Launching Digital Writing in the Elementary Classroom

Launching Digital Writing in the Elementary Classroom

EDITED BY JULIE JOHNSON

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Introduction

Welcome to Launching Digital Writing in the Elementary Classroom. Here you will find the stories of seven teachers who were willing to take risks and venture into new territory by integrating technology into their workshops in meaningful ways. All of us are writing teachers who write. We believe that it's important for us to do the work we ask of our students. It is in that practice that we learn about the real work writers do. It is here that we learn the struggles that our students face. It is here that we reflect on and hone our practice.

This belief that writing teachers need to be writers spills over into the digital world. If we want our students to craft quality digital compositions, then we believe that it's important for us to do the same. Over the last several years, we have each ventured into the digital writing world. Our idea of community changed as we connected with others we might not have been able to connect to before. The way we share our writing has changed too. Our writing no longer lives just inside our notebooks. Instead, we share ideas in 140 characters or less. We communicate visually through images and graphics. Our blogs give us the space to write about our thinking, reflect on issues we grapple with, and celebrate the work we see our students and colleagues doing. This work has not only helped us grow as writers but it's also given us the impetus to make changes in our classrooms in order to give our students new opportunities afforded by digital technologies.

And while our choice of writing tools and publication options have expanded, we still hold strong in our beliefs that good writing instruction is good writing instruction. Our beliefs about literacy lay the foundation for our work. We believe in the importance of workshop where students have choice to do the work they deem important. We give students time to dig deeply into their writing so that they can create, reflect and revise their work. Our students are making purposeful decisions as writers. They are determining which tool is the best tool for their message and who their audience is. The power of community cannot be ignored.

This book is a book by teachers for teachers. We are all in different places along the path of digital writing. Many of us are just beginning, while others have been exploring digital opportunities for a longer time. All of us continue to be reflective and responsive to our students' needs, enabling us to continually evolve as writing teachers.

What you will find in this book:

Chapter 1

Cathy Mere shares her own journey as a digital reader and writer. She explains how her personal writing work

nudged her into thinking about what her students needed in order to be successful readers and writers in the digital world. She lays the foundation for the rest of the book in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Mandy Robek, second grade teacher wanted to achieve the same digital writing success she had with her previous kindergarten class. With a picture of the end in mind, she tells about how she worked through the struggles she faced as she moved into a new grade level and wanted her students to begin writing digitally. This chapter focuses on why she chose blogging and how she implemented it in her second grade classroom.

Chapter 3

Community is the foundation of a strong writing workshop. Deb Frazier discusses the importance of building community not only in her classroom, but also globally. She is very thoughtful in how she integrates digital tools and social networks like Twitter to help her students build relationships.

Chapter 4

Debra Lairson explains the thinking she did around digital citizenship. As a literacy coach, she worked with several teachers as they implemented blogging in their classrooms. She realized that her writers needed to understand the responsibilities that go along with writing digitally for a global audience. She shares the work she did with a third grade teacher in her school.

Chapter 5

Making Purposeful Decisions as Digital Writers focuses on how Julie Johnson uses digital mentors to help her students look closely at the craft of digital writing. Her students use these mentors to study design principles and analyze the purpose behind craft moves that digital composers use in their compositions.

Chapter 6

Tonya Buelow explores how digital technology supported her English Language Learners. Using technology tools like Skype and video afforded her students the ability to access information more easily. Tonya used these tools to connect her students to a variety of authors. In addition, she explains how screencasting apps and blogging gave her students opportunities to be successful readers and writers.

Chapter 7

Scott Jones discusses how his perspective and then his teaching changed after reading a professional book. His belief in the importance of giving his students more choice in the work they do led to him implementing a variety of digital tools, including digital portfolios. In his chapter, Scott shows the reader how student work was impacted when they were given opportunities for conversation and reflection with an audience that reached beyond his classroom walls.

About the Authors

Cathy Mere

I have taught grades K-6, worked as a literacy coach, and a Reading Recovery teacher in Ohio. Currently I work as a reading specialist supporting literacy learners. I am the author of More Than Guided Reading, a Stenhouse publication, and is a contributing author for Choice Literacy. I share my professional reflections at Reflect and Refine: Building a Learning Community and dabble in poetry and personal essay at Merely Day by Day. I can be found @cathymere on Twitter.

Mandy Robek

I have been teaching for just over twenty years. During that time I have taught kindergarten, first, third, and currently teach second grade where I find guiding transitional readers and writers fascinating. I am constantly exploring, trying, and learning more about digital literacy. While working on this project, my biggest discovery was learning to trust myself, trust my students and realize we did not need to know all of the answers. I have degrees from the State University of New York College at Buffalo and The Ohio State University. You can follow me at my blog Enjoy and Embrace Learning and find me @mandyrobek on Twitter.

Deb Frazier

 I am currently learning alongside first graders who love learning as much as I do. Prior to my current position, I taught kindergarten, second grade and students with special needs in a fourth and fifth grade resource room. I've also taught students with special needs in kindergarten through third grade in inclusive classrooms. I received a Bachelors of Arts degree from Ohio Dominican University and a masters degree in curriculum and instruction also from Ohio Dominican University. As a young adult I had the opportunity to live in Okinawa, Japan and I've found this experience changed the way I view the world. Even today it continues to inspire me as a person and as an educator. I strive to help students understand the varying perspectives of others, to be accepting, and to learn about the person behind the one they see. I am a Co-Founder of Global Classroom, I blog about my teaching at Primary Perspective and Two Writing Teachers and I can be found on twitter @Deb_Frazier. Digital tools have become my students' hands into the world. They blog at Behind The Scenes in First Grade and tweet @Frazier1st. I reside in central Ohio with my husband and two daughters.

Deb Lairson

After graduating from Ohio University, I started my 21 year career in the Hocking Hills of Ohio. I taught kindergarten and title reading. After getting a phone call in late July, I began my Reading Recovery training. Reading Recovery changed my life as a teacher. I began to think about how the children should guide my instruction. I found that so rewarding, that while at a Reading Recovery conference, I discovered The Literacy Collaborative. I had labored over how I could continue to support my readers when they discontinued so that they didn't fall back. and I had found my answer.

I began my training at The Ohio State University during my fifth year of teaching. It was very challenging, but very rewarding. My teaching changed so much and I couldn't wait to share it with others! I spent fourteen years coaching teachers and providing professional development.

I began my journey with digital literacy during a book talk at my friend's house. I was so overwhelmed at first, but I began to think about it and dabble here and there. I have been spurred to learn more by great authors and friends. I am excited to be able to use all I have learned and to continue my learning journey when I go back to the classroom in the fall.

I will be teaching second grade. I am so thrilled to have the opportunity to practice what I know about teaching! I can't wait to get to know my students, learn what they can do and what they need next, and dig in!

You can follow me on my blog Loving La Vida Loca and on Twitter @DebLairson.

Julie Johnson

I have been teaching for 24 years. I am a literacy coach and classroom teacher in a suburb of central Ohio. A National Board Certified teacher, she has taught a variety of grades in elementary school. I participated in the summer institute with the Columbus Area Writing Project in 2007 and received NCTE's Donald Graves Excellence in Teaching Writing in 2010. I contributed a chapter to Assessing Students' Digital Writing: Protocols for Looking Closely, edited by Troy Hicks and am a contributing editor to Choice Literacy. My passion lies in integrating technology in my reading and writing workshops and helping other educators do the same. I can be found @jreaderwriter on Twitter and my blog Raising Readers and Writers.

Tonya Buelow

I have been teaching for 21 years. I am a literacy coach and a classroom teacher, so I spend half my day teaching and the other half coaching or designing professional development. It is so rewarding to work with both adults and children each and every day. I love learning alongside my students as we push ourselves as readers and writers. I have had the privilege to teach the following grades: kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, and fourth grade. Next year I will be teaching fifth grade and I look forward to a new literacy journey. I am a National Board Certified Teacher. I graduated from Ohio Dominican University and I received my master's degree at National University. I am a budding blogger so I hope you will enjoy my blog titled Learning, Growing and Reflecting Educator and @TBuelow on Twitter.

Scott Jones

My name is E. Scott Jones, and I am a fifth grade teacher at a suburban school in Central Ohio. After receiving my Bachelors of Arts from Denison University and my Masters of Education from The Ohio State University, I became a teacher who is inspired by my students daily. As a teacher in a self-contained classroom, my goal is always to help develop a classroom culture where students can reach their full potential. You can visit my classroom website (theflockjwr.com). Plus, I constantly strive to be an active digital citizen, so you can follow me on Twitter (@escott818) and my blog The Lead Goose.

Chapter 1: Transitioning Toward Digital Literacy

Transitioning Towards Digital Literacy

by Cathy Mere

1.1 In the Beginning: Finding Purpose
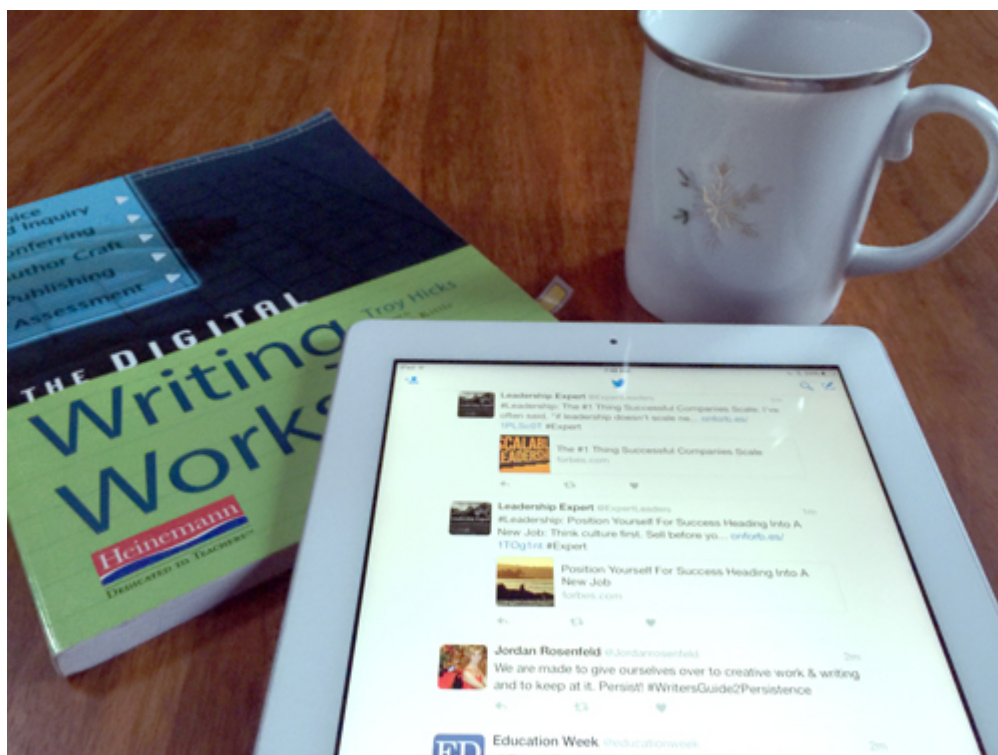
I'm not sure really where the transition to digital literacy started for me. Like learning to read decades ago, the transition is fuzzy and grey. Was it with Twitter? Was it my group of friends and colleagues that pushed my thinking? Was it the ease of using digital tools? Was it the fact that my notebook was sometimes at home, but my phone was always with me? I'm not sure what made me make the move to a more digital world of literacy, but I know I found my place of comfort there one day at a time as I discovered new uses and purposes in our digital world. I know learning and working in digital spaces has helped me to meet new people who push my thinking each day and changed my writing and reading life. I know that what I was reading, discussing, and sharing digitally changed my professional learning. I know these changes eventually transitioned into my teaching.

I suppose the journey into digital literacy began on a long car ride to Michigan. I was with a group of teachers on our way to a conference. The car ride was full of conversation. We easily transitioned from conversations about our families, to our busy lives, to teaching, to learning, to social media. Yes, social media. A few of the teachers

began talking about Twitter. "Did you see what so and so said on Twitter? I couldn't believe he posted that tweet," said one. "I have to keep following him because I look forward to seeing what he will say next," added another.

The talk about Twitter went on and on in the car. I felt lost in the conversation. I'd tried Twitter, but I didn't love it. What was so amazing about hundreds of tweets flashing across your screen in an unorganized jumble of thoughts? Finally, I couldn't take it anymore and spoke up. "I get Facebook," I interjected meekly. "Facebook helps me keep up with friends and family I might otherwise lose touch with in my busy days. I love celebrating with friends, learning more about their families, and keeping up with so many people. Facebook I get, but Twitter just isn't working for me." A quiet hush fell across the car. I'm pretty sure I had just committed a social faux pas and they were all wondering what they should say next. My friends quietly exchanged looks with one another. There was an uncomfortably long pause in conversation. Finally one of my friends broke the silence, "I didn't like Twitter at first either," she gently inserted, "but then instead of using Twitter personally I began to use it professionally. My thinking about it changed as I found a purpose that worked for me. Give it six months and see."

Knowing my friend never steered me wrong I thought carefully about her words. Maybe I would like it more if I used it professionally. Maybe I would find something interesting if I tried for a bit. "I hadn't thought about it like that," I acknowledged, "I'll give it six months." That's what I said, but I wasn't buying it. I didn't think anything would change my mind. Days passed, then weeks, and soon six months had come and gone. I had gone from watching tweets to connecting with others, from collecting to sharing.

It wasn't long until I found a love for Twitter as I learned from people in so many places. To be clear about how much I grew to love Twitter, I now have three different accounts, have built a large network of people I follow. Using social media purposefully to learn, to question, to collaborate, and to share professionally engaged me in this network. With Twitter, I didn't feel isolated in my classroom anymore. I didn't feel limited to learning by my physical space. Instead my learning opportunities grew as I built connections with other professionals digitally. Twitter led me to blogs. Blogs led me to new people to learn from each day. New people led me to new tools. New tools led me to new possibilities. It wasn't long until I began discovering new purposes in a variety of digital spaces. I also began to notice the discrepancy between the digital world I was living in each day and the way I was teaching. I realized that my students needed these same opportunities.

1.2 First Steps

As educators, many of us reach a point where we begin to realize the mismatch between the digital world we live in outside of school and the one we foster in our learning communities. Recently I was leading a digital literacy class to help teachers consider new digital possibilities for their classrooms. As participants worked I stopped to talk with Brian. Brian was once a literacy coach in our district. He has worked in a variety of grade levels and understands working with young learners. Last year was his first year back in the classroom full time so he's quite excited about opportunities to try new literacy practices with his students and shifting toward digital literacy. "How did you get started?" he asked as I circulated around the room as teachers worked. "To teach writing, we write. To teach reading, we read. To teach digital literacy, I feel like we have to be living in the digital world ourselves as readers, writers, and learners." I shared this statement knowing he'd understand this type of thinking. I told him about how I started on Twitter and then moved toward blogging. He paused for a moment and then said what so many people have said to me, "I just don't think I have anything important to say. Who wants to know what I'm thinking and doing?"

I was taken aback, as I always am. I could think of a hundred things I wanted to know about his work with

children. How could someone with so much literacy experience worry that he had nothing to say? I'm always a little saddened by how voiceless teachers feel. When I think back to my beginning days in the digital world I remember feeling that way too, but I guess I didn't really start writing for other people. I was used to writing in my closed notebook, but wanted a new space to reflect. I knew the public space on a blog would push me to think deeply and clarify my thinking. I knew it would allow me to participate in larger conversations and connect with other educators. Now, as I consider the educators in the blogging community, I know the writing we share is significant. We hold the real stories of education. We can help shape the thinking of others in regards to the work we do with young children. Every educator has something worth sharing.

> *I didn't get to where I am in a day; and I know where I am today is not where I will be five years from now – or a year from now for that matter. I've learned to be okay with that.*

Every step I have taken in digital literacy, I've taken with purpose. To foster digital literacy in our classrooms, it seems we need to first live as digital citizens ourselves. Like Brian, we have to begin to ask ourselves where to begin. Each one of us will take our first steps in different places, at different times, and in ways that work for us. Some of my first steps were taken to connect with others. Some steps were because there was something I had done before that I wanted to do digitally. Some steps were because there was something new I thought I could do as a result of new opportunities from digital tools. I didn't get to where I am in a day; and I know where I am today is not where I will be five years from now – or a year from now for that matter. I've learned to be okay with that.

Brian does have a story to share, but first he has to become comfortable taking the first steps. As Brian learns to work intentionally in a digital world, the next steps for his practice will unfold. As an educator, I've always known the impact of my life as a reader and a writer on my teaching. The lessons I learn as a reader and writer support the conversations I have with young learners. Since becoming an educator I've worked to be a more purposeful literacy consumer and creator, in part, because I know the difference this makes in the work I do with children. I can't ignore this when it comes to digital literacy. Literacy is power and that power doesn't belong to everyone with a device in hand. Instead that power is shifting to those who know how to effectively leverage these devices in our digital world. What does that mean for us as educators? How do we rethink literacy instruction in an ever-changing world? How do we rethink our pedagogy and practice as teachers of literacy?Where do we begin?

1.3 Finding Purpose
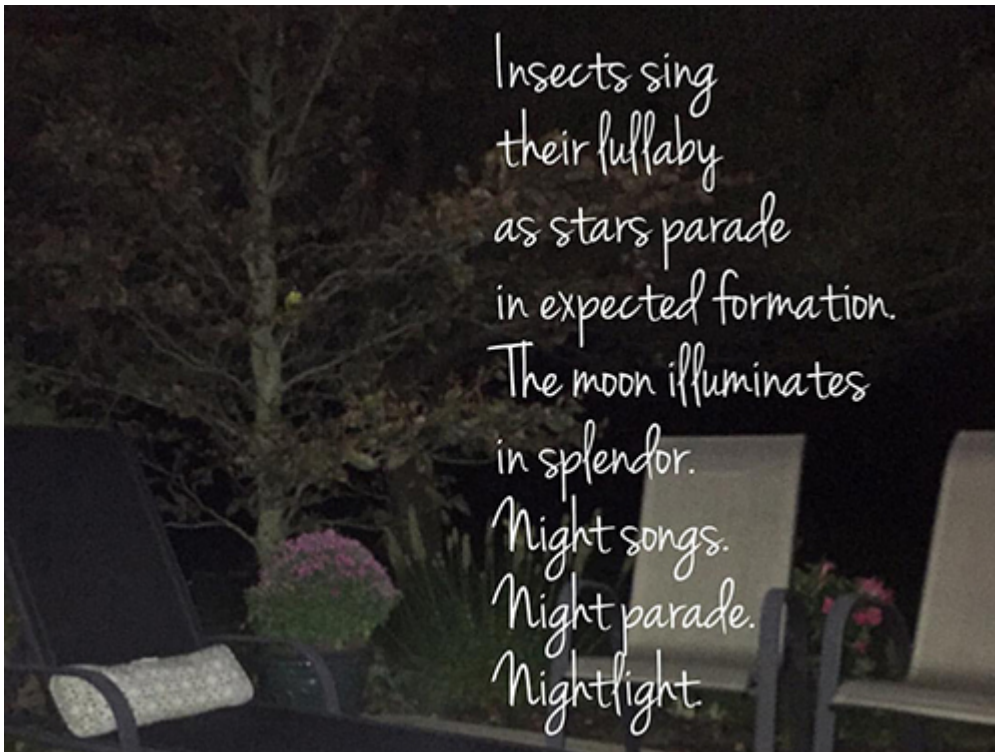
There's always something to learn. Recently my daughter was watching me snap another one of the endless pictures I take with my phone. When something catches my attention, a flower, a sign, a place, a moment, I snap a picture with my phone. Sometimes the pictures become possibilities for writing. Watching me, "You should really be on Instagram," she said matter-of-factly. A new social media network was really the last thing I needed anyway as I was already busy keeping up with Twitter and Facebook; I didn't need one more place to have to check each day. "You would like it," she said. "You share pictures and there isn't all the junk you have in your feed on Facebook." She had a point. I did love to take pictures. I did love to share images. I had other friends who had tried to push me into the Instagram world. Perhaps it was time.
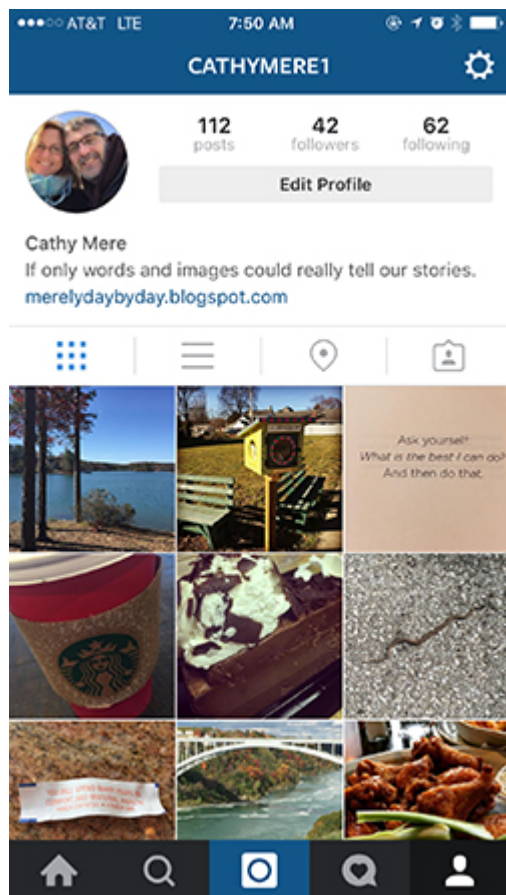
I've learned that recommended applications are often worth checking out. It's easy to delete them or stop using them if they don't work for me. Knowing she might be right I downloaded Instagram though I wasn't overly excited about it. How would Instagram be different from other social media networks for me? I downloaded the application and had to start figuring out the way it worked. I followed a few friends. I watched the way they posted. I started trying to figure out how to share. How do I post? Where is the edit button? What do all of these additional buttons do? How do I find other friends to follow? Once my picture is ready, where do I add the writing? I felt like I was starting over. It's a feeling I've come to recognize in becoming digital. There's this idea to try something new; then the challenge of trying to figure out. It's easy to want to quit, but if I stay with it I've learned the reward is worth it.

Just like anything we learn, I've come to understand digital literacy in small steps. If you are a piano player, a tennis player, a golfer, someone who sews, a cook, a gardener, or have other interests and hobbies, you have learned what you know in steps. You began with the basics. You probably started in small steps with some purpose behind your work. You searched for experts to tell you more. You read books. You experimented. You tried and you may have failed, but you kept building on what you know because you had reason behind your work. Working digitally I've tried to find the places that work for me.

The same has been true for my first steps in digital learning. My first steps in digital literacy were probably about seeking information and finding purposeful use. Where is that new pizza place? How do I get to the bookstore? What is there to do when we're in Hilton Head? What are the best tomatoes for canning? It wasn't long until I found myself on social media networks. In the beginning days I found myself just reading what others had shared. I paid attention to the style of their posts/tweets, considered content, and tried to figure out how the network

worked. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media networks work differently. In those first days, once I got a sense of the network, I began to try to participate. I looked for spaces to help me purposefully work.

Spaces To Create

Finding the Right Space

I use Twitter professionally. Reading blogs and following Twitter hashtags gives me new ways to learn.

http://twitter.com

I use Instagram to share short poetry and images.

https://www.instagram.com/

Facebook is a bit more personal.

http://facebook.com

Pinterest helps me keep track of important events and organize them into categories.

https://www.pinterest.com/

Shelfari lets me keep track of the books I've read or want to read.

https://www.goodreads.com/?shelfari

Watching TED Talks and participating in virtual rooms allows me to learn in ways I never thought possible.

https://www.ted.com/talks

Joining MOOCs introduced me to new people and ideas.

https://www.mooc-list.com/

There are so many ways to create using digital tools that change images, organize video around a message, or allow use of text. Having a blog and social media spaces gives me space to save and share these creations.

1.4 Power of Connecting

In those first days I began to discover, not only purposes for digital tools but, the power of connecting with others. If you think about the places you enjoy spending time, it's probably because you feel like you belong there. It might be at family gatherings, your book club, the gym, or a monthly lunch with friends. It is in these places you feel connected. The power in digital literacy is in the deliberate connections we make and the variety of spaces we can use to grow these connections. Part of what changed my thinking about using digital literacy was the connections I began to make with other educators. These educators made me think of new things, allowed me to peek inside their classrooms, connected me with new learning, and kept my to-be-read pile stacked.

Connecting to Groups Who Have Similar Interests:

There are also groups of people connected in common sharing of information. As I spent time reading blogs and following people on Twitter, I began to discover other groups with similar interests. These groups often share information related to a topic or interest. There are often conversations that take place around these ideas or posts that are written to share information. Some of these groups have regularly scheduled chat or posts times; others connect as needed. Since poetry is an interest of mine, I looked for other people interested in poetry. In this search I discovered educators, writers, and poets who shared poetry every Friday. This event, Poetry Friday, has a host blog each week where people link to share poems or poetry resources. I consider these communities to be more stable and ongoing. Hashtags on Twitter can help to find groups with similar interests. I began to follow the conversations of #1stchat, #titletalk, #nerdybookclub, #twtblog, #tcrwp and #edchat. These

conversations helped me to connect with people who have similar interests. Often these groups host scheduled conversations and continue to connect using the hashtag. Connecting through hashtags often leads to more interactive conversations and collaboration. You can find out more about these conversations at Cybraryman's website: Chats (https://sites.google.com/site/twittereducationchats/education-chat-calendar). Some digital connections are short term or focused around particular events. Donalyn Miller started a summer reading challenge under the hashtag: #bookaday. Participants tackle the challenge of daily reading.

Mandy Robek and I host a picture book event each August in which teachers, parents, media specialists, and book lovers share the ten picture books they can't live without. There's also a nonfiction picture book link-up in February. These lists are then shared in the Picture Book 10 for 10 learning community.

Connecting to Groups for Deeper Learning:

Going digital has really changed professional development for me. I no longer rely on professional development provided in sessions and lectures. Instead, I have been able to reach out to learn in digital spaces and learning communities. These communities continually push my thinking and offer share new possibilities. Along the way I also began to join and lead digital groups for more intensive study. With the help of Jill Fisch, Laura Komos, and Michelle Nero we created a group to digitally discuss one professional title each July. Our community, #cyberPD (https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/107711243109928665922), has grown from less than fifteen to over one hundred since it began five years ago. I've also joined MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) in which groups of people join together under common study to learn and/or create together. Recently, Julie Johnson and I hosted the Digital Maker Playground: a space where learners were able to play, create, and collaborate with other learners globally. I'm also participating in CLMOOC (http://clmooc.educatorinnovator.org/2015/) which is MOOCs provide a space for learning together. I find I discover new ideas working alongside other digital learners.

Connecting to Other Readers

Becoming digital has really changed the way I find books to read. Most books I read now are books I've discovered through blogs or on Twitter. "It's Monday, What Are You Reading" is a meme started by Sheila DeChantal of Book Journeys and moved into the kidlitosphere by Jennifer Vincent of Teach Mentor Texts and Kellee Moye of Unleashing Readers. There are also several blogs I count on for book recommendations. Aly Beecher hosts a weekly challenge for participants interested in getting to know more about nonfiction picture books and sharing their finds with other readers. My to-be-read pile is always stacked with titles I plan to read thanks to the many readers who take the time to blog about books. A few of my favorites include: A Year of Reading, Mary Lee Hahn & Franki Sibberson, There's a Book for That: Carrie Gelson, KidLit Frenzy: Aly Beecher, Teach Mentor Texts: Jennifer Vincent. I also count on readers like Katherine Sokolwoski, Karen Terlecky, and Margie Myers-Culver on Twitter to share titles.

The Power of

Connecting

When people ask me where to begin I often ask them, "What brings you joy? What are you passionate about? What are your interests?" There are so many places to grow connections around the interests you have. Digital connections can fuel our desire to learn more. It seems to me the people who are the most engaged in digital literacy have found their connections. relationships and new revenue building opportunities.

Spaces to Connect

Twitter

Google+

Instagram

Facebook

LinkedIn

Blogs

Digital Mentors

1.5 From Traditional to Digital Writer
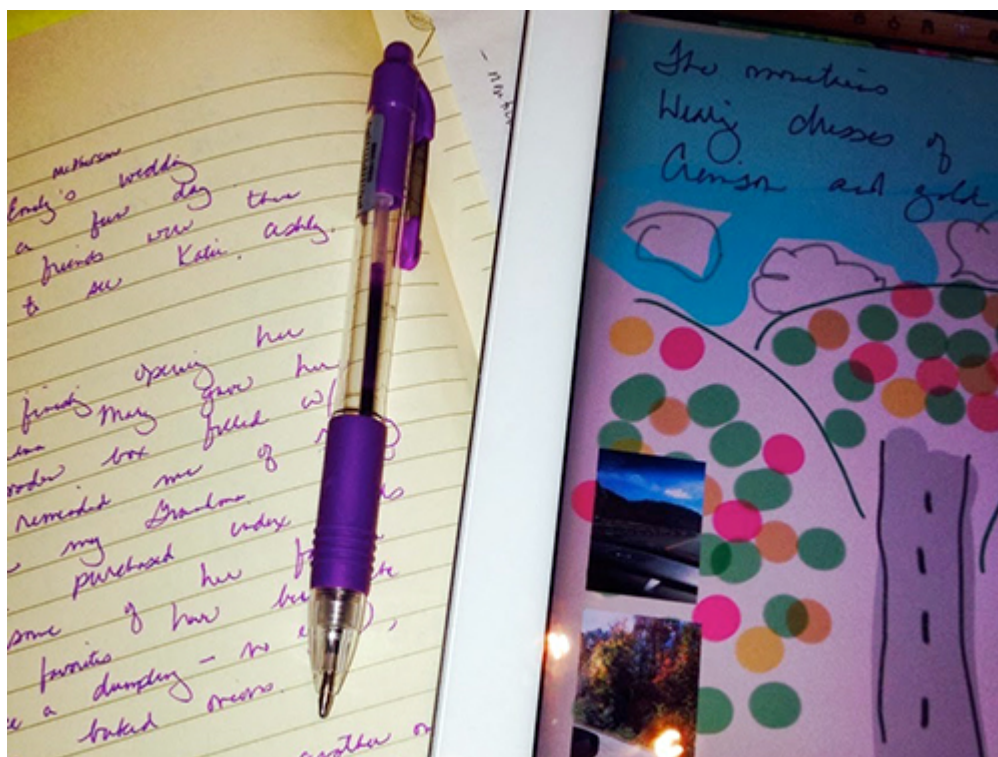
For me, finding the purpose in working digitally has always been the first step in getting started, but there have been other opportunities that have helped me along the digital path. Joining local groups of similarly minded educators pushed my thinking. We had tech nights at each others' houses. We formed groups discussing books about digital literacy. We created small writing groups that worked digitally as well as in person.

I'm thinking my transition has always been about engaging in our literate world. Digital spaces create new ways to work, collect, compose, learn, and share. If I could find a reason for the work I was doing and could make it fit into my world, I was often more likely to embrace the new way of digital functioning. Finding reasons to move from traditional writing to digital writing go back to purpose. For me, digital writing was easier. I was faster at typing and my words were certainly much easier for my reader to read. I liked the ability to connect with others and to have virtual discussions. I wanted to be able to share my thinking and have others push it further. While many of the beliefs I have about writing stayed the same as I went digital, the way I worked changed.

As a writer, I used to collect ideas in a notebook,
now I collect ideas in new ways.

As a writer I value keeping ideas I might use later in writing. It's helpful to have a space to play with writing and try to make ideas work. While I used to collect ideas in my notebook, I was finding new ways to collect ideas digitally. Often ideas pop into our minds at unsuspecting times: a conversation overheard, a flash of memory, a place newly discovered, a traffic jam. Often ideas for writing came when my notebook wasn't with me. I began to find myself more and more often using my phone to collect ideas. My phone was always with me. I'd use list apps to keep track of general ideas. I'd write longer snippets in my notes, later moving to a virtual Moleskin notebook, then Evernote, and currently I most often use Google Drive. I'd capture pictures to remind me of writing possibilities. I recorded voice memos as I thought out loud and planned future writing.

As a writer I used to draw and sketch ideas in my notebook –
or on napkins and post-its, now I use digital spaces.

To plan my writing I also found myself more often using applications on my iPad to sketch images, map out ideas, and play with words. I searched for applications that allowed me to draw, write, type, add voice, use color, insert pictures, and use multiple pages. My go-to app has been NoteShelf as it has a notebook feel. It looks like a notebook. It works like a notebook. It turns pages like a notebook. It has a nice collection of pen colors and sizes. I've also experimented with PenUltimate which allows more writing by hand, Notability which is perfect for annotating, and Moleskin which works well for catching small ideas.

Of course, I've learned tough lessons along the way. When my iPad had to be taken back to factory settings I lost everything in my notebook. I've learned to rely more often on applications with cloud storage possibilities or ways to save into Evernote, Dropbox or Google Drive.

As a writer, I used to write for myself,
but now I for an audience.

As I became more comfortable with digital tools and more intertwined in conversations across internet spaces, I found myself writing less often in my notebook and more often on my blog. This was very different writing as I had to be much more thoughtful about audience. It wasn't easy to put my first writing out into the world. It wasn't easy to share my thinking knowing that in a week I might change my mind. It wasn't easy to have people I didn't know to read my writing.

Gradually though I began to become more comfortable with writing for an audience. It forced me to work hard to think through complex topics. It forced me to push the quality of my work which was no longer tucked away between pages of a closed notebook. I began to look forward to the comments people left on my blog. I looked forward to hearing about the ways people connected to my posts, thinking about the questions they asked, considering new ways to think about a topic, and learning from their reflections on my writing.

As I writer I used to write when I wanted to write,
but now I feel more accountable.

When most of my writing went into a notebook, I wrote when I felt like it. I tried to plan consistent times and form a habit of writing regularly, but my routines ebbed and flowed. Moving to digital spaces for writing has made me more accountable to writing routines. I host two blogs. My first blog is mostly for writing about education and the other blog is more of a play space. On my first blog I write posts about teaching, literacy, technology, and other items related to the work I do with children. On my second blog, I play. This blog is the space I write poems, narrative essays, and short pieces related to the daily aspects of our world. This is the space where I join weekly conversations like Slice of Life and Poetry Friday. Because I have these digital spaces I find myself feeling more accountable to regular writing. I try to get posts out on a regular basis. In my notebook it was easy to let writing opportunities slip past.

1.6 Making the Shift
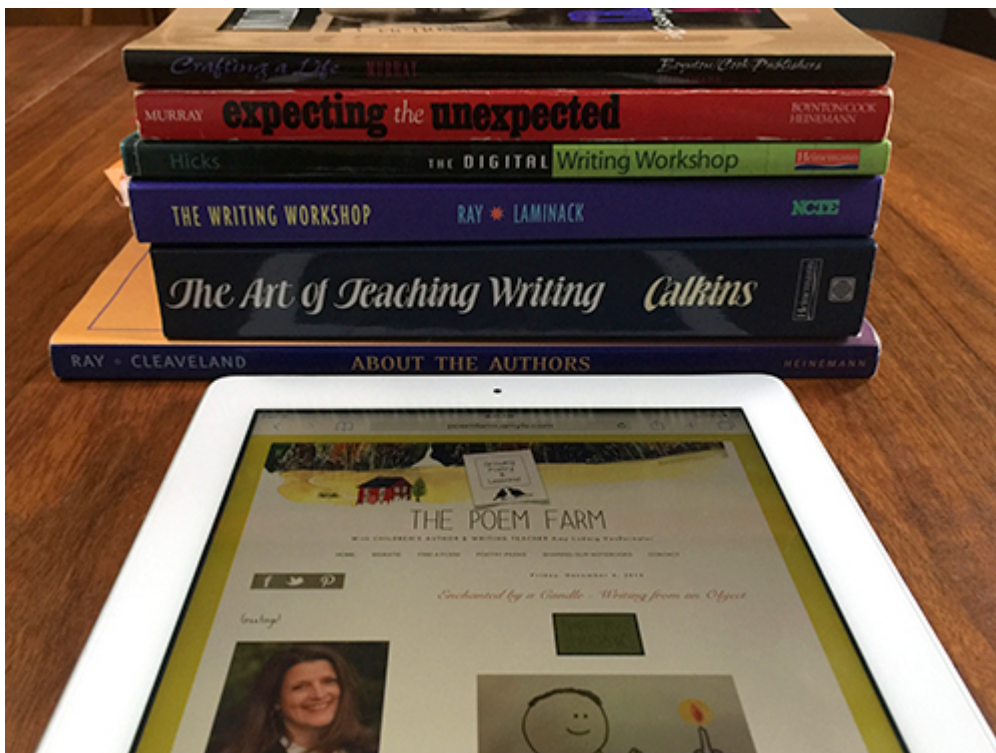
It's interesting to live in a time of transition as we move from a world of paper print toward greater use of digital spaces to share information; the remnants of our print world all around with new digital devices scattered about. The set of bound encyclopedias we bought for our children when they were quite small seemed a good idea to help them to learn, but by the time they really needed them they were looking up everything on their phones. Our family photos no longer live in a scrapbook, but are stored in digital folders or shared in digital spaces for others to see. Our trips are no longer taken with a paper map in hand, but instead our phones set to the destination. (Okay, sometimes I still like a map.) Years from now, we probably won't think twice about the transition from print to digital literacy. Is this transition as evident in our classrooms as it is in our daily lives?

