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The most efficient and effective ways to address new literacies for the 21st century classroom

Catherine Elizabeth McGowan
Rowan University, catetoy@gmail.com

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**THE MOST EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS NEW
LITERACIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM**

by

Catherine E. McGowan

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Education
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at

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Thesis Chair: Susan Browne, Ph.D.

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Ryan A. McGowan, and to my parents, James and Cindy Toy, for without them I would not be where I am today.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my appreciation to my professors that have lead me through this journey with their continued support and guidance. All that I have gained over the past two years will carry through with me into my next professional endeavor.

I would like to thank my husband Ryan for his continued love, support, and constant revisions. I would like to thank my daughter, Molly, and son, CJ, for bringing joy in moments of frustration and hardship. I would like to thank my mother Cindy, stepfather Chris, and in-laws Kathy and Chuck for supporting me throughout the past two years. My family has been my source of support, guidance, and strength.

Abstract

Catherine E. McGowan
THE MOST EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS NEW
LITERACIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM
2017-2018

Susan Browne, Ph. D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study is to provide an extensive review of literature that focuses on the most efficient and effective ways to implement new literacies in the classroom. It focuses on how to maximize the impact of new literacies instruction on student learning through curriculum, and professional development and discusses the impact of new literacies on student motivation. The thesis provides information on how to define new literacies and discusses the impact they are having on the school environment and learning process. It discusses the importance of new literacies and why they should be integrated into today's classroom. The literature focuses on existing curriculum development approaches that can be beneficial to developing a new literacies curriculum. The literature review finishes with the benefits of motivation and engagement of students with new literacies. Finally, the thesis finishes with considerations for practices and professional development that will allow for successful implementation of new literacies in the classroom. Implementation of new literacies is essential to develop skills and strategies students will need to utilize in order to be successful in the 21st Century.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

September 1, 2009 was the start of a new beginning for me. Had I known what my new career was going to be like, I may not have accepted the job. My first day in my new job was rough. I felt that I was prepared but, at the same time, I was nervous. Working in an alternative school was much more challenging than I thought it would be and my confidence quickly deteriorated. To make matters worse, my supervisor came in to observe me in action on my first day. I can still remember looking at him pleading for guidance with how to handle the classroom as the environment was something I had not experienced in my first 2 years of teaching. Working with emotional disturbed high school students was definitely a challenge.

The students really dug deep under my skin to try to get me to crack under the pressure. Often times I wanted to cry, and I did, a lot, in that first year. I strongly doubted my abilities as a teacher and frequently wondered if this was a career I could continue to work in. Despite my rough start, I kept showing up the next day and the day after that and the day after that. I had some good days, though most were bad, but continued to persevere. By the end of the year, when I looked back at the beginning of the year, I found I was changed. The students found a place in my heart and I knew I needed to return the next year and continue the journey I started. Even though these students had a tough exterior, they were really looking for someone to support and guide them both emotionally and academically.

Now 8 years later and I am continuing this journey to motivate and engage students who feel broken, abandoned, not smart enough, not good enough, and/or trapped

in their cycle of bad decision-making ways. Over the years, I have learned the importance of building relationships with these students. Without building relationships, I would not have any success in guiding my student's to better themselves as people or as learners. I often feel that if I left, there would be nothing for my students to look forward too and they would regress from the social and academic progress we made together. It is because of these relationships and their impact on my success as a teacher that I have reflected on my journey and continue to want to better myself as a professional. I want to help these students succeed and feel accomplished and I believe that I owe it to myself and to them to become the most effective educator that I can be.

So here I sit thinking about my beginning, writing my story, knowing that this is still just the beginning. I realize that each year has a new beginning with new personalities, new minds, new information, and relationships waiting to be formed. The thing I enjoy the most is seeing familiar faces each year and having another opportunity to work with the returning students. I love being able to take new ideas I have gathered and share them with our students. One of my favorite things I hear from my students is that they appreciate that I take the time to make sure each student understands what I am trying to teach them. They will often say that I provide them with numerous techniques to learn something especially if they do not understand it the first time. This lets me know that I am reaching all my students on their level and that they are taking something that will benefit them for the rest of their lives from our interaction.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to identify strategies and ideas for developing and effectively implementing a flexible and accessible curriculum that incorporates new

literacies, particularly integration of technology and information and communication technologies, to develop a 21st Century classroom for students. As a special education high school teacher in an alternative school setting, I have found that a majority of our students lack the motivation, self-efficacy, and knowledge to prepare, learn, and engage in a school setting that is designed to prepare them for success in the 21st Century. I am curious about the efficiency and effectiveness that new literacies can have in motivating, engaging, and assisting students to developing into literate individuals so they may be personally successful and contribute to society. I am interested in working with educators to develop a comprehensive and cohesive curriculum that supports and prepares students in an alternative school setting for their role in society.

Recognizing that teachers utilize “long-standing literacy routines [that] have a new technology tacked on here or there, without any way changing the substance of the practice” is what grew my curiosity about the incorporation of new literacies into the classroom (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003, p. 29). Students at our campus were struggling to meet the demands of State Standards and Testing as well as having difficulty demonstrating significant improvement on campus-wide and classroom assessments. The students understand and have the knowledge of the basic, typical uses of a computer such as creating word documents and slideshow presentations, but they lack the ability to interact via the Internet and engage in social practices to further their development and understanding of the world around them.

Students today need to be able to engage in a 21st Century environment in which they “comprehend and construct information using print and non-print materials in fixed and virtual platforms across disciplines” (International Literacy Association, 2012). In

order to attain the skills necessary to do so, students need teachers that are well-versed in new literacies as well as a curriculum that is engaging, motivating, flexible, and accessible. The importance of 21st Century learning in the school environment is significant and continuously growing. Students need to be equipped with the skills to adequately participate in the global society and have the skills to continue to adapt as the technology grows and changes.

In one study, I read about how a teacher incorporated new literacies in his fourth-grade classroom in a variety of ways. The study pointed out the importance of students being equipped with the knowledge to utilize available technology. It took planning, guidance, support from administration, and knowledge of new literacies to motivate his students to engage in the curriculum. This fourth-grade teacher utilized social practices to allow students to connect virtually with their peers in the classroom as well as their peers across the globe. Through the use of laptops connected to the internet, Barone found an increase in student motivation resulting in higher writing competency and critical thinking abilities. (Barone & Wright, 2008) I want to explore effective new literacy practices, such as the above example, to implement into the classroom environment.

