Student Provocateurs: Empowering Student Voice and Democratic Participation Through Film

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Student Provocateurs: Empowering Student Voice and Democratic Participation Through Film

Statement of Problem
Students live in a digital age, yet feel isolated and apathetic. Why has the promise of the digitally connected community failed to engage students? How can video, the cornerstone of digital media, be used to engage students in learning and in life? We know that engagement and personal motivation combine to create meaningful learning environments. (Daddis and Hart, 2001) A genuine interest indicates personal identification with a course of action (Dewey, 1913)

Part of the answer lies in developing digital literacy. Digital media, specifically video, needs to be prominent in the successful education of students. The world is saturated with digital media. By age two, 90% of children regularly watch television, DVD's or videos (Zimmerman, et al, 2007). Over 70% of K-3 students use computers in their free time. Nearly 80% of 3-6 students use computers to play games, while 6-12 students are using computers to create personal websites on MySpace, read the news, and blog. (Hurley, 2006) There is no denying the penetration of media into children's lives, while school activities and assignments lag behind in incorporating digital resources and teaching digital literacy.

But developing digitally savvy consumers is not enough. Young people are increasingly apathetic. Voters in the 18 to 24 age group have the lowest voting-day turnout with only 36% in the 2000 presidential elections and 47% in 2004. National averages were 60% in 2000 and 64% in 2007. (Fleischer, 2005) But there is hope. A significant increase in voting was noted from 2000 to 2004 for the 18 to 24 age group. This increased participation is attributed to the success of Internet campaigning on sites such as MySpace, YouTube, and Second Life, and Internet organizations such as MoveOn.org. (Green and Gerber, 2004) Using their media to communicate made a difference in their participation in our democracy.

Is it possible to have an educational future in which students are participating in and adding to the dialogue on important issues, building their digital literacy, and strengthening their communication and collaboration skills. The alternative - having school be viewed by students as obsolete and irrelevant, boycotted by some, disrupted by others is far from desirable. Students have a powerful connection to media as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) they prefer to communicate ideas through the digital mediums. (Digital Youth Research, 2007). What if they learned to use video to get other people to think about the things they care about? Would that get them involved? This project explores that possibility.
Action Research Key Question
Will students engage with social issues when they have film as a medium to provoke others?

Review of Literature: Basis for Study and Action

*From Whence We Came: Video as Window and Mirror*

Since 1904, when Thomas Edison predicted that movies would soon replace schools, this contentious stance has persisted. In some ways he was right. Media is a huge source of information outside of school. Radio, TV, filmstrips, and now the Internet have all taken a turn as the next coming in education. However, none have succeeded in transforming education to be more engaging, responsive and effective. We cannot rely on simply introducing new technologies into educational programs where students are passive. By in large, this has not produced the expected growth. Robinson (2006) has suggested that change will come when “students and teachers are creators.”

Photography was invented in the early 19th century. It was quickly all the rage. In 1877, British-born Eadweard Muybridge used 12 equally spaced cameras to take pictures of a horse galloping. (National Museum of American History, Wikipedia, 2006) These pictures were then used for the parlor toy known as the Zoetrope - a rotating drum with viewing slits that, when spun, made pictures inside the drum seem to move. In 1880, Muybridge worked out a way to project his still images of motion onto a screen using an invention called the Zoopraxiscope. (How Things Work, 2006) The excitement of moving pictures attracted both young and old.

Inspired inventors soon created a single camera that took rapid pictures of things in motion and when played back gave the illusion of movement. This was made possible by the invention of a camera that could move film quickly enough (16 frames per second) to take pictures of movement and celluloid film that was flexible and resilient enough to move through a camera and a projector. (Northern Territory News, 2006) American inventor Thomas Edison took this technology and created the Kinetoscope, a device that allowed a person to view moving pictures through a slot. France’s Lumiere brothers created the Cinematographe. It flickered more than Edison’s invention but it projected its images on a screen and was more portable than Edison’s design and public film viewing was born.

One of the first motion pictures released for viewing by a paying audience was “Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory” by Robert Paul and Birt Acres.
One of the earliest fantasy filmmakers was Georges Melies who created a soundless and very futuristic portrayal fittingly entitled “A Trip to the Moon.” With the addition of sound in the 1920’s, film took on a completely new dynamic and with it a new power. (FilmSound, 2006)

Today’s Film: Student Video production
Modern film images dominate our culture with their powerful images and captivating messages. Filmmaking and video utilization is now being offered on a large scale within the classroom. Education Planet offers 84 lessons for filmmaking. Lesson Planet offers 912 lessons for filmmaking. The powerful nature of visual imagery combined with student’s natural curiosity has been shown to promote active student involvement and increase interest and participation. (Epstein, et al, 2003) Epstein’s work has also shown video projects encourage students, promote pattern recognition, develop teamwork strategies, and presentation skills in a safe environment among their peers, while increasing retention of information and immersing students in the experience of becoming experts. They conclude that projects undertaken by the students enabled them to become more invested in their learning in and out of the classroom. (Epstein, et al, 2003) As the North Central Regional Educational Laboratories report, 21st Century Skill, states, “Today’s children are ‘growing up digital.’” (NCREL, 2005)

Even a quick Internet search reveals over 125 links to “Film Schools” around the world with programs in community colleges, undergraduate and graduate schools, and online. (USA Study Guide) Rainbow Media’s Independent Film Channel has arranged its own course to teach students the ins and outs of filmmaking. The Independent Film Channel launched Film School last November, with a curriculum that ties into English classes nationwide. It consists of a six-part lesson plan that encourages kids to read, write and, ultimately, create short films based on literature. The AFI Screen Education Center offers a 5-Step process that is designed to help teachers help students use the tools of filmmaking to master core curriculum subjects, from literature to math and science. (AFI Website, 2006) Apple Computer has an extensive multimedia educational section on their website for teachers and educators, where classroom examples are described and results given that reveal the transforming power of video for young children. Teachers report their students were “totally engaged in learning” and “this is a great way to boost self-esteem and empower young children!” (Apple.com, 2006)

Film has an undeniable power on us all. Educators are taking a greater interest in visual literacy as an effective way of reaching students whose
primary means of interaction, communication, and entertainment is visual. (Adams, 2005) Additional work by Adams, Carey, and Davidson, reveals the power of digital video as engaging, being able to utilize student media interests and technology skills, and covering a wide range of subject areas. (Pede, 2001) Bob Montgomery, a first grade teacher at Ross Montessori School in Carbondale, CO, created Kindergarten First Graders!, a project designed to help students learn about each other, introduce them to digital photography, and use computer software (iPhoto and iMovie). (Carey, 2006) His work is an example of introduction and utilization of technology by even very young audiences.

