Most college students have grown up with television and video games either as an enrichment of their lives or as a babysitter. After having been exposed to a myriad of visual stimulation experiences throughout the years, many students are dependent upon seeing, or interacting when involved in various learning opportunities.

Teacher education courses are particularly fertile ground for visual experiential opportunities in the field of practice. The synthesis of theory and experiences through presentations employing not only words, but videos or other images illustrating concepts has the potential to hold the students' interest as well as stimulate energy.

I will describe in this paper how to use a computer presentation program to increase the liveliness of learning experiences through video, audio, and animations. Group process, a major component of teacher education will be the focus of the video.

A digitalized video vignette portraying a situation in which both the teacher and the students in the classroom try to draw the non-responsive student into a discussion will be used as the demonstration. The teachers in training will be asked to share their interpretations of the class’s interaction on the video, and their comments will be categorized and prioritized in a manner that will help them both understand and be a part of the process. Encouragement of critical thinking, along with sharing ideas with their peers in the class, increases the possibilities for both extension of knowledge and experiential learning. Seeing how others draw conclusions in vivo is, in itself, a valuable group experience.

The slide show is set up in the following manner:

1. A short verbal description (approximately 3 slides) of the goals of the slide presentation. This includes animations and photos.
2. A slide with 40 seconds of digitalized video with a vignette illustrating the behavior of a student reluctant to participate in class and the response of the class to her.
3. A succession of slides that stimulate the discussion process by introducing various questions to encourage students’ synthesis of the situation. Suggestions provided by students re: teacher and student intervention will be displayed on the slides, prioritized and integrated into the broader learning goals of the course.

In my experience, using presentation programs that illustrate specific points through videos or photos along with encouraging students to become part of the presentation process is most effective in increasing student interest, sharing ideas as a class, and integrating theory and practice.

To avoid the pitfalls of irrelevance or lack of participation of students, the points illustrated should be clear and concise. The video or other media must illustrate the class or student problem well and provide opportunities for creativity in interpretation and critical thinking. The instructor, of course, should be experienced and well prepared, and the students must be equipped to participate through reading or other assignments or experiences pertaining to the material to be demonstrated.

Although problems taping and digitizing material may prove a barrier in some institutions, creative solutions are often available through University Television, cable TV stations that are required to do public service, or “home made” video vignettes subsequently digitized through campus media services. It may not be as slick as some day time soaps, but live action examples coupled with student participation and problem solving has the potential to combine theory and practice in an interesting and energizing manner.