The need for change became evident one day as I visited the Apple store and became fascinated as I watched several four, five, and six year olds sitting at a small table with iPads. They were just working away. They easily moved through menus. They worked until they figured things out. These kids were about the same age as the

students in my classroom; I remember thinking how mismatched our days in the classroom were to this new world they were already living in each day. I knew I had to find ways to make changes.

As I grew more comfortable in this new world of literacy, the work I was doing in my classroom became more uncomfortable. The way I was living in the digital world had added new excitement, built my interest, grown my learning opportunities, and offered new options. Shouldn't my students have some of these same opportunities to learn, to share, to connect, and to collaborate? Shouldn't they have alternate possibilities for collecting ideas and composing? Shouldn't they have opportunities to read in digital spaces and use different tools? Shouldn't they be able to reach out to others and build their own learning communities? Each day I would walk into my classroom and realize the literacy work we were doing was largely disconnected from real world literacy. I knew I needed to make a change.

The world is much different now than it was when I first started teaching. In my beginning years of work as an educator, my focus was on helping my students learn how to read and write. I set up reading groups and supported students as they worked to grow their reading strategies. We had daily opportunities to write to help students become better writers, but our writing rarely made it beyond the four walls of our classroom.

I began to realize that digital opportunities could open new doors for my students. The print books available to my students are no longer the only kind of text they need to learn to navigate. The paper they write on during writer's workshop is no longer their only option. I am no longer the only audience for their work. Our work can now reach beyond our community. Experts are now at our fingertips. These digital opportunities reshape the work we do in our classroom and provide new possibilities in learning.

I used to think we should all jump on the digital bandwagon when we were ready. I've come to realize that our students can't wait until we are ready. We have a responsibility to learn the things we need to know in the best interest of our students. Sometimes I hear people say, "We need our classrooms to be places where children prepare for their tomorrow." I'm thinking we need classrooms that have them living in their today before we can even move to that. Digital spaces provide students with a voice today.

In those first days of going digital, much like in learning a new tool now, I just had to take one step at a time. Yes, I learned to use digital tools purposefully, but I also knew I needed to stay grounded in solid pedagogy as I transitioned these tools to the classroom. The understandings I had gained from literacy leaders like Marie Clay, Gay Su Pinnell, Regie Routman, Debbie Miller, Donald Graves, Shelley Harwayne, Lucy Calkins, and Katie Wood Ray still whispered in my ear. Real reading and writing opportunities mattered. Students still needed to learn strategies for reading, build comprehension, understand writing craft, and learn to compose in meaningful ways. Students needed time to read and write daily, but I knew it needed to start to look different. I didn't want to use digital tools just because it was a cool thing to do, but instead to see how these new opportunities could amplify their voice and grow their learning community. I wanted to think about how they could enhance the learning we were doing. I wanted to think about how they could open new doors for learners.

To get started I began to look for experts who seemed to be figuring out how to use digital literacy in their classrooms. I found professional books where authors shared new possibilities and helped to shift my thinking. Will Richardson's, Why School?, made me ask hard questions about brick and mortar schools. The first book I read with a digital focus was The Digital Writing Workshop by Troy Hicks. It really shook up my thinking about literacy. It was his book that first opened my eyes to new possibilities and pushed me to move beyond my current

understanding of literacy. Reading Alan November's Who Owns the Learning, pushed me to think about student ownership in learning. These were among the first books that started to make me feel the urgency of the change I was trying to make.

Though books shaped these first steps, live content on the internet probably did even more in helping me to get started. When have we been able to read the thinking of experts from around the world seconds after they press the publish button? Having continual access to this fresh thinking, and being able to see the work students produce, to step virtually into classrooms, and to read reflections of educators, has kept pushing me forward.

Leaders of change like George Couros (Principal of Change), Jackie Gerstein (User Generated Education), and Scott McLeod (Dangerously Irrelevant).
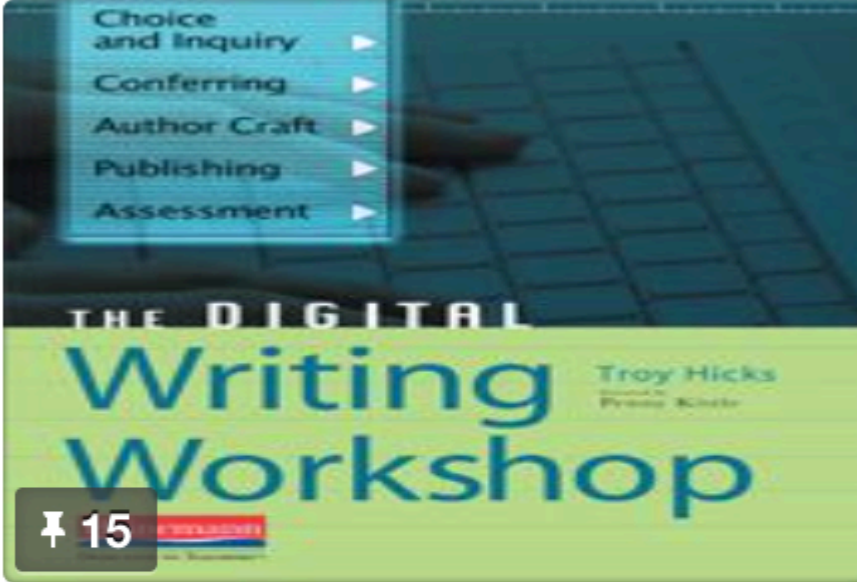
Leaders of digital literacy like Franki Sibberson (A Year of Reading), Kristin Ziemke (Ignite. Innovate. Inspire.), andTroy Hicks (Troy Hicks' WordPress Blog).

Digital writing mentors like Amy Ludwig VanDerwater (Poem Farm), Kevin Hodgson (Dogtrax), and Laura Purdie Salas (Laura Salas).

Teachers of primary students like Kathy Cassidy (Primary Preoccupation), Katie DiCesare (Truth Joy Possibilities), and Deb Frazier (Primary Perspective).

See my digital literacy mentors on my Pinterest board.

Digital Literacy: Envisioning …

1.7 The Power of Workshop

As I began to shift toward making room for digital literacy, I found that our use of reading and writing workshop was the perfect space for all literacy. I've always been someone who believes in the power of a workshop. Teaching in a reading and writing workshop hasn't always been easy. It's a delicate balance of knowing learners, building a collection of mentors that live around us, nurturing a caring community, listening to readers and writers, allowing opportunities for students to make their own decisions, and providing feedback that will help them push forward. It's about living and breathing in a community grounded in literacy.

For me, it is the predictability of our workshops that allows students to make decisions around digital and traditional ways to read, think, share, collaborate, and create. It is in this space to try new learning that students have opportunities to use digital literacy in new ways. During our reading workshop students can read blogs, eBooks, and other digital texts. They can use Kidblog to write a blog post, Educreations to share their thinking about a story, Pixie to write about the author's message or voice recorder to record as they read a book. As a class we collect our read alouds on Shelfari, send messages out via Twitter to other class about reading lives, and write

shared blog posts about our learning. During writing workshops students might be writing a post on Kidblog, taking pictures of a story they wrote and putting it in Educreations to add audio and share, creating a digital story using Pixie, or sharing a story using VoiceThread. As a class we share celebrations of next steps with others using Twitter, look at digital mentors, and seek advice from authors.

The power of the learning I was experiencing digitally, the way my writing life was growing, the types of digital reading I was doing, and the variety in tools for composition I was using helped me to know my students needed these same opportunities. Digital tools provide new opportunities and new ways to learn. In the time of my transition I've moved from using technology as an event where everyone is basically doing the same thing to having technology available so students can select it naturally in the course of our literacy work. First steps are always tricky, but students have helped me to see the significance of these changes and opened my eyes to greater possibility.

Digital tools offer some students alternative ways to learn. These alternatives sometimes move quieter students into a space where they feel comfortable sharing. I think of students like Tyler whose voice as blogger about books lifted him as a reader. A student receiving intervention, he had to work hard to make the gains he needed to make to catch up with peers. Tyler had fine motor challenges. Holding a pencil or marker was hard for him and no matter how hard he tried his letters were not easily formed. As we started to use Kidblog to compose in our classroom, Tyler was better able to share his ideas. The work of writing letters was replaced with the touch of keyboard freeing him up to do other thinking. Tyler began recommending books he liked to read to the class. Students loved his recommendations. Their enthusiasm for his work pushed him to write more. Becoming the star book recommender helped him stay motivated to do this hard work.

Digital tools offer students new ways to express their understanding. I think of students like Avery who had so much to share all of the time. Using digital tools to reflect, create and share gave her a way to take her energy and enthusiasm as a learner and use it to create new possibilities for others. She was someone who enjoyed sharing all the time and her voice could have easily dominated our community. Digital tools allowed her to write stories and share them with others. It gave her tools to record retellings of stories, to share new understandings, and to create in new ways. She continually pushed our community as she wrote digital stories, created videos, and continued to discover new ways to work as a digital citizen.

Just like some students prefer pencils, others enjoy pens or markers. Just like some students like to write books with several pages, other students prefer to compose an entire story on one piece of paper. Some illustrators prefer painting to sketching illustrations. The tools we choose are a matter of preference. These decisions are often shaped by the meaning we hope to create for our readers. Digital tools offer new ways to work, create and make meaning. I think of students like Maddie who found composing her writing in Pixie to be a way to think carefully about her words as she typed them carefully and enjoyed opportunities to illustrate using digital tools that allowed her to draw and color her illustrations in new ways. Her work pushed our class to think about new ways we could write our stories.

Remembering What We Know: Mentors, Modeling, and Shared Experience

The first year I introduced blogging to my students I just dove into the madness. I'd made excuses, but one day I just walked in and said, "Today is the day, no matter how ugly it gets." I won't ever forget that day because it did get ugly. However, it wasn't long until blogging got easier and students began to grow as writers. It was

interesting to watch them write about all that interested them. I learned things about them I wouldn't have known if we hadn't had this space. I realized that this experience was not only changing each of them as a writer, but it was changing our class as a community. No longer did students seem to think I was the only one they could learn from each day. No longer did it feel like every thought had to come through me before it got heard. Students seemed to be connecting with each other in new ways. I was a bit taken aback by how this one little change had accomplished what I had tried to accomplish for years, to have students really listening to one another and valuing their friends.

When the next school year started I knew I needed to provide this opportunity again for students.   We had gained so much the previous year from blogging, but I had learned lessons that were going to make it easier. I realized I had missed an important step the first year. I hadn't taken the time to model and demonstrate how to blog. I had forgotten the shared step of our learning. So when the new school year began I started the year with shared blogging. Right from the beginning we had a website that allowed us to blog as a class. We talked about those things we need to consider when blogging. What do we want people to know? How will we tell them? What's important? How do show with an image that isn't a picture of us? When students received individual accounts, having the shared experience lifted our beginning days of blogging. Students knew what they were going to write was their decision. They knew a title might make more people read their post. They knew a picture might make their writing more interesting or help make their point stronger.

I've had to remind myself to remember those same things I know about gradually releasing control of digital tools to students. I use the tool in my lessons, not to model the tool, but to help them to see the possibility. I have shared learning opportunities in which tools are a part of the opportunity.   I have to remember those things I know. I have to remember to provide mentors. I have to remind myself to provide shared experiences. I have to remember that some students will need more support. I have to know what my students already know and what will be next for them. When using digital tools I have to remember to consider the learners and adjust accordingly.

Remembering What We Know: Assessment Matters
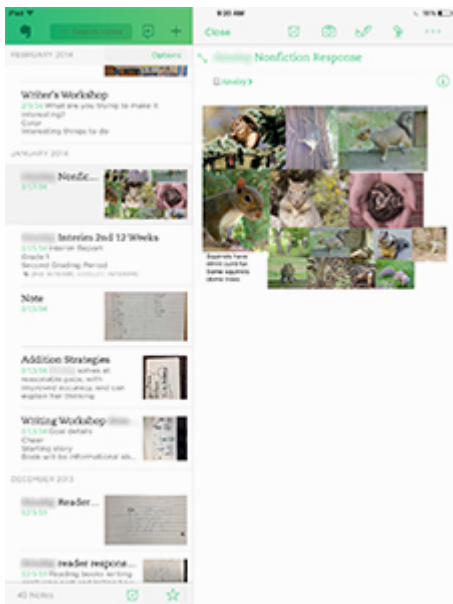
There are parts of my teaching life that going digital has made so much easier; assessment is one of them. Across my teaching career I've had many different record keeping systems for tracking anecdotal observations. I've tried mailing labels, file folders, post-its, and spiral notebooks with varying degrees of success. In the transition to becoming more digital, it became easier to collect and save different types of student work. I could take pictures, save links that connected me to work they had completed, and record student voice and conferring conversations. There are a variety of tools that will allow you to keep and organize different types of artifacts of learning.

The recent work by the National Council of Teachers of English about formative assessment has once again reemphasized what we already know: formative assessment matters.

Learning digitally in our classroom has pushed this practice forward by:

- making process work more visible
- allowing for self-reflection
- providing new opportunities for peer feedback
- giving us new ways to track thinking
- equipping me to keep anecdotal records in new ways

For me, Evernote seemed the tool perfect for collecting and tracking student learning journeys. Evernote allows me to type notes, take pictures, and record audio. Using Evernote, I'm able to create virtual notebooks to store and organize student work. Adding tags can help me to sort for purposes of reflecting and planning on individuals and the class as a whole. It is possible to create checklists within an Evernote note, if you're someone who works from checklists. I often create forms in Google and then place a link to the form in Evernote for easy access. Checklists work better for collecting information over several occasions. Google forms work better when I am collecting information all in one conference, one assessment, or one observation.

The Difference: The Power of Choice

If you stepped into my classroom during writer's workshop, you would likely see students with paper, with pencils, with markers, with iPads, with laptops and on desktops creating, composing, drafting, and publishing. Digital tools have opened new possibilities for students to make decisions about how they will write. Which tool will work best for my message? What is my purpose? Who is my audience? Do I want to be able to receive comments? How can I share this work? These are all questions continuously asked as writers work in our classroom.

If you stepped into the room during Reader's Workshop you would see this same variety of work taking place as students make reading decisions. You would see children reading at their tables, on the floor, and in small nooks around the classroom. You'd see students reading by themselves, students reading in pairs, and perhaps students learning or talking in small groups. Readers have time to read and share their thinking. Do I want to read a book or use the iPad? Am I going to respond to my video? Do I want to write my response on paper or digitally, compose a blogpost, create a video, or make a VoiceThread? Do I want to share my work? What do I want people to know about this book?

In today's workshops, students have many decisions to make about their learning. I have found digital tools to shift my classroom from teacher drive to student driven. There's something about the additional choices, the new ways to show understanding, and the possibilities for connecting with others that makes the learning feel different. Students have to think more about their intent and make real decisions. Students learn to rely on one another for feedback and support as they work.

1.8 Living as Digital Citizens

Often when speaking with groups of educators I'm asked, "What's different? What has changed?" Honestly, I still find it hard to articulate the differences as I moved from bringing my digital life and learning into the classroom for students.

As I've made this journey I have found a process that works for me and then transferred this understanding to my students. I've always chosen to take one step at a time. To others I think it often looks like I am taking more than one step at time, but often in reality I take one step and my students run eight steps ahead, and then I race to catch up. In the beginning, the first step I chose to take in my classroom was to introduce blogging. It was linear. It was a lot like writing. It was manageable. It felt safe. I chose a space, Kidblog, and we began. It was interesting as students got comfortable with blogging the impact it had our classroom. The voices of quiet students seemed to equalize, and in many cases grow stronger. Students were permitted to choose their topics and write anytime. I found students often choosing to write from home. I learned things about them I don't think I would have known without this opportunity to blog.

The change that still sticks with me the most, however, was the change in community. Though I have tried to work hard to change this, I have often felt that students see me as the go between in conversations. You say it to Mrs. Mere. She repeats it to the class. Then it is heard. I've never liked this kind of dynamic, and have worked to teach young learners to talk to one another. They can teach each other many things I cannot. This is going to sound strange, I suppose, but when we started blogging that changed. I noticed they didn't always feel like I had to hear something. They didn't always feel like I needed to be the person to say something. They started talking to each other, going to each other, and listening to each other. I didn't feel as necessary, and I loved that.

That's how it has been in this digital transition. I started with my own digital learning, realized the opportunities my students needed, and then shared it with students. In this digital transition there has been a true shift in ownership. As educators we often throw around words like authentic, ownership, voice and choice. We say we are working for purpose and audience, but often those purposes and audiences have been limited to the classroom community. We say reading workshop, writing workshop, and shared reading like they mean the same thing in every classroom, but they don't.

For me, I felt like ownership, authenticity, and choice were truly beginning to shift. I felt like conversations around audience and purpose were truly about that. As I grew in my knowledge of digital literacy, I began to open new doors for students. In response, students pushed my thinking about what was possible. There's no magic to what I am doing, but there is a willingness to take chances. Digital literacy isn't really optional. It's a part of our lives, and as teachers of literacy we owe it to our students to help them to thrive in the world in which we live.

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Chapter 2: Getting Started with Digital Writing in My Classroom

Getting Started with Digital Writing in My Classroom
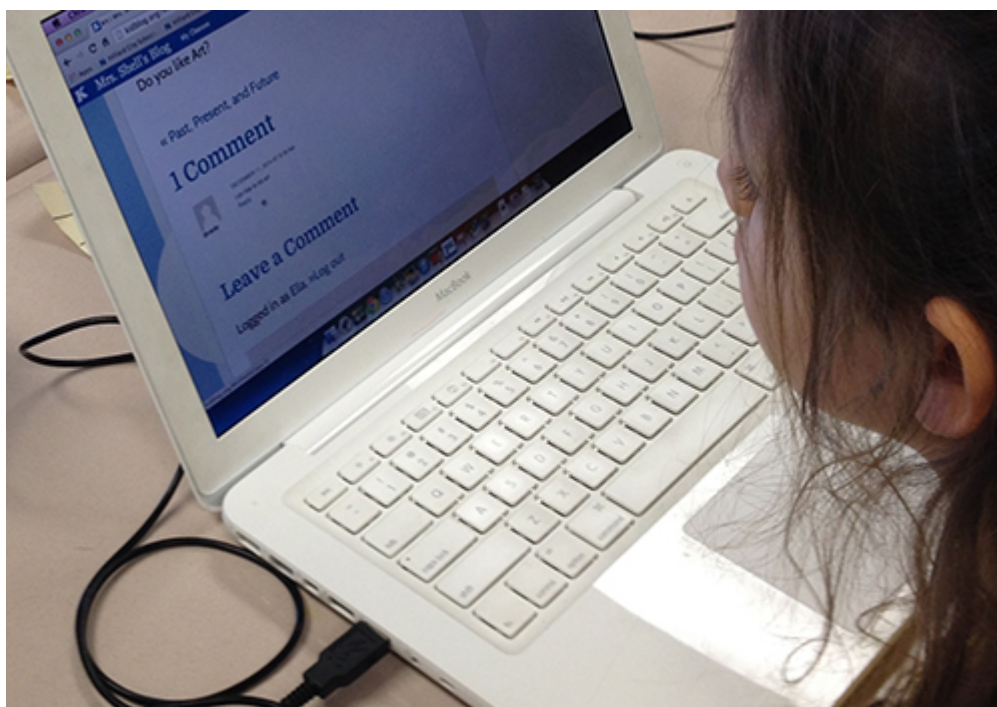
By Debra Fagnan. via Pics4Learning. Licensed under a Creative Commons CC By-NC-SA 2.0

by Mandy Robek

I am a blogger! I enjoy being active on Twitter! I find Instagram delightful! They have helped me grow as a learner and connect with others. I have found people with similar interests, aspirations, and those who push my thinking. It's been important to me to be digitally literate so I can be a mentor and share my experiences with my students. After teaching kindergarten for five years, I recently switched grade levels and spent the past year teaching second grade in a midwest suburban K-5 elementary school. I began the school year very excited to embrace digital writing with my students. I envisioned students having their own online writing space in a blogging format where they their ideas and voices could be shared. I envisioned fostering a group of writers that were willing and curious to read digitally while providing feedback to the writer. I envisioned writing as a choice activity to do from home and our conversations during the school day filled with excitement about writing.

2.1 Roadblocks

What I envisioned took a great deal of time to achieve. Since I had just changed grade levels my head was spinning daily with planning, assessments, and fostering a community of learners. I would wake up in the morning and say, "Today is the day!," only to discover I was wrestling with anxiety as I questioned myself. What tools should I use? What technology devices should I use? How do I model internet safety for my students? How do I assure parents their children are safe online? How can I feel more prepared? These questions would consume my thinking and I would decide today wasn't the day to start our digital writing journey. I needed to find a starting point and asked myself, "Where can I get help?" We had voices to be heard. We had learning to be shared. We had thoughts in response to others thinking and writing.

I turned to Twitter for help with my questions because people are so willing to share their thinking and offer suggestions. I specially reached out to @KristinZiemke because I had just finished reading Connecting Comprehension and Technology: Adapt and Extend Toolkit Practices, a book she co-authored. Kristin embeds

technology in her daily work with students and I thought she would have helpful suggestions for my questions. One particular piece of our conversation created a sudden enlightenment and inspiration.
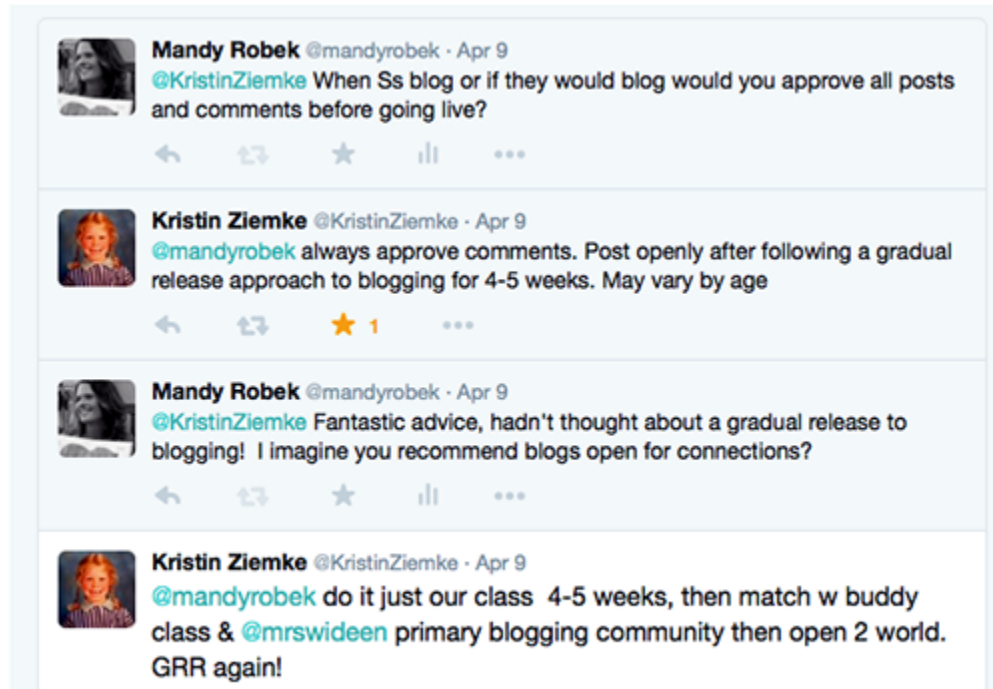
Twitter conversation between Mandy and Kristen Ziemke

Tweets are limited to 140 characters but I felt this little amount of text gave me a starting point to move forward and get my students engaged with their own blogs. Kristin's responses were just the nudge I needed to look at what we had been doing in my classroom together as digital writers. When school started, I modeled writing about our learning and for the first week of school I actually wrote the posts for our Class Blog page on our website. I began my modeling by thinking aloud about our school day for possible writing ideas. I would highlight something new we did for the day which became the title and then brainstormed some reasons why I wanted to share this part of our day. These reasons would guide my writing to include some details specific to the topic. Tiny Topics was one of those first pieces I wrote. I wanted to model how our sharing could be informative for our audience since Tiny Topic notebooks was something new to the students and their parents.

Tiny Topics

8/26/2014   0 Comments

Today we got Tiny Topic notebooks to help us live the life of a writer. We can write tiny ideas about things that have happened. We can take it anywhere we go. If there is something exciting happening, we can just pop it in the book and write about it sometime. It needs to be a story we can easily remember the words for. We only write our tiny topics in these notebooks. We hope to bring them to school each day.

My students were eager to start collaborating and sharing the writing for their class blog page. Just as we had when I was modeling the writing, we would gather at the end of the day and project our website on the Smart board for everyone to see to contribute ideas to our writing.

When we write class blog posts together, I sit at the keyboard typing, while students take turns sharing their thoughts with each other. We begin by thinking about our school day for a topic of interest to share. After deciding on a topic, we take a moment to give everyone some quiet thinking time. Next, we begin taking turns sharing what we would like our readers to know about our topic. Some ideas we are able to use just as they are. For example, in our piece about Writing Partners; one student shared, "Yesterday we got writing partners." This statement states the main idea of our post, so we leave it as is. Some ideas I gently guide, combining them to make our thinking more complete or make the sentence more sophisticated. An example of this would be when one student added, "We can ask our writing partners for a conference," while another added, "We meet at the coffee table." These two sentences became,; "We can ask our writing partners to have a conference with us at the coffee table." Sometimes I need to probe their thinking with a guiding question to include more details. I may ask questions like, "Why do we meet with writing partners?" or "How can writing partners help us?" It was interesting to observe how quickly my students were able to help with revising and editing our pieces. Since the pieces are projected on the SmartBoard, they help me with typing

mistakes, punctuation errors, and capitalization. They offer suggestions for moving the text around for a clearer organization or order of events. This is our final piece titled, Writing Partners.

Writing Partners

9/23/2014   0 Comments

Yesterday we got writing partners. When we are having trouble writing, we can ask our writing partners to have a conference with us at the coffee table. Writing partners can help us add more details. Writing partners can help us fix stuff in our writing. We can read them our story and they can give us advice. You are with your partner at the coffee table for 5 minutes or less. There is a timer to help us. When we are at the carpet together we sit next to each other so we can turn and talk to them, if we need to. We have numbers so we can take turns sharing, partner 1 or partner 2.

I soon realized we had already taken the first steps on our journey of becoming digital writers. We had been writing digitally together since school started. We had been co-constructing our writing in an online space. Making this realization alleviated my anxiety from earlier and gave me the confidence to address the questions I was wrestling with.

2.2 What Tools Should I Use?
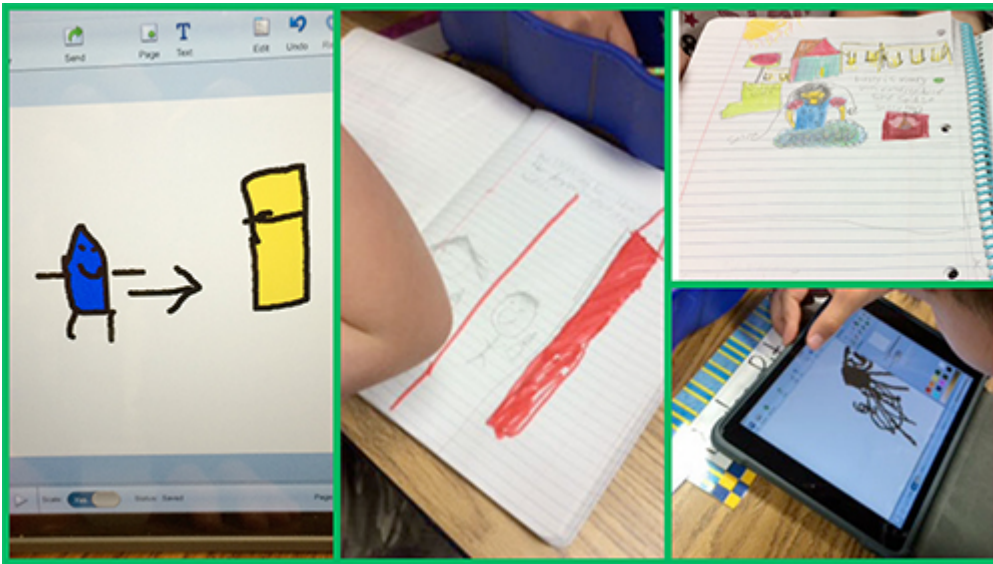
When I look around my classroom for writing workshop tools, I see a shelf set up with community supplies. My students have access to various papers with different layout formats. They will find sheets of paper stapled together for little booklets and single sheets to add more pages if needed or perhaps they just need one sheet of paper for a short piece. There are cups of colored pencils and boxes of crayons. There are boxes of markers thick and thin sorted by color. There are also boxes of chalk and oil pastels. We have Sharpie markers thick and thin tipped. We also have various formats of paint. My students have writing workshop folders for all their writing during a particular unit.

These materials are offered to help foster our writing community as I believe a strong writing community is needed to have an effective writing workshop during the school year. Building a community of writers begins with showing them how to be responsible with tools and choices. I dramatize lots of different scenarios for taking care of our writing tools and other writers in our community. Another important component of my writing workshop is providing choice: choice of topics, choice of time (How long will students work on a piece? Some students produce five books while another student creates two books.), and choice of materials. I believe choice is a huge motivator for writers and helps with writing stamina. When students have taken responsibility for the how to part

of a writing workshop they are able to be more independent and self directed which allows for conferring and small group discussions to happen. A writing community allows for students to have their voices heard.

My students are encouraged to think and plan not only their ideas but also the tools they will use while writing to convey their thoughts. In my writing workshop and shelves of tools, I want students to know, create, and believe the written word and illustrative piece of writing have a relationship to help convey their message. As I reflected back about introducing writing workshop tools, I realized we took a good amount of time to learn how a large shelf of community supplies would work. I introduced what was on the shelf and found opportunities to model each one of these tools early on. While modeling how and/or why I would pick a paper format or a writing tool we talked about how we could care for these tools so they remained nice for the next writer.

We also talked a great deal about how materials are shared at a writing space and how each person doesn't get their own set of tools. It's easy to forget all the little things that happened at the beginning of the year to establish a writing workshop but my reflection, taking the time to think about the beginning of the year, became essential in moving forward with digital literacy. I knew I would need to think about these same things with the digital tools I wanted to use during writing workshop.

Discussing and launching print writing tools takes energy and time and as I thought about incorporating digital writing tools I realized the same energy and time was going to be needed. The options for creating digital literacy is vast and overwhelming. I found myself spinning mentally and physically as I thought about apps and web-based tools. I received some sound advice from a friend, and picked two or three tools to make well known for everyone. This meant choosing a few tools that my students would learn well and be able to use with independence. Choosing a few core tools would also provide a common ground for our community of writers. Having a common ground could and would lead to easier problem solving and figuring out new ways to use these tools. These were some things I was wrestling with; picking a tool that would be universally acceptable on any device, picking a tool that could be accessed while at school and away from school, and picking a tool that would be user friendly. I also considered the tools we were already familiar with; Google Documents, Weebly, and Pixie. We had used Google Documents to create and published our About the Author pages for the books we were writing and created research book covers. We use Weebly for our classroom website and class blog writing. Pixie was used to create our self portraits digitally and for a research project with our librarian.

What I discovered while thinking about the tools we were currently using is I wanted to go a different direction. I wanted to remove the step of printing the student's work off at the printer and taking it back to our classrooms for them to use within our classroom walls. I wanted that next step to make our writing more public and have a digital audience. I wanted the look and feel of a blog; clean, crisp, and a similar format between authors and pieces for easy reading. I had concerns about opening our pieces to anyone on the internet and concerns about having the

pieces read by invite only. I also wanted to be able to approve pieces of writing and comments before they were published. I wanted to moderate our writing and our comments to ensure we were being responsible with our word and topic choices because our audience was going to much bigger than it ever had been before. I also wanted to moderate comments from visitors to make sure they were appropriate for second grade students. As mentioned earlier, our class had been using Weebly for our shared writing pieces about our learning and they have a feature for students to host their own blogs which I considered but I was worried about the amount of time needed to learn how to do this for myself before I worked with students. Pixie is a great tool for creating illustrative pieces but isn't designed with a blogging format. I was looking for a tool where Pixie could be imported and shared easily with a larger audience.

I considered several features I wanted in a tool for students to have their own online writing space. I wanted a web-based tool with an app option that could foster greater accessibility for my students. I wanted our tool to be accessible from home on different platforms and I was hoping my students would want to write while at home. I wanted to select a tool that was going to allow me to approve posts and comments before they went "live". I hoped to find a tool that I could adjust our community of readers. I knew that at first, I wanted our readers to just be us, but later would want to open it up to a wider audience. I wanted parents to have access to our writing and provide feedback to fuel our writing. I hoped we could share our writing with extended family members in hopes of expanding our readers. I wanted a clean and crisp look to help each reader and writer make navigation easier. I wanted a tool that would allow us to import and share our illustrative work done in Pixie and would allow us to insert photographs. I chose a blogging platform that was kid friendly and gave me all of the options I mentioned above.

Now that I had chosen my digital writing tool, I was closer to getting started. I realized just as my students had individual paper writing folders they needed their own digital folder which meant my first step was to create those before we could start. I also realized depending on where and how we were to get digital tools to use we would need to talk about or remind ourselves how we handle and care for these devices so they could be used by the next student.

2.3 What Technology Devices Should I Use?

In my traditional writing workshop format, tool accessibility has never been an issue. The students bring some of our writing tools from home from our school supply list and some of the tools I purchase with school money. By spending the time during our writing workshop to discuss how we use and care for these tools we are able to continue to use them for the entire school year and sometimes they carry over year to year. However, digital writers need devices and devices are much more expensive to purchase and maintain.

As I looked around my classroom, I had two desktop computers for twenty-two students and I was discouraged! I knew there would be excitement for the students to have their own blogging site and they would all want to be engaged right away. We are fortunate in my building to have a computer lab with flexible scheduling.

> *Flexibility was key in making our work successful.*

We are also fortunate to have a cart of Chromebooks for fifth and fourth grade with a cart of netbooks often used

by the intermediate grades but could be borrowed at other grade levels. I started considering these options and decided based on accessibility and our familiarity with a device, going to the computer lab would be the best option. We had done some work earlier in the year with the laptops in the computer lab and I wanted to have some comfort for my students with our new adventure.

Looking back, I realized going to the computer lab was not only comfortable for my students but it was also comfortable for me. When trying new things with my students, I have found having a familiarity or a basic comfort level alleviates some of my own anxiety. I don't need to know all the answers but being able to problem solve without panic is helpful. When I thought about trying to borrow the Chromebooks or the netbooks, I realized I had never used one and that might be too much learning for me to take on right then.

When I looked at the computer lab schedule it was pretty full. Going during writing workshop wasn't an option. Sometimes I find it easy to get into a mindset that our schedule has to stay the same but in reality it wasn't going to work for our digital writing launch. We had to be flexible and rearrange our typical daily schedule. The beauty and pure joy of a flexible computer lab schedule meant we could go three consecutive days to accomplish our writing and each day we were there at different times. Flexibility was key in making our work successful.

2.4 Moving Forward

How do I model internet safety for my students?

In twenty years of teaching, I've never questioned the safety of my students or the safety of their writing using traditional writing workshop tools. We've shared our writing with each other, we've shared our writing with families, and we've hung our work out in the hallways to expand our audience. This always felt safe and looking back I realize that safety was never really a consideration. Previously, the only aspect of writing I worried about was how we might tell a story including other people and guiding responses so they were effective in a kind manner. Our traditional writing workshop pieces were always shared with a community in which we were

members. Maybe that is why I panicked a bit about taking our writing beyond our four walls to a larger community with members we didn't personally know.

This is another area where my twitter conversation with @KristinZiemke and her nudging to think about letting go slowly had a great impact on our journey. I didn't have to have my student's blogs open to an unknown community right at the start! We could keep our sharing within our classroom community of writers as we were currently doing in writing workshop. I found myself imagining us taking small steps and our digital literacy community circle could increase in size as we became more experienced in our learning; and digital writing. When you read the work of digital literacy teachers much farther down the path than yourself it's easy to want to be right where they are RIGHT THEN, in that professional book, presentation, blog or tweet. We have to remember they too probably started with small steps and are further along on their own journey as digital literacy teachers.

How do I assure parents their children are safe online?

I communicate with parents about our writing workshop standards, learning targets, mini lesson goals, and examples of our work frequently during the year. However, I felt a responsibility to explain our digital writing launch and work in more detail. I was worried families might not be digitally engaged themselves and/or they would worry about their own child using digital tools. I also wanted to ease any concerns about Internet safety. I read a variety of resources from the Internet and put tidbits together for a parent newsletter. While this took a bit of time to research, think about and create, it was worth the investment of my time because each child was a successful blogger from home and parents had helpful information in case their child needed help. I shared with parents how the students would log in and how they could join our community and provide comments on our writing. I wanted to let them know they might see typing errors and why. "Writing and keyboarding are two different skills. I want to honor the writer while giving my students the opportunity to use the keyboard in a meaningful way. You may see spelling errors and you may see mechanical errors. The students are being encouraged to check for both of these errors. I believe with more time and practice these will become more natural for them as digital writers." I also shared with them aspects of being a digital citizen; digital communication, digital security, and digital etiquette.