Another study also discussed the importance of student motivation in the classroom. Students intrinsic motivation decreases as they approach middle school age while their extrinsic motivation increases. Teachers should assist students in developing a personal task mindset instead of a performance task mindset. Utilizing the engagement model of instruction, teachers intertwine six classroom practices to motivate students in a personal task environment thus resulting in more student engagement. With student motivation and engagement increasing, students can be more successful in the classroom

thus building their competence, self-efficacy, performance, and learning. (Davis & Guthrie, 2003) I believe that efficient and effective ideas and practices for motivation and engagement are important in developing literacy skills for students.

To aid in student motivation and engagement, Meo (2008) discusses the importance of developing a curriculum that is characterized by the “what”, “how”, and “why” of learning (p. 22). Meo (2008) discusses the process in developing a curriculum that is accessible to all students. Materials and resources should be “flexible and varied and take advantage of the digital media” (Meo, 2008, p. 22). I would like to examine whether following the suggested guidelines expressed by Meo when developing a curriculum will help to create a curriculum that is flexible and accessible for all students.

Karchmer (2001) argues that there is a “lack of substantial training provided by teacher education and staff development programs” (Karchmer, 2001, p. 449). Educators need time, practice, and support to incorporate new literacies into the classroom, especially when integrating technology and information and communication technologies. Educators need access to professional development that not only teaches the basics of the curriculum that is to be integrated but also the fundamentals for integrating the curriculum. To do so, professional development on new literacies, technology instruction, and necessary literacy skills for students should be provided throughout the year to educators. My goal is to find the most efficient and effective professional development techniques and combine them to improve the professional development program at my informing study site.

Statement of the Research Problem and Question

Currently, the study site that has informed my research is rooted in writing literacy, lacking ideas and guidance for new literacy practices that our students need in order to be successful in 21st century society. In addition, there is a lack of professional development in the area of new literacies from the administration. Teachers need support, guidance, and resources to guide their students toward acquiring the appropriate skills needed for the present and future. Thus, my research question became: What are the most efficient and effective ways to address new literacies to maximize the impact on students learning through curriculum, motivation, and professional development to provide students the necessary skills to engage in the 21st Century? How do educators develop and engage students in a 21st century curriculum including new literacies with limited technology? How does engaging students in new literacies impact their motivation and engagement to improve reading comprehension skills? What practices should teachers participate in to develop 21st century learners? How will students benefit from learning in a 21st century classroom? The specific aim of this study is to identify best practices for developing and implementing curriculum, development of a 21st Century classroom that utilizes new literacies, improving the effectiveness of professional development, and effects on student motivation and engagement.

Story of the question. My question developed over my years working in an underprivileged school environment that lacks technology, information and communication technologies to engage students in a 21st Century curriculum. I have been working as an English Language Arts teacher in an alternative school setting for 8 years. Over those 8 years, the local school districts and state have expressed the need to

prepare and engage students in technology use, so they may be more equipped for the future. In my role at the school, I was constantly asked how students could be motivated and more engaged to improve their reading skills across all disciplines. In assessing the classroom and instruction practices, I recognized what I believed to be a lack of technology utilization in the classroom necessary to properly prepare these students for the 21st century.

I also recognized that working in this environment, these students need support in interacting not only with their peers but with society. The mission of the informing study site is for the students to become independent and responsible citizens with the knowledge and skills teachers model. To do so, I needed to be able to utilize the skills and knowledge of new literacies so that I can effectively integrate them into meaningful and conducive lessons for my students.

Over the course of the past couple years, I have been immersing myself in ideas and understanding of how to utilize technology that is more than the typical, simple uses normally seen in the classroom. As I began my journey as a Reading Specialist two years ago, I was able to learn more about the world of technology as I had to immerse myself in new technologies that allowed me to collaborate socially via the Internet. A great deal of the coursework I did over the past two years focused on new literacies and their incorporation into the classroom. When presented with this opportunity to conduct teacher researcher as part of my Reading Specialist masters degree program, I immediately thought about new literacies and how they are underutilized in my classroom. Each student has access to a computer; however, the most they are required to do with the computer is create word documents and slideshows.

I began to think of how I could incorporate more interdisciplinary collaboration and technology use in the classroom. I wanted students to become more involved in the use of new literacies and expand their outlook utilizing technology to collaborate and socialize with peers outside of the classroom. Through observation and getting to know my students, I realized that they are routinely immersed in technology, especially with the utilization of social media. Even with the heavy personal utilization of technology, very few of the students use technology to express their thoughts, understanding, and/or opinions in the classroom. Students should be provided with opportunities to engage with new literacies in the classroom to improve motivation and learning.

The remainder of this paper is a review of literature published by a variety of professors, teachers, theorists, and researchers on the topic of new literacies and development of student's skills needed to be a productive citizen in the 21st Century. Chapter Two will review current literature that focuses on curriculum development, classroom integration, professional development, and student motivation, performance, and learning of new literacies. Chapter Three discusses the understanding of the context of the study and the process of the research and methodology that was utilized. Chapter Four provides considerations for new literacies practices and professional development.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

New Literacies addresses the challenge of preparing today's students with the skills necessary for success in the 21st Century society. This can be a daunting and difficult task for educators that are normalized by the instruction of traditional literacy practices, especially within the ever-evolving realm of the Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). It is the belief of the International Reading Association that "Literacy educators have a responsibility to integrate these new literacies into the curriculum to prepare students for successful civic participation in a global environment" (International Reading Association, 2009). This chapter presents a review of the literature that discusses the importance of providing new literacies instruction, effective and informative curriculum development ideas for new literacies instruction, support through professional development, and new literacies instruction's impact on student motivation, performance, and learning.

The first section discusses how new literacies is being defined and examined. It focuses on the important aspects of new literacies as well as areas where new literacies plays a role and how the role is defined through social language and new ethos.

The second section discusses the importance of providing new literacies instruction in the classroom. The International Reading Association (2012) states "The 21st century has brought with it a tremendous evolution in how adolescents engage with text" (p. 2). New Literacies offers a perspective on how to prepare students for engaging with technology and other information and communication technologies in coordination

with traditional literacy practices. Therefore, it is important to understand new literacies and why instructing students with this perspective is valuable.

The third section conveys ideas and guidance for developing a curriculum that is cognizant of the 21st century skills students require to be successful in society. Cammack et. Al. (2004) states that “In an information age, we believe it becomes essential to prepare students for these new literacies because they are central to the use of information and acquisition of knowledge” (Cammack, Coiro, Kinzer, & Leu, 2004, p. 1571). This section includes research on different effective curriculum development ideas on how to develop a curriculum that is cohesive and sound to be incorporated into all grade levels.

