

wood” — for a local high school, featuring student MCs and a “live via satellite” feel. Eight Hundred kids attended the assembly, had fun, laughed a bunch, and learned how tobacco corporations use Hollywood product placement to increase kids’ interest in smoking — a “win win” for everyone (except the Marlboro guys).

Our favorite method of distribution involves creating a “world premiere” movie event of our student films, either (ideally) in a local movie theater or a big screen auditorium, and inviting local TV news crews, school and select board members, parents, state politicians and health officials to attend. Plenty of publicity — including posters and press releases to local and state media outlets and phone calls to key community leaders — helps ensure a big turnout. Our youth film-makers dress up and walk down the red carpet, bathed in bright lights and camera flash “pops” from the crowd, followed by a community screening of our films and a “meet and greet” with food and drink afterwards. This is a fine way to honor students’ work, and educate parents and entire communities about the important relationship between media education and video production.

You can get a taste for MemeFILMS’ prototypes at our web site, and we’ve also packaged them on DVDs for easy and affordable access. Here are four different ways you can use the MemeFILMS prototypes to enhance your own media education and video production work.

1. **Educational tools:** Explore the Meme prototypes, in conjunction with ACME’s “Questioning Media” principles, to teach the basics of media literacy education, including: the general principles of media education, methods for media analysis/ deconstruction, product placement, focus group testing, and basic facts that illustrate how our media culture works.

2. **Production prototypes:** Explore the Meme prototypes, in conjunction with Meme’s web-driven production notes, to teach the basics of video production: camera motion, field sound, SPFX, lighting, blocking, script-writing, acting and directing.
3. **Examples of youth activism:** Share MemeFILMS prototypes (many of which have aired all over Vermont on community cable television and in movie theaters) to illustrate young people having fun challenging the media status quo.
4. **Entertaining movies:** Show MemeFILMS prototypes to remind kids that making media can be exciting, rewarding, and fun!

Consider that the most memorable media — TV commercials, movie trailers and the like — are very simple... In the end, the MemeFILMS formula is also very simple. What we do is to combine truth, humor, honesty, and the voices of our youth with accessible but powerful video production methods. We make Memes in very short time frames, design them for editing ease, and use them to impact whole communities.

Ultimately, the most fascinating aspect of our work has been the wonderful sense of spontaneous experimentation that results when you give communities permission to play with video. Making and distributing media that matters in minutes is essential work for all of us seeking a more democratic and humane media culture.

And, it’s heaps of fun, too!

“How do we distribute our films? Any way we can. I use our Memes in both DVD and QuickTime movie formats to educate kids in the media literacy education workshops and keynotes I give all over the country.”



MemeFILMS’ James Valastro and Vermont 6th graders with their smoke-free trophies: Flushing Big Tobacco

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