Students are also reporting on their personal experiences with digital video; “This let me be creative and figure out new ways to incorporate technology into my thinking. It also showed me how important it is to learn as much as possible about an issue before forming an opinion.” (Mangan, 2005) Mangan creates lessons for her students that incorporate video clips, photography, narration, and musical soundtracks. The most popular course at Hunterton Central Regional HS in Hunterton Central School District in Flemington, NJ is Honors Imaginative Processes (HIP) developed by Florence McGinn. The course focuses students on writing and literature and the use videoconferencing and digital cameras to work with a local university weekly. Each student is assigned a college student from Ryder University to help them combine creative writing with multimedia in digital portfolios of their work for college applications. (McGinn, 2000) Osborne High School, just outside of Atlanta, GA, is using ScreenPlay, a Microsoft video editing system, to increase students’ involvement in technology and has seen an increase in student spirit, attendance, and interest in school. (Davidson and Page-Quail, 2002)

Tomorrow and Beyond: Film as a Social Catalyst
Students are using film to express themselves and they are finding audiences. A recent BBC report suggests preliminary results of a pilot project using digital video that raises student’s enthusiasm for what they are studying. The project went further to say teachers felt students working with digital video stimulated the development of other skills such as problem solving, negotiation, thinking, reasoning and risk taking. The Gairloch High School Project, begun in April 2005, has the key aim of empowering pupils in their own learning and using a greater diversity of teaching approaches. They have adopted digital video streaming to showcase student work, utilized connections within the school community and constructed digital e-folios based on their work. (Davidson et al, 2006)

An eSchool News report on education on the Gulf Coast discussed how students are sharing their stories after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina
changed their lives. Hundreds of students gathered in New Orleans to view and show their digital films chronicling their experiences. (eSchools, 2006) At the end of the Film Festival, students learned their films will have national distribution and will become part of the permanent historical record for future generations. Tim Comolli at South Burlington High School in South Burlington, VT started a Video Imaging Lab in 1999. Comolli explains, “It is typically during the editing process that students begin to understand how manipulation of video images and graphics can create positive or negative stories and sway public opinion. As a result, emphasis is placed on how to produce accurate stories based on research and factual information.” (Patton, 1999)

These projects are notable in the way interest in and around them exploded very quickly. Student Provocateurs has sought to build on these efforts by creating a model that has immediate local interest and focus for students. What makes Student Provocateurs different as the next step in the utilization of video and the power of film in the classroom is its promotion of the natural curiosity, concern, and energy of children around an issue of importance to them. This multimedia project also offers a direct and clear model for individual and collaborative film endeavors, an important aspect identified by Lindroth (2004). Student Provocateurs combines sound film development techniques with inquiry instruction, an important combination according to Scot (2004), to guide students through information gathering, story outlining, job requirements (ranging from the writers, producer, director, floor manager, prop manager, camera operation, and editor), to identifying talent, scripting, story boarding, production, editing, and public revealing which Van Horn (2001) describes as critical to student success.

Civic action is the cornerstone of a democratic society. For centuries, our country has been shaped by the participation of its citizens. There have been many turning points that began with an individual’s courage in a public debate, here and abroad. Just listing the names of a few of the many notable social activists in our world’s history reveals their power and importance even today; Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Gandhi, John Lennon, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa. Student Provocateurs combines children’s natural tendency to question their world with the power of film as a medium for message delivery in the spirit of McLuhan and Fiore (1967) and Paolo Freire (1989) when he wrote, “I believe in the pedagogy of curiosity.”

Around the country, youth activism has been declining. But it wasn’t always so. For much of the second half of 20th century, student political activism was on the rise. In Singapore for example, in 1972 students
exerted an influence disproportionate to their numbers and become a force to be reckoned with by voting. (Huang, 2006) It was the first year 18-year-olds were given the right to vote and nearly 50% turned out. But by the 1998 mid-term elections, only 20% of those 18-25 year olds turned out to vote. At that time, polls revealed that only 26% of those 18-25 year olds believed that voting was “extremely important” and only 16% report volunteering in a political campaign. (OneWorld.net, 2006) In just 25 years, those who exercised their right to vote had been cut in half. This kind of apathy is dangerous to free societies.

Larson and Hansen (2005) have sought to identify the features of youth activism. When youth learned about different human systems and how to employ the strategic modes of reasoning of seeking strategic information, framing communications to an audience, and sequential contingency thinking, they were more likely to participate. The learning environment needed to be experiential and to have adults participating.

Learning experiences that engage students with content through critical and creative thinking have a long history in educational thought and practice. From Socratic dialogue that could elicit the Pythagorean theorem from a slave boy to John Dewey's maxim that, “Anyone who has begun to think, places some portion of the world in jeopardy” (thinkexist.com), the potential of education focused on student thinking to change the world is intriguing. From Piaget's emphasis on complex "formal operational" thinking as the goal for education to Vygotsky's emphasis on beginning with a child's judgment with his elegant simile, “Like a word that exists only in the phrase, and like a sentence that appears only in the child’s speech earlier that a separate word, judgment appears in the child prior to the concept. That is why association alone cannot engender a concept" (Vygotsky, 1962, p.144), engagement with complex ideas and authentic situations would seem to be a necessity.

Does this extend to the use of technology and education? Hank Becker (2000) says it does. Based on his national survey of teachers, he reports, "... where teachers' personal philosophies support a student-centered, constructivist pedagogy that incorporates collaborative projects defined partly by student interest – computers are clearly becoming a valuable and well-functioning instructional tool" (p. 30). Robert Tierney observing Apple Classroom of Tomorrow Schools (ACOT) also talks about how the importance of complexity helps students learn, "What we observed was the reality that multimedia and multiple layers of information helped students more thoroughly and more dynamically explore ideas." (Dwyer, 2000) Kaptelinin (1992) explains this further when writing about the unity of consciousness and activity, "This principle stresses that humans learn by
Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) have defined the characteristics of a constructivist learning environment, “…technologies should be used to keep students active, constructive, collaborative, intentional, complex, contextual, conversational, and reflective.”

Summary: Then, Now, Tomorrow
Albert Einstein said, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them.” Stalin is sometimes quoted as saying, “If I can control the media, I can control the world.” Vygotsky also points toward the future with his directive about education, “Pedagogy must be oriented not to the yesterday, but to the tomorrow of the child’s development. Only then can it call to life in the process of education those processes of development which now lie in the zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1993, pp. 251-252).

Student Provocateurs stands on the broad shoulders of those who have developed the technology (Muybridge, Edison, Paul and Acres), the ideas (Mangan, McGinn, Comolli, New Orleans students) and the power of film (McLuhan, Stalin). It builds on the strengths of students as digital natives to tackle the issue of student involvement and action. It frames education in terms of the pedagogy of inquiry (Socrates, Dewey, Dewey and Vygotsky) and is informed by the findings of researchers studying the use technology in education (Becker, Dwyer, Jonassen). Building on children’s natural curiosity of the world and their place in it, Student Provocateurs challenges students to create public discourse through their own films.

