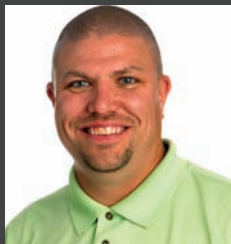




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BEYOND **TEXT**

Literacy for a digital culture

By **Kristin Ziemke & Don Goble**

*W*ith these simple words—*you have a story to tell*—Don Graves crafted the writer’s workshop to guide classroom experiences.

Around the same time, P. David Pearson recognized multimodal interactions and the role of active literacy.

Later, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey “Smokey” Daniels sought a curriculum of inquiry where questions connected schoolwork to real-world living.

Today, our classrooms build upon this strong foundation of pedagogy to fully leverage text, images, and video. The result is the opportunity for teachers and students to redefine literacy.

Shifts in meaning

Imagine this scenario:

Students sit on the rug as Kristin launches a minilesson. She teaches them how to “view to learn” as they watch a video to study and question a selection of media. As she teaches them to do with informational text, she invites students to draw or write about their new learning and questions. She guides them to apply many of the same strategies they use with print text such as “turn and talk” to deepen understanding or reread by watching the video again.

Today, the world is our curriculum. Access to information is no longer dependent on a child’s ability to decode text. Images, music, and video are diverse “texts” that we layer together to provide multiple entry points to learning. Partnering media and print text, we see this new era as an opportunity to engage

all learners and recognize that, as society and technology evolve, so too does literacy.

To be effective consumers and communicators, we must explicitly teach kids to analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of print and digital media platforms.

What is media literacy?

Shifts in how information is shared directly affects students. Daily, tweens and teens spend six to nine hours respectively using media. Our kids are increasingly online and only through development of specific media literacy skills will we allow the next generation to become more critically aware of the information they consume.

For our purposes, we take the definition of media literacy from the Center for Media Literacy: “a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.”

The media narrative

In his high school broadcast technology class, Don teaches students how the details in video—sound, lighting, and camera angle—transmit information. He uses a short video as mentor media that features a number of different camera angles and engages his students to read the information each conveys.

Together they discuss how a wide shot illustrates the setting. Don teaches students to closely read the video and use background knowledge and context clues to question the text: Why is the story taking place in this location? Why is this information important?

By “noticing and noting” elements of video production—a practice encouraged by Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst—we help students disseminate the media narrative.



Media creation is democratized as anyone with a device can be seen and heard.

A means for understanding

If we want kids to become better readers and writers, they must read and write more. If we want kids to be truly literate, they have to create their own media. We shift the role of students from consumers to creators and invite them to share in today’s culture where anyone with a device can produce media.

During a unit on Africa, first graders discover that reporting every detail they’ve learned is impossible. Kristin coaches students to determine the most important information from their research and models how to synthesize their findings into a short writing format. Students compose a song to share their learning and realize that media messages may omit a story’s details and that the artist determines which part of the story is told. Powerful learning occurs as literacies weave together and kids create to understand.

Whether recording for their broadcast news show or capturing stories in the community, Don’s students are always creating. With a simple tool like the iMovie trailer, students learn to craft brief, colorful images that coincide with the timing of the background music to influence emotion. Text added to the trailers summarizes ideas succinctly to impact the story. Don teaches students to post their videos online as a means to obtain feedback from peers and audiences beyond the classroom.

Through this process of creation, students learn new techniques and leverage feedback to revise and refine their understanding.

Where we’re going

We have more access to information than ever before. Audio and visual elements provide affordances for multimodal learners and differentiate entry points to information and how it is shared. Learning is active and student directed as kids question, seek, and interact with topics they want to investigate.

Media creation is democratized as anyone with a device can be seen and heard; no longer does an individual need to be wealthy or highly educated to have a voice.

Today when we ask students, *What do you wonder? Where can we find that information? and How do you want to share your thinking?*, we celebrate that there are so many options for kids to tell their story.

At the core, we invite kids to read, write, engage, and create more. When we teach kids to be effective thinkers in every context, we can move beyond terms such as *print*, *digital*, and *media*, and come to a point where we’re simply talking about *literacy*. ■

ILA 2016

Ziemke and Goble will copresent on the K–12 (e)Reading (R)evolution: Tech, Text, and Transformation panel on Sunday, July 10. For more information, visit ilaconference.org/iplanner.