



Neil Postman

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Every teacher a history teacher, every teacher a language educator, taught Neil Postman. By listening to the history of each discipline, the student witnesses the discovery process unfold. She will come to appreciate how emergent are the questions and how contingent is the truth. There is no such thing as “the definitive study.” Everything is work in progress. Postman would say that learning any subject demands that we acquire a skill with words—not only definitions, but also the questions and metaphors of a particular domain. Perhaps Postman’s greatest insight is the notion of education as counterbalance.

There is no one-size-fits-all blueprint for the best education. Instead, we must find out how young people are receiving information and then shape an educational process that counterbalances the predominant modes of instruction. If television commercials are teaching young people that quick solutions to problems come from without (e.g., win friends by changing your brand of body wash), educators must reveal to students tougher problems that must be solved from within.

Do you teach the history of your discipline? Do you see your teaching approach as counterbalance . . . Counterbalance to what?

Suggested Readings:

1. Postman N, Weingartner C. Teaching as a subversive activity. New York: Delacorte Press; 1969.
2. Postman N. Teaching as a conserving activity. New York: Delacorte Press; 1979.
3. Postman N. Technopoly; the surrender of culture to technology. New York: Vintage Books; 1993.

Learn More about Postman:

<http://www.neilpostman.org>