Public discourse allows for exchange of ideas and opens the dialogue on important issues. Involving students through media capitalizes on three important concepts: Students can be passionate about their world and their place in it; they are technologically savvy; and they want to be heard. Project Student Provocateurs brings these ideas together with a powerful purpose, as Huang put it, “Student’s gathered, with a clear focus, to change policy through action.” (2006)

The Field of Action
I chose to engage in action research at the intersection of digital video and democratic participation because of my past experience with student film production. I personally witnessed the power of film to ignite student interest and creativity. I am personally concerned about the decline of democratic participation and the “whatever” attitude of our youth, so when I saw that students really wanted to say something important and be heard by adults when they were making films, I wanted to explore that idea in depth. It seemed to me that film allowed students
to be provocative so Student Provocateurs became the working name of
the investigation. Because of my background teaching middle school, I
explored different locations, topics, districts and classes, eventually
choosing to work with Ms. Barone, a 6th grade teacher interested in
exploring new directions for education and a personal commitment to
local social action at an organic farm. The length of the project, topic
and type of instructional video to make for students, were all determined
based on the needs and interests of the teacher and students.

**Action Research Questions**
The action research project was guided by the following questions:

**Overarching**
Will students engage with social issues when they have film as a medium
to provoke others?

- Embedded Questions
  1. Can an instructional film be created that will inspire and direct
     student film production?
  2. Will students embrace the opportunity to express ideas important to
     them through film?
  3. If this program is successful, what are its key characteristics?
  4. If it is successful, what will be necessary to bring it to a larger
     audience in the future?

**Learning**
**Will students be able to use film as a way to engage others with important ideas?**

- Embedded Questions
  1. Will offering the opportunity to work with digital filmmaking increase
     student digital literacy skills?
  2. Will it increase their interest in communication?
  3. Will students be willing and able to reveal important issues through
     film?

**Creating Dialogue**
**Will the final product generate dialogue among adults surrounding the
issues presented in the film and increase student awareness of their
influence on dialogue?**

- Embedded Questions
  1. What will the audience be saying about the issues raised in the film
     after the showing?
  2. How will the students respond?
Action is necessary to reveal the possible answers to the above research questions. My work through the research cycles has been guided by these questions to develop an understanding of how film and student engagement intersect under these conditions. Throughout the process, I have reflected on the meaning in the process for teachers, students and families and considered next steps both within and beyond the process. My questions emphasize digital literacy and democratic participation, while looking at the powerful nature of engaging students in learning through film making about topics they are passionate about.

**Cycles of Action and Reflection**

**Action Research Cycles Summary**
Through four action research cycles this year, I have been able to learn by doing, and at the same time, reflect on unfolding events in terms of my personal theories, the literature on educational practice and the perceptions of the students and teacher.

**Cycle 1: Creating A Setting for Success**
The first set of actions came very early in the project’s infancy and were focused on the question, “Could interest be generated in a film project for kids that had them not only making a film but creating discussions?” This mini-cycle came full circle with the visit to Casey Farm and the initial meeting and emails with Deb Barone, the middle school teacher at The Lawn Avenue School in RI. Reflecting on this course of action, it was exciting to see how the project generated enthusiasm quite readily. Members of this educational community saw the merit for such a project as a means to engage students in using technology to communicate their ideas and to delve into the science, economics and societal issues behind organic farming.

The second set of actions began with the question as to whether the students could become excited about and understand the importance of a film project that was designed to provoke dialogue among adults. Reflecting on these actions, it is clear that the students were excited, engaged, and able to
see themselves as Student Provocateurs. The initial meeting with the class was exciting and stimulating. Their questions revealed a clear desire to be successful and a strong sense that what they were doing was important. They watched the film I made on how to make a film, read the organic bill of rights, and started working on choosing a topic for their film.

What would happen if students could use film like they use words – to find their own voices and to provoke others to think about important issues? What if they were able to develop the story line and to think of themselves as provocateurs instead of documentary makers or reporters? My hypothesis was that, given filmmaking skills, a model, the technology and most importantly, the permission to be creative and design their own film to provoke discussion, students would find this interesting enough to commit to it, follow through, and be successful. Teachers, administrators, and parents would also need to see this as a worthwhile educationally, worthy of support, and a valuable experience for developing students’ thinking and communication skills for it to be successful.

**Personal Actions**

I began by researching filmmaking, extending my own understanding of the media, the genres and the tools. In some cases I learned how to talk about things I already do as a videographer. In other cases, I learned new skills. I researched other film projects with students, wrote about film projects I have done with students, and analyzed provocative methods and purposes in films. These activities gave me lots of ideas and at the same time confirmed that Student Provocateurs was a unique approach.

But what would the students make a film about? What would be provocative in their minds and engage their teacher? How would I be involved since I would not be the teacher? A trip to the local farmers’ market gave me a seed of an idea. What about organic farming? It was the perfect way to combine my interest in science and health, and with the food crises and controversies in the news in the last few years, it certainly was fertile ground for provoking discussion.

Not 10 minutes away was Casey Farm, a very special organic farm devoted to education as well as farming and under the care of Historic New England. A meeting with Mike Hutchinson, farm manager, made it clear this was a place to start. The farm had a regular group of volunteers that included teachers and students. A visit with one of those teachers, Deb Barone, in a nearby town confirmed that I was on the right track. She was interested, and dare I say, excited. After an additional planning meeting, she began to build the project into her schedule, think about
involving parents, and planned when and how to speak to the school administrators.

It seemed that the students needed a model, so I decided to create a film for the students, making every step transparent and weaving video skills with narrative about the reasons for different filming decisions. You can view this film at my Action Research web site at http://students.pepperdine.edu/bdavey/actionresearch.html, as well as read a complete narrative about the process, a blog with a running personal account of the work, and more. Making a film about filmmaking was a way for me to shift from being the teacher in the classroom to supporting a class. If it worked, it would also make replication possible.

Supporting Evidence
How do I know that Deb Barone found this worthwhile? What evidence do I have? She planned to do it, talked to her principal, scheduled meetings with me, invited the parents in, invited me into talk with the parents and students, and talked with the students about it. She rearranged her curriculum - no easy task. She needed permission from the school to change the curriculum for one of her classes and not the others, and she got it. She wanted parents to be supportive, from driving students to the farm to film, to returning the media permission forms, so she invited them all to hear me talk about the project. All the students chose to participate. All the permission forms were returned and parents offered to drive students to the farm.

