

Places for Struggling Teens™

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"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

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INSTANT IMAGE VS. ACADEMICS

By: Lon Woodbury



We have just finished a political campaign where it can be argued that the advantage went to those candidates who presented on television the most attractive image and whose handlers packaged and presented the candidate through brief sound bites in a way that most effectively reflects the dreams and hopes of the public rather than a rational expression of policies the public agrees with. So far as governing our country, the lesson is that a person who does not have good looks will find it difficult to win an election, and to win, the candidate and campaign staff must be able to think in sound bites and images that appeal to the emotions.

That our culture has changed drastically in the last century has been a common observation for some time as people decry the increasingly dominating culture based on television, and more recently, the rapid action of video games, grammarless text messaging and instant reactions on Internet blogs. Neil Postman's classic Amusing Ourselves to Death, published in 1985, was perhaps the best known early popularization of concern for the implications of this cultural change. Taking a page from Marshall McLuhan's The Medium Is the Message, he traces how both public and private communications have been changed by a change in the dominant medium.

He observed that in the 19th century the printed word was the primary way people learned about ideas and events outside their personal experience. The printed word lent itself to long rational expositions on ideas, fostered refutation and rebuttal, and required active listening and long periods of concentration on the part of the listener in order to understand the complicated arguments or presentations. To participate in this medium required rational work on the part of the reader or listener, and required the ability to delay gratification. The medium of the printed word teaches the ability to concentrate, understand complex rational concepts from the written and spoken word, understand lessons from history, and learn to sit still in order to absorb complex concepts. Those very goals were and are a major focus of our education system from a century ago to the present.

The change today, the author asserts, is that television and the Internet now constitute the major way people learn about ideas and events outside their personal experience. He asserts this is a radically different medium from the printed word, not well suited to long expositions of complex ideas, and that history is not very relevant. It teaches the recipient to be passive, appeals primarily to emotions, and that anything important can be expressed in a one-minute sound bite, or at the most, a half hour dramatized event. Another important aspect is that the TV set can always be turned off or turned to another channel if a person feels it is not entertaining enough. Thus the title of his book. Instead of the child looking to learn rational thought, the child looks to be entertained. In this new culture, he asserts, if we do not find something entertaining, or worse yet, find it requires work, we tend to tune it out.

If we accept his theme, it exposes a major tension modern educators must work with. Our schools are still largely based on the medium of the written word that is presenting rational complex ideas which a student has to work at to learn. One must sit still

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Bulletin Board...

Welcome Hunter Campbell



Hunter Ronald Norman Campbell was born November 16, 2008, at 12:20pm to JoeLynn Leha Hamby and Spencer Raymond Campbell. He weighed 6 pounds, 12 ounces and measured 18 ½ inches long. Hunter is the grandson of Ron Campbell, Woodbury Reports IT Systems Specialist. Congratulations Spencer and JoeLynn on your baby boy!

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