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Make Your Point Using Video Clips
by Susan Brooks-Young

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Using video clips is one of the easiest ways to engage students in a lesson. The author offers tips for use as well as great websites for finding educational clips.

So many of the expressions we use to indicate understanding are based on visual references. I don't think this terminology developed accidentally. The connection between seeing and learning has been recognized for thousands of years.

Modern teachers also recognize the impact that visual media has on students. But in the past when we've brought media to our students, the conditions have sometimes been less than ideal. We've shown a 20-minute film to spotlight a 30-second clip or rearranged a sequence of lessons to accommodate a limited schedule for checking out a film, filmstrip, video, or DVD. But we've done it because we believe students benefit from these experiences.

Today's widespread access to online digital video makes it much easier to use video with students. We may still need to deal with classroom equipment issues, but the video itself is readily available in formats that make it much easier for us to target viewing to brief clips that relate directly to a lesson and then offer ongoing access to the clips viewed during class.

Why Use Video Clips?

Let's get a little more specific about why short video clips are powerful instructional aids. Aside from the "Wow!" factor, carefully selected and judiciously used video clips support several instructional strategies that enhance the content of the lesson and keep students engaged in learning. Initial planning time is extended because it takes a while to review and select clips, but once identified they can be re-used for immediate and future reinforcement. Here are a few ways clips can be used to support instruction.

- **Setting the stage:** A video clip grabs students' attention, helps them focus on the topic at hand, and often gets the lesson rolling by posing a question or suggesting a problem to be solved. For example, at the start of a lesson for upper-elementary or middle-school students about the impact of air pollution on humans, you might show a clip called *Air Pollution and the Lungs* available at bit.ly/e8tnjj to get students thinking about causes of air pollution before instruction begins.
- **Explaining or demonstrating a concept:** A video clip that explains or demonstrates a concept can show students how to complete activities or to explain content. These clips can also support the home/school connection when linked to the class website so parents can view and discuss them with their children. Teachers can also use these clips to help children catch up after absences. An example of this type of clip is *Feed That Dog*, which explains to students in grades 3 to 6 how two apples can be divided equally to feed Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Greek mythology (available at teachersdomain.org/asset/vt107_vid_feedthatdo).
- **For study and review:** Video clips for study and review can be linked to the class website so they are available to students at school and at home. Even very young children can practice what they've learned in class. For instance, after teaching preschool or kindergarten students a fingerplay such as *Open Shut Them*, teachers can encourage them to practice by linking to a video of the fingerplay that children can watch in a learning center or at home (available at bit.ly/hZsAJR).

What Else Do I Need?

To show a clip to your entire class, you need a computer, laptop, or other device that is capable of running a video and that can be connected to a projection device. Speakers are also a good idea, as the speakers on computers or mobile devices are usually not adequate for whole-class listening. If you are streaming the video from a website, you also need an internet connection.

To link to videos or to embed a video on a webpage, you need a class website, wiki, or blog where you can post the link or embed the video. Links and embedded videos are a good idea for managing your videos because you can access them with a click or two instead of having to enter a URL for the video or hunt for bookmarks before viewing. A Web page also allows you to add explanatory text or supporting documentation to provide context. And links or embedding facilitate home viewing of video clips.

Resources for Online Video Clips

There are many online collections where educators can find video clips for classroom use. The better known of these include TeacherTube (teachertube.com), SchoolTube (schooltube.com), and YouTube (youtube.com). In addition, in March 2009 YouTube launched an education area that targets primarily high-school and college students, YouTube EDU (youtube.com/education?b=400). TeacherTube facilitates downloading files for offline classroom use, but educators must read the Terms of Service for SchoolTube and YouTube to learn about their policies before downloading clips.

Do not limit yourself just to the widely known collections. Here are several free resources you may not have heard of that have a lot to offer.

