

## Teachers Tap Video-Sharing In the Classroom

By JOSEPH DE AVILA  
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When Richard Colosi wanted to teach his first-grade class about insects, he turned to the Web for help. Mr. Colosi, who works at Canandaigua Primary School in upstate New York, went to his laptop and put on a video parody of "The Dating Game" that featured different types of insects. The video was produced by a teacher in another school district and posted on TeacherTube, a video-sharing site for students and educators.

Video in the classroom has evolved since the days when teachers wheeled in film projectors on carts. More teachers are using online video-sharing sites modeled after [Google](#) Inc.'s YouTube to engage with students. And video is no longer a one-way channel of communication; students are participating in the creation of videos, too.

On TeacherTube, educators share material, such as instructional math videos, with classrooms around the world. Another site, SchoolTube, mainly hosts videos produced by students in class with the help of their teachers.

Teachers who use the sites say they value the opportunity to see what other educators are doing in their classrooms, and students say they enjoy having an outlet to showcase their work. Also, "kids are becoming more technologically inclined," says Mr. Colosi, and such video helps to hold their interest.

But while video-sharing sites can help capture students' attention, critics say such services will have difficulty gaining wide support from school administrators, who often block access to Internet sites like YouTube. Much of the material on these sites isn't tied to curriculum or designed with educational standards in mind, and the videos vary widely in quality. In addition, teachers need to weed through clips to make sure they are relevant for class -- a potentially time-consuming process.

Both sites say they screen videos to make sure they are appropriate for schools, but they don't vet the clips for accuracy or quality.

Jason Smith, a school superintendent in Melissa, Texas, founded TeacherTube last year. He wanted to find an easier way to deliver video to the classroom, and thought YouTube was a great model, he says. The for-profit site, which is free for schools, is supported by

advertising and private investors. Participants have uploaded some 15,000 videos that are freely available on the TeacherTube site, while 5,000 more can be viewed only by designated users.

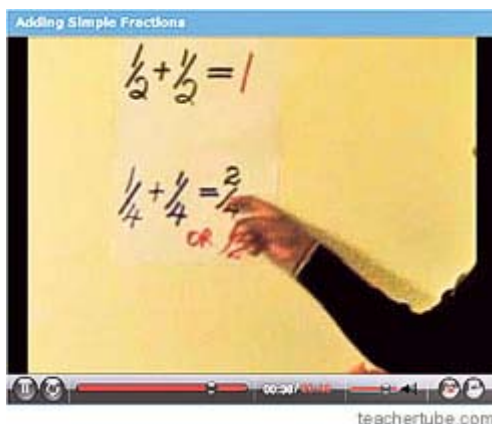
Teachers in the Galena Park school district near Houston have been using TeacherTube for students from elementary school to high school since the district approved its use last year. Younger students watch videos of teachers rapping about the rules of multiplication, while high schoolers see instructional videos on topics like calculus. Teachers sometimes assign video-watching as part of homework, says Dollie Mayeux, the school district's program director for mathematics. For example, if a student is struggling with a particular math equation, the student can watch an instructional video at home on how to solve the problem.

The Galena Park school district plans to develop guidelines addressing how teachers and students should use TeacherTube, administrators say. For now, teachers use their own discretion when choosing videos.

### Short Attention Spans

Beth Thomas, a mother of a first-grader in Mr. Colosi's class at Canandaigua Primary School, says she likes the idea of using TeacherTube as an educational supplement. Short video clips are a great way for Mr. Colosi to get the attention of her son Grant, says Ms. Thomas, a 45-year-old medical-office manager. A longer video would only make Grant squirm in his seat, she says.

SchoolTube, a free, advertiser-supported video-sharing service based in St. Louis, started last year as a site where high-school students studying broadcast journalism could post their work online, says founder Carl Arizpe. The site has since expanded to include student-produced explanatory films and video clips on a broad range of subjects, including the Salem witch trials and the Great Depression. Some 2,500 schools are registered on the site.



A fractions lesson on TeacherTube.

Stephanie Mills, a broadcast journalism teacher at Burleson High School in suburban Fort Worth, Texas, discovered SchoolTube last year. She liked the concept, she says, and had her school principal approve the use of the site to showcase her students' work. Now her students, who produce a weekly newscast covering school events such as pep rallies and sporting events, can share their work with family and friends on the Web.

Despite the popularity of classroom video-

sharing among some students and teachers, some experts say sites like these would serve teachers and students better if the videos faced wider scrutiny.

"Accuracy is a valid concern," says William Tally, a senior research scientist at the Center for Children and Technology, a nonprofit research organization. Mr. Tally says that the sites could use a Wikipedia model, where experts review material once it is posted for quality and accuracy. But he believes that most teachers would do a good job of filtering the content themselves.

Another worry for parents and educators is that content unsuitable for children will seep into the video-sharing sites.

Mr. Arizpe says SchoolTube monitors the site to make sure all the material is safe for students. A moderator, usually a teacher who has registered with the site, screens videos before they go live. SchoolTube employees also monitor the site for inappropriate content.

## **Register First**

TeacherTube says that only people working in education who have registered on the site can upload videos. The site relies primarily on users to flag any offensive content. On both sites, parents are generally required to sign a waiver if they want to allow their child to be filmed and to have that video posted to the Web.

Some parents also worry about exposing young children in videos that can be viewed by anyone online. Travis Hawkins, a junior at Kirkwood High School in Kirkwood, Mo., has been posting videos that he has made for his broadcast journalism class on SchoolTube since last fall. Travis's mother, Lyn Hawkins, says she is glad her son's work can be seen easily by others, but she also makes sure her son has clear boundaries on what he can film and put on the Web.

"The day has arrived that you have to be aware of what's out there, and you have to be involved," says Ms. Hawkins, an elementary-school teacher. For example, she won't allow Travis to post video of their home or of his younger siblings.

Dave Nagel, executive editor of THE Journal, an education technology publication, says another hurdle faced by these sites is the perception among school administrators that YouTube is mainly a time-waster. Also, he says, "there is the ever-present mentality of, 'If it's free, it can't be good.' "

In addition, many U.S. school districts already pay for access to more-established services like Discovery Education, a unit of media company Discovery Communications LLC. Discovery Education's streaming Web site pulls professional videos from partners including BBC America, PBS as well as from the Discovery Channel. HotChalk, an ad-supported online educational site, offers schools access to NBC News' archive for a fee.

Hoping to make its site more user-friendly, TeacherTube is rolling out a pilot program called TeacherTube Onsite that will give school districts software to manage videos on their own intranets.

SchoolTube is planning a similar service that will enable teachers to design public Web pages on SchoolTube's site, making it easier for schools to share videos, photos and documents.

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