective and will not have profane language or sexually explicit material. All video presentations shown in class will be approved by the Headmaster.

If a video is presented which has been rated by the Classification and Ratings Administration, the following guidelines will be in place:

K-3: Only G rated movies will be used.

4-8: G and PG movies can be used. If a PG-13 movie is to be used, the teacher will seek parental consent.

9: G, PG, or PG-13 movies can be used. If an R rated movie or clips from such movie is to be used, the teacher will seek parental consent.

This form will be submitted by each teacher prior to the showing of the first video of the year. If no form is returned, students *will not* be able to view the material and *no alternative course work will be provided*. Please return this form promptly.

My student may view the approved videos the teacher uses to support the curriculum.

My student may view certain approved videos with my permission on a case-by-case basis.

My student may never view approved videos the teacher uses to support the curriculum. I understand that my student will be provided with a content comparable alternative materials.

Student Name

Teacher/Grade

Parent Signature

Date

Video presentation request form

Requested by:

Name of video:

Producer:

Total length (minutes): _____

Total time of segments to be viewed in class: _____

In what grade will this video be shown? _____

Subject/course? _____

What unit of your curriculum does this video support?

Number of classes for this entire unit: _____

Length of one class period: _____

Total time of other videos/clips shown while teaching this unit: _____

Why is this video superior to an audio tape, book, photographs, or other method of instruction?

What content will you teach with this video?

What is the expected or desired benefit?

How does this video accomplish your goal?

How will you verify the content delivered by this video is absorbed and retained?

What provisions will be made to deliver the material to students who are absent or whose parents do not permit viewing of this video?

FOR HEADMASTER USE ONLY

_____ Not Approved.
_____ Approved for Grade(s) _____

Course(s) _____ Other: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____