How can I feel more prepared?

A writing workshop format is within my comfort zone for several reasons. My undergraduate studies were about a workshop format: mini lesson, independent practice/conferring, and sharing. I've read lots of professional books about writing workshop. I've taught various writing units and have experience using mentor texts to lead our work. I've seen over and over the importance of allowing students to choose their own topics for writing.

As I thought about my background and experience with writing workshop, I began to realize I was more prepared for a digital workshop format than I thought. I had read a few books about digital literacy and had blogs I frequently visited for ideas and mentors. I had some friends via Twitter and locally I could use as a resource. I could still use a workshop format but needed to consider the digital device as another tool, along with our paper, pencils, markers, and paint for creating and publishing student work. I could also still have my students choose

their own topics. As I thought about all of my reasons for hesitating, I soon realized that I already had answers to some of my questions. I began to feel more confident to begin our work.

The Final Nudge

It wasn't long before my students started giving me clues they wanted to participate more within our digital writing experiences. Sam started leaving comments on the posts we did together and I felt he wanted to foster more conversations around our writing. After Sam left a few comments Addison stopped by to share some thinking. Chihiro was excited one day during indoor recess when he created a domino train in great length and watched each domino tip over. He wanted me to create a video of his domino train falling and post it to our classroom blog. I wished I had stopped to ask why but based on his excitement I believe this may have been a new experience for him. I did this at his request but it didn't feel right to me because it was something personal and specific to him. This was not a common experience for all of us. It would feel better if he was creating the video and he was making his own blog post. I believed through these experiences that my students were nudging me for more responsibility and opportunities to be independent. I knew I needed to take further action and release ownership for sharing our learning.

My students always enjoy going to the computer lab and working with technology. They travel quickly, they find their seat and are quite attentive for any directions we might need to get through. I didn't anticipate the cheers and clapping that occur when I announced we were going to launch and start preparing their own site for blogging! It became apparent right away we had done the "we do" part of the gradual release model far too long.

Robek's Rap

Kidblog.org Edition

Dear Families,
I'm very excited to share with you we are expanding our role as digital citizens! We are using a new digital tool to produce and publish our writing. Kidblog.org was introduced and launched this week. A blog is defined as a website containing the writer's or a group of writers' own experiences and observations. Teachers with the intent to make blogging safe for elementary and middle school students created Kidblog. Kidblog allows the teachers to monitor the publishing and commenting within our community.

Kidblog is very safe. I have control over the student's blogs and comments. Our blogs are only viewable by classmates, the teacher, and the guests we invite at this time. No personal information is collected to create student accounts.

I like Kidblog's no advertising feature. The screens are simple and easy to navigate. Kidblog is perfect for helping us produce and distribute our writing. One of our language arts standards states, "With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers."

Writing and keyboarding are two different skills. I want to honor the writer and the while giving my students the opportunity to use the keyboard in a meaningful way. You may see spelling errors and you may see mechanical errors. The students are being encouraged to check for both of these errors. I believe with more time and practice these will become more natural for them as digital writers.
You may find our writing at – http://kidblog.org/MrsRobeksClass/

This link will take your student to our home page. In the top right corner they will find the words Log In, click this and another screen will pop up for you to use to log in. Each student is using their first name as their username and we have a guest username account.
They must be logged in to comment or create a new posting as a writer. Next, they will be able to find their username from a list and then enter their own password.

It is my hope as you see our efforts and read our writing you might be willing to comment. Writers grow and are encouraged by receiving feedback. Therefore, I've created a general guest account for parents to use. To use our guest account you will need to click on the Username – Guest and type in the password – guest. Once you have logged in, you will be asked to leave your name. I'd like to ask everyone whom comments to sign their name in a format that will help the students connect to who you are. For example; Addison's Mom or Annalee's Uncle, or Keelin's Grandma. This will also model digital security and we can find out who is reading our work.

Digital communication is a big part of digital citizenship. The students are very excited about our commenting feature within Kidblog. Today we discussed there are three types of comments; compliments, connections, and questions. On their own the students discovered they could reply to a comment and we also discussed if there are a lot of questions maybe that is an idea for another post.

Digital security is another area of digital citizenship and is defined as "electronic precautions to guarantee safety." You will also notice the students have created their own avatars using the software Pixie to help with our digital security. We've discussed not sharing our username or password with anyone but you, to help with our digital security.

Digital etiquette has been another area we have discussed while launching Kidblog. Digital etiquette is defined as "the electronic standards of conduct and procedure." We are talked about choosing kind when we share our stories and our comments. We have talked about how mad and angry feelings might be better in a paper notebook and not on a blog. All posts and comments are to be approved by me first to help foster digital etiquette within our community.

Kidblog does have an app you can download for free to your electronic devices. I just put it on my phone and ipad. You might need to find our class in one of the following ways – Mrs. Robek's Class or mandy_robek@olsd.us

Welcome to our digital writing world.

2.5 Getting Started
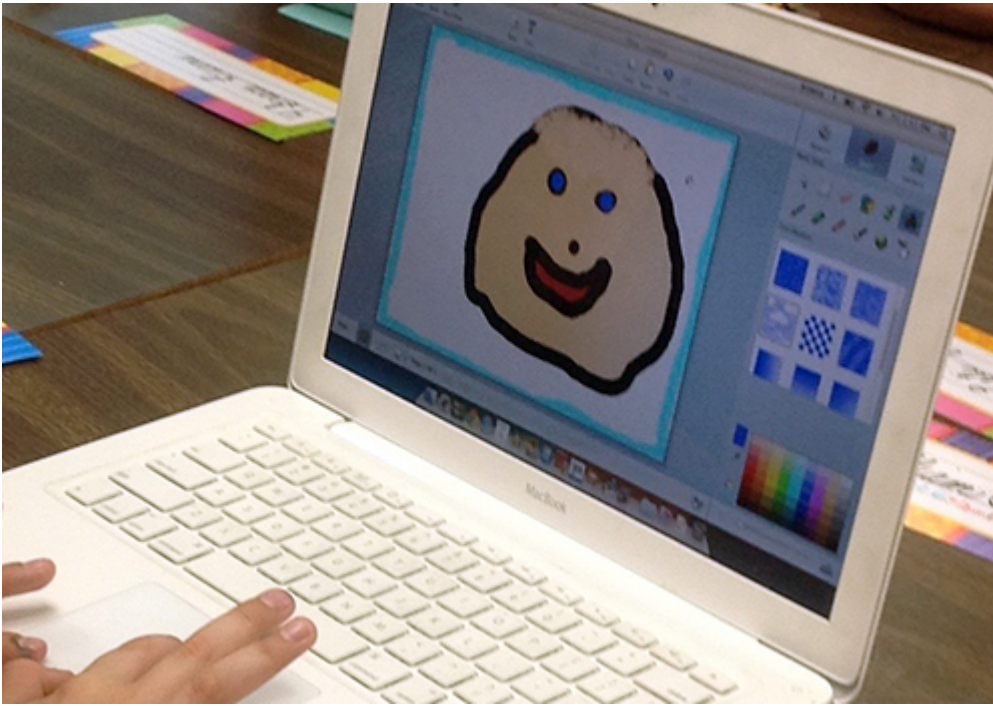
As I thought about the next steps in working with students, I relied on my own experiences as a blogger.

Setting up Accounts

The initial step in getting started is setting up an account and I did that for my students, using just their first name to help ensure we were creating a net of digital security. I have seen my own children struggle with various passwords for different tools they use for school. To simplify the login process, I decided students would use the same district passwords used for Google Drive. This made our login process very successful. After creating their accounts, I realized their account was going to a place to hold their writing as their writing workshop folders had been doing previously.

Choosing an Identity

I really wanted the success of our classroom community and how our relationships foster our writing workshop to carry over to our digital writing space. Knowing people build a community by making connections, I wanted to figure out a way for my students to understand that our classroom community consisted of the same people but in a different space. We would be connecting with each other in a new way, through comments on our blogs. As a blogger, avatars help me connect and identify with the writer. I also find avatars welcoming. The visual representation often helps me identify the author quicker than searching for their name. I use a photograph for my avatar because I want people to have a face with my name. I think it brings more personalization to an online community. When I thought about student avatars and having a photograph linked to their name I became worried about them being digitally secure. I pondered how could I get the face recognition in a digitally secure way and I realized self portraits could be an answer. We had previously created those in our traditional writing workshop using paper, tempera paint-cakes and Sharpie markers. We could recreate those using the digital illustrative tool, Pixie.

Images made with Pixie

Our first session in the computer lab was spent using Pixie to generate a self portrait from the neck up. My students had experience using Pixie which made this lesson a review for certain features I thought would be helpful; how to change the tip size for the drawing tool, drawing a large space and then filling it in, finding different colors than what is provided, the undo button for just the last move or two done, and using the entire screen to make our image large. It was quite enjoyable listening to the discussions between students as they created their avatars with intention.

Once our accounts were created and our avatars uploaded to each account we were ready to write. Again, I relied

on what I know about reading and writing from participating in the blogging community for guiding our work together.

Writer's Craft

The pieces we write in writing workshop usually receive a title to inform the reader what the book is about. This was going to be important to carry over into our digital writing work. Blog posts also have titles that grab the reader's attention by either naming the big idea for that piece of writing or provoking inquiry that wants to make the reader read the post. The body of a blog post elaborates on the title and shares the author's message.

Choice

All year long my students had been choosing the topics they wanted to write about in writing workshop and I wanted my students to know that blog authors write about what interests them, too. I shared my personal blog reading habits about running, scrapbooking, teaching, and cooking.

Next, I modeled writing a blog post sharing these ideas with my students using a topic we all had some familiarity with. This mini-lesson had two main focuses: navigating the Kidblog website, and modeling intentional craft decisions while composing my own piece of writing. Eggs on the Playground? was the post I wrote as a mentor text.
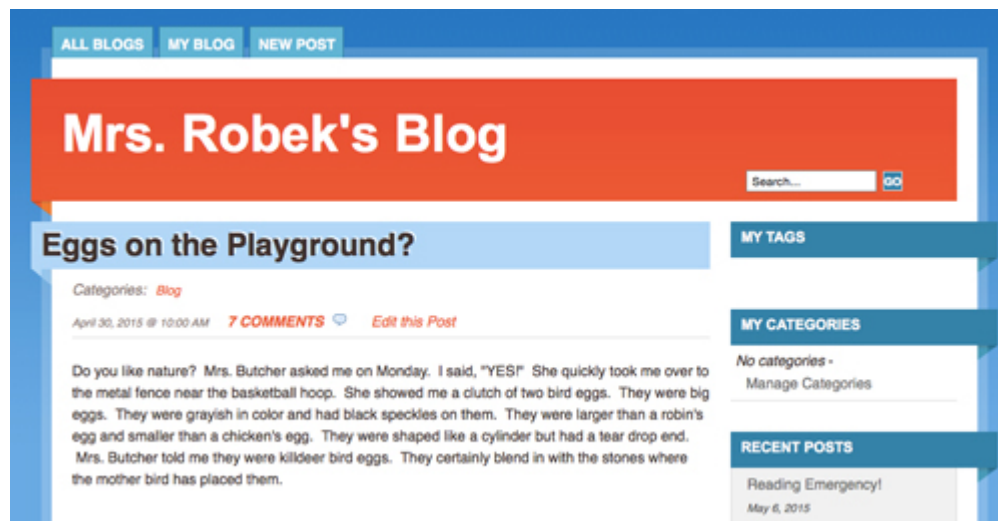
Time to Write

Giving students time to write continued to be important when writing digitally. They were eager and excited to write their own blog post with a self selected topic. The computer lab quickly filled with a productive hum as students composed their pieces on the keyboards and asked keyboard and Kidblog navigation questions to

a neighbor. The room was filled with purpose and meaning. We were very excited to make our writing visible quickly to the other members within our classroom community. Learning about the publish button was one small step on our journey and an exciting one for my students. You can see from the examples on the next page that my students wrote about a wide variety of topics.

"Choice in Topic Creates Excitement for Young Writers" Presentation

Responding to Others' Writing Builds Community

Previously, our writing workshop provided opportunities for students to work with their writing partner, small group, or myself for feedback. While this arrangement was helpful, I began to wonder what would happen if they had the opportunity for more classmates to read their work. Our third consecutive day in the computer lab was spent learning about the commenting aspect of blogging. I knew as a blogger myself that comments nourish, encourage, and push my writing. Blog comments promote interactions between the reader and the writer, making this technology experience quite social. I have been blessed to have had blogging interactions turn into relationships both personally and professionally.

As I thought about the type of comments I write and receive, I discovered they can typically be categorized as a compliment, a question, or a connection the reader might have. As we discussed each category, my students agreed they could think about something nice to say to the author, ask a question for more information or details, and/or share a similar story. I modeled how to navigate the commenting feature for Kidblog and the computer lab became a beehive with an energetic buzz. My students were excited to discover they already had a comment on their post from the previous day. To help generate commenting momentum for my writers, I read and commented on each post the night before from home. My students requested I sit at the computer and approve comment posts as they were done because they wanted the feedback from the reader right away and wanted to see the projected web page updated immediately.

"Comments Motivate Young Writers" Presentation

Now that we had learned about blogging and had generated exciting momentum in our digital literacy work, I wanted my students to know and live like real bloggers. Real bloggers can write when they feel inspired. This would mean they could write on their blog outside the school day. I shared with them they could do this via the website as we had done in school or they could use an app on their home devices. Cheers and applause rang through the computer lab. I modeled how to save their writing as a draft in case they couldn't finish a piece at home, depending on their schedules. Each student received my parent letter to help explain our blogging purpose, plans, and an invitation to join our reading and commenting community. That first night away from each other produced 51 comments, 12 new posts, and 3 drafts. Ten students had blogged from home that first evening. Up until this point in the school year, I had not encouraged my students to write at home and I was thrilled to see how many students choose to participate.

As trips to the computer lab continued and students continued doing the work of real bloggers, I noticed there was a fourth comment category. Sophie discovered she could offer an advice compliment in a gentle way to help the writer which gave us a purpose to learn about editing a post after we have published it.
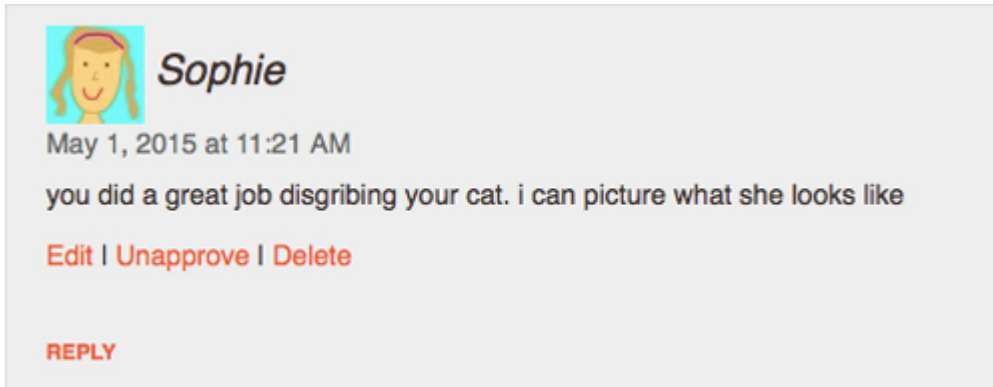
I began to see the opportunities digital reading and writing could offer our classroom community. Students had a role in our digital writing work, students had their voices heard, students were able to share their pieces with a larger community, and my students were able to experiment with genre, typography (font color, font size), and punctuation.

One of the biggest opportunities I observed while my students were blogging was seeing each student's voice come forward in a manner that was important to them. Students also had a an active role and they all willingly participated. Students who may not spend a lot of time together in class were reading and commenting to each other. Students who tended to be a little reserved during class discussions were participating at the same pace and volume of their peers. Students were able to share their own interests in hopes of finding classmates with similar interests: as Conner, a new student for the fourth quarter was doing.
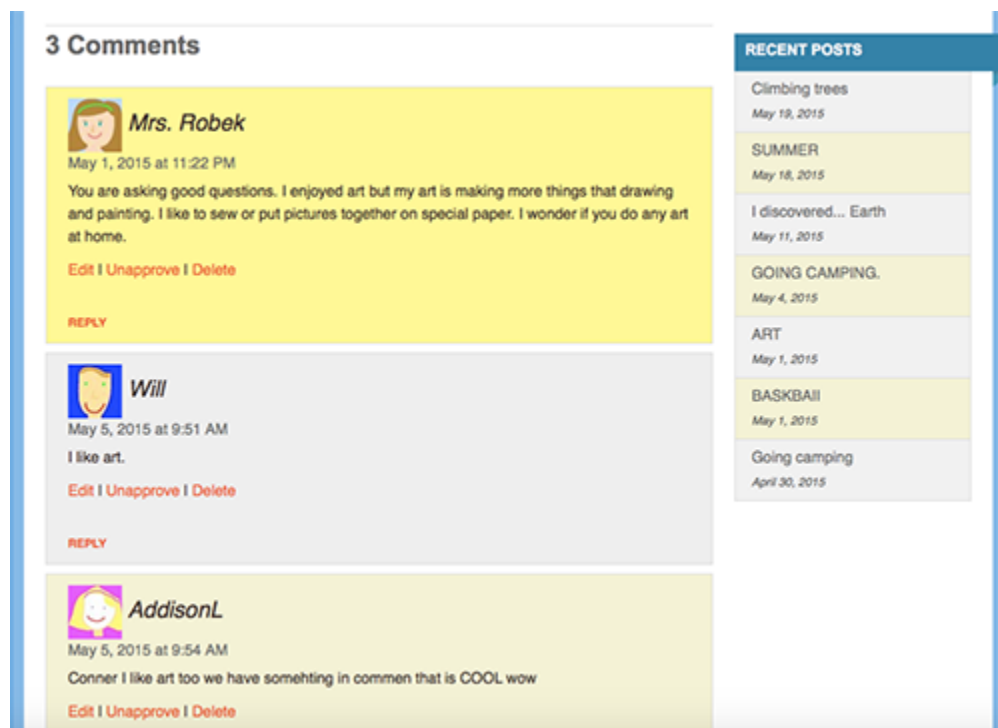
Blogging brings out student voices

Once we got momentum going with our blogging, it was interesting to see the different choices students were making within their blog posts. I was able to see a few students explore with different genres and typography. They had been doing this already within our writing workshop while working on paper and they naturally began exploring these ideas on their own as bloggers. I was so surprised one evening when I read Sophie's post that I wrote in my notebook, "I didn't show Sophie how to change color, font type, or font color." As I look back at our blogging time together, I didn't need to show Sophie how to make changes in her writing. I chose a tool that was user friendly. My students are natural explorers and problem solvers. Therefore, my digital readers soon discovered Sophie's learning and did their own editing to enhance their writing.

Final Thoughts

I started this journey feeling hesitant and slow. I was delaying my jump with digital literacy where each student had ownership and individual spaces to be writers. I am now feeling eager and enthusiastic. I am ready to jump with my students into the world of digital literacy much earlier than I had previously. I want to grow our community in hopes of making global connections for a longer amount of time during the school year. I've learned connecting with others not only expanded the four walls of our classroom but it expanded the individual workspaces for each child within my classroom. It became a powerful tool for students to share their voices. It became a powerful tool in fostering our community. My biggest discovery was learning to trust myself, trust my students and realize we did not need to know all of the answers.

Chapter 3: Digital Reading and Writing to Connect with Others

Digital Reading and Writing to Connect with Others


By Deb Frazier

I want the children in my classroom to be open to various perspectives, to be accepting of others and to learn about the person behind the one they see. As a young adult I lived in Okinawa, Japan. I had read books prior to my move to Japan, but nothing could prepare me for the actuality of standing amidst all these differences at the same time. I was overwhelmed by clothes worn by everyday people and the writing in strange shapes covering signs and buildings in every direction. I gawked at all that surrounded me. I noticed the sound of the language and its sense of rhythm and tone and wondered how people could talk so fast. I quickly spotted the tiny cars driving on the right side of the road and wondered how long it would take me to learn to drive on the wrong side of the road. I was engulfed by new sights and sounds and I immediately wanted to learn about the people and their daily lives. I began to meet friends who graciously shared their traditions, their food, and their language. The differences were clear, but hearing, seeing and feeling the similarities between us as people changed the way I view the world. As I listened to my friends share their traditions it became clear, behind all that looks so different to my naive eyes is a person.   A person with ideas driven by beliefs, fears and hopes. A person who wakes up each morning and seeks nourishment from food and others. A person who hurts and laughs just as we do. My perspective on the world was changed; I was a new person with open views on the world.

My experience in Japan wasn't my only experience with differences and misjudged perceptions. I grew up

alongside a sister with mental and physical disabilities. My sister didn't talk nor walk. She communicated much like a toddler, attempted words that sounded like grunts and groans. Those who spent the most time with her came to understand her language. As a young child she crawled and as she grew this became increasingly difficult and she got her first wheelchair. Despite her disabilities she had her opinions and her jokes! We all knew what would make her laugh and again, I learned there is far more to a person than what we can see with our eyes. This is a lesson that was hard learned and worth its weight in my heart.

Growing up in our family I became accustomed to stares and stereotypes. People are quick to judge what they can not understand. In today's global and diverse society I see much of the same judgement in cultures and lifestyles. This worries me as our world is increasingly more diverse and those who are becoming adults in this culture will need to be understanding of others. Success in employment and happiness for our society will demand we see the value in the ideas of others and use these ideas along with our own. I learned naturally to search for the person and not to settle for what I see. Growing up in my family was the beginning of my understanding of the importance and need to live in a world of acceptance and understanding. Now as an educator I have a strong desire to connect people on a deeper level, a level of understanding that goes deeper than what we see with our eye.

Digital tools offer us the opportunity to learn with others whom were once out of our reach. I decided my start would be in starting a professional blog, Primary Perspective. My mentor sat beside me at the neighborhood coffee shop as I took this first step into connecting my students to students of the world, with the intention to open minds to differences. I asked her questions and she asked me even more pushing me to find my own path into being digitally literate and building connections with others. All along I doubted the power of what I would say and the connections I would find, but I knew opportunities were far too great. I had to reach for them. I couldn't leave them unexplored. As I began this journey I thought of all we could bring into our classroom to help the students look past diversity. This goal was strong in what I believe in being a literate citizen. Digital tools were making it possible for me to embrace my teaching in a deeper way.
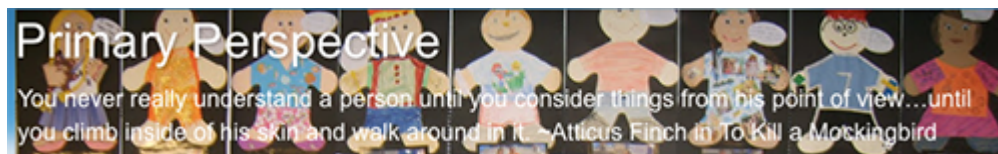
3.1 Our Classroom Community
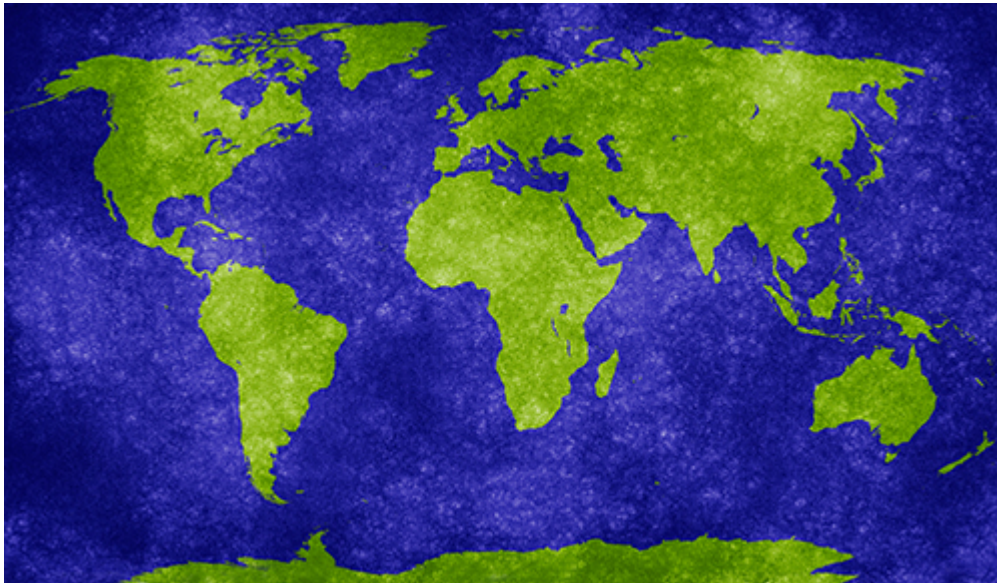
World Grunge Map by Nicolas Raymond via Flickr Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

I teach first grade in a suburban district in central Ohio. My school has some diversity. Several of the students in my classroom are second generation families in the US. Those in my class with international backgrounds speak English as their primary language and only 2 of the 5 students speak another language at home.

Our classroom community is responsive to the needs of the learners. Each day begins with a meeting where we discuss and work through our concerns and celebrate our willingness to take risks, learn from each other and support others. There's also a lot of choice in our room: choice to move about the room, choice to choose space and tools, and choice in how to show understanding.

The only thing that is not a choice is how we will treat others. We treat others with respect and understanding. I work intentionally to teach the value of others. We read books, role play and write stories to help us understand our feelings and how our actions affect others. Respect is learned and learning to respect those who are different than ourselves requires opportunities to experience diversity and differences. While we experience diversity and differences everyday in our classroom, at school, and even in our families, we live in a larger world. where the differences are greater. Building connections with the world is our first step in learning how to live in an open and accepting community.

From Humble Beginnings Big Things Grow

Our first global connection was not planned, it all happened quite naturally, (but would not have been possible had I not explored Twitter, blogs and various tools.) One student in our class read a book about India. As he was reading the book he began to question the accuracy of the information. He asked if he could take the book home for the night and read it with his dad who was born and raised in India. The next morning he burst in the door "Mrs. Frazier my dad is from India and he said all these things are not true, only some of them." He led the class through the book explaining what his father had said. As a class we listened, then one student said-

"Wouldn't it be great if our class in America could talk with other classes around the world?"

and then another-

"What if we could talk about our lives with classrooms in other countries?"

Our conversation led us straight to my blog because we CAN talk to classrooms in other countries! Gathered on the carpet, teacher at the keyboard and all eyes on one 17" monitor we began to think about what we wanted to learn about people in other countries and what they might want to know about us. We worked to compose our first post (pictured below) inviting others to step into our classroom and learn with us. The anticipation in our room was growing and we were all eager to see who would be the first to reply! We didn't worry IF someone would reply only when; we were naively confident!

Wanted! A Global Classroom~

WANTED!

A global classroom~

Our goal~
Nurture and reinforce an **attitude of respect** for cultures around the world. Enable the kids to see the **similarities** and **celebrate** the **differences** of many cultures.

We will...
 Explore how people around the world live?

We want to know...

- How do they go to school?
- What kind of houses do they have?
- What do they eat?
- What sports do they play?
- What kind of clothes do they wear?
- What celebrations do they have?
- What is a day like for kids around the world?

Our first blog post

As we talked about our blog reaching out to others I explained how we could stretch the reach of our blog even further by using Twitter. I opened the book beside me revealing a world map. I explained how we could talk to people all over the map by sharing the link of our blog post on Twitter.

Students questioned how a Tweet could talk to people. They didn't understand how others read Twitter looking for interesting ideas or classrooms to connect with just as we were. To help the students understand Twitter we browsed the feed reading tweets from various places, some in other countries, marking their location on the class map. We clicked on a few links in the tweets, we saw how you could send a link to help the reader learn more. We noticed many people typed "retweet" in tweets. I explained retweeting a tweet keeps the tweet active on Twitter and builds a larger audience as the tweet then reaches out to more readers. The students were beginning to understand the reach of Twitter and we were ready to send our blog out into the world on Twitter, complete with a retweet request.

Tweet sent out by first graders

The responses to our blog post and tweet ignited a fire; students wanted to read more tweets, they wanted to share more and they wanted to know how they could interact with this new audience. The first comments on the blog were promising: Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Guatemala, Cape Town, South Africa and Canada! Twitter and blogging were great tools for reaching out into the world, but the students wanted more, I wanted them to have access to these connections on an ongoing basis, not just when we were working as a class. In reaching out to build globally connected citizens who see the person behind the differences they would need to interact when they were inspired. They would need a different tool they could use independently, because Twitter and blogging (at this point) required my help.

As I considered the questions the kids were asking I began to think about the tools I learned about reading blogs and Twitter and just as I consider our non-digital tools, I wanted tools the students could use independently. I wanted the tools to be accessible to students without my help. I envisioned the students clamoring as they came in, running to check comments, sharing new thinking and asking more questions and learning throughout the day.

First graders use digital tools independently.

The tool would need to grow with the project and to be editable by all users. Speaking was also important to me, I knew we would be connecting with an audience that may speak English as a second language and the learners in my room were early in their language development. Both students are still learning to organize language and are often limited in their vocabulary and in written communication spelling further complicates communications. The opportunity to share orally better enables all students share thinking and ask questions.   I wanted the students to be free to share without the intimidation written language may bring. It was also important to have the capability to share photos and videos to support early language learners and we would need a tool we could use from home. Having access to the tools at home would help to ensure student initiated use of the tools and parent involvement. One tool kept coming to mind, VoiceThread. VoiceThread had all these features and would lead us on a path of student driven connections.

3.2 Our Global Classroom

This experience was pivotal in shaping who I am today as a person and an educator. I was able to share with my students the power in connecting with others who come from different backgrounds and learning that our differences aren't so different. With the perfect tool in mind, questions and wonderings already posted in our blog we gathered on the carpet to begin what would become our global journey. Twenty-three six year olds, 2 tubs of books, and five desktop computers, 1 VoiceThread account 1 teacher Twitter account and we were confident this was the start of something unstoppable.

I introduced VoiceThread to all twenty-three students on one 17" monitor. They watched as I showed them how to add a slide, a photo, a comment and how to reply to a comment.The opportunity to connect with classrooms in other countries was overwhelming, but we had to start somewhere and this is where we were. The fire had been lit. We had the beginnings of an audience and we were moving forward.

After the demonstration lesson the learners set out to create our first global interaction. Some ran to grab books and others decided to create illustrations to frame their questions. Students worked in partners deciding how they could best share and ask others to share back.

The conversations around our room were genuine. These first graders knew they were sharing around the world! They never doubted the ability or the power of the work they were doing. We had read books like Wake Up, World!: A Day in the Life of Children Around the World and Let's Eat: What Children Eat Around the World by Beatrice Hollyer and several others as a means to understand the practices of other cultures.

But now we were actually going to share and talk with children from around the world and we wanted to know:

- How do they go to school?
- What kind of houses do they live in?
- What do they eat?
- What sports do they play?
- What kinds of clothes do they wear?
- What is your school day like?

We were building connections with other classrooms; we were becoming truly global. No longer would we have only 23 voices in our room.   We were adding international voices that would move us to see new perspectives. This example is just one that shows how digital tools have the power to teach my students acceptance.

After the VoiceThread was created and shared on Twitter we waited. We checked for comments throughout the day and wondered why no one was commenting. The students were fascinated when I explained our global classroom friends would be sleeping while we were in school and we would have to check tomorrow morning for response to our questions. When I went home that evening I was also a bit worried about the lack of interaction on VoiceThread. I retweeted the link again, hoping to reach a side of the world who would have been sleeping when we sent the first tweet. I resent this tweet about every hour, each time asking those who read the tweet to please keep our tweet active in the twitter feed by retweeting. It wasn't long until @MGraffin from Australia replied to

the tweet promising his class would share in the VoiceThread. I could hardly sleep. I kept rolling over to check my twitter account for more replies! @MGraffin kept our tweet alive as we slept and this was a key factor in growing the Global Classroom. @MGraffin's location in Australia allowed our tweet to speak for us as we slept, reaching an audience on the opposite side of the globe. The next day as the students began to enter the room I explained how our one tweet had grown into several tweets all through the night. The kids were again shocked to know a whole other part of our world was awake while we slept. As we gathered in our morning meeting, we checked for comments on the VoiceThread. This day we had only one, but it felt like ten!

We were all so excited to hear @MGraffin's voice and his accent! Mr.Graffin left us the promise of more to come. The excitement on the faces of the students was compelling. I quickly showed them how they could check for comments on their own when they came in the next morning. The next day I logged in the desktops to our Global Classroom VoiceThread so they would be ready when the students entered the room. I stood back and watched in amazement as students entered the room and went straight to the computers anticipating new interactions.

Groups of kids gathered around the few computers in our room listening to others share about their country. Sounds of national anthems from India, New Zealand and Australia all played at once as the students listened to the comments. Kids ran to the library as they were asked to share more about our country and to think about the meaning behind our symbols and traditions. Jaws dropped as the kids realized students from other countries often spoke more than one language. I felt a sense of pride and the beginnings of something I once thought unimaginable as I listened to the voices calling each by their names. This was an audience of choice each interested in the other, pushing each one to think past what they assume to be true to find the deeper answers, the answers that matter.

3.3 Opening the Classroom to New Possibilities and Digital Literacies

As I integrated digital tools in the classroom, I held fast to what I believed as an educator and what I valued in diversity and acceptance. I wasn't willing to open our room to digital tools if they didn't meet the needs of the learners. I wanted to create opportunities for the students to design a collaborative learning experience where they could witness differences and begin to find similarities among these differences and see the importance of acceptance of others. Providing the ability for the students to reach outside of our room gave the students the chance to invite diversity. Our first global classroom project brought five different countries, a myriad of questions, acceptance and curiosity into our community.

Digital tools made what was once very difficult, more easily accessible. We had experienced interactive conversations with students from several different countries while sitting in our classroom. The potential of digital tools in our learning could not be underestimated. The global classroom was just the beginning and would propel us forward into being people who look beyond what our eyes can see and look for understanding.

Building Independence

The Global Project grew out of the questions of one student and changed the way I look at my responsibility as an educator. In this project, I guided the work. In future projects, I wanted to give my students more independence in making choices in learning and in using digital tools.

To give the students more control I began by creating individual avatars. I introduced a drawing tool to draw pictures of ourselves. I added these avatars to VoiceThread giving the students their own identity (and login). I showed the class how to take a photo, leave an audio comment and share a VoiceThread with those in our classroom. At this point the students had all they needed to begin interactive conversations with those in our classroom.

To help the students embrace the possibilities they now had with VoiceThread I read a new book to the class, The Spooky Box by Mark Gonya. I stopped just before the big news was revealed, leaving them begging me to turn the page. We paused, allowing a few to share what they thought was in the spooky box. Hands were tall in the air and many just couldn't take the waiting and groaned as I laid the book down. "You're not going to read the end? How will we know what's inside?" I asked the class if they had any other ideas of what might be in the spooky box and there was a choral "yes!" I then explained how I was going to take a picture of the book in VoiceThread and invite them all to come and share their thinking by leaving a comment.

With the class watching I demonstrated how to find the link to VoiceThread on our school webpage and then sign in using their own login information. The class cheered, "We can login all by ourselves?" I quieted the class and then asked a few students to help me create a new VoiceThread. Hands shot up like rockets begging to help. Using a variety of helpers we puzzled our way through creating a VoiceThread. At each new step I pretended to not to know the next step, asking the class to tell us what they seemed like the next step, the right button and what we wanted to happen. The class worked together and reasoned their way in a predictable way. This students weren't afraid to problem solve and they weren't giving up until they were successful! In stepping back and permitting the class to guide me they were learning how to problem solve and to use VoiceThread.

With the VoiceThread ready to go and the class feeling confident in their ability to use it, we were off to reading workshop. Students rotated through a class list each taking a turn to listen to the comments and sharing their thoughts on the VoiceThread. At the end of workshop we gathered together around the computer and listened to a

few comments, still not getting to everyone. I wanted to leave the class eager to hear more, enticing them to listen to the comments at home and even add more. I gave them directions for logging into VT from home and promised to finish the book tomorrow! The anticipation of hearing more created an itch to use VoiceThread, building a power for this incredible tool and its ability to continue and stretch learning outside of our classroom.

VoiceThread enabled us to share our voices and to hear those in our class, but I wanted to reach a larger community in which we could share and collaborate. If you step into our classroom any morning and join us for our meeting you will see our class Twitter feed displayed on the screen, large enough for all to see. We will all be gathered on the rug, one student standing at the screen holding a pointer leading us in reading tweets. You will hear the students discuss the meaning of the message and the evidence that supports our thinking. You will hear the students talk about how this information fits into our learning, new ideas, and wonderings all gained from 140 characters. Through our shared reading of tweets we learn not only the nuances of sharing messages via Twitter, (the length of a tweet, how to direct a tweet to a particular audience, how pictures can support the message, and how to save tweets we want to revisit) but most importantly our relationships and perspectives are broadened as we collaborate with a connected audience.