In the fourth section, I discuss how and why there is a need for continued support to efficiently and effectively implement a curriculum supported with new literacy practices. The International Reading Association (2012) states that “school leaders play an important role in supporting efforts across disciplines to integrate appropriate...instruction” (p. 6). Professional development is important to ensuring successful efforts to integrate appropriate instruction. This section provides support for professional development that is pertinent to success in developing literate pupils.

The fifth section discusses the effects of integrating New Literacies practices. This section focuses on the positive effects new literacies instruction has on student motivation, engagement, performance, and learning.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and emphasis on the importance of supporting educators and school districts in integrating new literacies for these digital natives.

Relevance of Social Language and New Ethos to New Literacies

New literacies is a term that focuses on the intermingling of traditional literacy with that of Information and Communication Technology's in a socio-cultural approach (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003). Throughout this thesis, new literacies is defined as "the utilization of technology and ICTs to develop the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge" (Cammack, Coiro, Kinzer, & Leu, 2004, p. 1572). Integrating new literacies practices allows people "to use the Internet and ICTs to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of that information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others" (Cammack, Coiro, Kinzer, & Leu, 2004, p. 1572). Knobel and Lankshear express that new literacies is more than just including technology in the classroom to produce a neat final copy of a paper. New literacies is more about the participation and collaboration that can be utilized through the technology. Knobel and Lankshear (2003) argue that more connections need to be made between the social practices and Discourses that students interact with outside of school and those they experience in school (p. 31). These new literacies practices need to find a way into the classroom to support students in learning skills that are important for them to become productive citizens.

Classrooms designed to support students to be self-sufficient when utilizing technology and ICTs help to develop meaning with the technology and do more than just access information. Today's students are digital natives and are constantly using various forms of technology but are they able to think critically about what they read or engage in

social practices that further their thinking and understanding of text? “As new literacies that include digital and media technologies evolve, preparing students to understand and adjust to these literacy demands is critical to current and future expectations for pleasure and work” (Barone & Wright, 2008, p. 292).

When thinking about new literacies, it is important to understand James Gee’s theory of Discourse as “Literacies are always embedded in Discourses” and students will thrive in different areas (Knobel & Lankshear, 2003, p. 8). Gee (2005) states that D/discourse analysis is “analyzing language as it is fully integrated with all the other elements that go into social practices (ways of thinking or feeling, ways of manipulating objects or tools, ways of using non-linguistic symbol systems, etc.)” (Gee, An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method, 2005, p. 9). Educators need to provide opportunities for students to thrive in their Discourse/discourse for students to engage in different ways with different social aspects. Gee (2003) states “Furthermore, very often today words and images of various sorts are juxtaposed and integrated in a variety of ways” (Gee, 2003). Images, symbols, diagrams, and other visual symbols have become more significant in today’s literacy especially for today’s generation of students. New literacy practices take into consideration these new languages and looks to incorporate learning the skills needed to think deeply and critically with the inclusion of traditional literacy practices and skills to develop student abilities.

Importance of Providing New Literacies Instruction in the Classroom

Barone and Wright (2008) discuss the role of new literacies in the classroom and the benefits of utilizing digital and media technologies to support new literacies. The article brings about the understanding that new literacies need to be carefully thought out

and planned accordingly to be the most effective and instructional. Three important components to the introduction of new literacies into the classroom include utilizing software in an effective manner, being prepared to adjust as the new literacies change, and understanding that new literacies are essential to the classroom and students need to be offered equal opportunities (p. 292-293).

Wright (2008) discusses his journey in developing a plan to integrate new literacies in the classroom. He expresses the importance of setting goals and objectives to utilize different software and aspects that technology has to offer. Another key component is his instruction of the technology while still maintaining social practices. He incorporates a mix of traditional literacy instruction such as teacher led discussions and then incorporates technology in which students collaborate, perform, engage, and learn (p. 298). Wright carefully considers each piece of technology, especially the Internet, to enhance classroom learning. He provides explicit instruction of the technology prior to its implementation and use. Wright also places emphasis on setting up classroom expectations for the use of the technology. This requires a lot of prep and planning for the lessons to go smoothly and to be effective for student learning and engagement. (Barone & Wright, 2008)

Houck (2016) emphasizes the importance of balance between traditional literacy skills and digital literacy skills. Both are important to the development and knowledge gain of the students. Utilizing digital texts in the classroom has its benefits: increase in motivation and engagement; allows for flexibility and choice; promotes inquiry and strategy application; and enhances the reading experience with proper scaffolding and support. While there are benefits to incorporating a balanced approach, Houck

mentions the challenges associated with implementing this balance in the classroom. These challenges include teaching students to read effectively in digital platforms, marking and notetaking skills, how to self-regulate, and embracing the changes associated with implementing technology into the classroom. However, if new literacy strategies and skills are properly planned and implemented into the classroom, the rewards for student success will be beneficial to their engagement in a global society in the future. (Houck, 2016)

Hammett (n.d.), acknowledges the connection between new literacies, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and 21st century skills. The article examines the theory of New Literacies as defined by Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel and Donald Leu. New Literacies are engrained in a sociocultural perspective in which students learn to generate, communicate, and negotiate meaningful content through digital platforms. Students are able to communicate and collaborate with each other through images, sounds, writing, speaking, listening, codes, graphics, etc. This change in the interaction with one another and the content is the “new ethos” stuff reflected in new literacies. Knobel and Lankshear (2007) state that “new literacies involve different ‘ethos stuff’ from that which is typically associated with conventional literacies [meaning] that new literacies are more ‘participatory’, ‘collaborative’, and ‘distributed’ in nature than conventional literacies” (p. 9). Students are moving into a world that is more focused around this type of participatory interaction, so it is important to have exposure to these “new ethos” types of interactions through the integration of new literacies in the classroom.