I had asked, "What would happen if students could use film like they use words – to find their own voices and to provoke others to think about issues they think are important?" What evidence did I see that they could and would? Here is evidence from cycle 1: (taken from email sent from Deb Barone)

January 27th, 2007
Quick questions…
The kids have come up with an idea but I wanted to run it by you before we went too far.
First, they have chosen...A Child's Right...from the organic bill of rights...
The story takes place at Casey Farm when two former classmates meet.
They were friends in middle school
Now it is some years later (to be determined)
They revisit their past and in doing so look over their lives and their connection to Organic
One has been relatively healthy while the non-organic has had a series of health issues
What do you think? Where do we go from here? They are very excited and working very hard!
I hope this is something that is workable film wise.

February 7th, 2006
Great...the first visit will be exploratory...and thank you for contacting the farm...that was on my to do list.
I can get the buses for those days. I am trying to work it out to minimize the cost of them...so I will let you know. Whom should I say will pay for the buses?
How many students should be working on sound, lighting etc...is there a better amount that seems to work?
Also, I will get back to you with some dates for you to come in...some for next week and then we have vacation (for a week)...but are you around the following week of 26th?
Kids are presently calling local farms and asking/interviewing over the phone...these may later be filmed. and become part of their film....but now they are collecting info.
The children have some interesting questions but I will ask them of you when we meet next time.....they are very passionate about this and have some concerns
later Deb

Additional evidence for the effect of the project on the students and the project overall comes from film footage collected throughout the project. Every aspect of the students' work has been documented on film, from their day-to-day activities, to my time with them in the classroom, to our trips to Casey Farm. Much of this footage was taken by the students. Their video work, their challenges and triumphs have gone into a documentary film, produced and directed by me, that is intended to serve as a reflection on the process of bringing to life the Student Provocateurs and a testimonial to the work and dedication of the students and all those involved. It is available for viewing on both the Student Provocateurs website (http://www.studentprovocateurs.com) or on my action research
Reflection on Cycle 1
It was clear that there was interest in Student Provocateurs. There was excitement, enthusiasm, and commitment among the students. Deb went above and beyond what I ever expected. In incorporating the film project into her class, she completely changed her science curriculum to encompass Student Provocateurs. The Organic Center funded the video camera and supplies, student transportation and use of school facilities. They were also a powerful source of information and support. I interviewed the president of the Organic Center for the initial video, “Making Your Movie.”

So, reflecting on the project, what did I think about the next steps? December and January brought together the creative ideas of the students into a script and storyboard. This was a critical step in creating a provocative film. Their initial work suggested that this was a very obtainable goal but it should still be recognized as a critical juncture in the film project. Additionally, success was clearly going to depended on the students’ ability to utilize available technology to produce the film. It was important to me that they not only conceptualize a powerful idea but feel they made their idea come to life through the medium of film.

Comparing What Happened With What Was Expected
It was very interesting for me to work through this with another teacher and her students. Since I have done projects like this in the past, I know how to do it, but to work with someone else has required a new role and different skills on my part. The layers of metacognition multiplied as I thought about how Deb was thinking, how the students were thinking, how I was thinking about their work, how I was thinking about how to document the process as well as create a product myself, how I was thinking about how to help the students document what they were doing as well as create a product and so on. While at times, it felt overly complicated, I am convinced that these layers have enhanced the communication among all of us and greatly improved the quality of everyone’s work (including my own). So, how did I think it would go? I thought I would have to do more to “sell” the idea. I had no idea how much work I would be doing, thinking that since I was not in the classroom, I would be doing less. No way! I have spent more time thinking than doing, and that was exactly what was needed. The reflection requirements of the action research model have served this endeavor and me well.
For example, Deb and I created a detailed schedule to guide the project activities. We were in constant communication, so the schedule changed to meet our emerging needs. Here was our first working version. For an up-to-date version of the checklist, see the website, [http://student.pepperdine.edu/bdavey/timeline.html](http://student.pepperdine.edu/bdavey/timeline.html).

Table 1: Original Time Table and Events Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase computer and camera</td>
<td>First week of January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students watch “Making Your Movie”</td>
<td>January 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Students for first time</td>
<td>January 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary footage capture</td>
<td>January 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; – June 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student choose movie topic</td>
<td>January 22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin script writing</td>
<td>January 23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin story board</td>
<td>February 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid script review</td>
<td>February 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid story board review</td>
<td>February 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera practice</td>
<td>February 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish script</td>
<td>February 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish story board</td>
<td>February 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iMovie software practice</td>
<td>February 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin filming</td>
<td>March 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip 1 to Casey Farms</td>
<td>March 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip 2 to Casey Farms</td>
<td>March 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip 3 to Casey Farms</td>
<td>April 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final filming and film review</td>
<td>April 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film upload to computer</td>
<td>April 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin film editing</td>
<td>April 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film editing</td>
<td>April 13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film editing</td>
<td>April 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student mid film editing review</td>
<td>April 27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student film editing review</td>
<td>May 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student final editing week</td>
<td>May 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student final editing review</td>
<td>May 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student film review</td>
<td>May 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student final edits</td>
<td>May 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public showing advertising</td>
<td>May 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public showing</td>
<td>May 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public showing</td>
<td>June 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student film copies to students</td>
<td>June 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public interviews</td>
<td>June 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interviews</td>
<td>June 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Interviews</td>
<td>June 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary film production</td>
<td>June 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Documentary film production</td>
<td>June 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary showing to students</td>
<td>June 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions</td>
<td>June 20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; – 22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next steps were focused on the production of the film itself. The students generated the idea, finished writing the script and storyboard, researched the topics in greater depth, and learned to use the camera. Finalization of the script was our main focus. Then we used them how to use the storyboard to plan camera angles. Later we considered locations and refined the scripts based on our first exploratory visit to Casey Farm on March 7th.

Beyond these concrete steps, it was important to continue to emphasize the importance of the students as provocateurs not merely filmmakers. My learning circle at FETC pointed out that most of my conversation was about filmmaking. What separates Student Provocateurs from other film projects I have done with students is getting them to become a powerful voice on a subject they feel is valuable and worthy of greater public discussion. Student Provocateurs provides students with an opportunity to realize the power of their voices through film and to use it responsibly.

It became clear from their story idea that the students were taking on the role of provocateurs. As they researched the topic, they looked for information and ideas that would engage adults in thinking differently about their lives. As the script developed, they wove the story to provoke thought, juxtaposing ideas through flashbacks, mixing information and casual conversation in the context of visiting the farm. The exploratory visit to Casey Farm resulted in further refinements to their storyboards as they looked for camera angles, thought about lighting and considered sound techniques to support the provocative look and feel they wanted.

Of course, I could not help looking even further ahead. Even in this first cycle, Deb and I talked more and more about the editing and public showing. We even talked about where to go from here in the coming years with her students and other classes. The Organic Center was looking closely at this as a model for educational outreach, and there are 10 areas on the Bill of Rights. I wondered if all action research projects were like this? Do they all get out of hand, causing you to wake up in the middle of the night with ideas, and begin to wonder how you will have time for anything else? We clearly had a lot of momentum in this cycle.