3.4 Building Connections

Keep in mind we are reading tweets to build new connections that will reach beyond our classrooms, to learn about the person behind the work and to see other perspectives. The connections we make should spark our interest, push our thinking, and be active in sharing and working together. To do this, we begin by looking at the class sending the tweet. We click on the name of the sender and we are directed to the user's profile summary.

Here we can learn about the class who is tweeting. We can read other tweets written by this class; we can see who they follow and who follows them. We can look to see how active they are on Twitter. We want a class who tweets regularly to increase the power of our connections. We pause for a few minutes to read through the tweets to see what the class shares and what they are learning.

We ask ourselves:

- Are we are interested in what they are tweeting?

- Do we have similar interest we could share with them?

- Would this connection push our thinking?

- Are we curious about their geographical location or culture or customs?

- Are they active on Twitter?

- Who is following the class and who the class is following?

- Do we see familiar names?

- Do they follow us?

- Are there names here we want to explore more?

As our connections grow we begin to see familiar names between classes and as these names increase so does our community of learners. We are well on our way to establishing collaborative connections.

Often classes will provide a link to their classroom blogs in their profile. If we are interested in learning more about this class we visit their blog. As we read the class blog we look again for learning we are curious about, familiar learning, student work samples and any information that will help us learn about the class as learners. Finally we are ready to make a decision on whether or not we will follow this class on Twitter. We discuss what we have learned, think about how it will impact our classroom and make a decision, to follow or not to follow.

Sometimes this is an easy decision, other times it's discussed over a few days. I want the students to feel invested and connected. When they talk about our connections I want them to know the classes by name, know their interest and to feel value in the connection and in the power of being a connected learner. Remember my goal is to instill a sense of acceptance and understanding of others and we can't do this with a superficial connection. To enhance these connections, we need to be able to ask questions and listen to understand and share our customs and beliefs knowing they will be valued in return. Students also need to know their audience as they choose who they will share their work with, who will find interest and who will push them to learn more. So we take the time to really explore, to think deeply about what it means to send your work out into the world, who your audience will be and to learn in a globally collaborative way.

Once the decision to follow has been made, we mark the location of the class on the world map (clearly displayed

at student level beside the display screen). We compare the distance of our connections and talk about the distance of our work, our voice and all who will read and possibly comment in between these connections.

VoiceThread had made its mark in our classroom. The class was familiar with the tool and used it regularly to create and share. I decided it was time to introduce a new tool. My goal is to provide the class with a variety of tools with different uses and possibilities. We now had an iPad added to our classroom and VoiceThread was only a web 2.0 tool. Our new tool would need to be available on the iPad. Looking back at the notes I had made while browsing other classroom blogs and Twitter I chose to add EduCreations. EduCreation's ease of use and ability to capture and share our learning would be the perfect fit.

New Possibilities

I introduced EduCreations just as I had introduced VoiceThread, but this time I was teaching a lesson while using the new tool. I pulled out the class iPad with everyone gathered around me and explained I had a new app I wanted to use. I explained I wanted to share my thoughts on a book we had read. With the kids help, we discovered how to take a photo, doodle and record voice. We all agreed this new tool was a great addition to our class. It was easy to use and gave us more choices in how we share our thinking. With this new tool we could type, draw, take pictures and record voice and (with the help of me) share our work with those in and outside our classrooms. A variety of tools and knowing the capabilities of each allowed the students to decide which tool best fits their purpose and need.

One morning the next week as the students were working, some spread across our room, some in chairs, a few at tables and a few in the hall, a low level hum of 6 year old students reading filled our room. I sat beside a few readers listening to them discuss a favorite character in a beloved book. Olivia walked over to us and asked if she could use the class iPad to make an EduCreation. I nodded quietly and off she went to grab the iPad. I watched as she settled in with her book and the iPad, unsure what was to come next. Will she need my help? Soon, I was back with my readers and lost all track of Olivia and her project.

As the class came together at the end of the workshop to reflect and share on their reading Olivia announced she

knew the author's message of Tea Party Rules by Ame Dyckman and asked to share her thinking from her iPad. The class paused, "Can we do that?" I quickly explained we could and displayed the iPad on the computer and then projected the computer on a large screen, allowing all to see her work. As she shared her response, the class was in awe! She shared a photo and audio clearly supporting her thinking. Olivia stood tall and proud as the class began to ask her how she did this. Olivia showed her work a few times answering questions first about the "how to" of creating on EduCreations as the kids were excited to repeat this in their work. Olivia had set the bar, not only had she done strong quality work she also used our new tool in a new way.

The class was fascinated with the work Olivia had done on Educreations, but I knew this work (as it was) was only visible to those who shared our EduCreations account and I also saw the interest from the students was focused on the tool not the content. I wanted to the class to focus on the learning and the possibility of a wider audience. So right there when the class thought we couldn't be any cooler I asked Olivia if she thought the author would like to see her work. Olivia's eyes grew big, her smile widened and her head nodded fiercely. I suggested we send out a tweet to Ame Dyckman. We typed Ame Dyckman in the search box and right away the author Ame Dyckman was at our fingertips!

After sending the Tweet we waited and returned to the regular parts of the day. By the time lunch was over so was our wait! Not only had Ame Dyckman replied to our Tweet, tying the conversation to the book and the learning, but she also invited us to Skype with her. Thank you Ame Dyckman!

Ame Dyckman also extended an offer no first grade teacher could resist, "goodies" to go along with a book! The goodies arrived and the kids were over the moon. This author was reading OUR work, she was interacting with us, and it was also the day she Skyped with us!

As I watched my class receive the pins, bookmarks and stickers from Ame Dyckman, I knew this was a special moment for us all. They had reached out to what seemed like an unreachable person and not only did she reply, she sent us goodies and Skyped with us.. Ame Dyckman's interactions with the students showed them that what they say matters. Their voices reached beyond the classroom, giving them an empowering experience.

Making Connections with Ame Dyckman

3.5 Sharing Individual Voices

Twitter was now a part of our everyday learning. As we came together in the morning or as we reflected on our learning at the end of a lesson, we checked our Twitter feed for new followers, responses to our tweets, and ideas to enhance our learning. Twitter to this point had been under my control. I wanted the students to be free to share their individual thoughts and celebrations on Twitter, not just the thoughts of the class. To reach this goal I added a Twitter board. (Another idea inspired by my mentor.)

Each globe at the bottom of the map is designed to look like a tweet complete with a student avatar and a Twitter handle (@Grace). Each globe is laminated so kids can tweet as many times as they like. I check the Twitter board a few times a day and tweet out their messages!

As you can see from @Grace's tweet the students had choice over learning design, tools and audience. They knew their place and they knew their voices mattered.

Students Take the Reins

WIth this solid understanding of the reach of our voices, and a platform to share their thoughts and reflections with parent, authors, teachers, other classes, my students began to dream up projects inviting the world to learn with us. One such project was What in the World's For Lunch? In this quest to learn more about lunch tables world wide the the class created a VoiceThread and invited others via Twitter to share their lunches.

This VoiceThread reached all the way across the world! The students received replies from as far as Hong Kong, China, Ireland, London, Bulgaria, Kentucky, Georgia and Michigan. This inquiry really helped the kids internalize the similarities behind the differences they see and hear in these connections. Students quickly heard accents and commented on the differences in the way they pronounce words, but they also noticed the many similarities between our lunch tables.

New Discoveries

I set out to show the kids the similarities lurking behind differences, but instead I discovered an unexpected power in adding digital tools to our classroom. I witnessed students making connections in lifestyles and practices near

and far. I witnessed learners discover their interest, learning style and voice as they problem solved the tools best suited for their work. I watched in utter delight as students helped peers and in collaboration discovered the strength in combining tools creating even more powerful voices. I witnessed the drive student ownership gives students as they took the reins and began a learning journey predetermined by no one but themselves.
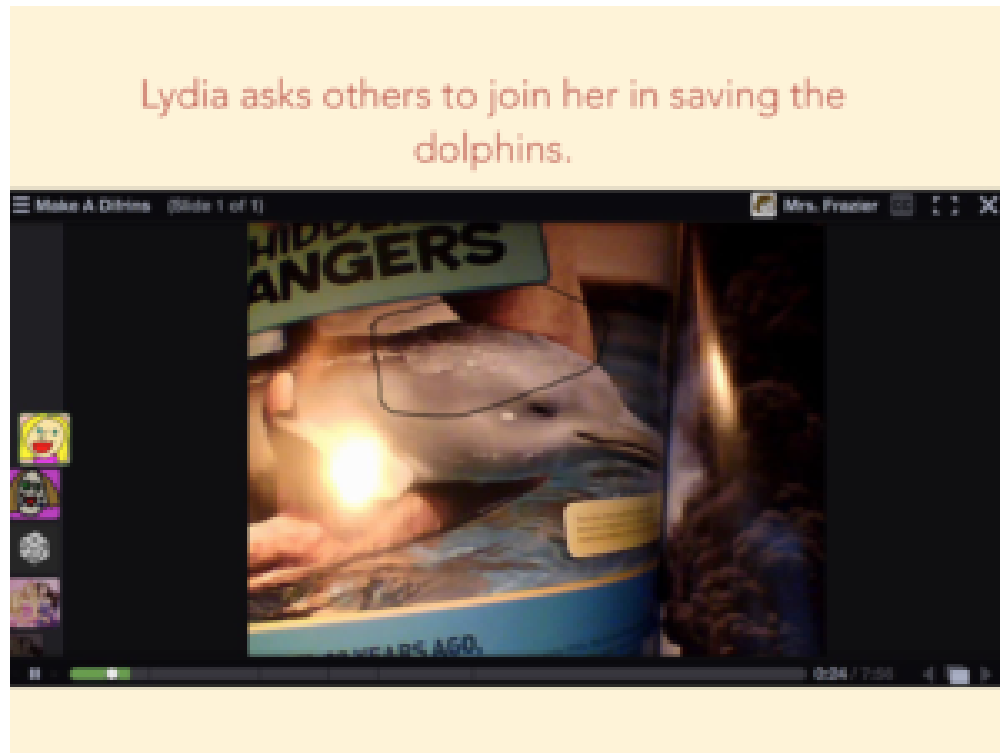
Lydia asks others to join her in saving the dolphins.

We have grown as a community through the use of digital tools. We have learned to share our voices and how sharing our voices connects us to the world. I have watched our community strengthen as we extended our voices out into the world. Here, we learned the benefits of expanding our community to include others who share our interest.
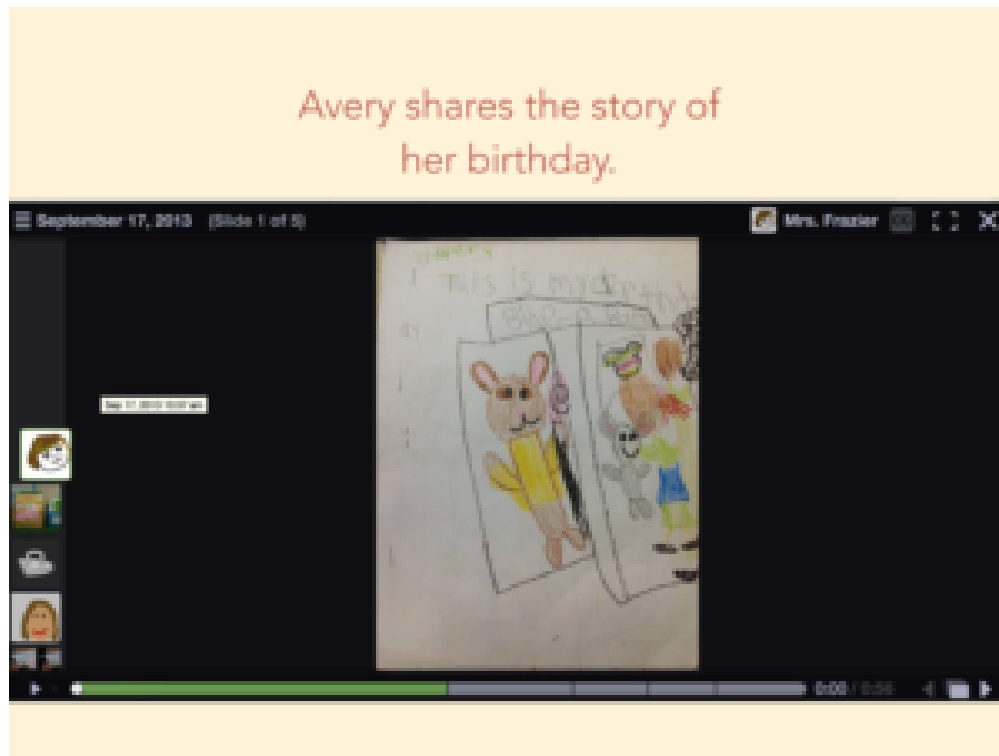
Avery shares the story of her birthday.

I have watched the learners in our community become learners out of a desire to learn and share with others. This is learning that will follow them out of our classroom and stick with them in all they do and become. I have witnessed the joy and excitement of students when they received comments on their blogs and replies to their tweets. I have witnessed each and every writer share their stories because they matter. Writers want to tell their stories, not because I asked them, and not for school requirements, but for themselves.

Brady reflects on his growth and shares with all by combining tools.

Resources

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Chapter 4: Responsibilities to Consider as Digital Citizens

Responsibilities to Consider as Digital Citizens

Elementary Students Using iPads at School by Lexi Flickinger via School Technology Licensed under Creative Commons CC By 2.0

By Debra Lairson

When I first decided to venture into digital reading and writing with students, I held the reins the entire time, which was not something I had done in my traditional reading and writing workshops. I didn't have faith that the kids would be able to do it alone. I didn't have faith that the children needed to take the time away from their typical writing workshop to spend time digitally. I was a literacy coach though, so I needed to change my thinking for several reasons. As a leader in the district, I had to make sure that I was trying the things in my classroom that were being asked of the other teachers. I wanted to be able to support the teachers as they ventured out into the unfamiliar digital world.

> *I've come to understand that writing is a process, whether composing digitally or with pencil and paper.*

When I began to dabble, I would use the computer and the projector to do shared reading or shared writing. I moved into interactive writing with a smart board, which was fun, but it was really just a substitution of what I had always done with an easel and chart paper. I was allowing myself to replace the chart paper with a digital tool, but I wasn't at a place where I was ready to actually transform the learning experiences for my students. I didn't think they were capable of doing such sophisticated work.

My opinion and my practice have changed. Just as children don't need to know the alphabet before they can read, they don't have to have spelling, or any of the other writing crafts or conventions under control before writing digitally. I had initially thought that writing digitally would be a way to publish the work that the children had created, so of course they would need to be able to spell everything correctly for their readers and have all of the necessary punctuation and voice that they needed in their writing. I've come to understand that writing is a process, whether composing digitally or with paper and pencil. As I began to venture into digital writing with my students, I realized we had a lot to think about.

Teacher Responsibility

The first responsibility that I had to consider was mine. I knew that I had a responsibility to my students to consider, reflect, think and grow as a digital literacy teacher. I began reading blogs and thinking about the practices of other teachers. I wanted to know the power and purpose of digital reading and writing. When I first began using these tools, I didn't understand the potential that they had. I offered very little to my digital community. Since I wasn't the kind of authentic digital community member that I wanted my students to be, I began to think about those that I followed who were. I studied what they did and how they did it and I began to create an idea of the type of digital citizen I wanted to be.

I realized that I had to start taking risks. I could not just read digitally if I wanted to be a part of a community. I needed to begin to comment on the posts that I was reading. I needed to take a stand on my own teaching and share what I was doing. I joined a digital community where I began to explore different tools, share my work and connect with other members. I attended classes and learned about what it meant to be a part of a digital community, both giving and taking from that community. I was leading the digital life that I wanted to make available to my students by participating in blogs, social networks and classes (both online and in person).

I was not where I wanted to be in knowledge and/or experience, but I had the responsibility to get started. I knew that I couldn't wait until I felt comfortable or knew everything that I needed to know. This is especially true in the digital world. The minute you know something, it changes. I had to leave my comfort zone behind and get going.

4.1 Jumping In

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I am a literacy coach. At one of my professional meetings, I had the pleasure of learning from Deb Frazier and Cathy Mere. They shared the things that they were doing digitally with their first grade students and I found my mind starting the spin. The videos and student work that they shared gave me the inspiration that I needed to get started!   The level of writing was not that different from a typical first grader, but the difference in the level of thinking was huge. They were making purposeful decisions about their writing, that I hadn't considered as an adult. For example, one child articulated his writing process and his thinking behind choosing a particular digital tool to publish his work. In addition, first graders are able to share so much when oral storytelling, but often don't have the stamina or skills to sustain writing longer pieces. Many digital tools allow students to use a combination of images, text and voice to express meaning. I knew I wanted these opportunities for the students in my building.

I returned to school the next day and immediately sent an email to the staff that I worked with asking them if I would be able to work with them and their students on blogging. I decided to begin with blogging because blogging was a linear process. Three teachers answered my plea. I began my work with a 3rd grader teacher who had been thinking about blogging with her students, and two first grade teachers.   They were excited that I was willing and eager to jump into this with them. During this chapter, I will focus on the work that I did with the third grade teacher.

This was our first time to introduce blogging to the children, so we had to really think about what they needed to know and how they needed to know it. There are lists out there for teachers to read, but as I know from experience, all kids are different. We wanted to make the teaching specific to the students.

When Megan (the third grade teacher) and I met, we had to consider the background knowledge of the students. We wondered if they had even seen a blog before and we discovered that most of them had not. So that's where we began. I created a slide show using google slides to help us with our organization when teaching. On one of the slides, I included a link to different blogs written by children. I chose blogs that I thought that the children would be able to use as a mentor text.

"Blogging in the 3rd Grade" Presentation

Mrs. Steahly's Bloggers shows the VoiceThread I made to help students create their first blogs.

After showing the blogs to the children, reading a few posts and talking about what the writers did on their blogs, Megan and I began by teaching the kids the basics like how to get on the blog , how to post, how to comment, how to post a picture or a video, etc.   We didn't teach all of this all at once. We would teach one thing, then get the children on the computers to try it out. Then we would teach another skill and give them time to try it out.

This got the children started, but I was naive to think that this was all that they needed. My approach to blogging, which was thinking that children were writing as in writing workshop, but on a blog, made me miss the essential responsibilities that digital writers have to their audiences and to each other. As in writing workshop, they needed to make sure that they were still writing for an audience. They also needed to learn the importance of protecting their privacy and the privacy and feelings of others. Responsibilities as digital readers and writers are vast and growing as the amount of reading and writing digitally and their accessibility grows.

4.2 Writing for an Audience in the Digital World

World by Nicolas Raymond via Freestock.ca Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY 3.0

The first thing that "came up" was that our writing would be read by people who are not in the same room and who do not share our students' experiences. We needed to make sure that our students understood they were writing for an audience that might not know them. Megan and I noticed that their posts left out information that was essential for understanding. They needed to say more so that their readers would understand and enjoy their writing as much as possible. One of Megan's writers blogged the following post:

swag bloggers
Categories: Blog December 15, 2014 @ 10:23 AM 1 Comment

This swag blogger just learned how to blog.I learned from the master.My nickname for her is mrs master.I even just learned my password.

« Learning to blog   9\11 »

As Megan and I read his writing, we noticed that he lacked a sense of story, and yet we read more of his voice in this post than in his other writing. There were possibilities here that were exciting to us along with the realization

that we had a lot of work to do. We needed to help our swag blogger make the connection between blogging and his other writing, and we needed to help him to see the difference as he was no longer writing only for the children in his classroom. His audience just got a lot bigger. Because of this, he really needed to think about building prior knowledge for his readers and had to work harder to make his writing meaningful to the larger audience.

why Ryan Johansen is the best player on the blue jackets

Categories: Blog March 5, 2015 @ 10:42 AM 1 Comment

Ryan Johansen is the best player on the blue jackets because he is tide for most goals,has the most assists and leads the team in points.he has 58 points.He also was the mvp for the NHL all star game. Ryan led the team in goals last year. Girls like Ryan because they think he is cute. Also Ryan is only 22.Ryan has 22 goals and 36 asissts.Ryan won the trick shot compition in the all star skills compition.this is how swag Ryan is.

Later blog post shows this writer is aware of a larger audience.

My mini-lessons were very to the point. I didn't want to spend too much time talking instead of allowing the children to work and I didn't want to teach too much all at once. I told the children what I noticed and then I taught them what they needed to know next based on what I was seeing in their writing. For example, as Megan and I looked at the writing of our swag blogger from the example earlier, we noticed that he was writing for the children in the room, knowing that they were having a similar experience. We knew that he needed to build upon his story about learning how to blog so that his readers would know what it was like and how he felt. We noticed these same things in a lot of the writing we were looking at, so we decided that this was a priority for her class. We pulled the children together as a large group and told them we had noticed that many of them had published one or two pieces on their blogs the day before. We looked at several of the posts and talked about whether or not they had enough information in their posts for every reader to understand. The children were quick to realize that they didn't. We took the children back to the swag blog post and worked through what that could look like for a larger audience and we revised his writing orally, allowing him to go back into the writing later. He ended up choosing not to go back into this piece, but worked harder for his audience

4.3 Publication Requires Responsibility
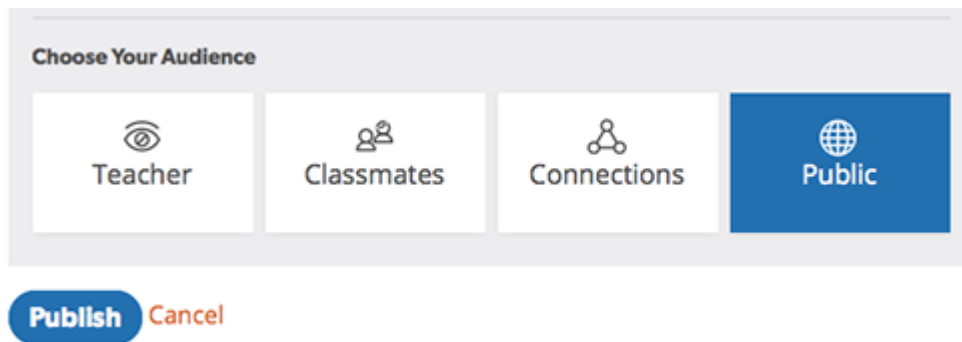
After thinking and reflecting on this experience, we decided that the children needed to be taught how to make sure that their writing looked its very best as well. If they were ready to publish their posts, there were some responsibilities that would come with that and that they would need to take them on. If they didn't want to publish without input, then they needed to save their drafts and keep writing. We talked about things that writers needed to consider, and created a chart together as we were talking. We reflected on the list and then we decided that we had enough to think about for now. The children wanted to get started!

We discovered that charting our thinking was very important because we were learning and doing so much. We wanted the writing (even charts) to be authentic, so we always created charts with purpose in mind and revised them regularly. As we wrote, we found that there were more things to remember and that there were things on the chart that we no longer needed because they had become a part of our daily habits.

Things to think about when publishing on your own

- Will my writing make sense to others?
- Does my writing look right?
- Will my writing embarrass anyone or hurt anyone?
- Is my writing interesting enough for people to want to read it?
- Does my title make people want to read it?
- Will my writing make people want to comment?
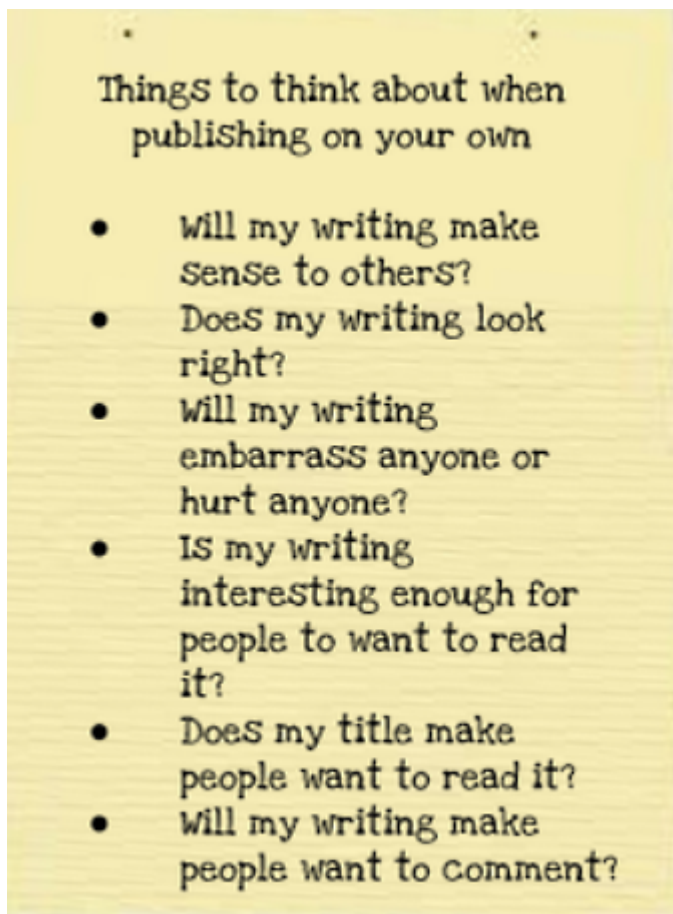
While some of the children were writing and publishing on their own, many of the children needed the traditional structure of: write a little, conference, write a little more. This was absolutely fine with us as we had taught the kids that writers have different processes and that it is important to find what works. We found that the conferences took the same shape as our more traditional workshop conferences, with one BIG difference: The children were very willing to go back and reread to make changes to their writing. This was a HUGE shift for the kids! They had always loved talking about their writing and changing things out loud, but when it came time to change it on paper, it often didn't happen. The children found it to be too much on paper. We talked about how it is an essential part of living the life as a writer, but I had to constantly prompt … until we wrote digitally. The children began to take this responsibility on independently. As a writer, I understand completely. The process of rewriting, cutting, gluing, revising and editing is painful when you have hand written an entire piece. If they were like me, it would have been very painful to have their writing look messy. When writing digitally, cutting and pasting is much easier. It's just a few clicks away. Once the children get the idea of how to edit and revise digitally, they quickly become independent and very willing to do so.

Megan and I saw the children going back into their writing, rereading and making changes as they went. When we sat down to conference, the children were telling us about changes that they had already made to their writing rather than doing it as we sat next to them.

4.4 Responsibility to Others: Commenting
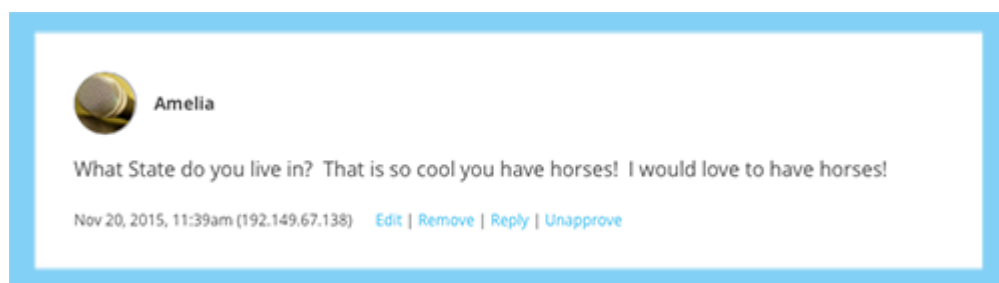
Because we knew that we wanted the students to have the same benefits we did from being a part of a digital community, we took the time to read their posts and pay attention to what they were trying to do, and what they needed to do next. This was what I had always done with student writing folders or notebooks in the past, so it made sense to continue the same process with student digital writing. We hadn't stopped to do it before because everything was moving so fast. We found that if we carried our iPads with us as we walked around the room, we could comment as the students wrote, and keep notes on what we were noticing. It was important to us to take the time to look over the children's writing, so that we could share ideas as we planned lessons and revised our own thinking as we taught.

One of the things we noticed was that as much as they loved writing digitally, the students were not taking the time to carefully read their peers' writing. Their comments were very simple and often asked questions that were answered in the writing. In the example below (from our swag blogger), you will notice that Erinn's first response to the post was, "Sooo cool". Megan and I agreed that this was not the kind of response we wanted to see. It was very short and didn't push the thinking of the writer.
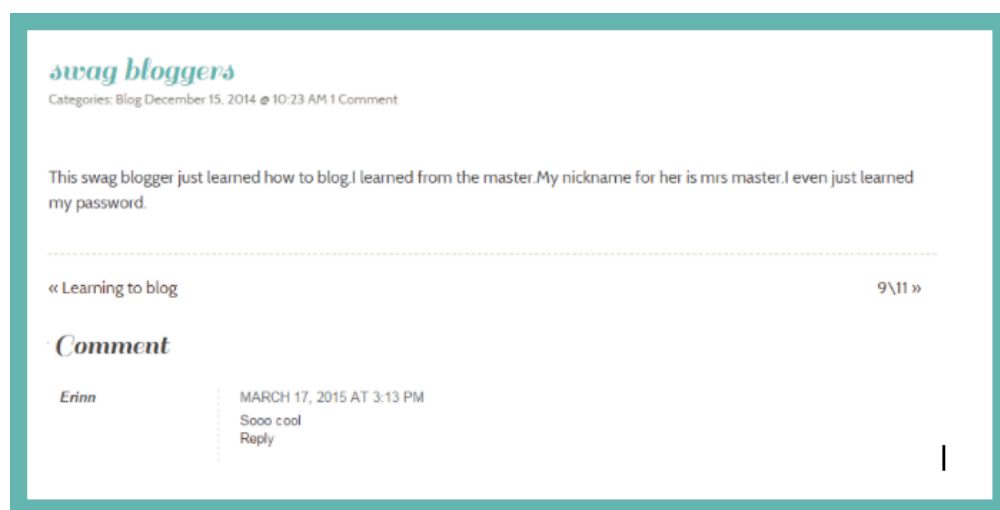
Megan and I wanted the comments to provide an opportunity for an open dialogue between the writer and the reader. We noticed the students' comments followed a pattern. They would say one thing and ask a question. Knowing that oral storytelling can help young writers organize their thinking, I talked to Megan about the benefits of having the students orally comment on some posts. It hoped it would help them get the idea of writing a more fully developed comment. We projected a blog post on the screen and we drafted a comment together, using chart paper.

As we reflected, we decided that comments should:

- be positive

- ask a question or make a connection to something the blogger says

- add to the content of the blog post

Looking at posts and comments, with conversation surrounding this reading, really helped the students to begin to shift in their thinking and in their writing. As you can see, in the student's second comment, following the mini-lesson, she is more thoughtful in her response. She commented on what she had read and then she asked for more information.
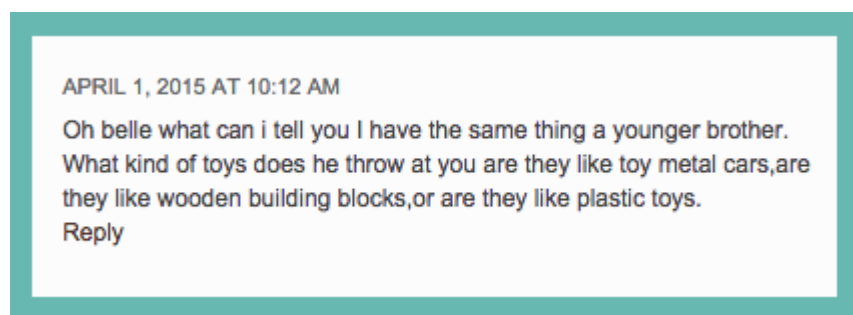
Even though the comments were improving overall, we noticed that some of the children were writing emoji responses, or incomplete sentences when commenting. I had to dig deep as a digital writer and commenter myself. I decided that the children needed to focus on commenting in a way that would help the other writers to grow either as a writer, or as a person. This was going to take practice and feedback. Megan and I committed to

making sure that we were providing timely feedback to the students as they stretched their own thinking about commenting.

4.5 Responsibilities as a Digital Reader

If we wanted comments to improve, Megan and I realized that we also needed to spend some time helping the students understand the intended message of the author. Students needed this knowledge in order to be thoughtful in their comments. We did this through shared reading and conversations about the texts and what the author was trying to say. One blog we spent some time reading was written by a car lover. As we read the post together, we posed the question, "Why do you think the writer wrote this post?" We got answers like,

"He's mad at car makers because they spend millions of dollars on commercials and don't help poor people."

"He wants people to know about Mr. Robertson. He had to walk 21 miles to get to work."

"Mr. Robertson is a role model for other people."

"He admires Mr. Robertson and he thinks that people should do more to help others."

We took this thinking to help us craft a response to Sky. Together, we crafted a comment that not only showed Sky that they understood his intended message but also allowed them to share their own thinking.

> *Dear Sky,*
> *We agree that Mr. Robertson is a hero! We are glad that he was able to get a new car. There should be more people who can help others like Mr. Robertson. Thank you for sharing this story.*

Megan and I reflected on what our students had learned. We wondered about what the children had needed to get going as responsible writers?

- They needed to learn independence with saving drafts so that they could? continue writing while waiting for a conference.

- Some, who were ready, had learned to independently consider certain things? so that they could independently publish their writing when they were ready.

- The children had the responsibility to read the writing of other bloggers? carefully and understand the intended message.

- When commenting, they had to intentionally craft responses so that they? were meaningful to the blogger.

- They also needed to understand and make the connections between writing? on paper and writing digitally.

One very important responsibility that we had yet to teach was the responsibility to each other. The children needed to be very thoughtful about both their posts and their comments.Children say things to each other on a daily basis, that when placed in print on the Internet for others to read, can sound terrible. The children had no intention of being unkind in any way. They just didn't think about how their words would sound before putting them in print, and then they didn't reread and think about what their reader might hear. Tone is a tricky thing. Megan and I didn't expect the children to be perfect in their tone, but we did expect them to be thoughtful.

The chart paper re-emerged and we read a post together, with the comments that followed. Megan and I took turns showing the children the various ways that the post and the comments could be read. Our goal was to raise awareness and make them more thoughtful. We talked about punctuation and how it can impact the way someone reads our writing. We also talked about how it is our responsibility to read the punctuation that the writer used so that we were more accurate in reading the tone.

4.6 Internet Safety

Think Before You Click via Flickr Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

One very important lesson Megan and I both insisted on teaching, was that of Internet safety. We controlled the privacy settings on the blog so that we could monitor posts and comments before they went live. We believed that the children were safe and secure from any danger. We were not positive though, so we talked about Internet safety. To get this conversation started, I read Little Red Hoodie by Adrianna Kruse. In Little Red Hoodie, Adrianna uses the wolf as an Internet predator. Little Red Hoodie is a tech savvy little girl who is unaware of the danger that she faces. She, along with her Granny, conquer the wolf in an entertaining way, while teaching the reader an important lesson about Internet safety.

The use of a familiar storyline with the children helps to engage them in a meaningful conversation around the characters. The important points we highlighted included:

- Keep personal information private including passwords and any kind of identifying information
- Get a parents' permission before connecting with others you might not? know
- Be respectful when posting online (If you don't want your grandma to ead it, don't post it)

- Remember that when sharing online, nothing is really private

- Let an adult know if a situation or comment makes you feel uncomfortable

When I began this journey, I didn't think about a lot of the things that came up while writing with the kids. I encourage you, even if you are the tiniest bit interested in considering digital literacy, to give it a try. It's wonderful to work with someone else, and while I realize that not everyone has another teacher to teach with, partners come in a variety of ways for teachers. Find other teachers out there who are writing digitally with their students via Twitter or teacher blogs.

4.7 Final Thoughts
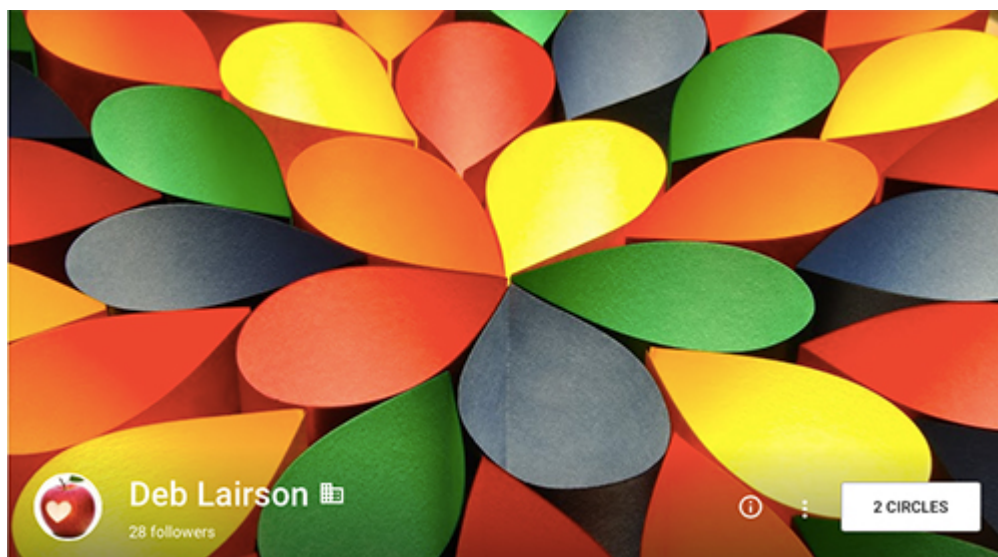
Start small. I am a writing teacher who believes that children need to be taught different genres with craft and convention mini lessons on each genre, but I also believe that children need to be exploring writing in a variety of ways, which includes both traditional paper/pencil and writing digitally. I have found success by introducing different tools by using them as a class initially and then encouraging the children to use them independently for their own purpose. Last year I started with blogging and everyone was blogging at the same time. My goal is to get to the place where my students are all making decisions as to which medium they want to use as writers.