Leu's description of new literacies encompasses similar views which include the skills, strategies, and disposition necessary to utilize the Internet and ICT's effectively. New literacies go beyond using the technology, such as simply constructing a word document, and should include collaborating and participating in social practices across digital platforms to gain and provide valuable insight. The study found a relationship between new literacies, 21st century skills, and ICT's that is important in the advancement of interaction in a global society for digital natives. Students need to be able to navigate the technology appropriately and use it to enhance the understanding of the world. (Hammett)

Barzillai and Wolf (2009) examine the need for students to have the ability to comprehend text including "inferential and deductive reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection, and insight" (p. 32). The importance of fostering learning in building skills of communication, collaboration, and creation with digital text must be taken into consideration. It is the role of the educator to ensure that each learner can successfully navigate and utilize the technologically. This can present some difficulty for students who are concrete learners. Even with this possible difficulty, educators should encourage and teach deep reading of digital text. Reading comprehension skills need to be explicitly taught as the brain requires support and instruction. Not only can the educator provide the necessary scaffolding and support to the student, the technology can also provide support. Time is required to make adequate choices about which technology to use to build reading comprehension skills and develop deep reading of text across a variety of platforms. However, the most important component of success in developing understanding and utilization of reading comprehension is to provide a curriculum that

uses both traditional literacy practices in coordination with new literacy practices.
(Barzillai & Wolf, 2009)

Brown (2016) investigated a year-long study to document a group of 2nd graders digital literacy experiences with e-readers (p. 42). The researcher joined a 2nd grade teacher in providing small group instruction with e-readers and observing student interactions two days a week. Information was gathered through notes, videotaping, teacher journaling, audiotapes, and student interviews conducted at the beginning and end of the study. Students were observed engaging with each other socially about the text they were reading on the e-readers. They developed thoughtful meaning making understandings of the text through their social interactions. Brown (2016) states it is important to “[blend] technology with human interactions to facilitate the reading process for young students” (p. 53). Comprehension of text is more meaningful when it can be discussed and one’s thoughts become expanding by listening to others (Brown, 2016, p. 53). The study concluded that “technology should be used in meaningful, integrated ways” (Brown, 2016, p. 53). The use of “digital tools and how they connect to the reading process” must be taught to students (Brown, 2016, p. 53). Through this study, student’s motivation to read book independently increased. In addition, the instructional reading levels of the students grew an “average increase of four instructional levels” (Brown, 2016, p. 52). Thus, demonstrating that utilizing a blend of traditional literacy practices with digital tools, new literacy practices, can increase student’s comprehension abilities and overall literacy abilities.

Through a research study, it was found that students were more motivated and engaged in the learning when technology was incorporated into the lessons. Cohen et. al.

(2015) focus on the need to incorporate technology into the classroom to benefit struggling readers. When using technology, performance was improved when demonstrating learned skills across disciplines and tests. The necessary support and guidance is provided to the students to use the technology. Lessons included teaching how to use the technology and setting expectations with certain objectives in mind. Pre-planning and development of lessons allowed for successful implementation of the lessons leading to a greater success rate. In this study, the utilization of technology in the classroom showed improvement in the reading comprehension scores. (Cohen, Ganley, Hall, & Vue, 2015)

Existing Approaches to Guide Teachers in Curriculum Development

Houck (2016) expresses her findings on the importance of “Balancing our time between reading print and digital texts [as it] requires a nimble brain that can make connections and develop metacognitive skills in and across both environments” (Houck, 2016, p. 1). This begs the question of how to develop and incorporate a curriculum that encompasses 21st Century skills with new literacies. As discussed in the position statement presented by the International Reading Association, students should receive “access to engaging and motivating content and instruction to support their continued development” (International Reading Association, 2012). The position statement explores the objectives and reasons for development of curriculum that fosters 21st century learning that includes new literacies and digital technology.

One of the most important notes made in the position statement is the need to instruct with this particular mindset across all the disciplines. Each of the content areas in which a student engages should include goals and objectives that incorporate 21st century

learning with new literacies and digital technologies. Continuous assessment tracks the student performance on the specified skills being taught. Educators need to be a part of the development process of the curriculum in addition to the methods of assessments to be sure goals are aligned. The goal of developing the assessment with the curriculum is to improve instruction and learning. (International Reading Association, 2012)

According to Grace Meo (2008), the curriculum should be accessible both within the general education population and special education population. The curriculum needs to support academic achievement through flexibility. Learners are diverse regardless of if they are classified in special education or not. The curriculum should be flexible enough to allow all learners to achieve academic success as well as to allow educators to easily differentiate their instruction to support all learners. Meo (2008) discusses the importance of developing a curriculum that is flexible and accessible without barriers for learning. Curriculum development requires the process of defining “goals that provide appropriate challenges for all students, ensuring that the means is not part of the goal”, use “methods that are flexible and diverse enough to support and challenge all learners”, use “materials that are flexible and varied and take advantage of the digital media”, and use “assessment techniques that are sufficiently flexible to provide ongoing, accurate information to inform instruction and determine student understanding and knowledge” (Meo, 2008, p. 22).

Meo discusses that utilizing an Universal Design for Learning framework to create a curriculum allows educators to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the students rather than the students needing to adapt to the curriculum. Curriculum development can be tedious and challenging. The process begins with establishing a

curriculum development team. The team designates a group facilitator whose primary job is to schedule meetings, set the agenda, answer questions, and support the process.

Collaboration is the most important element in developing a curriculum. Meo (2008) states that “Collaboration is the key ingredient among the team members, with all focusing on developing a flexible curriculum that supports all learners’ achievement of identified goals” (p. 23). There are 4 major steps to developing the curriculum: 1. Set goals; 2. Analyze current status of curriculum and classroom; 3. Apply supported framework to lesson or unit development; 4. Teach the lesson or unit. (Meo, 2008) New literacy skills need to be taught to today’s students. Developing a curriculum in which new literacies is engrained benefits and teaches students specific skills that will allow them to be productive in today’s society.

Zinser (2012) argues that students need to be prepared for the adult working world regardless of the route they take to achieve their status. He believes “there are foundation skills and process skills that will be needed for whatever scenario comes about” (p. 64). The article outlines the important skills that would be necessary to succeed in a global society. He = highlights the importance of developing 21st century skills that focus on “higher-level objectives such as global awareness and literacy in finance, critical thinking, and collaboration” (p. 66). He believes that there is too much focus on teacher led and controlled academic skills being utilized rather than allowing students to take control and make inquiries on their own. He explains that curriculum needs to allow for connections between the knowledge being learned and skills that are required to get there. The more connections students are able to make the better the chance of them finding “personal meaning, internalizing it and literally putting it in their

own words” (p. 67). Zinser believes this can be done through contextual teaching and learning using the REACT model.

The REACT model (Relating, Experiencing, Applying, Cooperating, and Transferring) emphasizes making connections between what the students learn, how they utilize the skills that makes sense to them, having discussions about their findings, and applying the learned skills in a variety of settings and disciplines. Students need to be taught skills they can internalize and use regardless of post-graduation plans. There is a need to be able to think critically and transfer those learned skills into any situation and/or setting. One aspect of those skills is the utilization of technology.