1. Thinkport (thinkport.org/classroom/onlineclips.tp): Thinkport is a partnership between Maryland Public Television and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education. A variety of free online tools are available here including a collection of video clips organized into seven categories covering academic content areas and professional development. Educators may view clips online or download them.
2. Teachers' Domain (teachersdomain.org): This collection of more than 1,000 video clips and other educational resources was funded in large part by the National Science Foundation. Registration is free and a registered educator can use folders to store clips and share materials with fellow educators and students. Users may view content online or download it for classroom use.
3. Kideos (kideos.com): Preschool and elementary school teachers will appreciate this site that targets children up to age 10. The collection is organized in categories that identify topics such as Bears or Dinosaurs or that identify shows like Sesame Street or Schoolhouse Rock. One limitation is that it is a violation of the Terms of Service to download clips for later viewing.
4. WatchKnow (watchknow.org): WatchKnow has indexed more than 20,000 online videos into 3,000 categories and has something to

offer for children ages 1 to 18. They plan to index more than 50,000 videos by the end of 2011 and are also working on foreign language interfaces—Spanish first, with other languages to follow. The project is the work of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi in partnership with Citizendium and Curriki. Like Kideos, clips must be viewed online.

5. TEDTalks (ted.com/talks): Many TED speakers address topics directly related to education, making this a rich resource to use when planning professional development activities. TED started out as two annual conferences that brought together people in the fields of Technology, Entertainment, and Design. It has expanded to an online site where anyone can watch the best talks. These video clips are licensed under the Creative Commons so site visitors are free to view, repost, or download the files.

What About Copyright?

Educators do need to think about copyright law when using online video clips. Luckily, one of the most common pitfalls, showing copyright-protected video as a reward, is avoided when teachers tie use of video clips directly to instructional activities as suggested in this column. In addition, educational use of copyrighted material is covered under Fair Use, which is described on Stanford University's Copyright & Fair Use website (bit.ly/jlO9X).

Still, there are restrictions that educators should obey. For example, although it's less likely to happen on a site with curated video collections such as Thinkport or Kideos, on those sites where anyone can upload video (e.g., YouTube or TeacherTube) there will be times when clips in the collection are posted without the permission of the owner. In these cases, educators must use common sense. Is it likely that a TV commercial has been uploaded with permission, or that a teacher paid for the rights to use commercially produced music as a soundtrack for a video?

Teachers also must check the Terms of Service (TOS) for every site to see if it's permissible to download videos for offline use. If permission to download is not given you can still link to the video or embed it on a webpage. The drawback is that if the internet is down or the hosting site is blocked at school, the video may be unavailable when you need it.

Additional Tips

YouTube presents some challenges not associated with the other video collections mentioned above, so the first two tips relate specifically to that site.

1. YouTube does host video clips appropriate for classroom use; however, the site is blocked in many schools. There is a workaround that may enable you to show these clips in a supervised setting. SafeShare.TV (safeshare.tv) and ViewPure (viewpure.com) are free services that embed YouTube clips on pages that eliminate ads, comments, and related videos. Just enter a YouTube video URL on the Home page of either site to generate a URL you can use to link to the new, distraction-free page. Talk with your network administrators to see if this is a viable alternative for your school. One caution: If students click on the video, they may be able to go back to YouTube, so they must be supervised.
2. The sheer number of videos hosted on YouTube can be completely overwhelming. Instead of wasting hours sifting through videos on your own, get started by reviewing recommendations from other educators. Online College Courses offers a list called 100 Incredibly Useful YouTube Channels for Teachers (bit.ly/9SD0J7) that is organized by content area and is a good launching point for your review.
3. View clips in their entirety before showing them in class. I have often watched the first minute or two of a clip that appeared to be fine for instructional purposes only to find a problem later in the video that makes it inappropriate for classroom use.
4. If students bring clips from home to share with the class, preview them. In addition to the possibility that content might be inappropriate, you must be sure that the clip relates directly to instruction and that showing it will not be a violation of copyright.
5. Make sure you always state a purpose for viewing a clip before you show it. This might consist of providing context for why this clip relates to a lesson, asking a question that will be answered in the clip, or mentioning something specific you'd like children to watch for.

All of the online resources referenced in this column are available in an online Webliography on my Web Tools for Educators wiki at bit.ly/gELPZQ. Give video clips a try. They will enhance your instruction and engage your students.

A former Catholic-school teacher, Susan Brooks-Young spent 23 years as a teacher and administrator. She now works as a professional consultant and author. Her latest book is Teaching with the Tools Kids Really Use (Corwin Press, 2010). Susan invites your comments at SJBrooks@aol.com.

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