Just as the children have responsibilities, we do too. We have a responsibility to make sure that all of our students have the access that they need to become digital readers and writers. We also have the responsibility to digital writers ourselves. On my own I am playing around with app after app, thinking about the implications for my classroom. I find opportunities where I can work with other teachers who are interested in digital literacy. One group I joined was called "Digital Maker Playground." In this group, we worked on a variety of digital writing pieces using different digital tools of our choosing. I was intimidated at first, since my experience was so small, but after playing for awhile, and seeing what the others in the group were doing, I became more relaxed and excited about my work. Through the sharing of our compositions and conversations about our writing process, I learned that I didn't need to have all the answers before starting. I just needed to start. Check out the Digital Maker Playground here and think about working with a group of colleagues to play around with the things that you are going to be asking your students to try.

"Twitter Hashtags to Follow" Presentation

Taking the responsibility of being a digital writer myself and being able to reflect with a colleague, helped me think through and understand the pieces of digital citizenship and teaching those responsibilities to our students. It is important that our students understand the responsibility that comes with putting their work out in a public space. They begin to learn at an early age to give back to their digital community. It's not enough to read what others are posting. Responding to others' writing fosters conversation and community. Those responses are most meaningful when students' comments reflect that they are reading carefully and ensuring that they understand the author's intended message. They are also responsible for the content they publish. Elementary aged children are at the perfect age to learn the boundaries of what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to publish (either traditionally or digitally). By teaching students how to be digitally responsible at an early age, we are giving them the foundation they need to make good decisions as digital readers and writers.

Resources

"Most Wonderful Use of a Car | A Kid's Blog on Luxury Cars | SkysCars.com." A Kids Blog on Luxury Cars SkysCarscom. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Mar. 2015.

Chapter 5: Making Purposeful Decisions as Digital Writers

Making Purposeful Decisions as Digital Writers

By Julie Johnson

5.1 Standing on the Shoulders of Mentors

Since using a workshop model in my teaching, not only has my own writing evolved, but so has how I read others' writing. Katie Ray has been one influential mentor in the work I do with young writers. She says, "In an inquiry stance, teachers help children explore these different alternatives for how to write something, and they let them do what writers really do, make decisions about how their pieces will go." Ray, 2006) A foundational part of my workshop is beginning a genre study by immersing students in the type of writing we will be doing. We examine texts through the lens of inquiry, meaning we ask questions like:

- What do we notice about this type of writing?

- What does the author do to engage us?

- How does that affect us as readers?

> *With digital writing, we need to think with words, of course, yet we also need to begin thinking like artists, web designers, recording engineers, photographers and filmmakers.* (Hicks, 2012)

We spend time reading these examples carefully in order to construct generalizations about the genre, identify craft decisions the author makes, and clarify the effect those decisions have on us as readers. It's not unusual to see various charts hanging in my classroom with all of this information compiled for students to refer back to in their writing.

After reading Troy Hicks' book, Crafting Digital Writing, my thinking as well as my practice evolved. He says, "The type of craft elements we insist our students create in their alphabetic texts can be complemented, – or better yet, extended – by the types of craft elements we can use given the availability of digital writing tools. With digital writing, we need to think with words, of course, yet we also need to begin thinking like artists, web designers, recording engineers, photographers and filmmakers. (Hicks, 2012) As I thought about this quote, my inquiry into writer's craft shifted from being focused on just print based text; I also began to look at web based text and multimedia pieces with a more discerning eye. I was looking at them as I looked at print based text. I began to notice things like white space in blogs, the choice and placement of images in web sites, the emotional response evoked from the audio of a video, or the technique of using hyperlinks strategically. As Troy indicates, the availability of digital tools can complement or even extend the craft moves authors can use when composing digital texts. This understanding, combined with my belief in the importance of using mentor texts to study craft, my practice evolved. I began to delve more and more into studying the craft elements of digital writing with my students using digital mentors. As a result, my students became more aware of:

- the purposeful decisions authors make when composing digitally

- the digital tools that can be used to make these craft moves

- creating a collection of mentors to go back to for support.

In addition, the more I delved into digital writing with my students, the more I realized that I had to give them the opportunity for choice that I had as a writer. While I always gave students choice in topics, I did not give them choice in how to create or publish their work. For example, if we were doing a genre study on personal narratives, each child wrote about a topic of his choice, but everyone in the class published the same way. Each child made a book at the schools' publishing shop or everyone made a poster to show their learning after researching a topic. Even as I began to incorporate more technology into my writing workshop, I still wasn't giving much choice in creation and publication. I was a teacher who did what I've heard called "event technology" where I wheeled the laptop carts down to the room and everyone did the same project based on something I planned for them to do.

It was then that I had an aha moment realizing that my focus had been more on learning the tool than thinking like digital writers. I realized that I had to change my instructional framework when students began asking if they could use one of the three desktop computers to write a blog, or if they could continue working on the story they'd

started at home. I saw students who previously hadn't been very excited about writing show an excitement that I hadn't thought possible. I needed to step back from making all the decisions for my students. I knew that it was important to provide them with time to explore and discover with some guidance.

My focus on tools then shifted; now the tools became a way to help students put it all together. I chose a few core tools that allowed students to do the work of digital writers. They learned the features and purpose of each, which enabled them to make decisions based on their purpose. As their repertoire of strategies and craft moves grew, so did their independence. They began to create pieces based on decisions they deemed appropriate for their audience and purpose. They weren't afraid to take risks and try new things that they observed in other digital pieces. As a result the quality of their writing evolved and became more sophisticated. By focussing on the craft of digital writing and not the tools, I was able to help my students think like web designers, filmmakers and sound engineers. Throughout this chapter, I will describe the journey my students and I had as we learned to make these purposeful decisions as digital writers.

5.2 Thinking Like a Web Designer

As students had more opportunities to write digitally, it became important that we add web-based texts to our mentor text studies. I knew from past experience using print based mentors that helping students identify and name the writing moves they notice gave them the ability to consciously try those same moves in their writing. I began to gather web-based texts to add to my mentor text collection. I looked for mentors based on my experience as a digital writer. For instance, I understood the importance of choosing the right images for my message. I made purposeful decisions about which words needed linked and where those links would lead my reader. I learned the necessity of writing in short paragraphs, leaving white space and using bold print and headings to guide and engage my readers.

I didn't need to go far to find mentors. We already had a core set of websites that students returned to again and again in our reading workshop. One of my favorites is Wonderopolis®. Wonderopolis® is a top quality website that encourages a sense of curiosity in children and adults alike. Developed by the National Center for Family Learning, it features a Wonder of the Day®. Their site follows the same structure of: question, video clip related to the topic, article that explores the topic, Wonder Words, a quiz to test out your knowledge and links to a variety of related topics. Readers also have the ability to listen to the article, which allows for even more choice.

I begin by using Wonderopolis® as a digital mentor because there are so many things we can look at:layout and design

- use of nonfiction text features
- organization of the text itself
- use of hypertext
- leads to grab readers' attention
- use of multimedia to share information.

I find an example that I know will be interesting to the students. For this example, we looked at "Is the Five-Second Rule Really True?" Of course, just bringing up the page brings peals of laughter and stories of eating gross things off the floor, setting off more laughter. After settling them down, I explain that I want them to just explore the web page and jot down what they notice either in their notebooks or in a Google doc. Some students prefer to to hand write their notes, while others would rather type them into a digital document. I also ask them to think about why the author might have done some of the things they noticed and how those actions affect them as a reader. I circulate around the room, listening in on snippets of conversation.

"Ooh, what if your food fell on the floor where there was a bunch of dog hair?"

"One time my brother ate a hot dog in the dirt. He just wiped it off and stuffed it in his mouth. It was so gross."

"Hey, Mrs. Johnson, if you put your mouse over the yellow words, you can find out the definition."

After about 15 minutes of exploration, I gather the students together and we create a chart of our findings. Gathering everyone together to share their thinking gives everyone a deeper understanding. It's not unusual to hear someone say, "I never thought of that."

https://osu.pb.unizin.org/digitalwriting/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/10/Wonderopolis-iBook.m4v

Analyzing Wonderopolis® video

We continue to go back to this website and study similar web-based mentor texts throughout the year as we focus on different e in the field. At the beginning of the year, we met via Skype with a digital designer to talk about how we can help our readers through it easily. She explained that people read web-based text differently than print text. Instead of starting at the top and re based text scan through the text quickly, reading short chunks of information quickly. Images and white space between the par The students immediately connect the designer's advice to what they observed in the websites that we had looked at carefully.

Michael Phelps

By Carson on Sep 30, 2012
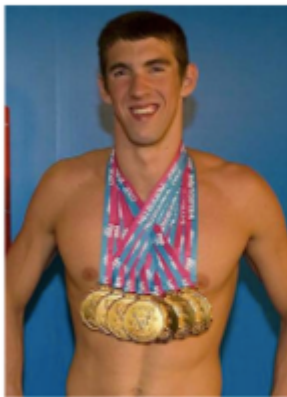
Michael Phelps is a swimmer. He has 22 medals 18 gold,2 silver and 2 bronze.
He was born June 30 1985 in Towson Maryland. He is 27 years old.
He lives just outside of Baltimore. Michael Phelps breaks record for most olympics
medals with gold in 4x200 meter freestyle relay. Just look at all those medals! I wonder if
those medals give him a neck ache?

Categories: Blog

Created: Sep 30, 2012 9:00pm

These are lessons that my students can incorporate into their writing right away. In this early in the year post from Carson, you of white space, creating small chunks of information. He's also chosen an image that signifies the importance of Phelps' acco hanging from his neck is astounding to Carson.

Shark's Body and Teeth

A lot of sharks are large and some are only five feet long. Sharks' scales are not smooth, sharks have pointed scales. The sharks ear is two holes on both sides of its head. For sharks swimming and breathing go together because if a sharks stops swimming, it stops breathing. Sharks breathe oxygen from water. They don't need as much **oxygen** as we do. Sharks have no bones in their body because their skeleton is made of **cartilage**. Sharks have thousands of teeth. Sharks have about 20 rows of teeth. Sharks have teeth that are for what they eat. Curved teeth for biting, pointed teeth for catching small fish, and flat teeth for crushing shellfish. Their teeth don't have roots so they break or fall out often. The new teeth move up from the row behind. Sharks go through thousands a **lifetime**. Sailors use shark teeth to shave!

How Sharks Swim and Hunt

Shark use their fins and their big tail to swim. When swimming sharks swim at 3 miles per hour. At times sharks can **burst** into fast speeds. Sharks swim day and night. When sharks hunt then at about 40 miles per hour. Sharks swim with their mouth open.

From Sharks by Nathan http://wonderinginroom114.weebly.com/nathan-sharks.html

In another example, Nathan also incorporates white space by inserting images between the two paragraphs to help his reader n from other websites he's studied and used color consistently throughout his web page.

Quality Websites to Use with Students

Site	Description	Ways to Support Student Decisions
DOGO News	Short articles on current events, science and sports. Includes graphics, interactive maps, photographs, video.	• Structure of informational text • Use of visual features • Hypertext • Images • Website Design
National Geographic for Kids	Covers a variety of topics around current events, people and wildlife. Includes polls, video, and games	• Use of bright vibrant colors • Website is navigated by clicking on blocks desig by bold pictures and minimal text • Variety of text features used • Use of white spaceStunning photography

News in Pictures

From the BBC, News in Pictures highlights a series of photographs of events happening around the world.

- Focus on photography telling a story
- Short, concise captions
- Ways to frame a photograph

5.3 Digging Deeper with Text

LADy LIBERTY

Introduction

Did you know that Lady Liberty weighs 450,000 pounds?   Lady Liberty is a big statue that brings peace and friendship to the world. She was designed by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi. She welcomes people who come to New York City. Have you ever wondered how Lady Liberty came to be? Well I'm going to tell you.

Facts About Fredric

Fredric was born on August 2, 1834. In 1864 the government had interest in a light house. He designed a colossal statue of a robed woman holding a torch. He would make progress on the name. but she would bring light to the world. He would not do the lighthouse. In 1870 he began to design the Statue Of Liberty.

Typeface

It took me a long time to figure out that I had to explicitly teach students some minimal information about typeface. Sure, they knew about bold letters for headings, but they still spent much of their time clicking on different fonts to see which ones looked the "coolest." A few simple lessons on how the typeface can impact the author's message help students get started with their own compositions.

It's important that the reader can read what's been written. Some script fonts are hard to read when there is a long body of text. Williams says, "Scripts are like cheesecake – they should be used sparingly so nobody gets sick." (pg. 181) Fonts with rounded edges give a friendlier message as opposed to those with geometric edges, which are solid and strong.

Hypertext

Students know that when they click on a live link, they will be taken to another place on the Internet, be it another

website, an image, or a definition. With close study of mentors, students begin to see the relationships between one of piece of information that is linked to another.

We begin by looking closely at several different websites. I ask students to specifically click on the links to see where they lead the reader. They keep track of their findings and then we gather to share. As students share, we can then begin to categorize how the linked texts are connected. Wonderopolis®, DogoNews, National Geographic for Kids and KidsHealth use hyperlinks in similar ways. In all four, the links can lead to:

- related articles within their site,

- other websites about similar topics,

- or to definitions of content vocabulary.

In the case of National Geographic for Kids, some links will also lead to their store where consumers can buy books or other items. KidsHealth also links to related videos as well as biographies of the authors.

After gathering this information, we have more questions:

- How does the author decide which words to link?

- How does the author know what information to add to those links?

- How does the author decide which words need definitions?

- Does the writer add links to an outside source or to material he's created and saved elsewhere on his website?

- How does the author ensure that the links add to the text and not detract from it?

I teach this lesson relatively early in the year through a shared writing experience with my students so that we can discuss the decisions writers make. Adding hyperlinks basically follows the same procedure regardless of the platform being used. Once students understand the why and how, they are able to transfer that knowledge to all of their digital writing.

Since we had just finished our read aloud, we decided to write a book review of Katherine Applegate's The One and Only Ivan for our class blog. We begin by thinking about our audience and purpose. We know that family members read our blog as do some other classrooms we've connected with outside of our school. We know that we want our audience to know more about The One and Only Ivan because we love it so much. We hope that they will want to read the book and have a conversation with us through the comments section.

We began by discussing what was important and what we wanted our audience to know about the book and author. We also referred to other blogs we'd read about books and came to a consensus. We would add hyperlinks to three things for the following reasons:

Hyperlink Decisions

ONE AND ONLY IVAN

1 BOOK TRAILER

They decided the link to the book trailer will help our readers get an introduction to the One and Only Ivan and make them want to read the book. Whenever I can share book trailers of books we're reading aloud or new books, I do for those exact same reasons. The students understand that linking to the book trailer will engage our readers as well as give them a different kind of glimpse into the book.

2 WEBSITE ABOUT THE REAL IVAN

Bicycles must follow the rules of the road like other vehicles.

Our text:

> *Our class is reading The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate. It's about a gorilla named Ivan who has to live at a mall. The story is told from Ivan's point of view. He spends his days watching TV, painting and being with his friends Stella and Bob. When Ruby, a baby elephant comes to live at the mall too, Ivan realizes that it's not right to make animals live the way they do. Julie, the caretaker's daughter understands how wrong it is for Ivan and the other animals to live in those conditions too. They form a special friendship. Read this story to find out what happens to Ivan and the other animals.*

We decide that there aren't any words we want to define, so we'll limit our hyperlinks to those three sites. Remember, we don't want to overload our readers with outside sites. We also decide that the addition of these sites will add to our reader's understanding of the One and Only Ivan and won't detract from our original intention of inspiring them to read the book. Next, we have to decide which words to add links to. As a group we decide to link the book trailer to the book title; Katherine Applegate's website to her name, the real Ivan's story to Ivan's name (noted in bold print above).

5.4 Digging Deeper into Design

The Principles of CRAP

I'm sure you can imagine the chuckles among my students when I begin to describe the four basic design principles that bring any piece together. In the design world, they are referred to as CRAP. The acronym stands for: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, and Proximity. In The Non-Designer's Design Book, Robin Williams explains each:

Contrast

This is what bring the reader's eye to the page. Simply put, if two things are not similar, then make them very different on the page.

Contrast Interactive Image

Repetition

Repeating visual elements on the page unifies and strengthens the piece by bringing everything together.

Alignment

Alignment brings order to the page. By giving careful thought to alignment, the designer creates visual connections between the elements on the page.

Repetition and Alignment Interactive Image

Proximity

Proximity is important when thinking about organizing information. Items that are related should be grouped together.

It is here that we begin to look closely at web based texts and look for patterns that we might identify. When I show the kids the home page of Wonderopolis®, they notice the following things:

Proximity Interactive Image

The similar parts are grouped together. For example, each page heading is grouped at the top of the website. All of the important vocabulary is grouped together. The 3 main questions that go with the wonder are listed together. The white space helps the reader know what goes together.

It isn't long before the students try some of these elements in their own digital work.

What tools do they use?

In Wildfires the most common and most used tool is called a puluski. They look like a indians tomahawk (throwing ax) only they don't throw them into the fire. It is a combo of an ax and hoe. What they do with them is they dig one giant fireline around the forest fire and then put special stuff in the fireline so if the fire comes too close to the fireline it stops the Wildfire. And you all know this tool, it's called a fire hose. Also there is a group called a Hotshot group and they use puluskis to dig fire lines around the fire. The most important group is the Smokejumpers, they parachute out of a helicopter on the side of the Wildfire to fight the fire!

What is a Fire Tornado?

A Fire Tornado is a tornado completely made of fire. They make Wildfires 30 times harder to stop. They start when there's a tornado and it runs into a Wildfire and picks up the flames and then a Fire Tornado is born!

From William's Wildfires http://wonderinginroom114.weebly.com/williams-wildfires.html

In this excerpt from Will's webpage about wildfires, he uses the four design principles effectively.

- **Contrast:** Will uses a different font for his headings, as well as larger size and bolds the letters. He separates the text from the headings with a double space to set the text apart.

- **Repetition:** His sections are all set up the same way. A left aligned image and heading introduce each section with a short paragraph of information that follows.

- **Alignment:** The images he chose are left aligned to the page. His headings are centered.

- **Proximity:** Each section is positioned closely, with double spaces between each section. The white space allows the reader's eye to follow the text easily. His webpage is clean and not cluttered with arbitrarily placed items.

Choosing Color and Images to Enhance Meaning

I am lucky that our art teacher teaches students about color theory at a young age. My students know the primary colors are red, yellow, and blue. If you mix equal amounts of each color with the one next to it, you'll get the secondary colors, green, purple, and orange. They learn about the other colors on the color wheel and understand warm and cool colors. Colors on the opposite side of the color wheel are called complementary colors and are used to show contrast. Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel and can create a harmonious tone to a piece of work. Adding black to a color creates different shades and adding white creates different tints. A monochromatic combination is composed of using one color with any corresponding tint or shade. With this basic knowledge, elementary students can begin to make purposeful decisions when incorporating color into their digital compositions.

One of the first things we do at the beginning of the school year is introduce ourselves by sharing a variety of images and items. Many students choose to create a digital poster, using the tool Glogster. This project is important because we begin to lay the foundation for making purposeful decisions about the visual aspects of a composition.

In her digital poster, Alex chose a pink background because it's her favorite color. The frames she chose to surround her photographs complemented the pink in different ways. The green and bright floral frames create a nice contrast to the background and make her images pop out. The purple and hot pink frames contain varying amounts of pink and work well with her background. She chose images that tell us more about her.
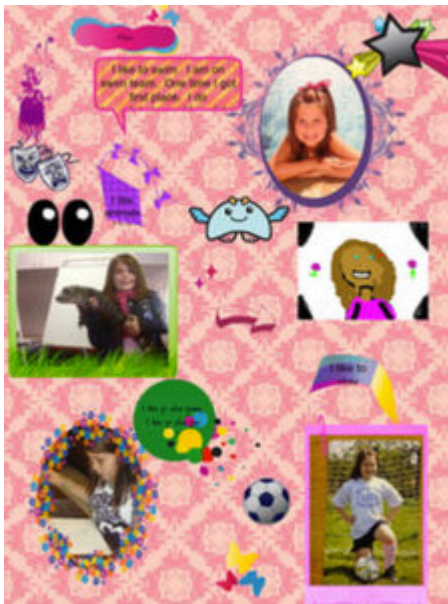
Thinking Like Filmmakers and Sound Engineers

Mentors are not just text based. We also look at videos and web-based texts that have embedded multimedia

compositions. Our young readers and writers spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes using entertainment media in a typical day. Because much of that time is spent using more than one medium at a time, they actually fill up to 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content into those 7 hours and 38 minutes. (Kaiser Family Foundation, Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18 year olds). Our students are experts when it comes to knowing what they like and don't like in multi-media compositions. They have their favorites and it's important that we help them unpack what makes a video or other media project work for them.

When looking at videos we can begin to ask kids,

"What makes this video engaging ?

What keeps your attention?

What distracts you?"

For example when watching Penguins vs. Pelicans, a short video by National Geographic, the following conversation ensued when I showed this video to a class of young digital composers:

J: I noticed that the music has a fast beat at the beginning and it felt like the action was going really fast.

M: Yeah, I noticed that too. While the music was going really fast, the penguins were swimming really fast too. The action went with the music.

K: The music at first sounded really snappy and happy. They used some kind of drum.

L: The narrator sounded happy too as he was talking about the penguins eating the anchovies.

J: The music changed when he started talking about the pelicans. It wasn't as happy. It was like the pelicans were being the boss.

Me: Why do you think the creator decided to change the music here?

J: Because now the pelicans are taking some of the anchovies from the penguins. That probably bothers the penguins to have pelicans diving down and grabbing food out of their mouths.

Noticing that they paid particular attention to the sound details, I asked the students to watch the video again and think about the words the narrator was using as well as the images and transitions and how everything worked together.

D: The narrator uses a lot of fun words.

Me: Let's name some examples.

D: rocket through a swarm of your favorite food

L: making pickin's easier

M: every party needs a pooper

J: Sometimes he says words that begin with the same sound like /sh/.

Me: That's right. I noticed him say, "shoal of shallow water" and "gleeful gluttons"

Me: What about the transitions where the scenes change from one to the other? What did you notice?

A: When he starts to talk about the pelicans, there is a big splash and then the music changes.

Me: Why do you think the author decided to do that?

A: He's telling us something is going to change. And it does. Now the we are finding out how the pelicans take the food away from the penguins.

M: I also noticed that the scenes go from one to the other really fast.

D: Yeah, it goes with the music and the action. Everything is happening really fast.

Our conversation continued and I was glad that the students were making connections between the action,

narration and visual images of the short film. Having these kinds of conversations about digital compositions helps students in their own composing. They begin to accumulate their own ideas for what will work and what won't work, which allows them to make purposeful decisions about their compositions.

The following is an example of a movie made by two third grade girls as part of a QR code project we did in collaboration with another building in our town.

https://osu.pb.unizin.org/digitalwriting/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/04/ Franklin-County-Fairgrounds-272p.m4v

"Fairgrounds" video by Mauriana and Rachel

After researching a part of our town's history, the students created a storyboard that outlined their movie. They then made decisions about photos, background music, and transitions. Mauriana and Rachel chose music they felt reflected the happy atmosphere you'd find at the fairgrounds. They paid careful attention to make sure the images matched up with the story being narrated. Finally, they used the Ken Burns effect, a panning and zooming technique to keep the viewer engaged.

Decisions About Sound

Sound adds an emotional element to any multi-media composition. We've all had the experience of our hearts racing as the villain approaches the unsuspecting victim and the thrumming music gets louder and louder. Or the opposite, we know that nothing bad is going to happen if we hear light-hearted lilting music in the background. It's fun to have the kids close their eyes and listen to music and identify how the music makes them feel. Background music isn't the only way that sound is incorporated into digital compositions. Amy Ludwig Vanderwater's blog, The Poem Farm provides a mentor for students to see how incorporating a recording of her poetry helps the listener/reader hear the author's intended meaning of the poem. Amy shared that recording her poetry actually becomes another revision tool as she listens and realizes that something might not sound right.

Rainstory – a poem by Amy Ludwig Vanderwater

The following is an example of a short video a first grader made after spring break where she made purposeful decisions about her background music.

https://osu.pb.unizin.org/digitalwriting/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/04/Kameryn.m4v

"Vacation," movie created in Pixie by Kamryn

Kamryn added music to her story about going on vacation. You can tell by looking at her colorful pictures and listening to her music that she had a good time at the ocean! She later told me that she picked that music because it sounded happy and she had a lot of fun when she was on vacation.

5.5 Thinking Like a Digital Composer: Putting It All Together

We quickly learn that different tools provide us with different options and that one tool can be used for a variety of purposes. As a writer, I may be wanting to share some research I did on rocks in Ohio. I could decide to make a graph in Google Sheets and create a diagram in Google Draw to support my work. I may want to import images from the Internet and add them to the text I've written. If I want to share that information with the students in my class and also want my grandma to read about it, then I may choose to write a blog post about it. If I am in the middle of collecting my information and not ready to share it yet, then I may decide to create a separate folder to organize my thinking while I work. I may decide that I want to add an audio reflection of the work I did, so I may decide to add a soundcloud or publish my work in VoiceThread. Or, maybe I need to get some specialized information, I may ask my teacher to tweet my questions out to an expert who will be able to answer my question. And then there's always the option that paper and pencil might be the best tool for the work I want to do. So many options are available to our young writers. As they become more aware of the tools and the possibilities that go with them, they are able to make purposeful decisions that impact their work.
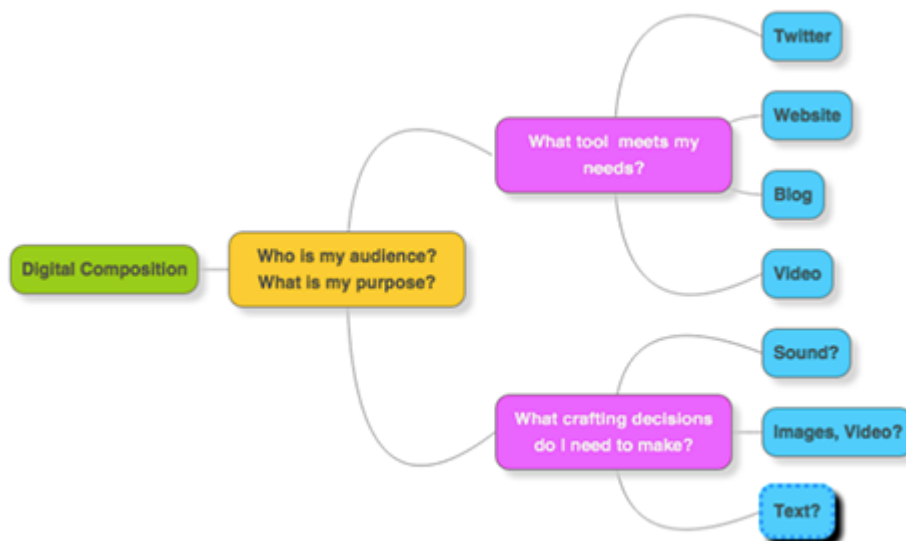
There are so many choices when it comes to composing digitally. Not only do writers have to decide how to

compose their message, but also where to publish it. When making these decisions, there are some key questions students must ask themselves:

- What is my message?
- Who is my audience?
- Do I want my message to go public?
- Do I want to begin a conversation with others about my writing?
- Is my message something short and quick, or do I need a platform that allows for something longer?
- Is my writing going to be more text based or image based?
- Am I creating something collaboratively?
- What is the purpose of this composition?

I will often share my own digital compositions with my students as mentor texts to illustrate the thinking process behind my creation. I want to show students how I take everything I've learned and use it to create something new. Below is an example of an image I created to introduce myself to an online professional development community with an explanation behind my choices.

I wanted to provide a glimpse into who I am by contrasting how others see me with how I see myself. Because there is little text involved, I had to think about how to get my message across in images.

For the background, I used Kaleidoscope to take a photo of my surroundings as I was working. Kaleidoscope is a tool that will transform images, much like a real kaleidoscope will. Sitting at the patio table, I had my iced tea (always nearby), the grill was going, the flowers were in the background, and I had 3 devices plugged in. I used Kaleidoscope to show the explosion of everything going on at the same time, which is typical of me. I then added images and text of all the things swirling around in my head. I chose to overlap the images to illustrate how muddled and hectic things can get when I get involved in too many things.

Next, I needed an image to show the "outside" Julie and chose the one of me drinking tea when out to breakfast with my husband. It was one of those lovely, slow moving mornings when I did feel nice and calm on the outside and inside. The thought bubble shows what's typically going on inside my head and I hoped the contrast between the two images would be evident. Lastly, I added the text "Julie on the outside" and "Julie on the inside." I chose to share this image on my blog because I wanted others in my professional learning network to read and respond to it.

Sharing mentor texts, both professionally published as well as those made by teachers and students provide the foundation for conversations about how students can incorporate all of these ideas into their own compositions. Discussing why an author might choose to publish his work as a blog or a YouTube video is another important part of the conversation. It all comes down to purpose.

From Michael and Luke's Awesome Website http://michaelandlukesawesomebatmanwebs.weebly.com/home.html
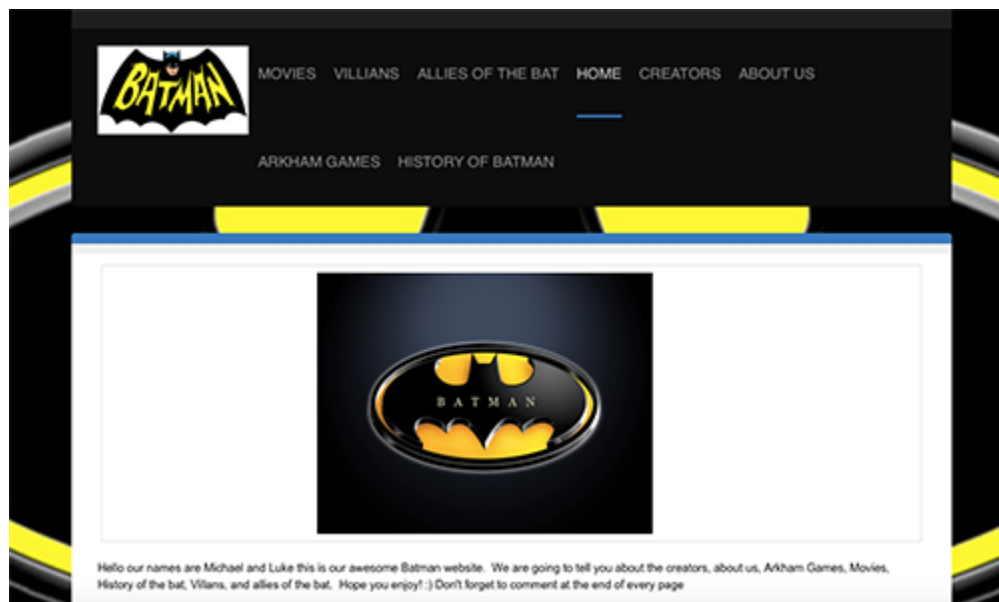
Two boys from one of my fourth grade classes were very cognizant of the moves they were making as digital writers. Michael and Luke were huge Batman fans. They read everything they could get their hands on about

Batman, both print and digital. They talked Batman. They gathered other boys and together they wrote Batman plays. They even began to collaborate on some research about Batman. It wasn't unusual to see the two of them sitting together during reading and writing workshop talking over something they'd read or scribbling notes in their writer's notebooks. It got to the point that writing Batman blog posts wasn't enough any more. Michael and Luke wanted a permanent place where they could not only gather all of their Batman knowledge, but also a place where they could share it publicly.

Since we had done a lot of work with Wonderopolis®, they decided that a website was a good place to start. It provided a place for them to dedicate pages to certain topics, they could embed video and images, and could add hyperlinks to their body of text. In addition, a website had the capability of allowing comments from readers. They knew from reading and commenting on Wonderopolis®, that the comments section was a place to begin conversations with others who were interested in Batman. They decided to name their website, "Michael and Luke's Awesome Website."

They introduce themselves and tell the purpose of their website on the homepage. Based on our work with web-based mentor texts like Wonderopolis®, the boys knew that categorizing their information into different pages made it easier for their readers to navigate the website. As they gathered information, they began to notice some patterns which then resulted in the following pages: Movies, Villains, Allies of the Bat, Creators and About Us.

If you look closely at this page, you can see the following decisions the boys made:

Purposeful Decision Making Interactive Image

A website allowed their learning to go public. I added a link to my classroom webpage, so their audience reached beyond our classroom walls. I sent out a Tweet to let our followers know that the boys had published their work. A website was also the perfect vehicle for collaboration. Both of them could work on the site at the same time, even if they were in different places. It wasn't unusual for them to come into the school talking about the work they'd each done at home the night before. During the school day, one might be in the library working while the other was in our classroom.

Which Tool?

In order to build a basic understanding of a tool's features and purpose, we began to chart what we learned as we used each new tool. Students could go back to this chart any time they were deciding how best to publish their work.

Tool	Purpose	Shared Publicly?	Features
Interactive Screencasting Whiteboard (Explain Everything, Educreations)	A tool used to create multimedia projects that include writing, drawing, images, video, and sound	Can be shared via email, link, embed in website or blog	• Can combine multiple pages into one screencast.
Digital Bulletin Board (Padlet, Corkulous)	An online bulletin board	Can be shared via email, link, embed, export as an image	• Curate information • Collaborative • Ability to create custom URL
Video Creation (Animoto, WeVideo, iMovie,)	Create live action and animated projects	Can be shared via link, email, embed	• Upload to YouTube or Vimeo • Can add voice, music, sound effects
Twitter	Share learning, ask questions, connect with others in 140 characters or less with audience outside classroom	Yes	• Develop relationships with others by following them • 3 filter topics • Quickly share information with audience through tags and retweeting
Blogging	Share learning, ideas, reflections on topics of interest with audience outside of classroom	Can be shared via email, link, Twitter, Google+	• Can embed video, sound, images, and links to outside sites • Commenting feature builds relationships • Space to hold different genres of writing
Google Apps for Education	A variety of tools that allows for creation through writing, drawing, uploading images and video, compiling data	Can be shared via email, link, Twitter, Google+	• Can be embedded into websites and blogs • Collaborative capabilities
Website	Share information, learning and ideas on topics of interest with audience outside of classroom	Can be shared via email, link, Twitter, Google+	• Can embed video, sound, images, and links to outside sites • Commenting feature builds relationships • Create different sub pages to go with main topic • Collaborative

5.6 Reflection
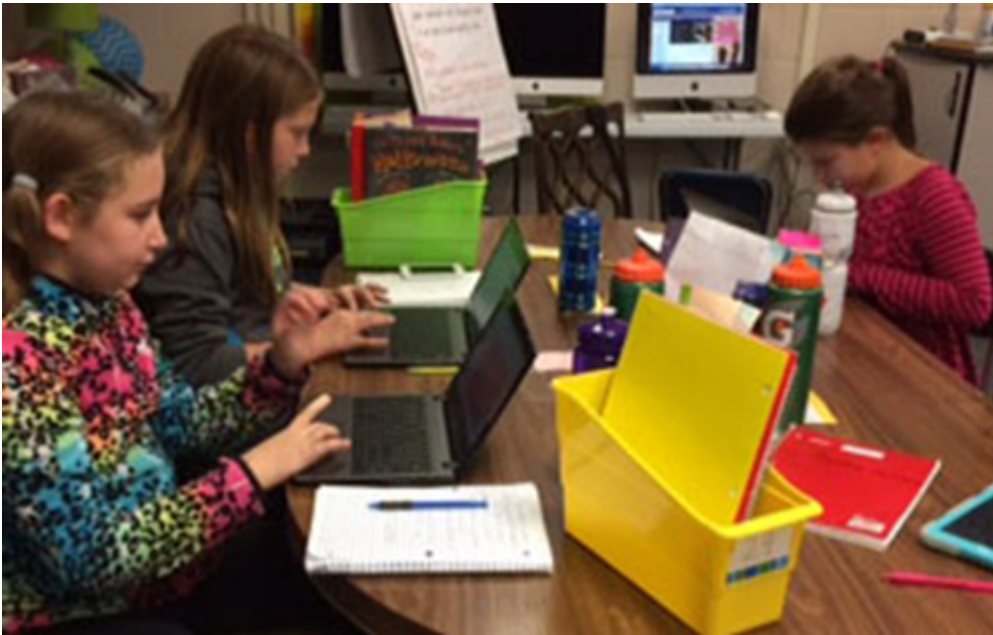
This work is messy. It's not easy. There are ups and downs. But it's all worth it. Giving students the tools they need to make strategic, purposeful decisions is so important. Using mentor texts to help ground students' understanding of craft moves is fundamental to my digital writing workshop. Mentor texts invite observation and conversation which help students articulate the digital composition moves they see authors make. The more we study mentor texts, the more patterns we can see emerge. Just as I see students taking on different craft moves that they notice in print based texts, I also see them begin to try some of those same moves in their digital compositions. They slowly build a collection of tools and skills that they can transfer to any digital composition.