Being able to use the technology is not enough to be successful. Skills are needed to utilize any piece of technology and know what technology is appropriate and suitable for different situations. Students must make critical decisions in which technology to use for the intended purpose like using PowerPoint or Prezi to create a multimedia slide show versus a word processor that would be more appropriate for a research paper. The article continues by discussing the importance of process skills; the ability to see the whole picture and each of its intricate parts and how those parts connect and compare to other intricate parts of a whole. It is then connections are being made and skills are utilized to discover something new. Students learn the process to reach a solution by identifying that answers can be reached in a variety of ways. When developing new skills, the process of developing the solution carries greater significance than arriving at an answer.

Zinser (2012) states that an important component to making connections between what is taught and the skills to discover meaning is through developing altruism (Zinser, 2012, p. 70). It is here that an understanding of the people within society and across other

cultures is developed. Altruism, in this sense, is the understanding that humans have the same basic needs regardless of where they come from and can contribute to a global society that enhances the well-being of the world for the future. It is important for students to understand that when the group excels through their contributions to the whole, they individually excel and further advance themselves. With new literacies, students have rapid access to discover what is occurring around the world. The Internet and other information and communication technologies are utilized to bring cultures, governments, countries, and the world to their front door. Zinser (2016) believes that developing altruism can impact what and how instruction is provided to students especially with the availability of global connections through the use of new literacies (pp. 70-71). New literacies practices integrated in a curriculum model can help prepare students to contribute to a global society.

Professional Development to Support New Literacies Integration

Barone and Wright (2008), discuss the essential elements for successful implementation of new literacies. Barone and Wright (2008) state that “Schools must consider their preparation for and response to several key elements before embarking on this journey” (p. 302). First stating that educators require sufficient access to technology, time, and support to develop an effective curriculum the article then continues to explore the importance of providing continued support even after the curriculum has been developed. This can include workshops about existing and new technologies, a technology support leader, and time to learn the technology and applications. Educators are generally eager take on the challenge of developing a 21st century curriculum because they want to prepare their students for the future. (Barone & Wright, 2008)

Karchmer (2001) focused on the literacy instruction provided in the classrooms of thirteen teachers. In terms of professional development, she found that there is generally a lack of training to incorporate digital literacy instruction. Educators were not provided “the time and specific instruction on how to integrate technology with existing curriculum” (Karchmer, 2001, p. 449). Short workshops were not enough to incorporate digital literacy instruction that is flexible and effective for student development of skills. Karchmer explains the need to provide time to design appropriate lessons that focus on incorporating literacy instruction with technology. She continues to state the importance of having exemplary teachers support novice teachers in their journey of digital literacy instruction. Staff support is a critical component to ensure proper and effective implementation of a curriculum that encompasses development of 21st century skills that utilizes digital literacy and technology. (Karchmer, 2001)

Borko (2004) discusses the importance of professional development. With the changes in the global world including the accessibility to technology, teachers require a great deal of learning with support and guidance to integrate these changes in learning. Borko (2004) states there has been a realization of these changes leading to “educational scholars and policy makers to demand professional development opportunities for teachers – opportunities that will help them enhance their knowledge and develop new instruction practices” (p. 3). Teachers have a right to high-quality professional development. However, Borko (2004) feels that the current professional development opportunities have been inadequate especially with the “evidence that professional development can lead to improvements in instructional practices and student learning” (p. 3). Borko emphasizes the need to prepare are students for the ever-evolving world.

In order for this to occur, Borko (2004) argues for teachers need to be provided with professional development that is ongoing and high-quality with instruction in the areas they teach (p. 5). Through the analysis of various studies, Borko (2004) found “Professional development programs that include explicit focus on subject matter can help teachers develop these powerful understandings” (p. 5). Teachers that are engaged in learning activities related to their subject matter have been found to be particularly effective. When teachers are offered high-quality professional development, they are more likely to incorporate the strategies taught to them, have an increased awareness of the role of student thinking, and collaborate to maintain high-quality instruction as well as improve their instruction (Borko, 2004, pp. 5-7). As Borko (2004) states, “A key reason for deepening teachers’ knowledge of subject matter and student thinking is to improve classroom teaching” (p. 6). Therefore, professional development on new literacies practices is becoming more pertinent for teachers as there is a shift toward development of 21st Century skills.

Role and Importance of Motivation and Engagement

It is through motivation that teachers can truly engage their students. Davis and Guthrie (2003) discuss the motivation and aspects of struggling readers, barriers of classroom practice, motivation theory, and how to engage students in learning (p. 59). To begin, Davis and Guthrie first looked at the common characteristics of a struggling reader. Struggling readers tend to have low confidence, disengaged from reading, exhibit self-handicapping strategies, socially marginalized, and are generally procrastinators. They are usually extrinsically motivated by grades, rewards, and teacher requirements. Davis and Guthrie (2003) state that the “qualities of cognitive competence, motivation,

and social interaction are dynamically interrelated” (p. 61). Without support in these areas, students are generally disengaged from reading activities which can result in poor abilities. They argue that students become less intrinsically motivated and more extrinsically motivated as they move through their middle school years. With struggling readers, their intrinsic motivation decreases more quickly than those that have had more success in reading. They state that this could also be the result of the environment changes of the classroom.

Within elementary school, schools are smaller, more personal, and instruction is typically provided by one teacher and possibly aides. When entering middle school, there is more of a formality of learning with multiple teachers teaching different content areas. The school is usually larger and there is generally less personal connection between teachers and students. Motivation in middle school appears to be linked to teacher outlook. Davis and Guthrie (2003) acknowledge the difference between teachers that emphasize personal task goals versus performance task goals. Personal task goals focus on being involved in the process of learning to gain understanding and expertise in the skills of the content. Whereas, teachers that emphasize performance task goals focus their attention on test scores, grades, and student comparisons.

Teachers should want students to take on a personal task approach and be involved in the learning process. “Students will be intrinsically motivated for reading and learning in school when teachers demonstrate their commitment to students’ comprehension rather than extrinsic factors such as their test scores” (Davis & Guthrie, 2003, p. 65). Davis and Guthrie found in a case study that struggling readers could experience success in reading when text was appropriately matched and personally

relevant to the student. In addition, they noted that students considered to be high-achieving struggled with text that was difficult and not personally relevant. Therefore, making connections and providing personally relevant text can help struggling readers can be successful in the classroom. Davis and Guthrie (2003) provide six classroom practices for motivating the struggling reader.

