Visual Literacy in the Classroom
Middle Years teachers from a primary, secondary and special setting work together to teach visual literacy through film analysis and production in their classroom

By

Nicole Rettke and Mun Wei Wong
Fairfield Primary School

Giovanna Liapis
Thornbury High School

Sue Richardson
Croxton Special School

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Nicole Rettke, Mun Wei Wong, Giovanna Liapis and Sue Richardson worked as a professional action learning team (PALT) using an action research model with key questions they were investigating. The Team would meet at regular intervals to share, plan and evaluate their work. The primary teachers focused on the production of film, use of special effects and script writing. The special school focused on film analysis, which was a new aspect for them, through use of the film "Shrek". The secondary school focused on incorporating the use of multiple intelligences as a framework for analysing the fantasy film "Lady Hawke".

Contact Details:

Nicole Rettke and Mun Wei Wong
Fairfield Primary School
123 Landridge Street, Fairfield, 3078
Tel: 9489 2966
Email: rettke.nicole.j@edumail.vic.gov.au
Email: wong.munwei.m@edumail.vic.gov.au

Giovanna Liapis
Thornbury High School
238 Collins Street, Thornbury 3071
Tel: 9480 4066
Email: liapis.giovanna.g@edumail.vic.gov.au

Sue Richardson
Croxton Special School
159-165 Beaconsfield Parade, Northcote, 3070
Tel: 9482 5482
Email: richardson.susan.b@edumail.vic.gov.au
**VISUAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM**

Middle years teachers from a primary, secondary and special setting work together to teach visual literacy through film analysis and production in their classroom

1. Key area the practice aims to address.

   **Category:** Student Learning  
   **Effective School Category:** Focus on teaching and learning  
   **Other:** Student engagement, teacher learning

2. Key details about your institution/s that are relevant to the practice.

   **Name of school or organisation:** Northcote Network Cluster B  
   **Cohort:** Middle Years (5-9)  
   **Region:** Northern Metropolitan Region  
   **Level:** Primary and Secondary  
   **Other:** Thornbury High School has a television studio and access to personnel with expertise in film making

3. This practice

   Demonstrates improvement (Exemplary practice)

4. What are we doing or improving?

   Students today bring with them a rich understanding and experience in visual literacy. The teachers decided to use this to engage students in their classrooms so that they became active rather than passive participants. Their objective was to develop and improve the students' abilities to deconstruct and construct visual text through a specific focus on film.

5. How we did it/are doing it.

   The teachers worked as a professional action learning team (PALT) using an action research model with key questions they were investigating. They would meet at regular intervals to share, plan and evaluate their work. The primary teachers focused on the production of film, use of special effects and script writing. The special school focused on film analysis, which was a new aspect for them, through use of the film "Shrek". The secondary school focused on incorporating the use of multiple intelligences as a framework for analysing the fantasy film "Lady Hawke".

6. How do we know it is working?

   Students demonstrated high levels of engagement. The quality and standard of the work produced by the students showed a deep understanding of the requirements. A pleasing outcome for the teachers was the increase in motivation to participate and complete work by previously disengaged students.
Student reflections and self evaluations often highlighted the relevance and authenticity of these units of work for them. These teachers are now sharing their work with other colleagues across their schools.

7. What are the outcomes of the practice?

- High levels of student engagement, motivation and participation in project
- Increased teacher knowledge and confidence in use of video filming and editing equipment
- Reviewing of curriculum to include more units of work which use and produce multimedia text
- Sharing of resources both physical and human between primary and secondary schools
- Production of curriculum materials and resources

8. What have we learnt?

- Use of film and technology engages all students
- Use and production of multimedia texts enables disengaged and low level literacy students to become engaged and participate at higher levels than when just focussing on written and spoken texts
- Production of multimedia texts is a relevant and authentic task for students and increases their engagement and motivation to learn
- Teachers and students can learn together when using technology

9. What are we doing next, and can the practice be extended and sustained long term?

- Evaluating and refining of units of work for inclusion in curriculum for the following year
- Developing further ideas for inclusion of more units using multimedia texts
- Professionally developing other members of staff in use of video filming and editing equipment

10. What did we use?

- Knowledge and skills of teachers in PALT
- Professional development provided by Australian Children's Television Foundation computer "Let's Edit" software program
- Blue screen
- Knowledge and expertise of staff from Thornbury High School to train teachers

11. What idea, theory or research did we base our project on?

The concept of engaging students through use of multimedia text, starting from the knowledge and experiences the students bring with them to the classroom. Making learning tasks authentic and relevant - concepts underpinning Middle Years pedagogy.

- Multiliteracies
- MYPRAD teaching and learning principles
12. Funding or resources.

DE&T Innovations and Excellence Cluster funding provided release time for teachers to attend PALT meetings and professional development activities. Some school-based funds for the blue screen and editing software purchased in the primary school.

13. Timelines.

The teachers established their PALT and started working together in 2004 as part of the action research teams that were established under the I & E initiative. They attended professional development in the area and developed units of work which were trialled during 2005. During 2006 they will continue to work together developing further materials for use in this area.

Attachments

“We were inspired by the technology and multimedia. We feel we’re learning as much as the kids.’
Nicole Rettke & Con Karmis, Fairfield Primary School