As I move forward, I realize that I need to continue to find mentors for my students' work, especially those that focus on using sound. I'd like to create a central hub so that students can easily access those mentors. As new tools emerge, it's important that I continue to find opportunities for digital composition. Participating in professional learning opportunities like the National Writing Projects Connected Learning MOOC, help me improve my technology skills, introduce me to a community of others who understand the importance of teachers of digital writers needing to be digital composers themselves, and grow as a learner and teacher.

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"Rainstory." Copyright © 2015 by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater. Used by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.

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Chapter 6: Supporting Diverse Learners

Supporting Diverse Learners

By Tonya Buelow

6.1 Getting to Know My Students
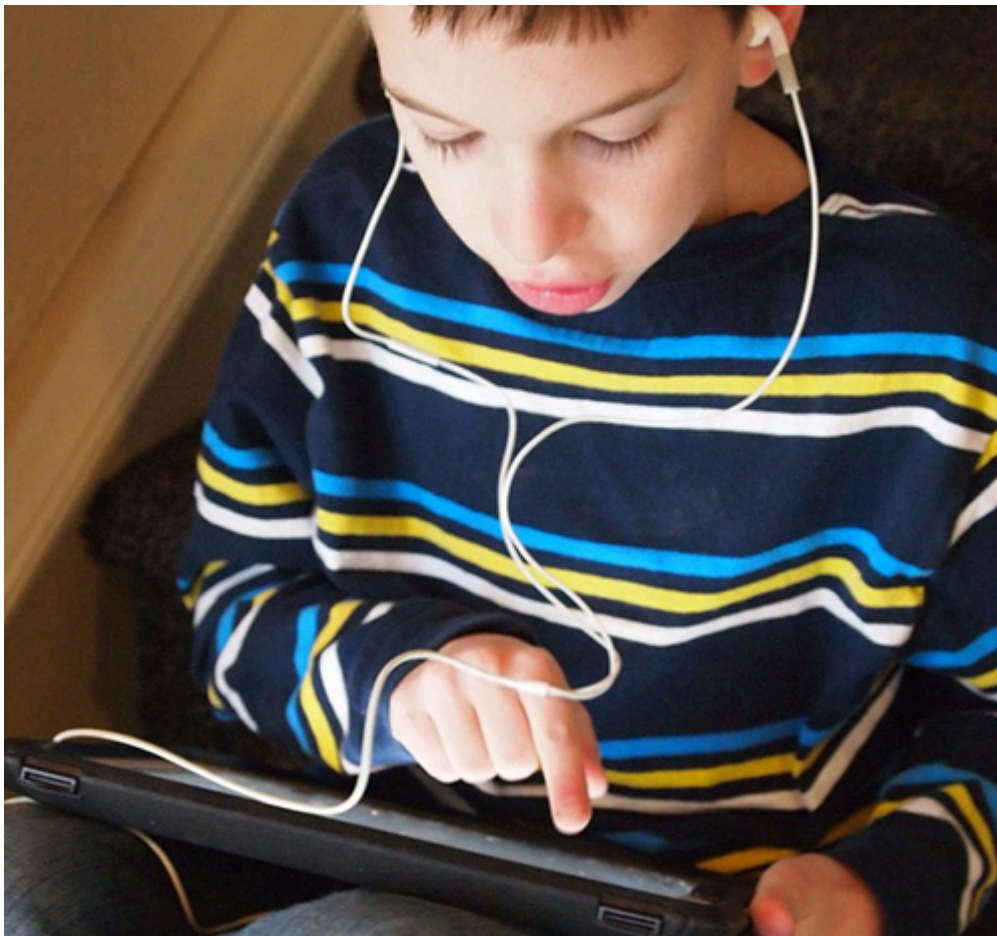
"School boy with an iPad by Brad Flickinger via Wikimedia. Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY 2.0

I love the first day of school and getting to know my students as readers and writers. It is the beginning of a new journey where we learn about each other's' likes and dislikes. We also learn each other's' passions and all the different expertise that will be revealed in our room. Last year I wanted to seamlessly weave digital literacy into my workshops but I wasn't quite sure where or how to begin. I always sit down before the first day to look over data to help me determine my students needs as learners. I pulled out the students' Spring running records to see what they had control over as readers. A running record helps me understand how students decode unknown

words and some strategies they use to comprehend the story. I wrote down some possible teaching points but I needed to know more. I started to wonder what kind of reading and writing habits the students had under control. Can they write ideas down quickly or fluently on paper? Which authors or genres do they love? Do they enjoy reading and make time to read outside of school? Do they share books or recommend books to other readers? Do the students like to write? What types of genres do they understand as writers?

I reread over my teaching points and questions and realized that I was still thinking about the literacy framework the same way I always did. I thought of possible mini-lessons, teaching points in conferences, and possible guided reading groups. I knew that implementing a reading and writing workshop was best practice for teaching literacy and I needed to stay true to the workshop model. However, I needed to push myself to think about how to integrate digital tools within the workshops to support the various type of learners I had and to prepare students for future jobs not even imagined yet. I needed to focus on how the digital tools would enhance the learning in our workshops. I needed to focus on my purpose for integrating the digital tools in a mini-lesson or how digital tools would help students communicate, collaborate, and reflect on their learning. I needed to think about how technology would be a tool to help students by providing them with more voice and choice.

I learned that ten of my third grade students were English Language Learners and I was excited about that because of what they could bring to our classroom. The students who were learning English as a second language also had diverse backgrounds which we could build upon to grow an appreciation for different cultures as a learning community. Some of the students were fluent in their native language and in English. Others were more fluent in English than their native language spoken at home. A few of the students were more fluent in their native language than in English. I was looking forward to getting to know all my students who are unique in their own ways. I loved the idea of having so many different perspectives based on different experiences to enrich our conversations which would deepen our understandings throughout the year.

I thought about these students who were speakers of English as an additional language as readers and writers in my workshops. I focused on their strengths in reading and writing English and how to build on those strengths. I knew that using technology as a tool could propel their learning just like my non English Language Learners. It was time to begin thinking about the possibilities digital workshops would offer for all my students to be successful learners.

6.2 Which Path to Travel?
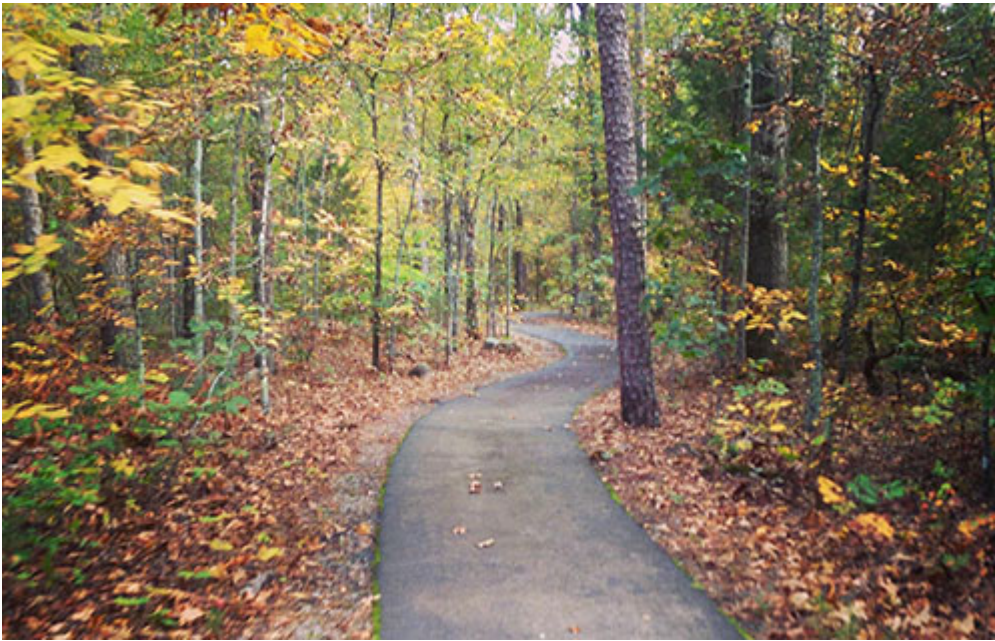
Path to Knowledge by Hallie Hale via Pics4Learning Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY 2.0

The first time we gathered for writing workshop I explained what a writing workshop would look, feel and sound like. I wanted the students to understand that the structure of the workshop would be consistent. The workshop structure is the following: mini-lesson, independent write time, mid-workshop interruption, and share time. During independent writing time the students write and I conference with individuals or small groups. If something jumps out at me during a conference we stop for our mid-workshop interruption. I share some great things writers are doing and encourage others to try the strategy or craft and then everyone goes back to writing. Writing workshop ends with 3-5 students sharing their work and other students give the writer feedback. We discussed how the noise level would need to be fairly quiet so that everyone could think and focus on their writing pieces. I also discussed a few simple non-negotiables with the students: writing every day and student choice in topics.

I love to share past student writing samples so that they will understand writing workshop is a time to create different writing pieces using different genres. Some of the writing they can make can be a picture book, a poem, a letter, an article, a nonfiction book, a book review, etc. It helps the boys and girls to see different genres they

can explore as writers. For the first few days of writing workshop students are paired with a partner so that they can discuss things they did over the summer, they can share happy or sad memories, they discuss their pets, they can tell stories about their family, or anything else they would like to share. I did think about my English Language Learners when pairing the students. Students who spent the summer back in their country could share their experiences together. I paired students who spoke either Spanish or Arabic together so they could share their ideas in English or in their native language. Everyone chose to discuss ideas in English. I walked around the classroom and listened while students shared. I discussed how the things they talked about can be turned into writing pieces. Once students had some possible ideas I sent them off to write so that I could make some observations and take notes about them as learners.

It was the end of our first week working together as writers and I felt overwhelmed as I reflected on how the week went. I was overwhelmed because I had to be really purposeful about my first steps or moves to get this group of learners started on the right path for our journey. I knew there were different paths that can be taken on a journey but usually there is a path that gets you there in a more efficient manner. I noticed that most students could only write for a few minutes at a time, so they needed to build more stamina. I also noticed choosing a topic to write about seemed to be challenging for them. As their writing teacher, I needed to think about how to get them to see themselves as writers and understand how writers work.

Writing partners confer with each other.

I pulled a few books off my shelf as tools to help my writers understand how ideas can be turned into something. I decided to use the book titled What Do You Do With An Idea? by Kobi Yamada. This book tells how one boy took a pressing idea and over time turned it into something amazing which helped change the world. I wanted my students to percolate their ideas and think about the possibilities those ideas could be and the impact their ideas would have on others. We discussed how writers get ideas from everywhere and they take those ideas and turn them into writing pieces. The students turned and talked about possible ideas and then we did a quick share out before I sent them off to write. At the end of writing workshop we always have a 10-12 minute share of our writing work. As students were sharing I wondered if they just came up with an idea because I asked them to,

or did they choose an idea they really wanted to turn into a written piece to share with others? Then I began to ponder how I would help them take more ownership of their writing work.

It seemed the next logical step was to share how I collect ideas. I started showing them my writer's notebook and some of my planning pages using the document camera or Elmo. Then I shared a finished piece of my writing to see how one of those ideas turned into a rough draft. This was a great start but I also needed to find a way to bring published authors into our classroom so that they could get a better understanding of how different writers work. This gave me an idea to search Youtube for videos to use in my writing mini-lessons. I needed to find short clips and familiar authors to share with my students. The videos would be more engaging visually because of the headlines, the quick pace, and the background music. Videos also made it more accessible for every student to understand the message without having to think about reading levels. Hopefully, the students would notice every writing move has a purpose. I also wanted to use videos in my mini-lessons so that students would know how to gain information from a video and understand that videos are another way to share information with an audience.

I decided to start with the author Mo Willems because so many students know who he is as an author and have read lots of his books. My English Language Learners could easily read several of his books because there were speech bubbles identifying who was talking and Mo Willems' illustrations helped students understand how a character was feeling in the story. Most of Mo Willems' books only had two characters in the story and you could find those characters on every page. Each book had a problem which was solved by the end of the story. There were also lots of Youtube videos where my English Language Learners could listen to his stories if the book was too challenging to read independently. All the students enjoyed the humor in his books. Mo Willems was an author accessible to all my students as readers and writers.

I found a video (Mo Willems on Writing Books Interview) where Mo is discussing how he thinks about the character for a while and thinks about how that particular character would handle certain situations. I wanted students to understand that when writers get inspired it could be because of a special memory, a character, a topic, an environmental issue, etc. I told the students we were going to watch a Youtube video where Mo Willems talks a little bit about how he writes books. All the students were excited and eager to see how Mo Willems works as a writer. We watched the video and the students shared out what they had learned from Mo Willems. Here is what we learned from Mo Willlems' video: writers sketch and think about lots of characters, writers think a long time about what a character is like, writers share their writing with others to get feedback, and writers read to get ideas from other writers. At the end of the video Mo Willems shares why it is important to read and he invites viewers to read some of his books and start drawing some of his characters. He says that you might even create a book that he would want to read.

Mo Willems On Writing Books Interview

Kaylinn took Mo's writing advice and started to think about how to develop a story based on a character in her writing notebook. She used the Pigeon from Mo Willem's stories because she had a solid understanding of what this character was like. Kaylinn played around with possible story ideas in her writer's notebook. In her Pigeon Wants to Play Softball Kaylinn included Piggie and Elephant who are other characters created by Mo Willems. During share time Kaylinn shared her ideas from her writer's notebook. Hopefully, she would spark other writers to think about a character and how to develop a story based on what the character was like. Students could develop their own character or use a character they were familiar with from a book. I pointed out that Kaylinn's reading life was also impacting her writing life. If she wouldn't have read so many Pigeon books than she would not have been able to envision her own Pigeon story versions. I knew that showing a video helped us envision new possibilities in the work we were already doing in writing workshop. We would need to continue to share the different ways students gathered ideas as a writing community during our mini-lessons, mid-workshop interruptions and share time.
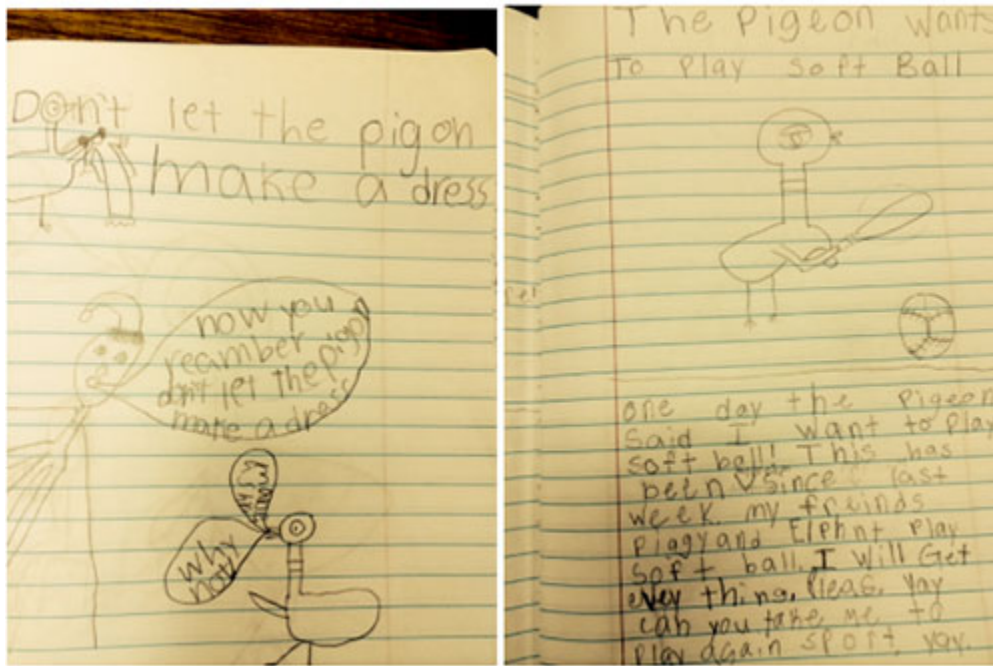
Kaylinn's writing is influenced by Mo Willems.

As I mentioned earlier, students were also having trouble getting their ideas down quickly on paper in writing workshop. My students who spoke English as as second language needed time to share their stories orally before putting their thoughts in writing. English Language Learners need daily opportunities to learn and practice English so they can develop their literacy skills. However, some of my non English Language Learners could also benefit by sharing ideas orally before writing down their thoughts. I decided to show the Youtube video of Robert Munsch sharing his writing process (Meet Robert Munsch). Robert Munsch started his writing career by telling his stories to children at a daycare. The children were his audience and the feedback the children gave him helped him revise his stories before he put them in writing. Students needed to understand that writing is a process. As writers write they get feedback and revise along the way and don't wait until they finish a writing piece. After the video we talked about how sharing ideas orally with another writer could help develop ideas into writing pieces. As writers share their ideas they make changes either orally or they can make revisions on paper. The children decided if they wanted to spend the first five minutes talking with another writer or if they wanted to get to work. Students who were in the middle of a writing piece wanted to work and students who were ready to begin a new piece wanted to share ideas with a partner.

Meet Robert Munsch

At share time students who orally talked about their ideas said it helped them as writers either to develop an idea or figure out what to write about.

As the year went on we discussed different reasons why writers need to orally discuss or get feedback on their writing pieces. It became a regular part of our routine for students to choose if they wanted to start their writing time by talking or writing. Some writers wanted to write first and then share their work with another writer. Some writers wanted to create a writing piece together. Three of my English Language Learners wanted to work together on a poem towards the end of the year. All three of these students needed to discuss their work orally and then write. The students loved soccer so they chose to write their poem about this topic. I was amazed at how they discussed and thought about whitespace, line breaks, and repetition. Each English Language Learner published the poem on their blogs. Here is Abdallah's published poem:

soccer

By Abdallah on May 27, 2015

soccer soccer in the field

playing

   kicking

     runing

  catching

blocking

    bumping

in the grass and runing after the ball

Sharing, talking and reflecting became a way all of us started to work as writers in the room.

6.3 Author Connections: A New Path of Possibilities

Nancy Krulik
She is the author of *George Brown Class Clown, Katie Kazoo and Magic Bone.* We loved that she shared her new Magic Bone book with us before it hit the bookstore. The students could give her feedback about her writing. Nancy also shared with the students how she revised and made changes with her Katie Kazoo series.

Nancy Krulik's webiste: http://www.katiekazoo.com/nancy.html.

Tonya Buelow
@TBuelow

@NancyKrulik was so engaging and helped Ss see they r working like writers. She talked about her writing life. pic.twitter.com/dufh2tWndx

2:57 PM - 16 Oct 2014

After a few weeks or so our writing workshop was beginning to have more flow and stamina. Some students would walk in first thing in the morning and share what they would be writing about later in writing workshop. I started to notice that more students were getting their ideas down on paper more fluently because they were writing more complete thoughts or sentences during independent writing time. They were thinking about writing even when it wasn't writing time and they were making plans as writers. I started to wonder how I could possibly keep this momentum going throughout the year as we grew as writers and learned about new genres? What if I could make published authors even more accessible to the students by giving them an opportunity to interact and connect with them? What tool would allow me to do this and I instantly thought about Skype. One problem…

I did not have any money to pay for Skypes and I knew that some authors charged a $100 dollars or more. I remembered my principal had shared a website called Skype in the Classroom (https://education.skype.com/).

I already had a Skype account so I logged into this website and started to explore the possibilities. To narrow the search you needed to choose a subject, so I clicked on reading and writing. Then I picked the appropriate age range. I started to browse the options and I found an author from London who was willing to Skype with elementary students. I pushed the button to register for this lesson (sometimes you might have to send an email to the publisher or author when you register). A few days later the author, Jonathan Emmett, responded via email by sending dates and times. I choose a date and time and then we emailed back and forth right before the Skype visit. I was totally amazed at how easy it was to make this connection happen. All I needed now was to have Skype installed onto the computer that projected through my Epson machine. Once the resource technology teacher completed the installation we were ready to go.

A few weeks before the Skype session I checked out books from the public library by Jonathan Emmett. As a class we read a couple of books together for pure enjoyment. We visited his website to learn a little bit more about the author. Students chose to read books by Jonathan during independent reading time and shared out their thinking about the book during share time. This extra time reading and enjoying the books sparked a sense of excitement to connect with a published author.

The day before our Skype visit I talked to the students about how we were going to get the opportunity to connect to a published author. I told the students that he would be able to talk with us and we would be able to talk to him. We discussed how we would have some time to ask Jonathan questions and we talked about what kind of questions would help us grow as writers. As a class we brainstormed some questions orally and then I asked students who were interested in asking a question to raise their hand. I gave each of them a card and they wrote down a question they would like to ask. I collected the cards so I could read through them and decide who would ask a question. I decided to do it this way because students sometimes forget the question they want to ask and questions will be repeated or asked twice. If a student had a question that he/she thought of during the Skype session I would let them ask it.

Jonathan began the session by introducing himself and asked the students what time was it in our town. He told them that it was 1:30 in the afternoon in London and the students were intrigued by the time difference. Then he read his book titled The Princess and the Pig and after the book he shared his writing process. The last 10 minutes or so was a question and answer session. Our first Skype of the year was a huge success and the students were amazed how we could talk to an author all the way in London.
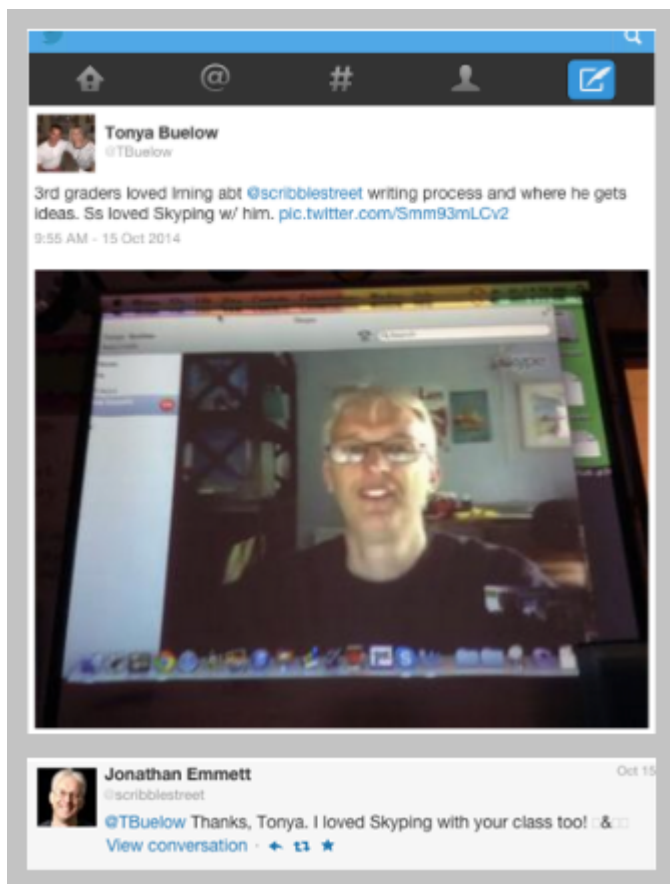
I was excited to see if there would be any shifts during independent writing time after our first conversation with a published author. I scanned the room to see if anything jumped out at me… I noticed Rana. Rana is an English Language Learner but she is bilingual in English and Arabic. As a writer it is challenging for her to come up with a writing topic. She can write simple sentences about a topic but needs strategies that will help her elaborate on her ideas. Topic choice was a writing goal for her so I have had many conferences with her on how to gather ideas as a writer in her notebook. I was excited to watch her quickly write her ideas down on paper. I walked over to celebrate how she came up with an idea on her own. I also noticed that she was playing around with a beginning that grabbed her readers' attention. As a writer, she was trying the same crafting technique as Taylor, another student in the class. She tried to start her zoo story with dialogue. Rana no longer was struggling over topic choice and she was understanding some important things as a writer:
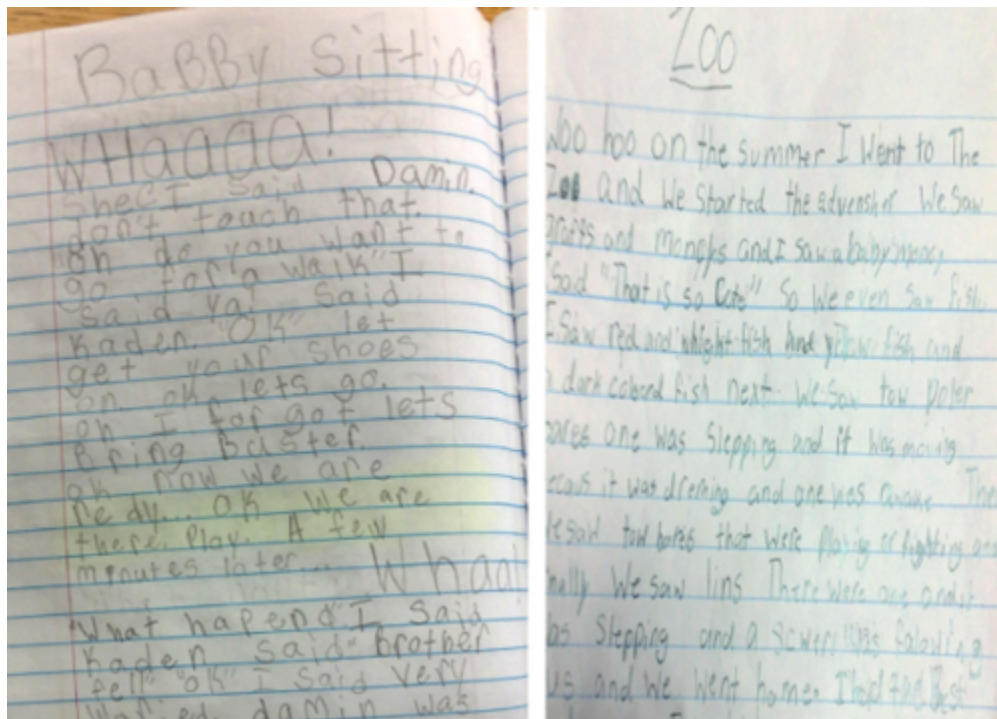
Rana and Taylor's writer's notebooks

1. Ideas come from everywhere

2. Think about your memory bit by bit so you can capture it for your reader

3. Writers learn crafting techniques from other writers

I continued to walk around and wrote similar anecdotal records about other students using a crafting technique like another writer, independently choosing a topic, or telling the story bit by bit to bring their readers in. The students were making progress because of the various levels of support within a writing workshop along with the influence from published authors. This journey was starting off well!

We did around 6 Skype visits throughout the year and each one was a purposeful and powerful connection. The opportunity to connect and hear the writing process for each author was amazing. It was truly magical to hear an author read his book and then have him share his writing process. These connections enhanced the work we did as readers and writers in our workshops because students realized they were doing authentic work with both traditional and digital tools. After each Skype session we would reflect on what we learned as writers with a quick share out. I wrote down their reflections in my notebook so that I could create an anchor chart with all our takeaways.

Author Skype Takeaways

- *Writers get ideas from everywhere.*

- *Writers write everyday.*

- *Take a quick walk/break when you have writer's block and then come back to reread your work.*

- *Writers revise A LOT!*

- *Reread your writing everyday.*

- *Write in a way that brings your reader in – use narrative even in nonfiction.*

- *Writers research for both fiction and nonfiction.*

- *Writers write in different genres.*

- *Finishing a writing a piece can take a long time.*

- *Writers get feedback from other writers or their editor and make changes to their writing.*

- *Writers share ideas with other writers.*

- *Writers work on more than one piece at a time.*

- *Some writers keep a notebook.*

- *Writers have a space where they work.*

- *Writers have ideas percolating in their head about their next writing piece.*

- *Constructive feedback energizes writers.*

The Skype sessions gave our classroom a common connected experience with authors. This experience gave us an opportunity to reflect on how we work as a community of readers and writers. I used some of the writing advice we learned from published authors when I conferenced with students. I compared students' writing work to authors we connected with along with other published authors whose writing we studied. For example, Maya created a nonfiction blog post about lions. She began her piece by making her readers feel like they were in Africa. As a writer she tried to write like Rebecca Johnson (we connected with her), Nicola Davies, and Valerie Bodden. She took the mini lessons we discussed along with the author connections to explore and try new crafting techniques as a writer.

Lions

By Maya on May 22, 2015

Your in a african rainforest you hear leaves crunching.You hear footsteps coming closer to you. You hear a giant roar and you realize it's a Lion! Lions eat a lot of meat including humans, Zebra's, giraffes,pigs, antelope, and wildebeests. They eat more meat then we eat! Lions can find there food by smelling and hunting. Lions are very big cats. They use there look including there sharp teeth to get meat and to scare people and animals away. One way to know if your looking at a lion is by there big harry and fluffy mane. You can Find lions on mountains, in Africa, Forrest ,zoo's and. Many other Places. Lions are carnivores because they eat Meat. They also are mammals. Lions have been around for many years. Did you know that Lions are the second largest big cats species? Lions can be very mean. If you get close to a lion it might chase you . If you mess with a lion it will try to eat you in one tasty bite. Lions remember can be mean but are still living animals and want to have memories and have life's just like us.
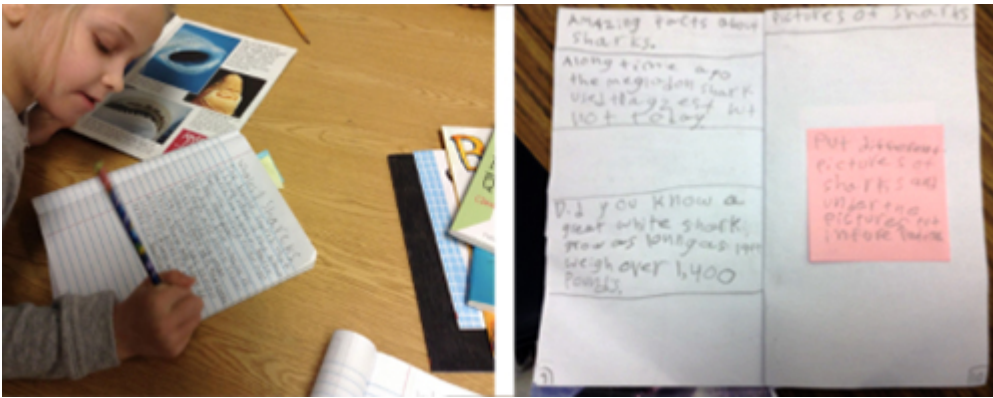
Our mini-lessons, share time and author connections helped us understand how our reading lives impact our writing lives. In the picture below you can see Jenna using her independent reading time to gather facts in her writing notebook about sharks to use in her nonfiction writing piece.
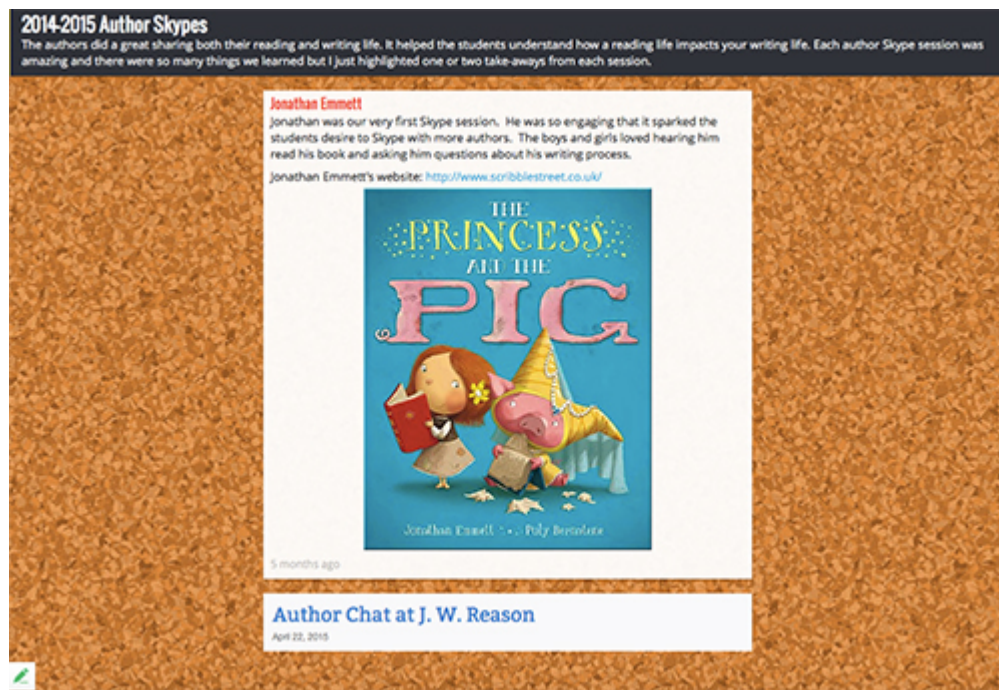
In all the Skype visits authors shared books they enjoyed as children, books that inspired them to become an author, or just books they were currently reading. Some of the authors asked the children to share books they were currently reading. The author connections and regular book talks shared by me inspired the students to share books they enjoyed with each other as a reading community. Olivia is sharing with the class a book review about a book she really enjoyed. Later on in the year these book reviews would be shared traditionally with paper and digitally through blogs. The Skypes and book reviews were another way to invite readers to explore new genres.

The connections we made with authors was another way to support the literacy framework we had in place. The advice we learned was woven into later minilessons or compared to the writing work that happened in our reading and writing community. Students started to make decisions about which pieces to publish based on feedback from other writers and which sections to revise based on peer feedback. Published authors would share marked up drafts to show how much time they spent revising their work. The author connections helped me build a more grounded concept around how

Student's summary of "I am Albert Einstein"

and why writers revise for a series of mini-lessons. I noticed that students were editing and revising as part of the process and were becoming less dependent on me to help them with these concepts. Revising suggestions were becoming a natural flow during our share time and students were actually making changes in their work instead of saying, "I will think about what you said." Students shifted from writing because I expected them to do it to thinking about what to write so that they can share their work with a wider audience outside our classroom walls.

I created a padlet of the authors we Skyped with last year : Author Skypes

One Snapshot of our Author Connections

There is one particular Skyping moment that I really cherished. We were Skyping with Erin Soderberg who is the author of The Quirks series and she asked the students to share what they were currently reading. Several students had shared the independent books they were reading and then I called on Tempa to share next. She said, "Well, I would like to discuss an idea I have been thinking about for my first chapter book, would you like to hear it?"

Erin replied, "Yes, I would love to hear your thoughts about your first chapter book."

Tempa said, "Okay great, I am going to write a book titled The Journey. The main character will have an ordinary life and then her life will change when she begins to go on journeys by entering a different world where there is magic. I am still working on how she will cross into the different worlds and the different journeys she will experience."

Erin responded, "That sounds like a great story and I would like to recommend a book that you can read that might help you get ideas for your first chapter book. The book is titled Breadcrumbs by Anne Ursu. This book might be a little challenging for you but you can check it out and see."

Tempa replied, "Thanks I will see if I can get the book."

As this conversation was going on my heart filled with joy and excitement. Tempa had internalized what it meant to work and think like a writer. She didn't even hesitate to get some feedback on her next writing piece from another writer. I savored that moment for a minute before saying goodbye to Erin Soderberg. It was moments like these that made teaching so rewarding and satisfying.

I checked the book out of the library for Tempa but it was too challenging for her to read. I let her investigate the book to see if this was a book she would encourage her parents to read to her. She kept it for a couple of days and then gave it back to me. As a reader she did continue to read fantasy books that would impact her writing. Tempa

decided to take her ideas out of her writing notebook and begin a rough draft. I was very intrigued that she started the book by creating the cover and wrote the synopsis to go on the back of her book. This writing piece wasn't something she would finish that year and Tempa was okay with that. As a writer she had been playing around with this idea for a while and she learned that writing is a process and it takes time. She was willing to invest the time to work on her book outside of writing workshop and over the summer.

6.4 Writing About Reading: A New Road to Travel

Little about the book

The book is about a boy that gets bad luck and needs to leave his home without his mom and dad. *Now little bit about the story and How it goes.* The boy's name is Toozak. He told a group of whale hunter (a group of people that hunt whale) where a lot of the whale were. He told the wisest person that he had done it.The wisest person told him to leave and make shore the whale lives otherwise you will be cursed forever. So Toozak to help and poret it. This was in the 1848.

