Chapter 15
Core Concept #5
Media Shape Values

Make Media!
Grades 6–12

Objective: To encourage your students to become responsible media makers by mentoring them through the process of creating media that reflect their worldview and values. This project requires the traditional cognitive skills of reading, writing, and researching in addition to production and critical thinking and critical viewing skills.

This is a soup-to-nuts project that begins with developing a message and then moving through a series of creative steps to visualize and articulate that message with a camera. Through the years, I have encouraged students to make a statement about their world as a way of giving them the opportunity to create media through their lens and with their voice. Here are the steps.

1. *Form small production groups:* Divide the class into groups of four students—just the right number to designate a producer, director, writer, and cameraperson in each group.

2. *Create Your Message:* This step provides the groups with a preliminary exercise on how to deliver a message to the public through images. Present a scenario in which each group has been commissioned to deliver a message about an important issue on a huge billboard in Times Square. Encourage the students to create a message that reflects their values even if those values are not popular. The billboard message should be created with as few words as possible. The images will tell the story. A few helpful hints:

    *   Remember that images provoke emotions. What emotion does your message provoke? Find an image that reflects that emotion.

    *   Keep it simple!

3. *Develop a Treatment:* Develop a three-paragraph description of the short film that includes the following information:

    Paragraph 1

    *   Summary of *storyline*

    *   Description of *characters*

Paragraph 2

- Explanation of *intended message*
- Identification of *audience*

Paragraph 3

- Production Group Name
- Format: commercial, movie trailer, opening scene of drama/comedy, talk show, PSA (public service announcement), new feature, mini-documentary
- Assignment of Production Roles: producer, director, writer, cameraperson
- Location
- Research
- Resources/Props
- Production Schedule (Get out the calendars!)

4. ***Storyboard:*** Continuing to work with images, have the students plot their story with *a frame-by-frame visualization* of the action. (Think cartoon!) They can use magazine pictures, their own drawings, or any mode of visualization inspired by their creativity. (You can find samples of storyboards online.)

5. ***Script:*** Write a script that includes dialogue and action descriptions to correspond with the storyboard frames. You now have a "map" of your movie—image-by-image and line-by-line.

6. ***Video:*** Now it's time to go out with the map, crew, and camera to make a movie. The finished film should be about three to five minutes in length—just enough time for a debut production. Students should not film any more than fifteen to twenty minutes worth of raw, unedited footage; otherwise there will be too much material to edit.

7. ***Editing:*** Computers now come with movie production software that makes the editing process easy for any computer whiz kid to learn. Make sure that there is someone in each group who knows how to edit. If no one in the group can edit, then restrict the students to producing a thirty-second, well-scripted, well-rehearsed public service announcement that they can film straight through without any editing—but well rehearsed!

8. ***Screening:*** *Most important, view all films before you screen them in class! Your students— an enthusiastic audience of Comedy Central and late night cable television—probably have a different standard than you about what is acceptable content, especially in terms of humor.*

Once you have approved all media, make a big deal of the screening. Get the students involved in marketing their films. You might even consider an evening event with parents in attendance.

9. ***Concluding Statement:*** It is recommended that all students submit a one-page, typed, reflection paper on their personal experience of this project, including comments on the following:

   a. Working collaboratively in a group;

   b. How this project informed their perception of media;

   c. What it feels like to be a media producer;

   d. What kind of value decisions went into the creating, imagining, scripting, filming, and editing of the film (refer to the questions in the section "Who's In and Who's Out" on page 116 in *Catechesis in a Multimedia World*).