The six practices “that foster engagement and aid in the achievement of reading competence: (1) knowledge goals, (2) real-world interactions, (3) abundance of interesting texts, (4) support for student choice and self-determination, (5) direct strategy instruction, and (6) collaboration support” (Davis & Guthrie, 2003, p. 72). The characteristics of the six practices all work together to support students in their motivation to become successful readers. There is increasing evidence to support that students become more motivated and engaged in lessons when text is personally relevant and at their instructional level. Davis and Guthrie (2003) state that “motivational support is increased with real-world interaction, interesting texts, autonomy support, and collaboration” while “Cognitive competence is increased by direct strategy instruction” (p. 78). However, the six characteristics need to be taught simultaneously rather than in isolation. All the characteristics need to be taught together and in support of each other to increase motivation in struggling readers. (Davis & Guthrie, 2003) New Literacies can be particularly effective in bolstering motivation through at least three of the noted characteristics: providing real-world interactions, an abundance of interesting texts, and collaboration support.

Wright (2008) found that comprehension improved when instruction using a new literacies approach was utilized especially with the incorporation of technology and ICTs

(p. 301). Along with improved comprehension, motivation had documented gains when students were provided explicit instruction from the teacher on how to visit, explore, and learn from information presented on the Internet. Wright (2008) discusses how students were motivated by the utilization of laptops in the classroom stating that “the number one thing laptops have done is motivation” (p. 301). He emphasizes the importance of providing explicit instruction on how to surf the web and use programs such as a word processor, multimedia software, blogs, email, and instant messaging. The instruction utilized engagement with both traditional literacies and new literacies to provide instruction of the necessary skills to take part in a global society.

With the incorporation of new literacies in the classroom, it was noted that students made significant academic growth. Wright (2008) documented that 72% of students met or exceeded benchmark criteria for English Language Arts (ELA), 65% that qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch met or exceeded expectations for ELA, and 67% of Hispanic students met or exceeded benchmark criteria for ELA on state criterion-referenced test (301-302). Motivation through the use of laptops with explicit instruction on how to utilize the Internet and other ICTs and instruction of both traditional and new literacies engaged the students in the learning environment. In turn, significant academic gains and deeper understandings of text were made with both print and non-print materials. (Barone & Wright, 2008)

Incorporating new literacies instruction can be highly motivating and engaging thus increasing students’ ability to make deeper connections to text in both print and non-print platforms. James Paul Gee (2012) expresses the positive effects of video gaming on learning ([Edutopia], 2012). Those who participate in playing video games such as

Minecraft and/or World of Warcraft are making deep connections and entering into a specific discourse. Gee found a specific set of principles that participants of video games encounter. Participants are able to establish an identity in the “virtual world in which they will live, learn, and act through their commitment to their new identity” (Gee, Good video games and good learning, 2005). Through this identity, participants interact and collaborate with a specific language set to attain a specific goal. Each player brings a specific skill to the group.

As stated by Gee (2012), playing video games that require group interaction and collaboration participants want to vary the skill sets to reach the common goal otherwise the goal cannot be reached. Much like in today’s society, various skill sets, knowledge, and understanding is needed to reach the common goal and improve upon what already exist. Video games require participants to utilize different skills including but not limited to critical thinking, writing, reading, understanding of language, and problem solving. (Gee, Good video games and good learning, 2005) New literacies practices look to teach these skills in order students to operate in society in much the same way. These skills are critical to engaging in a global society to better the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, reviewing the literature provides an argument for new literacy practices to be incorporated in the classroom. There is need to develop 21st century skills that incorporate new literacies through the use of traditional literacy practices and technology and ICTs. Educators seek to expand their understanding of technology and ICTs and how they can be utilized effectively in the classroom. Developing a curriculum

that is flexible and accessible to all allows educators to support and prepare their students for the present and future.

For educators to experience success, they need to be provided with the necessary time and support. They should be supported by their schools through professional development initiatives. Professional development should include preparation time, support from administration, continuous workshops, and exemplary teachers with knowledge of technology. Providing appropriate and ongoing professional development increases educator knowledge and understanding that reflects in their everyday practices and implementation of the curriculum.

Motivation is crucial to engaging students in lessons that incorporate technology and ICTs to enhance their cognitive abilities and deeper understanding of text. Utilizing student's personal backgrounds and abilities assist in making meaningful connections to self, to other text, and to the world through traditional and new literacy practices.

Educators practice motivation through direct instruction, learning and knowledge goals, collaboration, allowing student choice, interesting text, and real-world interactions.

Continued support using new literacies to intrinsically motivate plays an important role in engaging students and helping them to make more meaningful connections.

The goal of this study is to identify the best practices, goals of professional development, and objectives necessary for developing the already utilized skills of digital natives through the incorporation of new literacies practices and skills into the classroom.

Chapter 3

Context

Community

The study site that has informed my research question is one of several alternative special education schools operating in the Atlantic, Cape May, and Ocean County regions. The specific study site, managed by a corporation established over 40 years ago, is designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This campus in particular focuses on students who need Emotional, Social, and Behavioral Support. The study site that informs my research is located in Atlantic County in Southern New Jersey which is comprised primarily of white residents with 87% of the 274,549 population identifying as white as of April 1, 2010 according the United States Census. However, the demographics for the location of the study site is not an accurate depiction of the student population. Most of the student population is comprised from 2 cities in Atlantic County: Atlantic City and Pleasantville.

Atlantic City has a population of 39,558 with the most prevalent ethnicities being 38.3% African American, 27.6% Hispanic, and 26.7% White. The high school graduation rate is 69.7% with 15.8% of those earning a bachelor's degree or higher. The median house value is \$203,300 with an average \$29,200 household income. In Atlantic City, 34.3% of the population is living below the poverty line. (United States Census Bureau, 2010)

As for the city of Pleasantville, the population according to the US Census is 20,249. Within this population, the most prevalent ethnicities include 45.9% African American, 41.1% Hispanic, and 24.3% White. The high school graduation rate is 70%.