**Cycle 2: In the Midst of it All**

Cycle 2 brought its own unique challenges while providing great excitement and energy in moving Student Provocateurs forward. A valuable insight that I had at the end of cycle 1 was that my personal emphasis had drifted toward thinking of this project as a film project instead of the original focus of students utilizing the power of their voices to create dialogue among adults while the students were still on target.
Refocused, I made a conscious effort to notice how students were being provocative and discuss that with them.

It turns out that determining a point that represented a natural division for reflection for this cycle was more about it finding me than me finding it. The reflection point for cycle 2 was at the end of script preparation and before filming.

As the work continued forward from the end of cycle 1, students' scripts began to incorporate more and more of their research. At first, the research was tacked on to the dialogue. Students were reading complicated information, and starting to memorize it. I suggested they put their scripts down and just talk to each other and share the information like they would in real life. They liked the feel of this better and turned from trying to memorize facts to understanding the facts well enough to be able to explain them to someone. They could then craft the research they had done into their stories. What they had learned from their research became an integral part of the script. The students had put foundations under their visions so they were feeling more ready for filming than before.

**Turing Ideas into Reality**
Cycle 2 of my action research project, *Student Provocateurs*, was to examine whether the project philosophy and concept were powerful enough to motivate students to create a film that would ultimately provoke dialogue among adults. Often, projects are presented to students with great excitement and anticipation but soon falter and lose their momentum because of limited interest and commitment, teacher time, or administrative support. *Student Provocateurs* was designed to empower students to engage with the topic and the media. Cycle 2 would reveal whether or not they were self-motivated enough to continue developing the idea to the point of filming.

**Developing a Sustainable Model**
Once implemented, will the project sustain itself and be internally motivating enough to get kids to continue their actions to prepare for filming? My hypothesis was that, if genuinely interested in the project, committed to learning, and motivated by the concept, the students would successfully develop a viable film script ready for shooting. I was reminded of Frank Smith (1998) who wrote that the only time it is worthwhile to correct a student's writing is when he asks you to. Smith urges us to create tasks that are authentic enough that students want to perfect their work. Would *Student Provocateurs* be authentic enough? We would soon find out. Would the students be interested enough to write and rewrite, to plan and rehearse, to defer filming until they had
processed their ideas through several cycles of action and reflection? Would their teacher be able to help facilitate this process and have a shared vision with the students?

**Actions**

During the cycle 2 time period, roughly January 15th, 2007 until March 27th, 2007, I actively worked with the kids much more than during cycle 1. My time spent with them focused on scripting and storyboarding. These were two areas that emerged as needing the most attention and were critical to getting ready for filming. They worked in small groups, individually, and had large group discussions. Themes ranged from camera use to lighting and scripting and storyboarding. Deb Barone and I served as resources and coaches on the issues during these activities.

My role continued to be primarily one of “expert.” I brought a unique tool-set to the process for the students and offered advice and suggestions, contributed to conversations, and helped them shape meaning through being a trial audience for them. While the students were always the driving force behind the film and its ideas, I became a constructive voice that the students seemed responsive to and were willing to accept support from, in developing their ideas.

Some of my activities as an “expert;”

- Answering questions about film “flow” by having the students discuss story ideas in terms of following a story line and progressing towards a key idea.
- Focusing students’ attentions on creating a clear beginning, scenes in the present and past, and an ending scene to help develop the clarity of ideas and connections.
- Giving students the opportunity to use cameras to film my discussions and actions with the smalls groups of students so others could review it later to pick up techniques and ways to think about their work.
- Challenging some ideas that reached into areas that were impractical and would ultimately lead to difficulties in completing the film project.
- Continuing to bring ideas and suggestions back to the time line for the project to help the group maintain focus and continue their progression towards the first day of filming.
- Helping students face the challenges of making group decisions by reminding them to stay focused on the bigger picture and remember that the project was a reflection of shared ideas.
Reflections from One Teacher: Assessing Student Attitudes and Activities

To assess student attitudes, I sent a questionnaire to the Lawn Avenue School and Deb Barone. The Lawn Avenue School is a 5-8 middle school with a dedicated parent population and smaller classes. Getting students interested in the program was not difficult. They were very interested in trying new things. In some cases, student attendance is an indicator of student interest, but in this case, attendance was already high - near 95% daily.

Student attitude is an area I was studying and looking for changes. The questionnaire and discussions with Deb allowed me to characterize student attitudes from her perspective. She described the students “very excited” while having periods of lower excitement when demands from other classes are higher. Some group dynamics went through changes from the beginning of the project; most notably leadership among the groups evolved. “Their groups have changed dynamics a few times...the people that started out as strong leaders have backed off a bit and others have stepped forward (as they have learned they do have things to offer).” Deb reports that the “original leaders” have learned that everyone in the group has a value and can contribute in a unique way. There have been struggles and changes in mood. On a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest level of interest, the students were described as being an 8 at the start of the project, a 5 when the work level increased (research, scripting, storyboarding) and at a 10 at the time of the release of the second action cycle report. Deb additionally shares that consistently the students are “laughing, sharing, discussing and growing while having a good time.”

As the students progressed, their group effort and listening increased, Deb reports, “The students are more accepting of one another and have increased their listening skills.” Students have grown in different ways according to the Deb, “A few of the quieter students have moved into leadership roles in their groups and seem to be the solid rocks...the consistent ones which keep the group on task.” Deb continued to describe the variety of group dynamics by saying that, “The spontaneous early group leaders have given way to more steadfast students with better follow through.” This could be a result of the realization that the project has many facets that demand attention and must be completed and built upon. There are a great variety of skills that are necessary in a film project. This allows for a great variety of strengths to emerge among the student groups. Deb offered, “once they shifted leadership roles and ideas started to come they forgot to worry about being ‘cool’ which is fun to watch!”
Interest and initiative are also important indicators to consider. As students’ overall interest ebbed and flowed, so to did their initiative. As the pieces of the project were starting to come together, the students reportedly showed a greater level of initiative. Deb reported that the kids were often highly involved in projects and their work but Student Provocateurs was “very different” because it was “unveiling” each child’s strong points. Deb summed it up as, “While someone else may love to write, vs. someone else wants to draw...and so on ...so they are happy in their places and are thriving.”

The goal of Student Provocateurs was to increase student voice in bringing attention to important issues. I asked Deb to comment on actions students had been taking to prepare to provoke dialogue among adults. She reported that they had considered it in the structure of the script. The story the students came up with was built on adults who are reflecting back to when they were “young” and students at The Lawn Avenue School. In the film, they revisit many childhood memories and work information into the story line both in the past and present. There is a “coming of age” fool to their approach in the way that they reflect back on their childhood ideas from these adult perspectives. It seemed they were able to keep their focus on provoking dialogue and chose a story line that they thought would have maximum impact.

