

Excerpt from BIG MEDIA, Little Media

“Learning From television: What Research Says”

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“During the last few decades we have frittered away an enormous amount of research time asking relatively useless questions about the media of instruction. ***Can the media teach?*** has been asked over and over again, and over and over again the answer has come back: ***of course***, students can learn effectively from the media, from any medium. ***Can they teach as well as a teacher?*** The answer: what they can do, they can do as well as a classroom teacher, sometimes better. It depends on the performance of the teacher, the content of the media, what is being taught, and to whom. ***Is one medium any more effective than others?*** For some purposes, probably yes, but overall there is no superlative medium of instruction, any more than there is one simple algorithm for selecting one medium over others. We have come to realize in recent decades that leaning from the media is not an area that lends itself to simple answers. It is an extremely complex multivariate process that challenges us, if we are to understand it, not to ask the simple questions, but rather to concern ourselves with the conditions for selecting one medium over another, for combining and for using media.”