Eleven percent of the population earns a bachelor's degree or higher. The median house value is \$157,100 with an average household income of \$37,340. 24.8% of the population is living below the poverty line. (United States Census Bureau, 2010)

School

The study site that informs my research serves students ranging from 5-21 years of age, grades Kindergarten to Twelfth, with one or a combination of emotional, behavioral, social, or learning disabilities. The informing study site offers academic instruction using applied behavior analysis with a focus on community-based mental health services and support for students and their families. There are currently 41 students enrolled from several towns across Atlantic, Cape May, and Ocean Counties. The enrollment breakdown is 35 male students and 6 female students. 95% of the student population speak primarily English in their homes; 5% speak a combination of English and Spanish in their homes. The racially and ethnic breakdown of the school is 48.7% of the student population is African American, 31.7% are White, and 20.5% are Hispanic. Of the student population, 97.5% have an individualized educational plan while 2.4% have a 504 plan. The teacher to student ratio is 6:1 with 7 students requiring a one-to-one aide. There are 6 full time teachers, 7 one-to-one aides, and 3 classroom assistants.

The study site has a high success rate for students returning to district, enrolling in a college program, and/or becoming employed in the work force. In addition, students that are not prepared to graduate may enroll in the study site's Standard 9 Program to gain additional skills for life success. The informing study site's mission is "to provide a structured, enriched, and safe environment that meets each student's educational needs, and helps each student develop the knowledge and skills to become an independent and

responsible citizen” (Y.A.L.E. School Inc., 2017). The study site strives to provide each student with high quality, evidenced-based academic differentiated instruction. The goal is for students to make a minimum one year of academic progress each school year meeting the standards set forth by the New Jersey Department of Education. The study site looks to provide a transfer of skills learned in the classroom to real-life experiences exposing students to community outings in which they must utilize specific skills taught in the classroom.

Classroom

The high school English Language Arts (ELA) classroom is the source of influence for my research question. Students have continually struggled to utilize comprehension skills to improve their overall literacy abilities due in part to a lack of motivation and engagement. A majority of the students have experienced failure and a lack of success within their sending districts. Typically, their academic needs have not been met in the public-school setting and most students have given up.

The high school ELA classroom at the study site that informs my research has been striving to incorporate a variety of new literacies that engage and motivate students to provide a taste of success in reading. Anecdotal observation has noted that students have been more engaged, motivated, and successful when taught with books relevant to their interest and personal experiences. Students have shown success when technology is properly implemented and utilized in the classroom. However too often, technology has not been properly implemented with well-designed and thought-provoking lessons as required for successful implementation.

Typical implementation of an ELA lesson and/or unit at the informing study site consists of teaching a specific reading comprehension strategy, reading text utilizing the strategy, student creation of a PowerPoint or Word Document to demonstrate further understanding of the taught strategy, and a post-test. This method has proven to be an incomplete and ineffective implementation of new literacies into the learning process. Students seem to need to be able to interact on a social level and provide their inquiries and understanding both within the classroom and across multimedia formats. They express a desire to be provided with varied technological skills including blogs, forums, games, videos and other available technology to prepare them for interaction in the 21st Century society.

Students

The students informing the research question are in grades 9-12. These students have been through the elementary and middle school grade levels but have achieved minimal success. They typically enter the study site with little success and knowledge of literacy that they will need to be successful once they graduate high school. Upon review of state PARCC testing, 82.2% of the student population did not yet meet expectations, 15.5% partially met expectations, and 2.2% approached expectations on the English Language Arts portion of the test. On the performance levels on the Mathematics section were as follows: 55.5% did not yet meet expectations, 42.2% partially met expectations, and 2.2% met expectations.

Classroom assessments indicate that students are struggling to meet expectations on their grade level for reading comprehension. Students are assessed using the Scholastic Reading Inventory. Of the high school student population, 15.4% are

performing on grade level with 84.6% performing at least 2 grades below their grade level according to the Lexile scores they achieved. A thorough review of the data shows the lack in student ability to be successful on state mandated testing and classroom assessments. It appears that teachers need to provide more explicit instruction that incorporates new literacies, especially technology and social practices, with both print and non-print materials to better prepare students for the 21st century.

Research Design/Methodology

Through a conceptual framework, researchers can investigate concepts demonstrating the connections between a variety of theories and phenomena. Researchers can utilize the findings of a phenomena that provides insight into their own inquiries. Researchers can identify a variety of connections amongst various pieces of literature and studies. Through these connections of concepts, the researcher develops their own conceptual framework supported by the work of others. Conceptual framework can be defined “as a network...of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” (Jabareen, 2009, p. 51).

As I embarked on my research, it was important to develop and analyze a conceptual framework to support my inquiry. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) state that “the field of qualitative research has expanded to include multiple varieties” (p. 19). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) feel that Lankshear and Knobel have set the precedent for qualitative research when they “argued that teachers learn by researching a variety of topics, including ‘policy, communities, social class, the work world, [and] nonstandard language varieties’ and by engaging in ‘historical, anthropological, sociological or

psychological studies and theoretical work conducted in other places and/or at other times” (p. 19)

This definition holds true in my situation. Since I was not in the classroom or able to directly involve myself in teacher research by making observations and analyzing the practices taking place within the classroom, I researched and reviewed a variety of topics about the environment in which I work to develop my own general knowledge about my inquiry. I use the research of others to inform my thinking and research and utilized that information to develop a plan that could be useful upon my return to the school environment.

Procedure

Before I began my inquiry as a teacher researcher, I first needed to identify a phenomenon of interest and develop a research question. My research question is as follows: What are the most efficient and effective ways to incorporate new literacies to maximize the impact on student learning through curriculum, motivation, and professional development to provide students the necessary skills to engage in the 21st Century? Since I was not able to be in the classroom at the time of this study, I needed to develop a conceptual framework for my research and use the works and research of others to inform my thinking. As I read through the various pieces of text related to my research question, I identified common themes or concepts that help to inform the various aspects of my question. I found several text pieces that are relevant to my research question and these common themes revealed themselves throughout the existing research: importance of providing new literacies instruction, effective and informative curriculum development ideas for new literacies instruction, teacher support through professional

development focused on new literacies, and the impact of new literacies instruction on student motivation, performance, and learning.

Data Sources

Within this study, I have been reviewing a variety sources including books, journals, research studies, etc. to examine the information available to inform my research question. I am looking to develop a cohesive conceptual framework that will allow me to examine the common themes from a variety of sources. Locating common themes in published research materials confirms the importance of each theme and reinforces the validity of the completed research. Identifying these themes allows me to further my understanding of developing and implementing a flexible, accessible curriculum for the 21st century classroom that is motivating and engaging for all students.

Acknowledging the common themes that were identified, I began to identify the connections among the sources of information collected to inform my research question. The sources were sorted into the common theme categories. Once they were sorted, I examined how the sources provided insight and useful information in each area beginning with the importance of curriculum development. It was important for me to assess how a variety of researchers develop curriculums that incorporate new literacies in multiple disciplines.