Right now on page 71

As a reader I use technology to sustain my reading life. I use Twitter to learn about the latest books to share with students as well as what to read professionally. I've sent tweets to authors to share my thoughts about their writing. I also use Goodreads to help keep track of the books I have read and books I want to read. I blog about books and I read blogs about books. I have created and participated in online book communities. Digital literacy is still new to me and I continue to explore new tools and spaces to share, reflect and push my reading life. However, my students were only using traditional tools to sustain their reading lives and our reading community. They needed more opportunities to grow as readers. So I thought about tools students could use to share their thinking about books. In writing workshop we were using technology to share our work with with a larger audience, so why weren't we doing that in reading workshop when we write about our reading?

I knew that I did not want to have everyone learn new digital tools at the same time. I wanted to use the tools to demonstrate and model the possibilities in my mini-lessons. If I took the time to teach each technology tool and decided on a project to do with each tool then we would lose valuable independent reading time. I wanted the students to make the following decisions; which book to discuss, what was important to share about that book, and to decide which tool (traditional or digital) would best communicate their ideas.

The students had some digital tools that they were already using flexibly in our workshops. I wanted to introduce them to a new tool that had some different features to help express their ideas. I wanted something that would

allow the students to either record their thinking or they could insert a text box. It was important for my English Language Learners to be able to either choose to write down their thinking or record their thinking. Some students had more control over speaking English than expressing their ideas in writing. Students needed to be able to take photos or insert photos to help share their thinking because not all students love to draw. Some students enjoyed creating multiple slides to express their thinking so I needed another tool that would allow them to organize their thinking by slides if they chose to. All the students enjoyed sharing their thoughts with the classroom and also with a wider audience. It was important to have a tool that allowed students to share in the classroom and through social media to reach a larger audience. I needed a digital tool that I could use for shared writing and to express whole class thinking instead of using our traditional anchor charts. Another digital tool I found that would help me demonstrate learning and also fit the various needs of my students was called Explain Everything.

I decided to use this tool in my next mini-lesson on how readers grow theories about characters. We have been talking about how to use evidence from the text or book to support our thinking and help us grow our ideas about characters. I used our chapter book read aloud titled The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo. Edward is the main character in the book and we were thinking of precise words to describe him. I took a photo from a page in the book that we could use to describe what Edward was like. I projected the image onto the board so everyone could see it. As a class were were able to discuss a trait and find evidence to highlight on the photo. We could insert a text box for shared writing. We crafted our thoughts together about Edward and then talked about how this is another tool to use when you write about your reading. I would continue to use this tool over the next few days in our mini-lessons about characters.

At first only one or two students tried to use this digital tool to share their thinking about their books. Rana who is an English Language Learner I mentioned earlier wrote about Mercy Watson at home and then brought in her writing to use this digital tool to share her thoughts about the book. First she shared with the class and then we imported her work into her blog for a wider audience to read.

In the beginning the whole family ate breakfast and every Saturday Mr. Watson takes Mercy on a ride. Mercy sits in the back seat.

Mercy wants to drive but Mrs. Watson said, "No, you are not driving because Mr. Watson is driving."

Read to find out If Mercy listens to Mrs. Watson!

Rana writes about Mercy Watson

I had to keep in mind that the students were learning the tool at the same time they were writing about what they thought was important to share. This did slow down their time to craft a response. They would need time to write down their thoughts and then figure out which pictures to use in their digital piece. They might try and record their thinking on a slide or page. The students needed time to revise and edit their work if they were posting on their blog. Some students started to ask if they could use Pixie to share their writing about their reading because they were familiar with that digital tool. When students started choosing different tools more consistently in the workshop I noticed them wanting to write more about the books they were reading. The technology tools gave them more options to take ownership of their work. Students trying new things helped other students see new possibilities when writing about their reading. I wanted the enthusiasm and options to come from the students not from me.

> Students trying new things helped other students see new possibilities when writing about their reading.
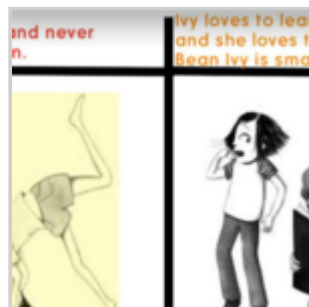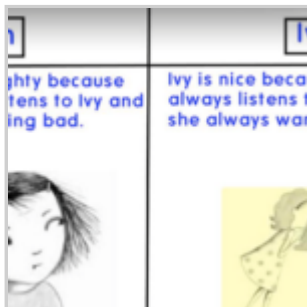
Our whole group share time at the end of reading workshop would be another opportunity for students to see how to use technology as readers. Students could use Airserver to share their work on the iPad and we could share multiple screens at once. Students could see the different tools and messages from each reader. There were days where we shared about our reading with traditional tools, and there were days where there was a mixture of both because it all depended on what the students choose to use and the purpose of their work. It was important to focus our conversations when sharing these pieces on the process and not the product. The tools were a vehicle to display their work but it was important to understand the strategies readers used to get them there. I asked some of the following questions: Why did you choose to talk about that part of the book? What evidence did you use to support your thinking? What else did you notice? Can you tell me more? I used these questions to guide students' thinking whether they used traditional or digital tools. The biggest thing the students needed to think about was audience. Did they want to share this book and thoughts with just our reading community or did they want a larger audience?
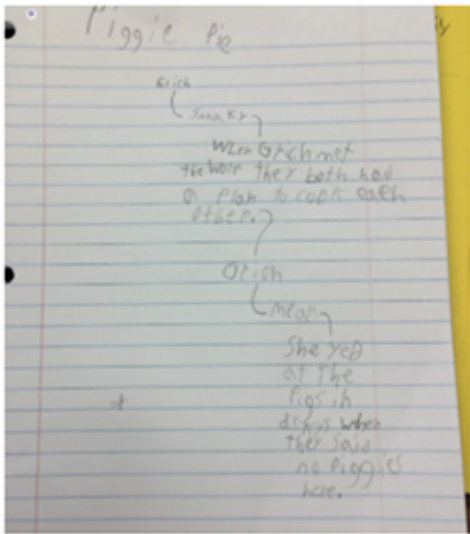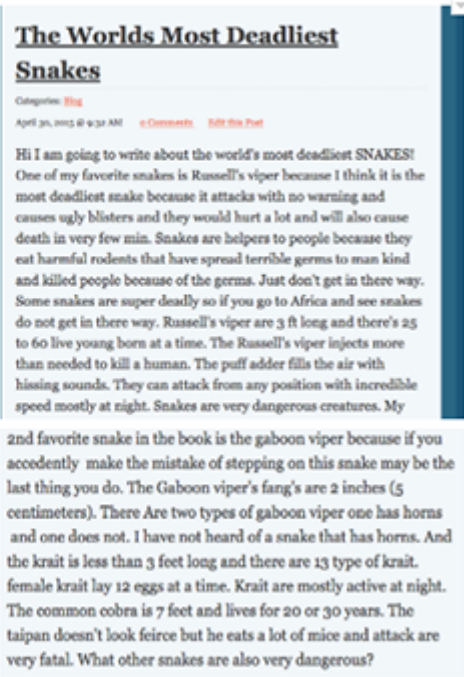
I decided to encourage technology use in my guided reading groups. When we were writing about our reading I let them choose to compose their thoughts on paper or they could use a digital tool. Interestingly, I discovered that students typically chose their response journals when writing about their reading from our group work and chose digital tools to write about their reading with their independent books. I really started to see how voice and choice were key to the students owning their learning.

As an example, Zach was a student who had great reading stamina but needed to work on writing stamina. He did a wonderful job of sharing his reading thinking orally but needed support when communicating his ideas using written expression. Zach was aware that he needed to work on writing about his reading. When he would write in his response journal Zach would rush to get his ideas down so that he could go back to reading. After many conferences I still noticed his responses were the same and we still focused on including more evidence or details. I kept wondering how I could help Zach shift and get him more motivated to write about his reading. Throughout the year we make reading goals to reflect and push ourselves as readers. Zach's goal for himself was to write more about his reading.
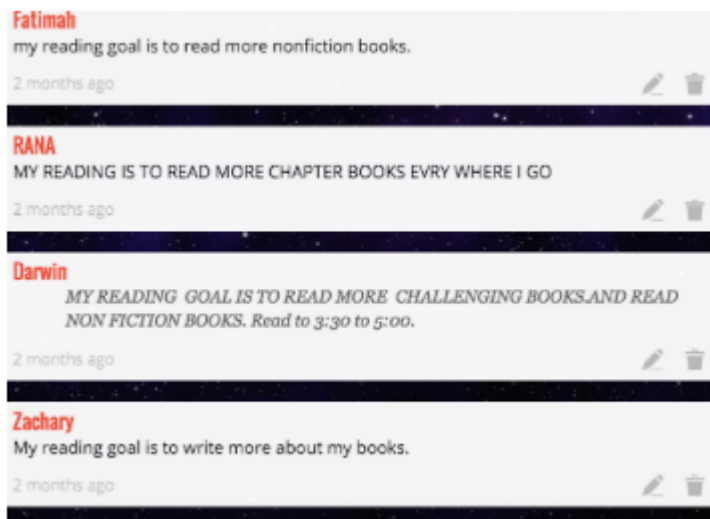
He started using digital tools to help him achieve his goal. Zach slowed down his work pace to spend more time

on responses and he started to add more details about the book. I was amazed at the differences in his responses and how he was more motivated to write about reading when he could choose what to say and which tool to use.

Zach's written response	Zach's digital response

6.5 Next Steps

There were many moments when our share time felt messy and muddled but it turned out that it was more productive than unproductive. I realized that our whole group share time propelled a lot of things, such as: students writing more about books, students flexibly using tools to share their thinking, and students being held more accountable. I would hold the students accountable for their learning but they started to hold each other more accountable. Students' comments to each other would push them to put more effort in their work. For example, Rana shared her thoughts about the book titled Chopsticks by Amy Krouse Rosenthal using the iPad. The students were listening as she recounted important events from the book and then she ended the piece by telling what she thought the theme of the book was. Before I could say a word Tempa immediately said, "You need to think about using evidence to support why you think that is the theme of the book." I sat there for a moment thinking that was exactly what I was going to say and probably exactly how I would have said it. Many of the other students agreed and Rana started to share why she thought that was the theme. Now that she had orally shared her evidence she could easily go back and put those thoughts in writing on the iPad. As this conversation played out I recognized that students needed to receive feedback on a more regular basis. How do I provide that everyday? When would this happen because time is such an issue? I knew we needed to begin reading partnerships.

The students already knew how to give feedback and talk about books so I needed to help them put all the pieces together. I pulled out the chart we made at the beginning of the year on how we talk like writers. We discussed how we work with a writing partner and how that would look the same or different with a reading partner. I modeled with another student how reading partners talk and the students shared out what they noticed. They noticed that one person shares and one person listens. The person who listens needs to ask questions or give feedback. Then the roles switch. It was important for them to understand that a good conversation changes or pushes a person's thinking. The children were ready to practice and seemed thrilled to have the opportunity to share their thinking with another reader every day. The boys and girls got eye to eye and knee to knee in the meeting area so that I could buzz around to each group and hear their conversations. They discussed their books and I would listen so that I could share out how they pushed each other's thinking at the end of the partner share. We did this a few more times as a group and then they were able to move anywhere in the room. After a week or so of sharing with our reading partners I noticed how some students continued to use post-it notes to record their thoughts and some students started to use digital tools. I was astonished at how naturally this happened and I was pleased that the readers in our room were flexibly using digital and traditional tools to share their thoughts about books. The boys and girls were working as readers who were using different tools to help sustain and push their reading life.

6.6 Final Destination = Integration Full of New Possibilities

The Crazy Snow Day

Categories: Blog

November 15, 2014 @ 9:52 AM   1 Comment   Edit this Post

"Mo, Mo" my brother yelled.

"What do you want!" I said to my brother Nasri. "Leave me alone I am trying to go to sleep here! Ok, ok." I said madly.

"Snow, snow," my brother said.

YEAH!!! me and my brother got our snow clothes on. We tried to sneak outside but... my mom caught us red handed.

So we asked, "Can we go outside please?"

"Yes" my mom said.

Last year was a wonderful journey that sparked some incredible learning opportunities. Students started to take ownership of their learning by choosing what to write about and which tool was the best vehicle to communicate their message. I was happy to see digital tools being used simultaneously with traditional tools within our workshops. A strong reading and writing workshop is key to get the journey started, and then the integration of digital tools with intentional purpose allow students to connect their passions and learning.

Ghadeer, an English Language Learner, decided to continue to blog even though it was summer. Ghadeer had only been in our country for about 2 years and was rapidly gaining control over the English language both orally and in written expression. She had an amazing time at our field day so she wanted to share her experience on her blog. I was more than thrilled when I saw this post. She was able to use digital tools to fuel her writing life.

Field Day

By Ghadeer on Jun 25, 2015

One day it was friday. Before the school ends in one week it was field day.We waited until the colck is 9:00 A.m to start our field day.Then when it was 9:00 a.m we start our field day.I was holding the lunch boxes wagon and my best friend Donya was the leader because one of the 3rd grade teacher put my t shirt and Donya's t shirt yellow but our classes color is green.So my teacher decided to put Donya is the leader and me is the wagon holder. SO I have to be the last person in my classroom's line.And the problem is that I don't get a turn because I'm the last one in the line.We played Alot's of games and jumping.After a while I told my teacher that I want to be the second behind Donya ALWAYS.And I did.And in lunch we ate chesse Pizza.In the afternoon we played in water games.And after the water games we played in a giant allagator. It was very fun.Like it was the best day ever in the school year.

I found from the beginning that the addition of digital tools gave my students the support they needed to grow as readers and writers. The use of author videos and live Skype visits helped bridge the gap in students' understanding of English, both spoken and written. Being able to connect with published authors engaged students in ways that traditional print resources did not. The additional opportunities provided through blogging and tools like Explain Everything and Pixie gave students more choice in how they shared their learning. Digital workshop gave my students a chance to work in authentic ways so that they could move forward as strategic readers and writers who are able to make goals, communicate, connect and reflect about their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Resources

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Chapter 7: Cultivating Student Ownership with Audience, Autonomy, Discourse and Reflection

Cultivating Student Ownership with Audience, Autonomy, Discourse and Reflection
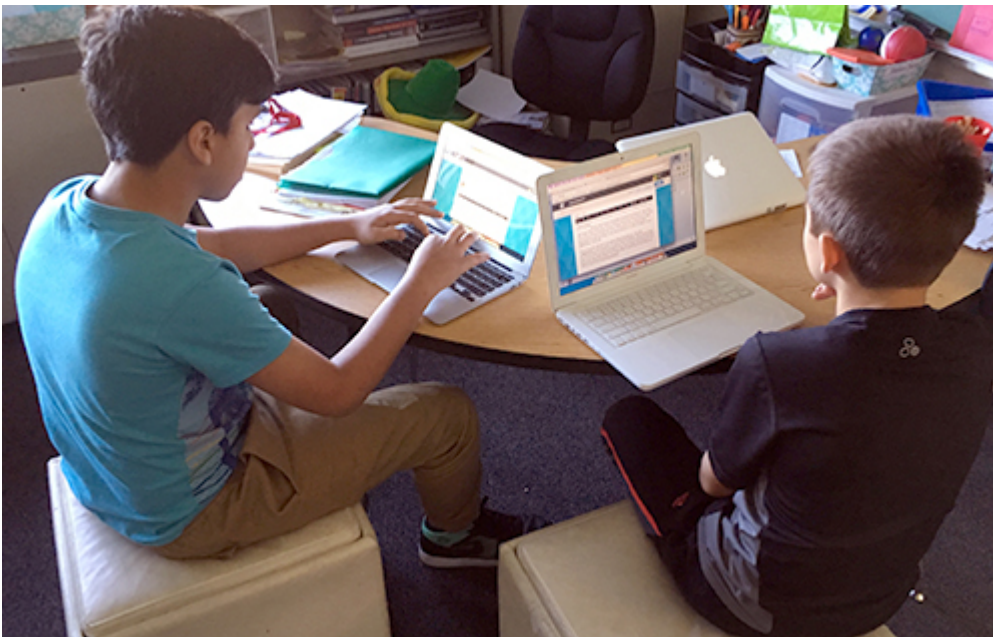
By Scott Jones

7.1 Seeing A Need for Change

One of the most influential books in my digital literacy journey is Alan November's Who Owns The Learning?: Preparing Students For Success in the Digital Age (2012). November emphasizes how students become more self-directed learners when they are able to create content and participate in work that is meaningful to them. To illustrate this point, November uses the idea of a digital learning farm. In this model, "students supply much more of the creative design, preparation, delivery, and revision of the educational process, enabling teachers to spend more time in the roles of mentor, advisor, and facilitator." (Kindle Locations 251-253) He states, "The goal of the Digital Learning Farm model is to redefine the role of the learner as a contributor, collaborator, and leader in

the learning culture." (Kindle Locations 244-245). As a teacher who is constantly seeking out opportunities to improve my students' learning, I started to reflect on the digital work my students had been doing.

Before reading this book, my students had digital experiences on a regular basis. They had become accustomed to blogging, watching me use Twitter, Skyping with authors and using a few websites as part of our reading and writing workshops. Yet, to continue November's metaphor of farming, I realized that my current classroom was more proportionate to a small digital garden because it was a smaller space and mostly managed by me:

- My students' blogs were not visible to the public.

- I designed most of my students' digital experiences.

- I was the only person who could access our class Twitter account.

- Students used laptops and iPads as a whole class at the same time so it was easier to manage.

- Much of my students' digital work was researching science or social studies topics or playing math games.

Yes, I was giving my students digital experiences, but I was not asking them to be very strategic in their digital work. These experiences did not allow students to connect, collaborate, analyze, reflect or actively contribute to the digital world. Also, the digital work was passive and did not recognize the importance of an audience other than me, autonomous decision-making, purposeful feedback or opportunity for student reflection. I needed to shift control of my students' learning. I began to acknowledge that I was not meeting the needs of the digital learners in my classroom because I still controlled their learning. It was time to transform my classroom into a "digital learning farm" where my students were empowered to cultivate their own learning journey.

Digital citizens contribute to the digital world, they don't just live in it. I was going to ask my students to live in the digital world by:

1. Publishing more content

2. Continuing the conversations we had in the classroom using digital tools

3. Connecting with other writers (inside/outside of classroom).

4. Making decisions with purpose behind these decisions

5. Reflecting on their learning to gain new understandings and digitally record these reflections

In order for students to be active digital learners, and make these contributions listed above, there are four core essentials that I use as the foundation for the digital experiences I give students. These four principles are: audience, autonomy, discourse and reflection. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how these four principles, when at the core of students' digital experiences, empower students to be more mindful participants of their own learning.

The Four Essentials Of Digital Experiences

In all areas of life, we must decide which tools to use for which occasion. Obviously certain tools work better in certain situations. When is the last time you used a pencil to eat cereal? This sounds ridiculous because at one time we learned that the tools we use fulfill a purpose. When parents, friends, teachers and others train us to use

certain tools, the purpose behind that tool is part of the learning process. This must be the same as we teach our students which digital tools to use.

With each digital experience, my students need to understand the purpose behind each tool. As a result, I hope that my students will see the value in the learning; thus, they will be more intentional and strategic when using the tools. That is why multiple conversations with students take place about the four essentials that support a culture of ownership. Here are brief synopses of audience, autonomy, feedback and reflection that I use with my students as a basis for our digital work.

Audience

Traditionally, the teacher is the sole audience of a student's work. A digital learner has an audience that extends beyond the four walls of the classroom. Giving students a sense that someone else is invested in their learning process (besides teachers and parents) helps engage students to develop skills and knowledge to complete a product. Thus, it gives students a deeper purpose for learning and producing high quality work.

Autonomy

Often times, the assignment a student works on, and the time in which they can work on it, is dictated by the teacher. Teachers can give more control to the students so they have their voices heard and their choices honored in determining their learning path. Autonomy can include: student choice in what students work on, when they work on it and how they complete a task.

Discourse

Discussion plays a significant role in a student's comprehension of text, and of the world. When students participate in a productive and purposeful conversation, they can share opinions, evaluate ideas, take risks, make connections and dig for deeper meaning. Collaborative conversations has been enhanced by a number of digital tools available to students. As a result, there are new opportunities for discourse that allow students to be a more active learner.

Reflection

Because of the Internet, today's learners do not need teachers to provide them with facts and knowledge. Therefore, students must be able to take new knowledge and act upon it and make new meaning. Digital learners must examine their learning process and draw connections between content areas, instead of always focusing on the end result.

7.2 Essential #1: Audience: Motivation for Students' Creations
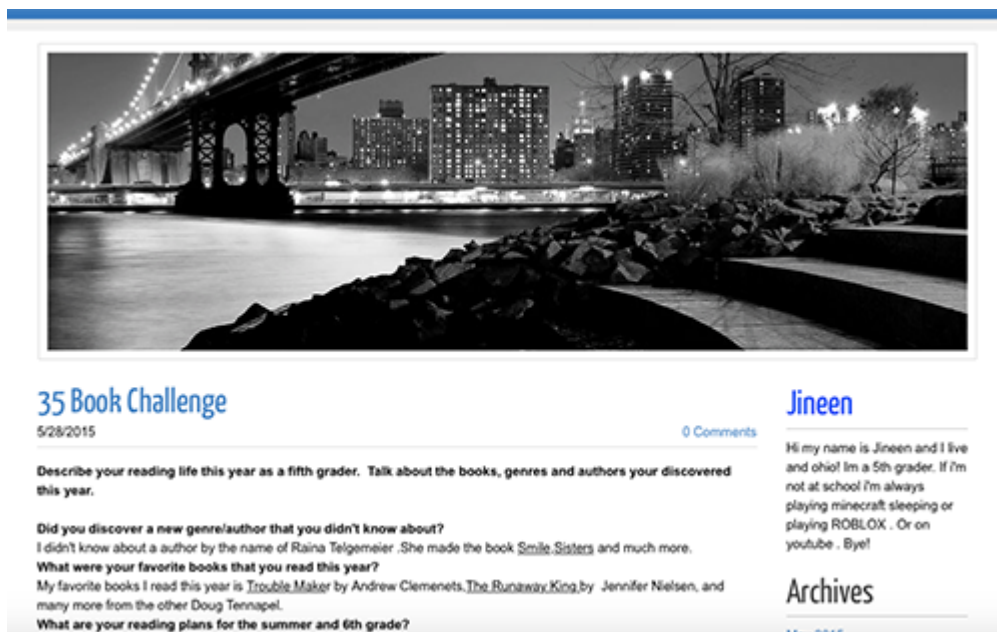
Audience matters. That is one important concept for young writers to keep in mind as they develop writing pieces. In my pre-digital classroom, my students wrote primarily for their classmates and me. Students knew the teacher was usually the only one who was going to see their work, coupled with sharing their drafts with their peer editors and classmates. Now that I look back, I recognize that in my pre-digital classroom, audience didn't matter. That is to say, some students lacked the motivation to create writing pieces because the audience never changed. Audience motivates my students by providing them with real-world opportunities for their writing and other digital work to reach outside the classroom.

One day a group of students were blogging during a writing workshop. One of them announced to the class, "Mr. Jones, some girl from Texas just left a comment on my blog." I looked at her blog post with skepticism, and sure enough, there was a comment from a 10th grade student from Austin, Texas. One by one, other students noticed that they had also received comments from 10th graders in Austin, Texas. After a few days of research, I narrowed down these students' teacher and school. I sent an email thanking her for providing an authentic audience to my fifth graders. I wanted her to know that she and her students had given my students a powerful message about

audience. Many of the comments, such as the examples here, gave students the enthusiasm and initiative to keep writing. These comments were specific to each blog post, and often times asked follow up questions related to the writing. This indicated to my students that this new audience of high schoolers were actually reading the blog posts. They noticed that the comments were meant for the individual blogger. Each new comment became a powerful celebration of our writing and energized my students.

Prajwal (Ms. Ruiz's 8th Period)

Woah I haven't heard about that book before but it sure does sound interesting. If you enjoy it, have you considered reading any other books from the same author? I'm sure you would find them interesting as well.

May 15, 2014, 4:42pm   Reply

Eillett (Ms. Ruiz's 2nd Period)

I love going to the beach, it is so relaxing. I was stung by a baby jelly fish once while in Puerto Rico. It did not hurt as much as I thought. Don't worry, you'll have fun!

May 14, 2014, 12:10pm   Reply

Sarah D

Thanks, I feel much better now. :D

May 15, 2014, 1:34pm   Reply

Pretty soon, these young writers in my classroom would voluntarily ask to login to their blogs and see if someone replied to one of their posts. Yet, something else began to happen. Students were starting to bring their audience into their peer conversations about their writing. I could hear students saying things like, "Well, Antonio from Texas said that he liked my first sentence, so I want to keep it." Furthermore, I noticed that the quality of their writing improved. Students were spending more time editing for grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes. Despite regular reminders from me about writing mechanics, my students found a new sense of motivation as a result of their new audience. This authentic audience from 1,200 miles away truly heightened my students' motivation, hence their sense of ownership was growing.

Another example comes from a student, Hayden, inspired by the poetry of Ralph Fletcher, wrote a poem about a snowplow plowing our school playground. (Yes, he had been looking out the window daydreaming during independent work time, but, boy, did it inspire a magnificent poem from this 10-year old.) When I conferred with him about this, I made sure he knew I was blown away by his figurative language. He ended our conference by asking me to tweet out the link to his blog. Hayden was actually seeking out an audience beyond our classroom walls. He was both surprised and thrilled when after a month, Ralph Fletcher himself replied to his blog. Ralph Fletcher's reply helped my students realize that their work was being seen outside our classroom walls and it motivated them to write even more.
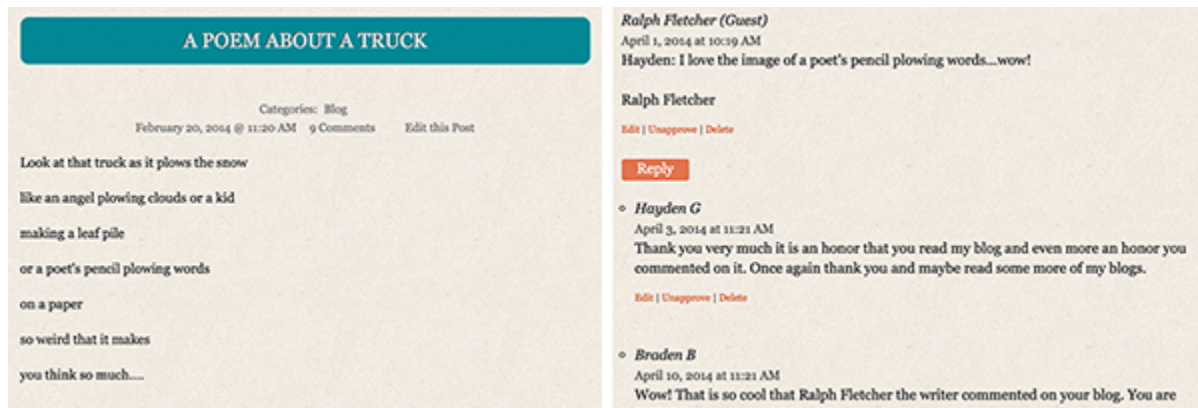
Hayden's blog and response from Ralph Fletcher

Digital Portfolios – Curating Learning For A Global Audience

Throughout the school year, my students curate pieces of quality work and artifacts that demonstrate their learning. In the past, before I recognized my students as digital citizens, I gave students back their graded work and assessments, and they would go through the process of inserting this work into a 3-ring binder and filling out a reflection paper that I provided them. The purpose of these data binders was to require students to be more mindful of their development as a learner by reflecting on their work. However, there was one glaring issue with this process. The binders stayed on a shelf in our classroom. These binders had an audience of one. The student was truly the only person who saw the contents of this binder. As I learned to push my students to be contributors to the digital world, I started to wonder what would happen if students' work and reflection process was communicated to the digital world. Therefore, I decided to shift these binders into digital galleries of student learning called digital portfolios.

In my classroom, a digital portfolio has become a digital and public collection of a student's learning journey. It is a space where students tell their story–document current understanding, celebrate successes, show their progress, store finished products, and reflect on their growth from pre- to post-assessments and demonstrate their reading and writing lives. By digitizing their portfolios, students would be displaying their learning journey for all to see. No longer would their portfolios be in a 3-ring binder stored on a shelf in the classroom, only to be opened when they receive a math test back. Now, each student's learning process would be on display beyond the classroom walls, in addition to being more easily exhibited for their classmates and other stakeholders (e.g. parents, extended family, former teachers, peers).

Not only do digital portfolios offer a wider audience for students to display their work, they are also powerful tools because they allow students to make digital contributions to the digital world that incorporate audience, autonomy, feedback and reflection. In each of the following sections, I will show how digital portfolios support each of these essentials of digital experiences.

Classroom Implications

Our unplanned pen-pals from Texas and a comment from Ralph Fletcher are wonderful examples of students writing for an audience outside of the classroom. Also, digital portfolios are an example of creating a public

gallery of learning that is meant for a larger audience than merely the student and teacher. So, what were the effects of creating a larger audience for student work? How did this change my students' growth as learners?

There were a number of positive outcomes that resulted from this shift in audience. One result was students were more engaged with the work, propelled by the idea that their writing pieces and quality work samples are expected by an audience beyond the school. Secondly, as bloggers, students began to think of their audience during their writing process and make deliberate writing decisions based on the idea that anyone could read their writing. Audience wasn't an afterthought once they published their work. Thirdly, writing with an audience in mind became part of our daily conversations during our reading and writing workshops. For example, during our interactive read alouds, students began to make connections between authors' writing decisions and how it affected the reader. Lastly, using digital portfolios to make their work samples public and share their reflections as a learner gave my students a deeper purpose for learning and producing high quality work.

While some students are intrinsically motivated to write because it is a passion, what was truly motivating was the thought of someone out in the world reading their writing. Students were inspired when they were offered an audience with whom they genuinely wanted to connect.

7.3 Essential #2: Autonomy: Allowing Student Choice
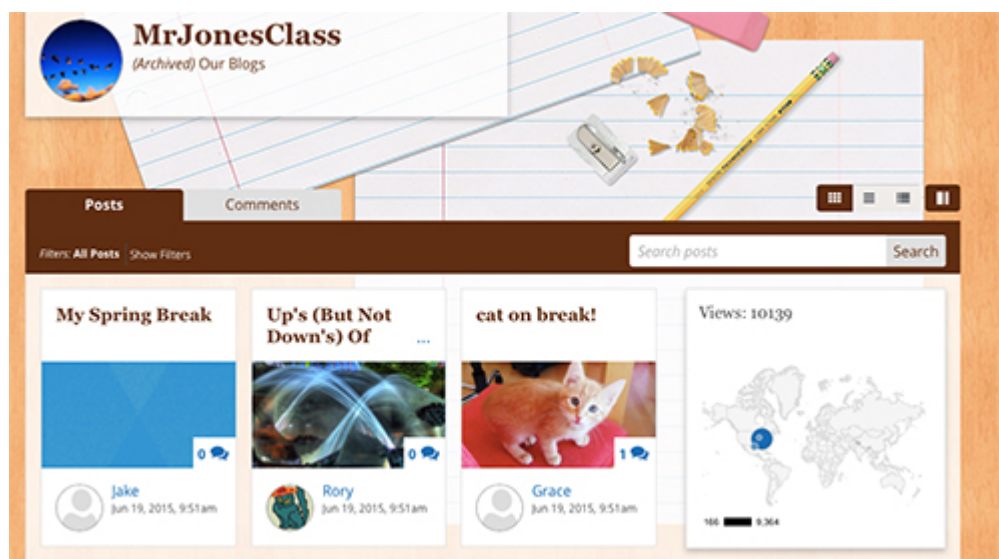
For years educational psychologists have known that an essential element of motivation is an individual's need to feel autonomous. I will be using the word autonomy to mean students having their voices heard and the choice honored in their learning. By empowering students' voices we show that we value them as important members of our community with important things to say and contribute. As a teacher who strives to create a personalized learning environment for my students, I recognize the importance of my students being autonomous in their reading and writing choices. I do not assign specific books or authors to students. Nor do I select a writing topic for students during writing workshop. I don't do this because most students who lack input into decisions about their learning feel unmotivated and indifferent about improving. By giving students autonomy over what they read and write, students are more committed to developing their skills because they have choice in selecting topics and genres that are meaningful and enjoyable for them.

One of the ways my students strengthen their voice and have choice in their writing is through blogging. They use their blogs to tell their story and share pieces of writing that are meaningful to them. Students love being a blogger because it allows them to use their voice in addition to having a choice in their writing topic, genre and format. I have seen my students post a wide variety of genres and formats (e.g. personal narratives, book reviews, weekly advice columns, parodies and poetry). You can visit the page on our classroom website with resources and links about student blogging here: http://www.theflockjwr.com/student-blogging. Below, you will see two examples and very different blog post topics by Jake and Jineen.

Jake was an active and determined student who loved sports. The year had started with his parents telling me that he had not been remotely interested in reading or writing for the past few years. However, one morning in February, Jake came bounding into the classroom very excited about the Super Bowl that had occurred the previous night. After tossing his backpack onto his desk, he asked if he could spend time blogging about the game during our morning routine. While it was not Jake's normal morning activity, it was difficult to say no to this young writer. I could see how motivated he was to write. Jake was writing about something that was personal to him. His love of sports and his excitement about the game had inspired him to compose a summary of the game. While this blog post has errors, his enthusiasm for this topic provided momentum I had not seen before. Choice in topic gave Jake incentive to write which carried through into future writing workshops.

Super Bowl

By Jake on Feb 5, 2015

Super bowl XLIX was really good. It was amazing. The end I will save for later. So it was the Seattle Seahawks going up against the New England Patriots. I knew this would be a good game. It starts and New England scores first. 7-0 they are ahead. Now nothing much happened so lets skip until to the fourth quarter about 2:00 to go. So the score is 28-24 New England. Russel wilson with about 50 seconds now throws it down the field to Kearse and he hit the ground the ball is on his legs it bounced and OOHHHHH!!!! He caught the ball off his legs!!! He moss'd him And layed his Kearse on the corners. They are now at the 1 yard line. Run it in. The super bowl is on the line. Now like 25 seconds to go. Go! They decided to pass. All you heard from the tv was IT IS INTERCEPTED!!!!! Sigh. I guess we lose this time. End of the game score was 28-24 New England Patriots. BOOOOO!!!!!!! WHY DON'T YOU RUN THE BALL WITH THE BEST RUNNING BACK IN THE WHOLE LEAGUE AT THE 1 YARD LINE WITH THE SUPER BOWL ON THE LINE????????? :(

Jake's blog post

In the next example below, you can see that Jineen has written a short biography about the author Margaret Peterson Haddix. Jineen always enjoyed writing workshop, but she struggled to produce pieces of writing of substantial length. Also, she and I had spent many writing conferences discussing strategies for adding personality or voice in her writing. Jineen had especially enjoyed a few of Haddix's books during the year, so she wanted to learn more about the author. During reading workshop, Jineen spent 3-4 days reading as much about Haddix as she could. She searched websites and evaluated the information that she would eventually add to her biography. In an attempt to set her biography apart from other Haddix biographies, she is experimenting with adding voice and style to her writing. Jineen uses parentheses as a way to talk to the reader directly. Her first sentence signals that the reader will learn a great deal about the author. Also, in her concluding paragraph, Jineen intentionally adds quotations to leave the reader with some advice from Haddix herself. By selecting a topic that she was passionate about, Jineen was able to focus her attention on developing her a unique and natural writing voice.

Who is Margaret Peterson Haddix?

By Jineen on Apr 16, 2015

Who is Margaret Peterson Haddix?

By: Jineen

You came to the right place to learn about Margaret Peterson Haddix. First thing you should know about Margert is that, she grew up on a farm about halfway between two small towns, Washington court house, Ohio and Sabina, Ohio. Her birthdate is April 9,1964 (See if you have that same birthdate)

Lets get to know about Margaret's family! Her mother is a nurse, and her dad is a farmer. She has three siblings, an older brother, and an younger brother, and a younger sister. Now that she's older she has a husband named Doug. She also has two wonderful kids Meredith and Connor.