Time constraints remained the largest concern about the feasibility of the model program. My learning circle asked how much time it would take a teacher to move from start to finish. This is clearly an important issue to consider that will be critical to its success with other schools. Overall, faculty members and administration were excited enough about the program that they were willing to do whatever it took to follow through. Deb said, "In my 26 years of teaching, it is easier to stay with what you know and what is comfortable but when you [Brad] said, ‘Never stop learning’, I decided to go for it.... What a gift [for the kids]...to be given time and space to be kids, to be creative and to be proud of what they have done."

Reflection on Cycle 2
I was very pleased with the progression of the students' work and direction they had decided to take with their ideas. Looking back at those two months, it was clear that this was a critical time for Student Provocateurs. The transition from ideas to action was challenging while being a valuable learning experience for us all. I can see the importance of momentum and the consistency in bringing the students from a place where they are learning about the topics and considering the script and storyboard to a place where they are ready to capture their ideas on film.
**Reality Check and Into the Future**

There were moments when I was not completely sure that the kids were getting the concept but after sitting down with them in individual groups, it became clear that they had a clear sense of how to create dialogue to provoke an audience. My time with their individual “flash back” groups made a big impression on me, helping me to realize that they were really grasping the idea of getting the audience involved. Having had prior experience with facilitating film projects with middle school students, I was familiar with the pace and involvement the students were showing. I was very pleased with their progress and how dramatically they had progressed since their first visit to Casey Farm.

To prepare for the future of the project, to help generate interest, to support replication and sustainability, I created a website dedicated to the Student Provocateurs Project. It can be viewed at [http://www.studentprovocateurs.com](http://www.studentprovocateurs.com). The website is designed to promote the current work with students and to reveal the power and potential of film as a medium of change for student voices. I began actively updating the site to reflect the most recent work being done. I started planning to have the finished student film as well as the documentary available there.
Cycle 3: From Ideas to Action  
Relying on Momentum  
The third cycle was film creation. At this point, the students had been working on planning for the film for months. They had researched, watched, listened, questioned, brainstormed, scripted, story boarded, adjusted, and rethought. All this work was part of creating their film. For the students, after the first ten minutes of the process, they were ready put cameras in hand and go out and film the world. They had to wait until late April for filming to begin and filled their time with all of the other activities necessary to make filming possible.

In retrospect, the process to this point had been maintained by the knowledge that some day they would be filming. This created the momentum that carried the process along through the slower times of research, writing, rewriting, and rehearsal. The students diligently completed storyboards, scripts, and costume drawings. They had scene discussions, rehearsals, and carried on great debates about what should and should not be in their film. The power of film as a medium of exploration also seems to play an important part in the project’s momentum. It was a novel technology tool for these kids at this point and one that they see as important to them in the future. However, I don’t
think it is wise or necessary to rely on the novelty of film to capture and hold student attention. As time and technology progress, I suspect many students will have had their own experiences with digital filming. The ability for anyone to make personal films is clearly evident on sites such as YouTube and MySpace. These kids are growing ever more technically proficient with video capture and filmmaking. They are growing their digital literacy skills, but the tools may change. It may have been that it was not the promise of filming that kept them going, but the visualizing of how their ideas would come together in a medium they liked and had prior experience with. I wondered about what the effect of using podcasts or still image montages would have been on their motivation and the final product.

**Action!**

The two general questions for cycle three were:

1) Can we capture all of the footage that was developed and scripted during the year?
2) Is Student Provocateurs powerful enough to carry the project to completion?

More specific questions about supporting the students were:

1) What actions can I take to support the students in editing the film?
2) How can I involve the students in editing the film? Could a group format maintain their ownership? Will they feel as accomplished as students do when they learn to edit themselves?

Shooting started in late April at the school. There are three scenes that took place at the school and we were able to shoot those first. The idea that scenes could be shot out of order was a little difficult for the students to grasp at first but they quickly adapted. The first day of scheduled shooting at the farm revealed the limited practice that the kids had in acting out their parts. There were other difficulties with costumes and props. We ended up utilizing the time as onsite rehearsal. I was able to post their work to the Student Provocateurs website for their review. This gave them the opportunity to self-correct and enhanced their preparation.

Deb reported that it was good for them to see their acting ahead of time so they were able to see what they liked and get a better sense of how the scenes were going to look on camera. With three trips to the farm cancelled due to construction there or bad weather, the students had additional time to work on their scenes and story line. When we were able to get to the farm for filming it was a cool and rainy day but the filming needed to happen. The students were great and worked very hard to get
their scenes filmed and completed. We spent a great deal of time with
the four lead actors to capture all of their dialogue and scene transitions.
As the acting director, I felt that capturing the dialogue and scene
transitions would be the most important aspect to keep the film together.
We needed to return to the farm once more to shoot two final scenes.
After that day’s shooting, we also discussed the different options for
advertising of the film project. It was a great time to talk about
the advertising because students were becoming more focused on their
audience. Talking about the advertising heightened their awareness even
more. Practically, it was also important to get the advertising underway
before the completion of the film because of the tight timetable. They
had many good ideas about getting the word out about the film
including posting fliers in local stores, making signs for telephone poles,
creating a roadside sign, and posters for the two schools. We also
discussed how to get press coverage for the film. An important feature of
Student Provocateurs is to create dialogue about the topic from the film
and this makes getting adults to attend the premiere critical.

Answering the Questions:
1) Can we capture all of the footage that was developed and
scripted during the year?
The students were able to capture their film. The greatest difficulties
were developing a realistic shooting schedule and determining a
mode for editing collectively. I wonder now about condensing the
program into a more realistic time frame that incorporates
adequate time for editing.

2) Is Student Provocateurs powerful enough to carry the project to
completion?
Carrying the project to completion does not seem to be an issue
when there is enough time. What I believe to be critical for the
sustainability is the development of a more realistic time frame
overall; perhaps within a standard school term, quarter, or trimester.

More specific questions about supporting the students were:
1) What actions can I take to support the students in editing the film?
I think giving the students scenes beforehand was helpful and
getting them to focus on their particular scenes allowed them to
create something true to their original scripted and storyboarded
vision. In the future, I would like to see more time for hands-on
editing from the students and more team collaboration and
decision making on their part in the editing process.

2) How can I involve the students in editing the film? Could a group
format maintain their ownership? Will they feel as accomplished as
students do when they learn to edit themselves?
My experience with students editing their own film is they are empowered by the editing process and the freedom they have in doing it themselves. They are able to more clearly represent their vision and are not subject to the interpretation of an outside observer. Although the students participated in the editing process and were committed to finishing their film, I cannot say with any certainty that they understand the editing process any better than when they began the program, although they do self-report that they learned editing skills. As their editor, I tried to carry out all their decisions and make the film what they wanted it to be. I edited it twice based on their reviews. But in the end, if they had been doing the editing, they might have made different decisions. I have no doubt that some of them will learn to edit because they want to be able to do it all, and with access to the technology, they certainly will be able to. It may be that they simply do not know enough to know what they missed.

