

AS AN INFORMATIONAL TOOL, video has been around for decades. But with faster Internet connections, cheaper and ubiquitous tools, and more willing participants, its use in the past several years has exploded in schools across the country. The flipped classroom phenomenon is fueled by students watching videos at home, absorbing lessons from their teachers, or going on websites such as Khan Academy. Some K–12 teachers use video as a content creation and production tool, both in and out of the classroom. Students are displaying their understanding of new concepts, demonstrating new skills, and showing off new talents to the world, all through self-created videos. In addition, teachers are finding uses for video with their peers. Video continues to make up a larger part of professional development for teachers, from watching tutorials to watching themselves in action.

Erik Palmer certainly knows about the transformation video can make in a classroom. When Palmer was teaching an eighth-grade civics course at Campus Middle School in Englewood, Colorado, he asked his students to write a three-paragraph essay on the rights, duties, and responsibilities of a citizen. After class, one student asked if, instead of writing a paper, he could produce a video.

Palmer, who was a classroom teacher for 21 years and is now an educational consultant in Aurora, Colorado, found himself intrigued.

"I realized that outside of my class, students were living in the 21st century," says Palmer, who approved the student's request. "But when they came to my class, they were back in the 1980s. It was a matter of bridging that gap instead of making them time travelers."

Palmer's students produced videos on multiple topics, such as democracy and the basic principles that guide their daily lives. Offering this alternative to papers and PowerPoint presentations allowed students who might be stymied by those methods to show off different talents.

VISIBLE THINKING, CRITICAL THINKERS

AS A FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER AT Westgate Elementary in Arlington Heights, Illinois, Paul Solarz strongly believes video is why his students engage in more intelligent discussions



HOW VIDEO CAN HELP STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS, LEARN

From flipped learning to students creating multimedia projects to teachers getting personalized PD, video is filling many needs in today's schools.

when grouped in literature circles. "I'd been doing literature circles for 10 years without videotaping," he says, adding that watching the videos also helps him monitor student progress. "Without video, discussions were much weaker and rarely involved finding evidence. Students listen better and their conversations become more in depth when they're being recorded. It causes them to think about their thinking."

Solarz's students also tackle a six-week video project in which they pursue a teacher-approved personal interest, such as how the solar system was formed. They research and evaluate theories or develop their own theories, create a final product (e.g., a paper or poster), and then videotape themselves explaining the product and the process used to create it. The end goal, Solarz says, is for students to explain what they learned, the value of that learning, and how they can pass their findings on to others.

Each student watches one video created by a classmate and then provides a suggestion for improvement and a compliment. "It's a great way of teaching each other," Solarz says.

So is creating videos that explain 21st-century skills, such as collaboration, thinking interdependently, or managing information. Students create their own individual videos at the end of the year illustrating one of these skills.

Solarz introduced the technology into his classroom about six years ago, when his school district allowed access to YouTube. On average, students create and produce two videos per day.

"Teachers ought to try video as a tool for student assessment or improvement," he says. "It's an opportunity to listen in on [students'] thinking. It's visible thinking in action, which can make for better learning."

As an early adopter of video, Wesley Fryer is helping other teachers better understand video's value as a content creation and production tool.

Fryer, a fourth- and fifth-grade STEM teacher at Independence Elementary in Yukon, Oklahoma, had his students produce videos of the catapults they constructed and shoot slow-motion video of their completed Rube Goldberg projects.

Students in other classes produced "green-screen videos"—kids stood in front of a green screen with their research notes superimposed behind them and narrated their findings—

which were then posted on one of the school's YouTube channels. "Two students who were very quiet in class produced videos of Goldberg projects they made at home and were excited to put them on the classroom channel," Fryer says, adding that his classroom channel now supports more than 400 student videos.

"It was an extension of classroom learning," he says. "Video brought experiences they had at home back to the class and allowed them to shine... Video is transformative in that way."

The opportunity to produce video content not only changes students' perceptions of STEM, it also engages students with discipline or behavioral problems in the learning process.

Still, Fryer says, some teachers are intimidated by video, don't realize how simple it is to use, or don't recognize that by enabling students to become content creators, it allows them to have authentic learning experiences.

Among the best ways to sell the value of video is for teachers to see compelling examples of student work, he says, noting that most would eagerly jump on board to use video in the classroom. "We need students

graduating from our schools to be critical thinkers and critical consumers, to not believe everything they read or see," Fryer continues. "Using video and other media is an important part of becoming literate citizens and critical thinkers."

A SHARED VISION

SOME TEACHERS ARE DISCOVERING the power of video's flip side—professional development.

Teachers at Queens Metropolitan High School in New York started a video club two years ago to enhance their classroom teaching techniques, says Heather DeFlorio Ascioia, a 10th-grade ELA teacher who also leads the school's English department.

In the past, DeFlorio Ascioia and another teacher would visit classrooms at other schools and in other districts to observe teachers and offer feedback regarding their instruction delivery. Two years ago, she says, they decided to replicate the process within their own school.

But instead of sitting in a classroom—which was sometimes intrusive and affected student behavior—they opted to videotape teachers during

class. Once a week, teachers would meet after school to watch the videos and discuss their notes. They offered one "warm comment," something the teacher was doing well, and "cool feedback," one practice the teacher could implement the next day and another that would require several months to develop and implement.

"The feedback coming from teachers when they watch the video is a lot more spot-on, because everyone is watching the same thing at the same time," says DeFlorio Ascioia. "With video, it's easier to home in on what the teacher is doing, student interactions, and instruction instead of all the other variables in the room."

Perhaps the biggest takeaway is that the videos have encouraged DeFlorio Ascioia and other teachers to reflect on their own teaching style. Based on the approaches she has seen in the videos, DeFlorio Ascioia considers how her lessons are being delivered and develops new teaching strategies. "Video has the ability to push people's interaction to the next level in an environment that's full of support. It gives us a shared vision to improve our instruction," she says.

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