Some job's Margaret held before her books were published she was an editor at a newspaper called The Journal-Gazette. Also a reporter at a newspaper called the Indianapolis News. She got her bachelors degrees in english/journalism, also creative writing and history. Margaret went to college miami university (The one in Ohio not Florida like you would have expected)

Other than writing or reading Margaret enjoys things such as,Traveling, Bicycling,Hiking,Going to the museum,and hanging out with her friends and family. Before I end this I would like to say what Margaret wrote to all her readers, "I love making up stories and playing around with words and imaging interesting situations" She also has advice for her future authors, "Read a lot, Write a lot, And enjoy what you read and think about.
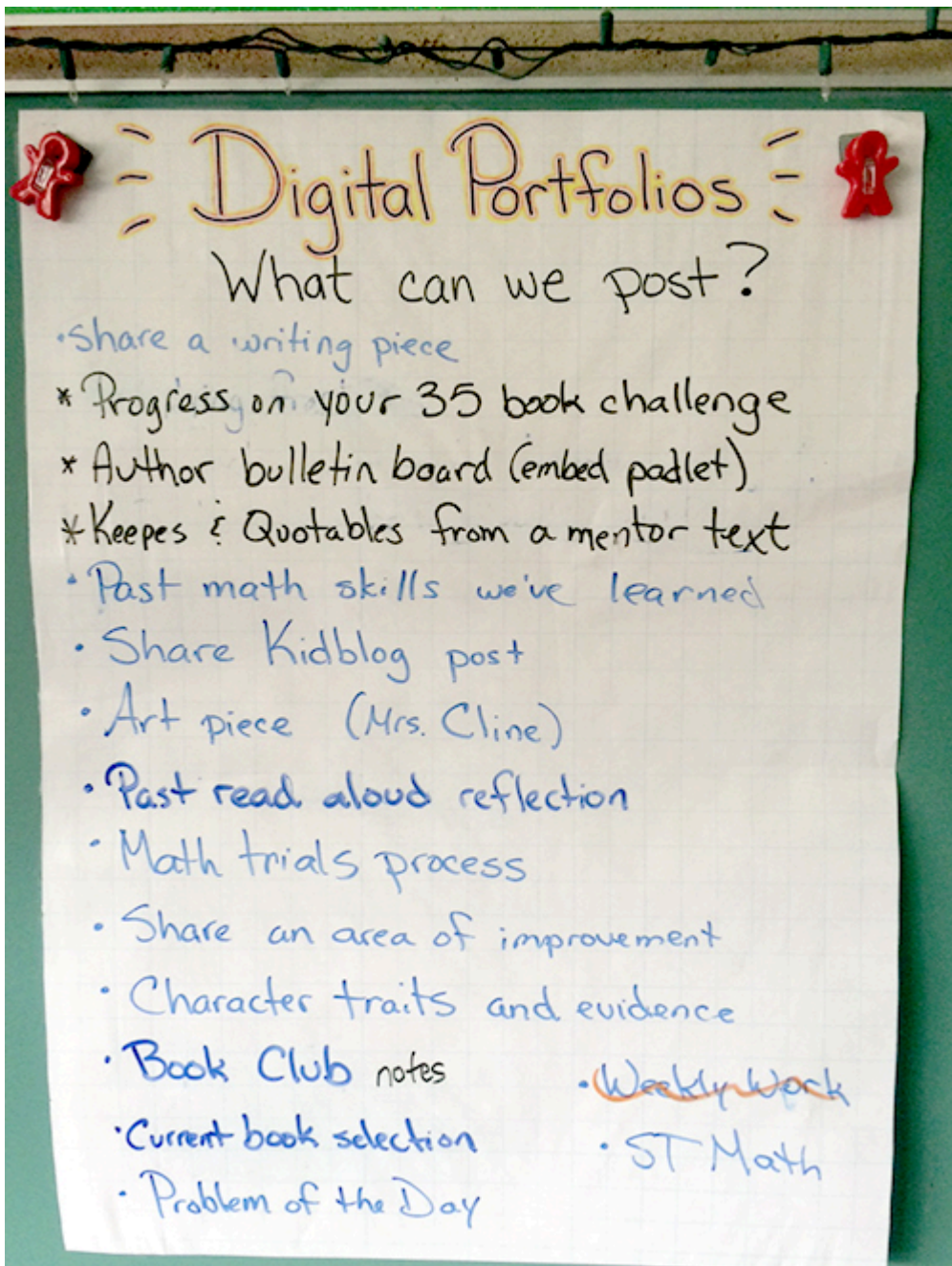
Jineen's blog post

Digital Portfolios – Choice and Ownership

When beginning the digital portfolio process, I knew students would need time exploring this brand new digital playground. So, I charged them with finding a template and designing their website to fit their personality. Then, I set them free to play and explore. These digital citizens are used to pointing, clicking and dragging, so I let them discover things on their own. They chose a URL (e.g. http://nathanielsjourney.weebly.com). They chose a design template, colors, fonts, and pictures for their headers. I circulated and assisted as needed; yet, I found that letting students have time to play with this new tool first allowed them to discover so many functions and elements of the website without me explicitly teaching them. Often times, students unearthed a cool feature or function and explained it to each other, all without my instruction.

Nathaniel's Digital Portfolio

Like every other learning experience, digital or not, student ownership is more likely when students fully understand the rationale behind what they are doing. Also, it is key for students to use their voice to give input on, and help shape these learning experiences. Therefore, I felt it was necessary for students to help select what types of products would be included on their digital portfolio. Knowing that this list would change many times throughout the year, we recorded our list with dry-erase marker so we could add or take away ideas. Here is the anchor chart we created:

Digital Portfolios
What can we post?
- Share a writing piece
- * Progress on your 35 book challenge
- * Author bulletin board (embed padlet)
- * Keepes & Quotables from a mentor text
- Past math skills we've learned
- Share Kidblog post
- Art piece (Mrs. Cline)
- Past read aloud reflection
- Math trials process
- Share an area of improvement
- Character traits and evidence
- Book Club notes
- Current book selection
- Problem of the Day
- Weekly Work
- ST Math

Classroom Implications of Autonomy

As a result of having autonomy over their blog topics and digital portfolios, students were engaged in the writing process and empowered to make decisions about their writing. In addition to being completely committed to their topics, students made deliberate decisions about their writing craft with little guidance from me, which had not been the case in previous writing pieces. They were responsible for their writing and had a sense of ownership. Also, both writers improved in areas in which they had struggled because they were interested in the topic. By giving them a say in their writing topic, students did not feel inhibited to write. Essentially, they had a sense of feeling capable and successful which motivated them to improve their writing craft.

7.4 Essential #3: Collaborative Conversations
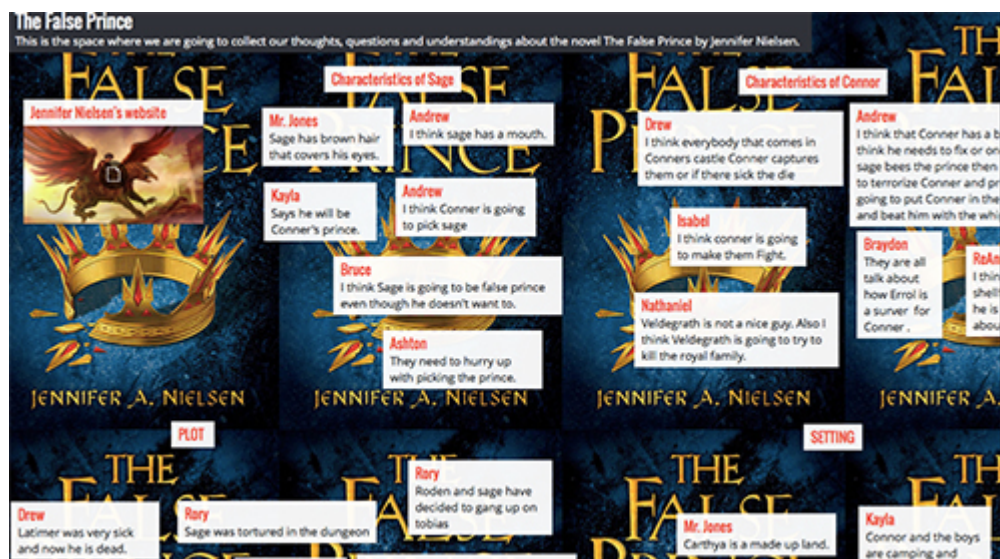
Conversations occur in all classrooms in some form or another. Some teachers use conversation as a method for collaborative problem-solving. Some teachers use conversation to allow students to share opinions and new understandings about a topic or text. A number of digital tools have made it possible to ensure that discourse among students is purposeful and open. Gone are the days where students that want to contribute have to sit on the periphery of discussions. Making digital discourse part of the classroom culture has given power to my students' voices as a way to:

- Grapple with the literal and inferential? meaning of texts
- Clarify their understandings about content
- Encourage students to talk with one another about their learning
- Develop critical thinking skills

Year after year, read aloud tends to be the time of day when the most conversations take place. It also happens to be my students' favorite time of day. Quite frankly, it is mine as well. I love sitting with my students and reading a great book. As a result of integrating a few digital tools into our class read aloud routine, the discussions that takes place are collaborative, rich, dynamic and focused.
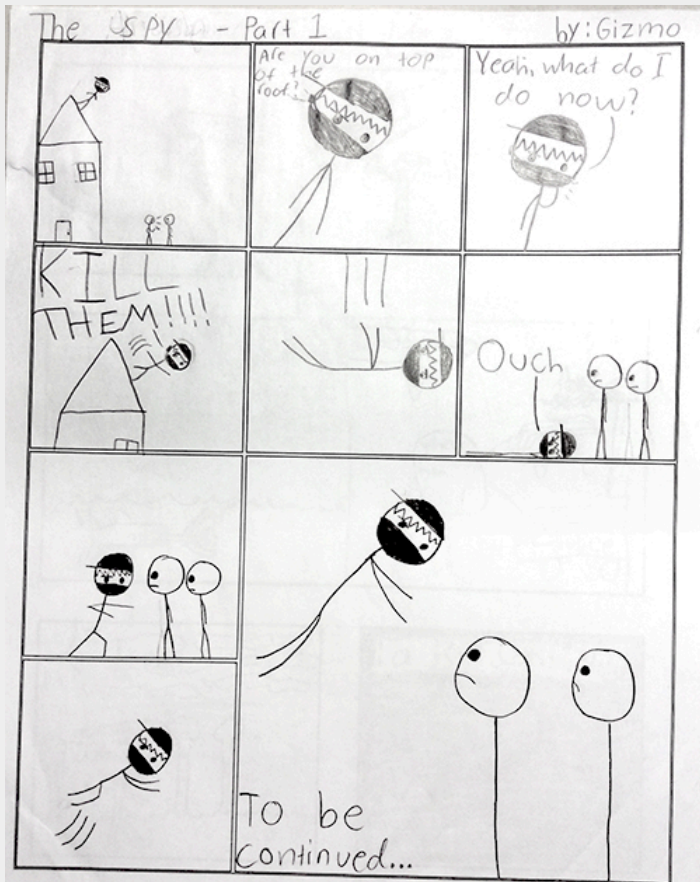
Graphic novels are useful in scaffolding comprehension and building a reader's inference skills. That is why I find it important to explicitly teach students how to use a graphic novel's unique features to understand and critically think about the text. Here are some of the basic visual text features a graphic novel that I believe readers must discern:

• **Panels**

◦ Squares or rectangles that contain a single scene

◦ Panels give structure to the narrative

◦ Breaks apart the page into a series of visual moments

◦ The size of the panel may indicate the importance of a character or event to the plot. Pages with fewer panels mean pages that read quickly and emphasizes big, climatic moments. A page with a greater amount of smaller panels page capture a lot of small moments.

• **Gutters**

◦ The space between panels

◦ Natural breaks for reader to pause and reflect on comprehension

◦ Readers must predict and infer what is happening between panels

◦ Readers find meaning in the transitions from scene to scene

◦ Indicate a passage of time, change of setting, or change of point of view

• **Dialog Balloons**

◦ Contain communication between/among characters

◦ Use to indicate which part of the action needs dialogue and which parts do not

• **Thought Balloons**

◦ Contain a character's thoughts and ideas

◦ Shows the internal story of a character

• **Captions**

◦ Information from the author

◦ Filling in holes of what the reader may need to know

◦ Contain information about a scene, character or description

◦ Tells us about the setting

◦ explains character's journey

• **Sound Effects**

◦ Visual sound clues

◦ Reassures the reader that we do not live in a silent world

◦ Stimulates the reader's senses

Projecting The Text

This year, I read the 2015 Newbery Honor award-winner El Deafo by Cece Bell to my class. It was one of my most successful read alouds ever. What made it success was the discourse that resulted from a simple adjustment. Since it is a graphic novel, I downloaded the Kindle version and projected it onto the Smartboard. In doing so, my students were visually captivated by Cece Bell's wonderful illustrations. It allowed us to talk about how to truly read a graphic novel, and use the different elements of a graphic novel to make meaning. We discussed panels, gutters, dialogue bubbles, and thought bubbles. My students grew accustomed to having the text projected as I read, and as a result, my students insisted that I project the text for our next read aloud. What I love about this idea is that now I can model fluent and expressive reading while students see the same text I'm seeing. This opened up a variety of discussion points such as: how punctuation affected my voice or how authors use text features to create meaning. Not only that, but I used the highlighting tool in the Kindle app to make any words or sentences that made an impact on me or made me ask a question as I read. I also highlighted examples from the text that corresponded with teaching points from writing workshops (e.g. using vivid verbs, character's thinking and responses to actions, blending action, dialogue and thinking). By being able to share the text (without wasting paper and time making multiple paper copies), our conversation around this book was more productive. Furthermore, the text was accessible to all readers regardless of their reading level. Each student was able to enjoy and share in the conversation around the book.

Digital Bulletin Boards

During our daily interactive novel read aloud, my students and I would stop and talk so much about characters,

plot, themes and author's style, that we ran out of time too quickly. So, I experimented with using digital bulletin boards (e.g. Padlet) as a way to continue the conversation beyond the classroom walls. Before the day's reading started, I asked five students to get an iPad so they could add to our Read Aloud Wall. While I read, these students recorded their thoughts or typed important details or "a-ha moments" from the book. After we finished reading that day's chapters, or before we read the following day, the class and I visited our digital bulletin board and discussed what the students had written. On occasion, students added their thoughts to our board at home. This didn't replace our interactive discussions while reading; yet, it did enhance them. It gave students who might not contribute during a discussion an audience to share their thoughts.

Having read the responses beforehand, occasionally I would pick one or two responses that I thought might evoke deeper thinking and ask students to comment on them. Or I might ask students to choose a response on which they would like to comment. This focus got us started thinking about what we had previously read and alleviated the potential for getting off topic. The in-class dialogue between students about these boards also allowed students to give each other feedback and ask clarifying questions, thus clearing up any misunderstandings about the text. Here are some examples of digital bulletin boards:

- The False Prince by Jennifer Nielsen

- El Deafo by Cece Bell

After reading the first few chapters of El Deafo, students and I discussed our first impressions of the book. We discussed questions such as: How is the author introducing the character to readers? What strategies is the author using to establish the situation (i.e. setting the scene) for the reader? What are some conflicts that you predict might happen to the main character? I asked students to keep pondering what we discussed and let it sink in for a while. I went on to ask students to post their thoughts and new understandings about this book onto our El Deafo bulletin board sometime before read aloud the next day. Many students opted to do this at home. Others asked to post during the afternoon because they did not have Internet access at home, which I gladly accommodated. The following day, I projected our digital bulletin board and asked students to comment on another student's thoughts.

As a result of using digital bulletin boards in read aloud, my students created their own author bulletin boards.

Each student chose their favorite author and added links, book covers and other content about their chosen author. You can see examples here: Author Bulletin Boards

By making these small digital shifts during interactive read aloud, these tools allowed students to have a much stronger conversations around texts. As a result, students shared their knowledge, as well as created new understandings from seeing their peers' ideas. The opportunities for feedback, and the resulting conversations, give students more ownership of their learning because they are able to synthesize a wide range of ideas and formulate new meaning about the text.

Classroom Implications

As a result of using digital tools, students were able to continue our conversations beyond the classroom walls. Using digital bulletin boards, such as Padlet, students were able to see other students' thoughts and understandings of the text, which helped them refine their own thinking. Also, our discussions were not a result of the same few students who always took part in the conversation. Instead, all students contributed. Thirdly, projecting the text during read aloud enabled all students to visually engage with the text at the same time. Teaching points were more immediate, and provided structure and focus to our discussions. All of these adjustments made our read aloud time social and engaging which was highly motivational for my readers.

7.5 Essential #4: Reflection: The Heart of Learning

Persuasive Essay Reflection

Now that we have wrapped up our first persuasive essay, share your thoughts about our persuasive essay unit. 1) What did you learn? 2) What was the most challenging part of this writing process? 3) What did you learn about yourself as a writer? 4) Share your favorite sentence that wrote in your essay?

Mr. Jones
Now that we have wrapped up our first persuasive essay, share your thoughts about our persuasive essay unit. 1) What did you **learn**? 2) What was the **most challenging part** of this writing process? 3) What did you learn about **yourself** as a writer? 4) Share your **favorite sentence** that wrote in your essay?

JamesOl
I learned that 1 liter of milk in canada at lowest price is 2 loonies or 1 toonie. A loonie is a canadian one dollar bill a toonie is a two doller one. The most challeging part was finding the price of the milk. I learned that I perfer canada's milk than americas. My favorite is the part when I say "we dont have that in america do we?"

Bruce
I have a very good way to write a persuasive essay. The most challenging thing was typing and coming up with a essay. What I learned about myself is I can come up with my own true facts. My favorite sentences were my persuasive ones.

Angel
I have learned that you need 6 paragraph in your essay. The conlusion was the hardest part. That i can be creatve .When i said that fish can't swim around will out toxic acid going in there gills do you want to be in a house and not be free.

Zakariah
I was writing about that we should be able to play Basketball games in Gym. I learned that we have to have 6 sentences. the sentence that was new was called the counter claim. In the counterclaim you proove the other side of the story wrong.

kayla
I learned that there is more to an augment than you think. The most challenging part of this writing prosses was coming up with a good counter claim . What I learned about my self as a writer is that I can augur better than I though . My favorite sentence that I wrote was my title " Horses Are Great . But Expensive "

Ashton
I learned that you have to put more evadices to your pargraft. The most challenging part was the Counter Argment. My favorite part was the first paeagraph.

Rachel
I learned that you had to have a counter claim instead of just reasons for your claim. The most

chris
I learned how to write persuasively. the most challenging part was the conclusion paragraph and the beginning paragraph . I learned that as a writer that writing persuasively is easy after a while. my favorite sentence is "the fate of these animals is in your hands."

Jake

As teachers, we know that it is hard to argue with the idea that reflection is a significant part of the learning process. American education theorist and reformer John Dewey states, "We do not learn from experience …we learn from reflecting on experience." My students and I always conclude our reading and writing workshops with a short debriefing time. I sit in a circle with the other student readers and writers, with notebooks open, and they share their writing process from that day. We ask questions and share our successes and struggles we had. These five to seven minutes are crucial because it grants students the chance to connect their process to their growth as learners. Reflection is fundamental for my young readers and writers to realize their work is about the process of learning, not always the final scores or end results.

Persuasive writing seems to be a very challenging genre of writing for my fifth graders. That is not to say that fifth graders can't argue. On the contrary, this age group can be very proficient at arguing when given the opportunity. However, developing a 5-6 paragraph opinion piece that uses multiple reasons and supporting details for each argument, along with counter arguments, to support a point of view has proven to be grueling for many of my students. This compelled me to incorporate more reflection into our persuasive writing units. Here are two examples of how my students used digital tools to make their reflection public.

Digital Bulletin Boards

With regards to student reflection, digital bulletin boards (e.g. Padlet, Corkulous and Popplet) are wonderful tools to make students' reflection public. Why make reflection public? I believe that students sharing their learning process with their peers only heightens awareness of their strengths and next-steps. That embodies what it means for students to take ownership and control of their learning.

After our first persuasive writing unit, I felt it was important to see where my students were in their understanding of this type of writing. I asked students to post their thoughts onto our class digital bulletin board. (e.g. What did you learn? What was the most challenging part of this writing process? What did you learn about yourself as a writer? Share your favorite sentence that wrote in your essay.) I was able to use this information as a formative assessment of their learning, and students were able to read their peers' strengths and struggles. Let's take a look at a few examples of how my students used the digital bulletin boards for reflection.

* Link to our Persuasive Essay Reflection digital bulletin board

Madison

I learned that you have to have details for your reasons. The most challenging part was trying to find strong reasons for my point of view. I learned about how I can put transitional words in my writing as a writer. My favorite sentence was when I told the people that watch too much television "Stop watching television and exercise!"

When I read Madison's reflection, I noticed that she learned a great deal about herself as a writer. She learned the importance of using details to support her arguments, and she claimed that this was the most challenging aspect for her. Also, Madison integrated transitional words throughout her writing (e.g. for example, firstly , in conclusion). As a result of this reflection, I gleaned that I could scaffold Madison as she worked to include supporting details throughout her information and persuasive writing. Another teaching point for Madison could be to encourage her to keep using transition words as a way to show express agreement, compare/contrast arguments, emphasize a point or add information.

ReAnne'

My favorite sentence that I wrote was at the end is mom you should get me a new laptop! Also I learned was how to start your intro paragraph.It was hard to think what I want to start it with.The most challenging part was my last paragraph to wrap up my essay.It was hard because it took me a little while to think what I want to say so I did some thinking and said "Mom now you should get me a new laptop because one getting homework done before someone else gets on,two if I'm not on a family member needs to get on they can,three I can play video games before or after dinner or even homework.Those are my reasons so I can get a better laptop before christmas.Mom now go get me a new laptop!"

ReAnne's reflection indicated that she struggled with finding an effective way to start and end her essay. The fact

that this was a challenge indicates that she understands the importance of these two paragraphs as bookends for the essay. As I continued to work with ReAnne through writing conferences, I planned to check in and offer feedback about her writing choices for introducing and concluding her writing pieces. It seemed that ReAnne would benefit from some mentor texts with strong introductions and conclusions and I provided those for her too.

Screencasting Whiteboard Apps

Screencasting Whiteboards (e.g. Educreations, Explain Everything) are another excellent way for students to display their learning and reflection. Students worked far more independently on their second persuasive writing experience. Without as much scaffolding as before, it was time for students to share their purposeful writing decisions that went into their writing. Students used the interactive whiteboard app Explain Everything to share three parts of their persuasive essay. I wanted them to think like writers, and explain their purpose and intentions with the decisions they made as writers. Here are some examples of the students' screencasts as they reflect on their writing process.

Upon viewing Tiara's screencast it's clear that Tiara has gained much insight into herself as a writer. She starts her essay very intentionally. She writes, "Despite what people think…" because she says that using larger words has a better chance of grabbing the reader's attention. Secondly, it's clear that Tiara is writing with her audience in mind. The fact that she is using transition words to organize her writing indicates that she sees the purpose behind organizing her writing. Lastly, Tiara shows the importance of revising during the writing process by giving some examples of "ordinary words that (she) exchanged for larger words." Tiara's screencast indicates that she is a strong writer that has learned a great deal about audience and purpose. All in all, it seems that Tiara is a very strong persuasive writer.

Rory's screencast also indicates how he has become much more intentional as a writer. His first piece of evidence indicates the importance of the introduction paragraph as a way to state his point of view. Also, Rory included a counter-argument in his persuasive essay. He states how he uses this opportunity to discredit an opposing argument. Finally, he points out that he tries to give his readers a "guilt trip" as a method of convincing his readers to agree with his point of view. Similar to Tiara, Rory has made some very intentional writing decisions.
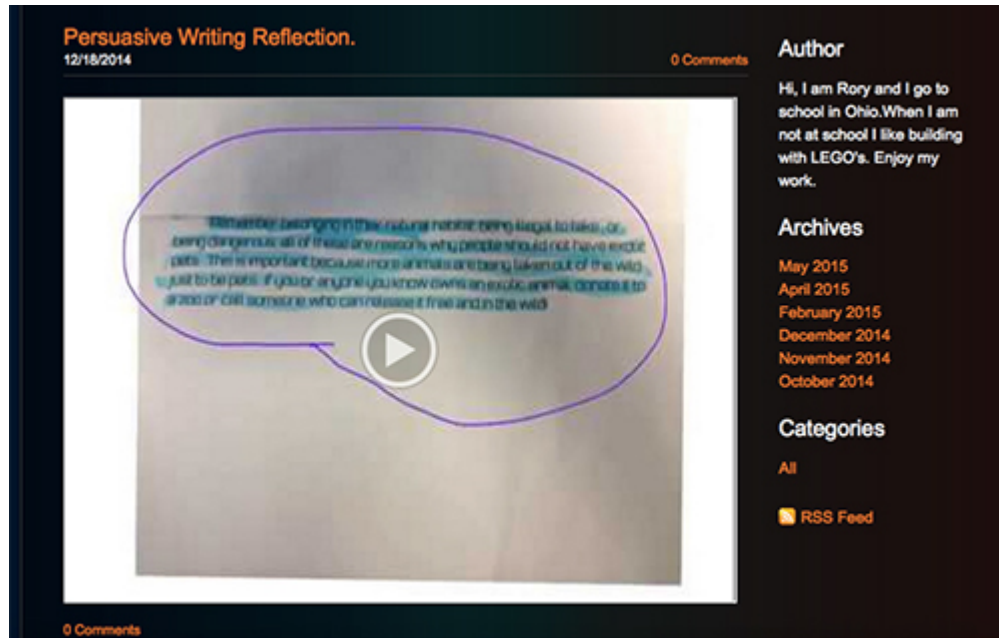
Digital Portfolios – Reflection During The Learning Journey

Student reflection about their thinking is such a crucial part of the learning process. That is why I must continue to find ways to help students increase the quality of their reflections included in their digital portfolios. One way to do this is to be a role model of reflection. I need to continue to think aloud during mini lessons and make my thinking and reasoning clear and obvious. A second way to strengthen my students' reflection skills is to keep on incorporating it into our regular conversations. I'll invite students to have conversations about their problem-solving processes. A third method to make sure reflection is always at the forefront is to continue to design questions that will encourage students to share their new understandings. I've seen the power of well-crafted question or sentence prompt, and how it can push students to think beyond the final product and focus on the learning process. Here are some examples of ways I question or prompt students:

"Prompts to Encourage Reflection" Presentation

Classroom Implications of Reflection

By making reflection a key component into our daily literacy work, my students have realized that learning is not always about facts and details. Rather, learning is about discovery. Students need to discover their own reading and writing process, strategies to build comprehension and make their own meaning about texts. My role is to guide and facilitate their reflection so they can monitor and refine their own learning process. As a result

of making their reflection public using digital bulletin boards, students are more attentive to their progress and next steps they need to take to reach their learning goals. In conjunction with public reflection, students used a screencasting app to explain the thinking behind their writing choices.

7.6 Combining the Essentials
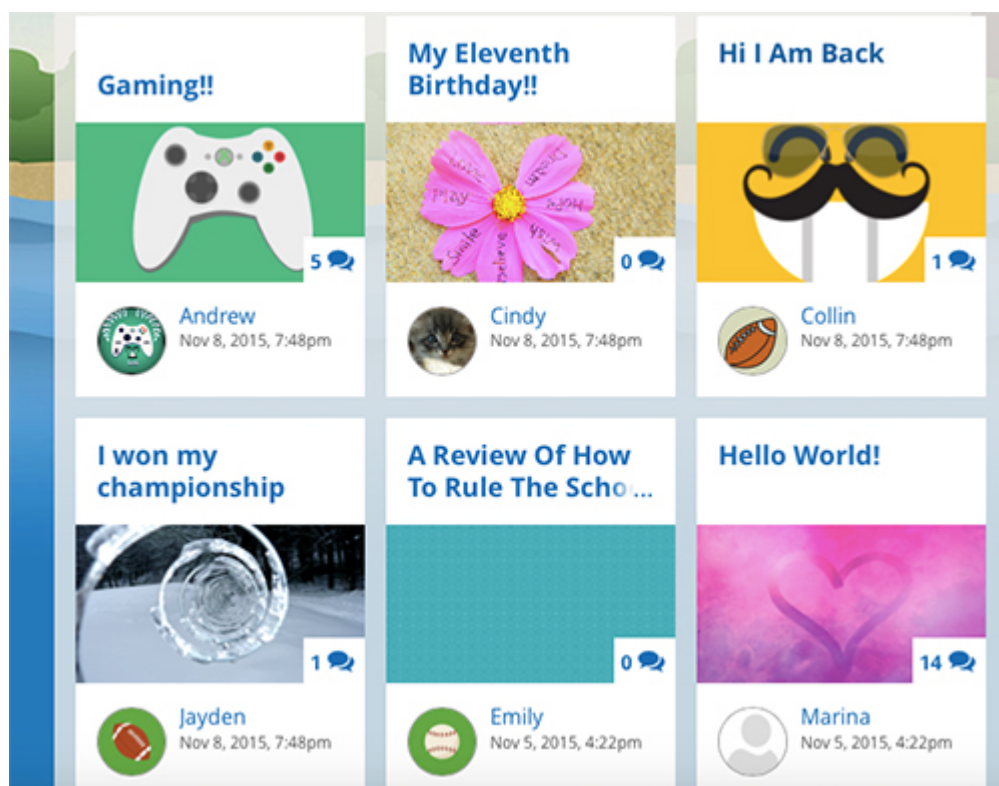
Student blogging has become such an integral part of our digital learning culture over the past few years. It's difficult to think of a day when students aren't blogging or thinking about blogging. While students' blogging is trendy right now, and many are quick to hop of the blogging bandwagon, I wanted to make sure I was using blogging with purpose and intentionality. Here is an example of one student's blogging experience that blends audience, autonomy, discourse and reflection. I believe that this example shows Gage as a digital learner who is cultivating his own learning in a powerful way.

Gage was a member of the boys' writing club that I started a few years back. The boys voted to name it "Dudes Awesome Writing Gang", or D.A.W.G for short. I have found, like many other teachers, that writing is a challenge for some of my male students. When asking boys why they don't like writing, they consistently answer by saying, "It's boring!" "I'm terrible at it." "It hurts my hand." "Teachers want me to write about boring stuff." That is why I enlisted the boys in my classroom to start a optional weekly writing club. Each Friday, the boys and I would

have lunch together and simply talk about our writing. Boys would share their writing and give feedback to each other. (On one occasion, one boy's piece of writing made milk come out of another's nose, but that is for another time.) I wanted writing to be less-threatening and engaging for the boys. No topic was off limits. I would only give a writing prompt if they were stuck. I wanted to them to see writing as a way to explain their passions, make people laugh, and share their emotions. This also proved the power of giving and getting feedback, as well as writing for an audience other than themselves.

As part of D.A.W.G., Gage was inspired by Ralph Fletcher's Guy-Write: What Every Guy Writer Needs to Know. He wanted to use his blog to post weekly advice column for "dude writers." Gage's strong voice comes across in a "Tips for Dude Writers" column.
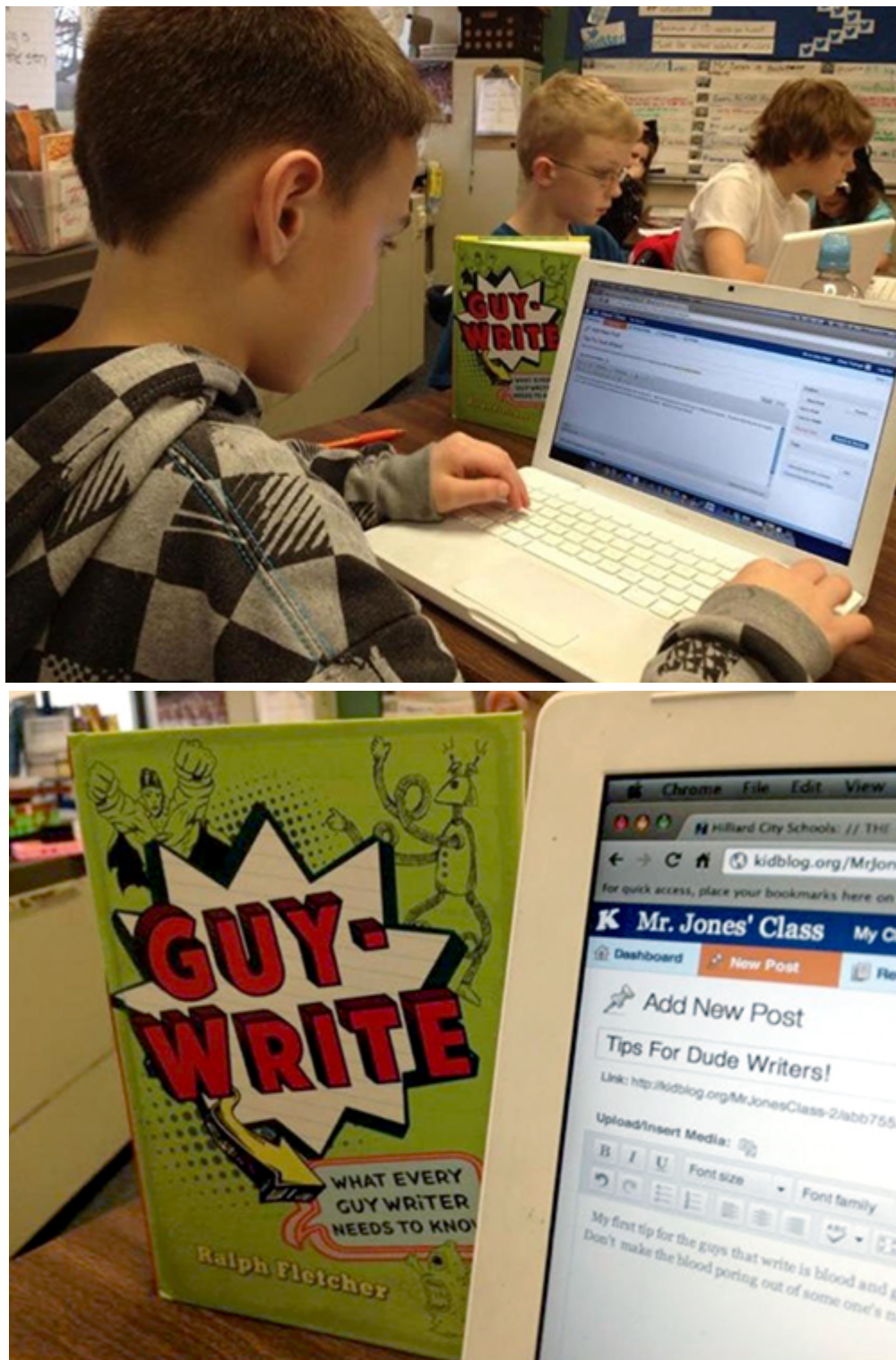
How did this simple blog post incorporate all four essential elements?

Audience

Gage's topic was meant for an audience outside of himself. By the very nature of an advice column, he had to make sure his writing was geared towards a specific group of reader alignnone aligncenters, w in this case, is boy

writers. Furthermore, after his first "Tips of Dude Writers" post, others students were demanding he write more in this series.

Autonomy

Gage was engaged with his writing piece because he had a choice of topics for his blog. He was also empowered as he wanted to share his voice to share a topic that was meaningful to him.

Tips For Dude Writers!! (Romance)

By Gage on Dec 18, 2012

Ralph Fletcher is the author of Guy-Write. He says, "We may not always show it, but we definitely feel things and feel them deeply." That is why todays tip for the guys that write is ROMANCE. Now your most likely thinking thats nasty, thats girly! Well thats not what I think. Romance is a big part of a story. Romance is usually the thing that motivates a character to do something big in the story. For example Romeo and Juilet they were madly in love with each other. They killed there selves becuase they thought each other were dead and that really got you thinking. Usually romance in people's writing happens at the end. For example The Last Olympian (Percy Jackson Series) Percy kissed Annabeth. Romance keeps you reading in a book your always thinking when are they going to fall in love or start dateing. Sometimes you have a tite feeling in your gut that they will fall in love even if they don't show any sine of love also you can just tell they will be together. **Plus girls dig some romance!**

So in a Nutshel, Romance is a big part of writing.

So tune in next time on.....

Tips For Dude Writers!!

Discourse

Once posted, Gage received multiple comments about this work. As you can see, my comments focused on praising his craft. The next comment from another classmate states how he liked the examples that Gage used. Feedback is an important part of discourse as it informs the learner about how his ideas are being understood.

Mr. Jones

December 26, 2012 at 8:50 PM

Great blog post, Gage! I love how you used a quote from Ralph Fletcher's book. That is a great way to show how much an author inspires you. You make a really good argument about why romance is something that guy writers can write about.

I also really like how your last few blog posts have followed a format. You always end a post with "In a nutshell..." That rocks, dude!

Edit | Unapprove | Delete

Reply

Caleb Da.

January 8, 2013 at 9:52 AM

Gage I think Its boss that you just wrote that blog because that is very good and i like how you used examples from a book

Edit | Unapprove | Delete

Reply

Reflection

Gage used Fletcher's book as inspiration; in doing so, he had to reflect on Fletcher's writing and how he could use Fletcher's advice to get his point across.

When thinking about the digital opportunities my students are using, I want to make sure I am maximizing each opportunity for students to take control of their learning. Whether it is blogging, digital bulletin boards or other applications, I always try to ensure a digital experience that: 1) gives students more ownership of their learning than I have, and 2) helps grow their seeds of learning so they can fully harvest their digital learning farm.

Conclusion

My students have shown me that I cannot meet the demands of 21st century learning, with 20th century systems and tools. As their teacher, my hope is to continue to nurture a space where students do more purposeful digital work. Audience, autonomy, discourse and reflection have become the foundation upon which all of my students' digital experiences are built. My hope is to design digital experiences where my students shift from merely users of digital tools to contributors of digital content. My students have been motivated to take ownership of their learning when they have:

- Had an authentic audience outside of their classroom
- A chance to reflect and give constructive feedback
- Participated in collaborative discourse with peers
- More voice and choice in the digital tools they use to show their learning.

I strive for my role to be one that encourages them as learners and empowers them to truly own their learning.

Resources

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