The Films
The two films, the student film, “The Organic Truth, A Child’s Rights” and the Student Provocateurs 2007 documentary represent the best evidence for what was done and the work that was completed to meet the goals. All of the footage of the student film, edited and unedited, can be viewed at [http://www.studentprovocateurs.com](http://www.studentprovocateurs.com). The unedited film segments, called “ruff cuts,” can be seen by following the links with the gorilla on them. The final rough edit film can be seen by following the links with the eggs. Both represent the tremendous effort by the students to get the film captured. The documentary can also be viewed on the same site.

The original idea was that the students would work on editing their film once they had a chance to practice and learn about film editing. The issue was that their school computers did not have editing software and there was not enough time due to the delays in filming. I also underestimated the amount of effort that would be necessary to get sixth graders ready to edit a film. Ultimately, I edited it with their input in a collaborative setting. We had a discussion about the editing process and what was needed. What they did not experience was getting to edit their own work on the computer. I would like to work this into the project at an earlier point next time and grow their understanding through hands-on experiences; perhaps with some lessons where they edit rehearsal footage. Editing is a difficult process and perhaps the most technical portion of making a film. Future development of Student Provocateurs will need to address the editing issues and time constraints for making the film.
Reflection on Cycle 3
What struck me the most about the project at this point was that it might not be a sustainable model. My goal was to design a program that could be utilized as a model for other situations and to create a website to house all of the information necessary that would be free for download by any school. The website has become a reality but the project needs reshaping. There are three notable challenges to the future of the program. The first, Deb Barone has dedicated her science curriculum to this program for the year, something I do not think can be counted on from other teachers. This cannot be a necessary component for the film program's success. Relying on this would greatly limit the number of classrooms that might do Student Provocateurs in the future. Second, she had to get permission from the school board to make the curriculum change. With our educational system’s current focus on test scores and student “achievement,” changing curriculum is difficult and often impossible. Third, I have dedicated a great deal of time, effort, and expertise that might not be available at other locations. It is difficult for a teacher to dedicate a great amount of class time to a project that falls outside state or national standards. It was a great milestone in our efforts when the school board and principal accepted the alterations to the curriculum. These three things together represent challenges to a sustainable program.

To address the need for creating a more sustainable program, my cadre learning-circle members, my cadre parent, Dr. Riel and I discussed possible solutions. We identified two missing elements to help with the challenges stated above; ties to national and state curriculum standards, and reducing the amount time it takes to do the project. Therefore, I would like to establish is a connection to national and state standards and find ways to reduce the scope of the film portion of the work. The importance of the film is that it provokes dialogue. Dialogue is developed from powerful ideas and clear vision. I want different groups of students to be able to focus their attention on a variety of important topics and create meaningful films that keep the idea of Student Provocateurs alive. I think I can create a variety of options for how classes might use the model.

The first Student Provocateurs film is about 16 minutes in length. My former students made “energy videos” that were 2 to 5 minutes in length. They were able to complete their films in about 30 class days. They also worked on other more traditional science curriculum areas while the films were being created with about 2 weeks dedicated to filming, editing, and producing their work. Additionally, Dr. Riel suggested that the program be offered through the Boys and Girls Club or other youth program. This
would allow for the continuation of powerful ideas and stories to exist while helping to bring educational opportunities to students who perhaps need it most. This is a new direction for me and working with a population with which I have not had experience. I could see how the informal learning environment could benefit from Student Provocateurs and find audiences in their communities for ideas their children care about. These ideas clearly merit further exploration. At the film premiere, a member of the Jamestown Youth Program approached me about working with a group of students to make a film about the revitalization of their new building and program.

Data from Final Student Interviews
All participating students in Student Provocateurs for 2007 (N=18) were interviewed on camera. They were asked five questions and given the opportunity to expand on their answers, as they felt necessary. All the students felt they recognized the importance of getting important ideas to others as a result of participating in Student Provocateurs. A majority (67%) of students reported thinking Student Provocateurs was started to teach filmmaking, with 17% feeling it was started to help develop communication skills. Half of the students reported learning communication skills and how to work with others while the other 50% felt they had mainly learned skills related to the process of filmmaking. Students said they would have done less research, storyboarding, and scripting and spent more time learning to edit and acting in the film.

Table 2: Why do you think that Student Provocateurs was started?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N (18)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To teach us (kids) about filmmaking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop communication skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get us (kids) active in learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provoke ideas in students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: What skills do you think you have learned while working on the project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>N (18)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating and working with others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filmmaking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera use, sound, and lighting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and researching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun and learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: What was your favorite aspect of making the film?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning about and then making a film</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging around between shooting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-takes from the film</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating the stories</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching and learning about hormones</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: If you could do anything differently what would it be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less research and more filming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time writing the script and storyboard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to do more editing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a bigger part in the film</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Has working on a Student Provocateurs film helped you to see the importance of getting others to think about important ideas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are telling about organic foods</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As kids we have important things to say</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film is an important way to get ideas to others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People listen best to video</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to make more films now</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working together makes for a stronger argument</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids can say anything through film</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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**Summative Reflections**

As educational leaders, we are preparing teachers and students for a future that we are unable to imagine. We will only know if we are successful by watching our students to learn from what they do with what we teach them. We are fortunetellers without a crystal ball or tarot cards to rely on. When implementing educational policy and ideas, we must rely on research, well-supported theories, best practices, our own experiences, and the advice, collaboration, and knowledge that comes from our work as a community of learners. We are taking a leap of faith and the consequences are real, sometimes tangible, and potentially far-reaching.
I believe there are fundamental skills our students need to be ready for this future and a need to address these issues now. Our children will be faced with environmental, social and political conditions that we have created or perpetuated but which we do not totally understand, or have the collective will to change even though we recognize the necessity for change. Our children must be masters of communication and collaboration, able to adapt, explain, synthesize, and build ideas, and be able to localize information and personalize themselves to become what Thomas Friedman (2006) calls, “untouchables.” Students will need to be masters of learning, bring passion and curiosity to what they do, and work well with others, professionally and personally. Even our formal expectations as manifested in standards, textbooks and testing is slowly moving toward learning how to learn skills, cross-disciplinary topics, and learning tools.

