

Chapter 5

Bridging New Media Literacies and the Common Core Through Narrative

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses a formative experiment studying professional development given to fourth- and fifth-grade teachers to help improve their integration of digital tools and writing instruction. The authors focus on the need for teachers to study and integrate both the Common Core writing standards and new media literacies. The authors discuss which new media literacies elementary teachers of writing seemed to identify with most and why. Subsequently, the authors discuss where the new media literacies were implemented through digital storytelling. The authors focus here on narratives at the elementary level and give teachers practical suggestions not only for how they might make these stories digital, but also discuss the underlying skills that their students might gain from engaging in such practices.

INTRODUCTION

Writing has traditionally been neglected in schools in the United States (National Commission on Writing [NCW], 2003) although its application to future professional success is recognized (NCW, 2004). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), adopted in 41 states (Common Core, 2020), placed an emphasis on writing and language that gave hope that this neglect would be addressed (Mo et al., 2014). At the same time, these standards emphasize both conventional and digital writing with standards such as standard six, which calls for both publication and composing with digital tools. Dalton (2012) suggested that while the CCSS do not explicitly have technology standards, their embedding in other standards

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leaves latitude for teachers to expand writing to include multimodal composition or writing that includes more modes than text alone (Howell, 2018; New London Group, 1996).

When focusing on writing in particular, the CCSS show both promise and potential problems when it comes to expanding the notion of writing to include today's digital landscape (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center], & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). The CCSS do include anchor standards that call for students to produce and publish writing with digital tools (standard six) and to gather information from both print and digital sources (standard eight). However, these standards regarding writing and digital tools are divorced from the content standards regarding writing, those calling for students to write according to the text structures of argument, informational, and narrative writing (standards one through three respectively, see Howell et al., 2020b). This segmentation is problematic especially when studies of literacy teachers have found that they do not implicitly integrate technology effectively into their curriculum despite valuing the potential impact of digital tools (Howell et al., 2017; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). Furthermore, just producing and publishing with digital tools does not necessarily target the needed skills for students with technology in a digital world. Jenkins (2006), in his theoretical perspective of new media literacies, defined 11 skills that students needed to be able to create and collaborate in today's technological society: play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation. Without further integrating content and digital tools, standards such as the CCSS do not address these more nuanced skills or new media literacies needed in a digital age.

This chapter centers on a formative experiment conducted in five elementary schools with fourth- and fifth-grade teachers (Howell et al., 2020b). This study used a year-long formative experiment design working with 15 teachers in a school district in the Midwest of the United States. Formative experiments are used to determine how an intervention can be implemented in an authentic instructional context to reach a valued pedagogical goal (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). This study arose from a need for these teachers to more effectively integrate a 1:1 ratio of student Chromebooks into their writing curriculum. The authors' focus in this chapter is on the teachers' need to integrate new media literacies with the Common Core writing standards. The authors explore this integration of new media literacies and writing standards as a crosswalk done during professional development along with which new media literacies were the most prevalent in their connections. The narrative text structure is highlighted to discuss how teachers implemented digital tools and new media literacies skills in the semester following their professional development. Included in this discussion are relevant digital tools such as Avatar Maker, Seesaw, Coggle, Toontastic, and StoryboardThat and how these were used to enact new media literacies skills within narrative.

The authors adopt a broad definition of digital storytelling as using digital tools to tell stories (Shelby-Caffey et al., 2014). The focus here is on narratives at the elementary level to give teachers practical suggestions not only for how they might make these stories digital, but also to discuss the underlying skills that their students might gain from engaging in such practices.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Jenkins (2006) defined concepts for the digital culture students were participating in and how teachers and schools could contribute to their success in that culture. The culture he saw in this digital environ-

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