As it Turns Out, TV is not a Vast Wasteland After All

By Jeannie Standal

Remember filmstrips? If not, think of them as the horse and buggy of today’s video and multimedia tools. Between YouTube, TeacherTube, streaming services like United Streaming, subscription services like Amazon Prime and NetFlix, channels like National Geographic and History Channel, not to mention PBS and so many more, there is educational video content coming from every direction. Now, with cameras attached to everyday devices, teachers and students can even create their own video content.

Is video really beneficial, or just an easy shortcut? To be sure, no other medium can take a class on an impossible field trip to Mars, or a journey through the digestive system. According to the Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation at the University of Queensland in Australia, there are also pedagogical benefits to using video as an integral part of a lesson plan. Video facilitates thinking and problem-solving in making connections between visual clues, memory, and the recall of new knowledge; assists with mastery learning by communicating facts and demonstrating procedures; inspires and engages students in a number of ways including both independent learning and enhancing team work and communication skills; and providing authentic learning opportunities.

Although the “vast wasteland” quote from former FCC head Newton Minow’s speech to the National Association of Broadcasters is famous, the full quote is “When television is good, nothing—not the theater, not magazines or newspapers—nothing is better. But when television is bad, nothing is worse,… I can assure you that you will observe a vast wasteland.” He delivered this speech in 1961, and it is just as true today. I’m looking at you, Honey Boo Boo.

If the ancestor of classroom video is the filmstrip, the newest generation is the flipped classroom. Video lectures and practice exercises allow teachers time for projects and hands-on learning, making video opportunities vast, but more fertile than wasteland.

Sources:

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