Is PowerPoint Crippling Our Students?

**Yes**

I don’t use PowerPoint anymore. There … I said it. I am not proud of it. I am a technology professor. All of our textbooks come with PowerPoint slides. I teach others how to use PowerPoint. I’m good at it. So good that my students’ grades prove that with PowerPoint slides and the book, the instructor’s value has diminished.

Sounds like online learning, you say. Not really. In online learning, at least the students communicate with each other. There is discussion, dialogue, exploration. My use of a technology tool has violated the social norms of a good educational classroom.

Am I willing to advance with technology and regress the socialization factor? Am I willing to become another distributor of mindless media? No! Never! What we gain with PowerPoint may not be worth the price.

*PowerPoint Encourages Passivity.* I know the MTV generation makes use of color, sound,

**No**

The college students and practicing teachers I instruct are crazy about PowerPoint. When my students come to computer class they are tired and exhausted from a day’s work. They usually drag in late to class, and can’t wait to leave early. The last thing they want to do is learn anything that would require mental work. They certainly don’t want to hear some boring professor lecturing them on how to use PowerPoint. However, the situation changes when they begin to work with the program. Like magic, they become involved in the learning process. These unmotivated, tired people begin researching subjects in depth to create original presentations. Mind you, these presentations are not superficial and thrown together like most papers and college reports. PowerPoint seems to bring out their creative side. On top of this, the program is easy to learn, use, and share with other people.

*PowerPoint is a very versatile program. Students create electronic portfolios, Jeopardy-
movement, and cartoons. I realize that students are used to being bombarded with imagery. However, even television has realized the value of interactivity and audience response. American Idol's ratings indicate the value audience places on participation. PowerPoint makes good use of media features; however, it does not require the student to play an active role in its use as a learning media.

**PowerPoint Inhibits Spontaneity.** Have you ever used PowerPoint in a class where a student makes a point and the PowerPoint ends up going south? PowerPoint is a static document. It does not embrace change or open thought. No one could possibly document true discussion. True discussion is free flowing and can take many avenues to cover the same point. True discussion is the epitome of an educated society.

**PowerPoint Promotes Inactivity.** Today's student is accustomed to media that requires little from them to unveil the story. PowerPoint embraces this inactivity and displays the next thought with little input. Slide after slide reveals data that the student may have had little to no part in creating.

**PowerPoint Welcomes Interactivity.** Unfortunately, the interactivity is somewhat like a remote control for a television. If the student does not understand a point, a change is just one click away.

**PowerPoint Removes Responsibility.** Education requires the student to accept responsibility for what is learned, discussed, embraced, and rejected. PowerPoint assumes that the student is a clean slate and has nothing to contribute that cannot be covered with just a bullet point or mini-movie. Even if the slide asks a question or invokes a thought, the student generally has little responsibility in its inception.

Please don't get me wrong. PowerPoint is a great tool! But is it a tool for education? Education needs students who are active, responsible, and engaged. Discussion needs to be free flowing and allow for interactivity. PowerPoint—with its text, movies, and sounds—reminds me too much of watching television with closed captioning on. Retrospectively, I have to remember that it is rarely the tool that is the problem—perhaps I need to review how I use it?

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