In reality, we have been addressing these skills in education for a long time. What we have not been doing is pushing them into a more prominent position in our schools. These skills closely mirror what have sometimes been labeled as the natural possessions of those referred to as “right-brained.” Right-brained individuals are described as imaginative, intuitive, artistic, musical, and big-picture focused. Many schools have expanded their arts programs and recognize the importance of balancing educational experiences. What I would propose is an expansion of programs that focus on offering students the opportunity to grow their imagination, intuition, artistic expressions, pattern recognition, communication, collaboration, adaptability, synthesizing skills, and personal interactions within the traditional content areas.

Student Provocateurs was originally designed to empower student voice and democratic participation through film. What students have reported learning is how to work with others in groups, collaborate, communicate, and make a film along the way (skills identified by Jonassen and Rohrer, 1999, as characteristics of constructivist learning environments). Student Provocateurs has show to give students a reason to think, write, and work together. With this high interest method, students ask and answer their own questions, do in-depth research, engage in thoughtful dialog, learn how to build interest, provoke thought and focus adults’ attention on issues. Student Provocateurs offers students the opportunity to engage in meaningful learning where they are tasked with creating a film that highlights an issue that is important to them and is designed to generate dialogue among the film’s viewers. The benefits of Student Provocateurs, although not exactly what was originally intended, meets educational needs that will grow student skills for future success.
Ideas and new thinking
As I reflect on the process and results of doing action research on Student Provocateurs, a list of key ideas emerges:

- Tomorrow leaders are today’s students
- Tomorrow’s leaders will need to be (Friedman, 2006):
  - Communicators
  - Collaborators
  - Leveragers
  - Adaptors
  - Explainers
  - Synthesizers
  - Model Builders
  - Localizers
  - Personalizers
- To be successful students will need to:
  - Learn how to learn
    - Learn new things to adapt
  - Bring curiosity and passion to their work
  - Work well with others professionally and personally
  - Nurture Right-Brained skills
    - Imagination
    - Intuition
    - Pattern recognition
    - Artistic expression
- Therefore, education needs to move its focus to right-brain attributes and active learning that will benefit students more in a future where individually, creativity, adaptability, communication, collaboration, explanation, and intuition will result in success.

A Final Reflection
Student Provocateurs was designed to encourage student participation in dialogue about important issues and engage in the democratic process through creating a film. The answer to the action research question: “Will students engage with social issues when they have film as a medium to provoke others?” is a qualified yes. Participating students report feeling empowered to share important ideas with their audience with the goal of increasing dialogue. Students also report gaining collaboration, communication and teamwork skills as a result of participating. However, there is an important caveat. The web of support was complex and all the elements seem to be necessary. The commitment of the students, their families, Ms. Barone, and the school administration were strong. Casey Farms was a valuable partner and the Organic Center was very generous in their financial and informational support. I am concerned that these
events combined to make Student Provocateurs possible and that the players involved were part of a perfect alignment of puzzle pieces that came together to make the work possible. I also recognize that I played a major role in getting these things to align as they did. I cannot help consider the ramifications of a program that relies so heavily on so many different elements. There are critical links that must be made. At any point in the chain, be it funding, administrative support, teacher participation, time, location, technology, software or hardware, a weak link could bring the project to a halt or alter its direction.

There were also unintended benefits. In conversations and interviews with students, they emphasize how they learned to work together. In much the same way the ACOT researchers reported, students were more likely to work together because of the complexity of the task. They came to value others' ideas as much as their own. They accepted different roles than they thought were their first choices (everyone wanted to act), and they all enjoyed this as a way of learning.

When I asked students what the goal of Student Provocateurs was, more than half of them said something like, “to learn how to make a film.” My initial thoughts about this were that I had missed the opportunity to create a program that encourages democratic awareness and participation. But then they said that it was about being heard, getting their ideas out and getting people to think about how the issues. It may be that because film was a new medium to them, this had to be their focus, and it was what sustained their research and collaboration, at least at times. It seems that the idea of student provocateurs was not ever far below the surface of the film making, and it provided the right mix of elements for students to learn, interact, grow, collaborate, communicate, work together, utilize technology to express themselves and acquire new digital skills. They learned skills that serve every citizen in a democratic system well - to listen, to respect differences and to settle disputes constructively and amicably. It may be that this is the best evidence of a 6th grader's understanding of participation in a democracy. The way that the challenge of completing a film allowed them to experience democratic participation may be as important as the focus on the goal of being heard. They were in charge. They had control over the entire process – not the adults. That freedom had the limits that comes with balancing individuals' rights, and navigating between liberty and equality in a democracy. It turns out they were as proud of their teamwork as they were of the film itself.

Another factor was the audience for the film. The audience for the premier was very friendly, composed of mostly family and fellow students.
A more critical audience might have taken issue with some of the film's claims and facts.

A less supportive environment for learning might have created additional challenges for the students and perhaps weakened the students' sense of freedom in the process that may have been pivotal to their enthusiasm, sustained interest and willingness to collaborate.

It will be valuable to experience a second project with the full film cycle to further evaluate the effects of these factors and the conditions that facilitate the use of film for developing student voice in a democracy.

Next steps
- Work with a community-based youth program in Jamestown on their documentary project to try out the informal education model.
- Align the program elements with National and State curriculum standards.
- Find a school in a more urban setting for the 2007-2008 school year.
- Further refine the introductory film “Making Your Movie.”
- Create a film for students on how film can make people think, rethink and talk about ideas – how to be provocative.

It may be that there is a range of ways to implement Student Provocateurs. At one end of the spectrum, there is the “train-the-trainer” model, were teachers would attend a workshop of varying length depending on their experience, leaving with the technical know-how and a clear understanding of Student Provocateurs so they could do it independently like I did when I was a teacher. Lying somewhere in the middle, is the supported model, represented by this project, where I acted as producer, chief editor, and film and technology expert to the students directly. In this model, my discussions with the students are around camera use, filming techniques, editing and associated technology as well as how to be provocative. At the other end of the spectrum, a mentor model, taking place in a school where editing software, video equipment, and technology personnel are in place allowing me to take on the role of mentor for the teacher, guiding the exploration of provocative film ideas and student participation. In this model, students are the producers and editors and my discussions with them would be about the extent to which their work will provoke discussion.

In summary... As a result of this effort, I have become systematic in action and reflection. I feel like the students who found their way through experience, conversation and revisiting their ideas in different forms. At the same time
students were discussing ideas, conceptualizing scenes, creating storyboards, practicing scenes, critiquing and doing retake after retake, I was reflecting on what was going on, blogging, keeping my study groups updated, and writing, always writing. My peers and professors were asking me questions just as I was asking the students to share their thinking. At times, the students were impatient with the process and some will still say they wished we had done more filming and less discussing. At times I was impatient with the action/reflection process, unable to imagine I had anything else to say. As a "just do it" kind of person, I have really come to value reflection because it gave me so many insights and brought in so many ideas from others. Freire said he believes in a pedagogy of curiosity. I now believe in a pedagogy of action and reflection because it gives curiosity a voice and carries it out into the world.
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