

Chapter 5

Creating a Balanced Literacy Curriculum in the 21st Century: Authentic Integration of Literacy 1.0 with Literacy 2.0

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores new ways of envisioning a balanced literacy curriculum where through a balance of Literacy 1.0 with Literacy 2.0 educators can sufficiently prepare students to navigate the complexities of 21st century literacies. It presents examples of how digital storytelling and multimedia responses to literature call for a knowledge of school-based literacy practices, while at the same time allow students authentic learning engagements with multimodal composition and media production. Further, the chapter highlights how these literacy engagements can provide students use in the vocabulary of multimodalities and create students who are producers and critical consumers of 21st Century texts.

INTRODUCTION

The balanced literacy approach to teaching reading and writing stemmed from the philosophy that children learn best through opportunities for authentic reading and writing experiences. Au (2000) expressed this balance as systematic instruction through teacher directed lessons and motivating activities that allow children choice and owner-

ship of their literacy experiences. Today's rapid technological advances, however, have altered the authentic literacy practices of youth and young children and have fostered new modes of textual practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Luke, 2006). Many of these developmental changes in literacy have occurred due to the affordances provided by Web 2.0 experiences. Web 2.0 includes social networking sites, fanfiction sites, wikis,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-3974-4.ch005

multiplayer online games, video-sharing sites, and music sites (Wohlwend, 2010). The literacy practices affiliated with Web 2.0, or Literacy 2.0 (Knobel & Wilbur, 2009), therefore involve multiple modalities, engagement with non-linear texts, self-motivating purposes, differing codes of language, wide audiences, distributed knowledge, collaboration, and connections to identity work. Conversely, Literacy 1.0 practices primarily found in schools are considered to be test driven, focused on single authoring, involve engagement with linear reading and writing, and prepared for a one-person audience, i.e., the teacher (Wohlwend, 2010). These Literacy 1.0 types of reading and writing practices may be inadequate to prepare students for the complex and wide range of reading and writing purposes and practices found in our fast-changing technological world (Black, 2007; Lewis & Fabos, 2005). Thus, there is no denying, “We live in an age that demands technological and visual literacies along-side strong skills in reading and writing” (Kadger, 2004, p. 6).

In this chapter, I present a balanced literacy curriculum for the 21st Century. Based on my six years of research and work with new and pre-service teachers in the area of digital literacies, I discuss how classrooms can become spaces where students are provided opportunities for reading and writing experiences that authentically and meaningfully integrate both Literacy 1.0 and Literacy 2.0. More specifically, I discuss how new technologies have changed the reading and writing processes (Andrews & Smith, 2011; Stone, 2007) and offer ways that a balanced curriculum for the 21st Century can include the multidimensional and organic nature of these changes. I present examples of how digital literacy engagements, such as digital storytelling and multimedia responses to literature, call for a knowledge of school-based or Literacy 1.0 practices, while at the same time allows students authentic learning engagements with multimodal composition and media production. I demonstrate that by providing students with authentic digital literacy engagements, one can naturally create a

balance of Literacy 1.0 with Literacy 2.0. More specifically, I highlight how these digital literacy engagements can ultimately provide students use in the vocabulary of multimodalities and, therefore, create students who are producers and critical consumers of digital and multimodal texts.

Overall in this chapter, I explore new ways of envisioning a balanced literacy curriculum. Within this balanced literacy curriculum, systematic instruction will continue along with motivating activities that allow children choice and ownership of their literacy experiences as expressed by Au (2000). However, the reshaping of the curriculum will allow for more understanding of students’ digital text consumption and production. This new balance of Literacy 1.0 with Literacy 2.0 will serve to sufficiently prepare students to navigate the complexities of 21st Century literacies. Ultimately, the goal of this proposed chapter is to present a balanced literacy approach for the 21st Century that ensures students the opportunity to achieve the highest competence in all the varied modes of communication now available, whether digitized or not.

NEW LITERACIES

Drawing on the work of Street (1995), Kress (1997), and Gee (2008), I approach literacy from a sociocultural perspective. Literacy research relying on a sociocultural perspective examines the ways literacy practices are situated in social, cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts. More specifically, “literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script, but applying this knowledge for specific purposes and contexts of use (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p. 236). Therefore school-based literacies and digital literacies are viewed not as isolated textual practices, but linked with the social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded and which they help to shape. In addition, a sociocultural perspective of literacy highlights the

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