I was also looking to see how researchers identified the most productive and critical ways of developing a curriculum plan that connects the various disciplines. This is important because students need to be able to think critically about text in all areas and utilize skills learned across all areas. Throughout the examination of sources, I looked at the components of curriculum the researchers found to be pertinent to developing a

cohesive, flexible, and accessible curriculum for all students. I also assessed the sources to identify the roles of teachers, administration, students, specialist, etc. to assist in developing the curriculum. I looked for analysis of curriculums that had been developed and teacher's success in implementing them including appropriate professional development and best practices for student motivation and engagement.

Data Analysis

Developing a 21st century classroom can be difficult without the proper curriculum, resources, support, and understanding. As I continued my research and analyzed the sources, I looked for methods to support implementation of the curriculum. It is important to establish the lessons for teaching the necessary skills with the necessary resources for development of knowledge and practice. Teachers need to be prepared for the lesson and familiar with the resources in order to successfully conduct the lesson. They need to understand how to properly engage and motivate the students with the lesson.

In order to be successful, teachers should prep for the lesson by making sure they understand the purpose of the lesson, how to use the technology, pre-read any text and comprehend it, and know the student objectives to be met. Throughout the lesson, teachers should be taking notes, physically or mentally, about the lesson. It is important to know what worked well in the lesson, what did not work well, what needs to be changed, and what can be done to further student understanding and use of the skills taught. This should occur after each lesson so that the curriculum can become more adaptive to the student population. It is important to remember that each lesson should be flexible and accessible for the students and what may have worked well for one student

or group may not be as successful for another. Continual assessment and modifications to the lessons will support a flexible and accessible curriculum. However, teachers require support in implementing the lessons of the curriculum.

Professional Development is a key component to successfully implementing lessons from a well-developed curriculum. Providing staff with professional development will be important to student success. Teachers need time to prepare for each lesson especially when incorporating technology. There are teachers, young digital natives, that are good at navigating technology and utilizing it in the classroom. On the other hand, there are teachers who are not as equipped and need support, time, and assistance in implementing lessons in which students will utilize technology. Continuous workshops throughout the year need to be made available for teachers to provide them with necessary support. There should be a chain of command for whom teachers can approach with questions. Without proper professional development, teachers will find themselves struggling which can result in poor student engagement and learning.

Finally, student motivation and engagement are key factors to having a thought-provoking 21st century classroom. Students need to be prepared for the global society they will enter post-graduation. It is important to support and enhance the skills of these digital natives. Students should be able to examine text critically, utilize technology to further their understanding and engage socially about text, and utilize the skills learned across disciplines. To implement these lessons, teachers need to be able to motivate their students. This is where a flexible and accessible curriculum becomes crucial. Teachers may need to use text that relate to the student population personally or use technology they are most familiar. Teachers need to develop a sense of intrinsic motivation for

students to engage in lessons. To accomplish such a feat, teachers should access the resources available that will help students engage in the lessons. As they engage in the lesson and attain success in some degree or manner, their intrinsic motivation will begin to blossom. Some students will require extra extrinsic motivation to engage. The important piece is that students are engaged in the lesson motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically, and applying skills learned from the lesson not only within a particular classroom but across a variety of settings.

Chapter 4

Considerations for New Literacies Integration

After a thorough investigation of new literacies, I questioned how the information I gathered could benefit myself and other educators in the classroom. Included in the work of classrooms is the need to consider how to best utilize new literacy practices in the classroom. It is important to remember to intertwine new literacy practices with traditional literacy practices. Utilizing a word processor is not a sufficient or adequate use of the vast amount of technology available. Students need to participate, collaborate, and distribute information, thoughts, feelings, etc. with the tools made available through technology.

Educators need to provide explicit instruction on how to use technology to advance the learning of their students. Classroom exercises need to cover traditional literacy mediums but should also address new ethos changes that have evolved the way that people communicate with each other. Through guided practice, students will utilize the skills taught with traditional literacy and new literacy practices across disciplines. The remainder of this chapter will provide information, ideas, strategies, plans, and goals for implementing and creating a 21st Century classroom that utilizes a breadth of new literacies. The chapter will discuss the development and implementation of a curriculum aimed at incorporating new literacies practices into a Middle School classroom.

Curriculum Development Guidance for a Middle School Classroom

To begin to successfully implement new literacies in the classroom, a team of people should be established to develop a curriculum with specified goals and objectives to meet the expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). According to the

Common Core State Standards Initiative (2017), “the mastery of each standard is essential for success in college, career, and life in today’s global economy” (Council of Chief School Officers and National Governors Association for Best Practices, 2017). The CCSS gives “Individual states [the] sole responsibility for determining what teachers should teach and students learn” (Mraz, Vacca, & Vacca, 2014, p. 8). Teachers are given the freedom to decide how to guide and teach the expectations set forth by the CCSS with focus on learning to “read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas” (Council of Chief School Officers and National Governors Association for Best Practices, 2017). The CCSS are intended to guide the development of curriculum instruction while allowing for teacher creativity in providing instruction. To develop a cohesive curriculum for middle school students, the Middle School CCSS, students’ social, emotional, and cognitive development, and school based goals and objectives need to be taken into consideration. With those considerations in mind, planning a curriculum can begin to take place.

The curriculum should be planned out with lessons across disciplines keeping in mind cross-curricular lessons. Each teacher from the discipline needs to be involved in collaborative planning of lessons providing information on what needs to be taught. Discipline area teachers can identify objectives that can be taught independently and/or can be taught in conjunction with other subject areas.

To begin lesson development that incorporates new literacies practices, teachers begin with 1.) determining instructional goals, 2.) essentials questions, 3.) instructional strategies and activities, 4.) instructional materials and resources, 5.) new literacies, and 6.) assessment (Mraz, Vacca, & Vacca, 2014, p. 140). Lessons should develop skills and

strategies through explicit instruction, guided practice, collaborative practice, and independent practice. Strategies that will benefit student learning in reading comprehension include: predicting, activating background knowledge, synthesizing and summarizing information, identifying main ideas, questioning, making connections, analyzing, evaluating, teaching vocabulary, making inferences, compare and contrast, and setting a purpose for reading.

Forzani, Leu, Timbrell, and Zawilinski (2015) state that integrating new literacies into the classroom will require instruction of additional skills and strategies (p. 345). Some of the additional skills and strategies include email usage, video conferencing, locating and synthesizing information on the Internet, collaborating and communicating via technology, podcast, and blogging. These new ethos communication methods have changed the way that people interact with each other and it is important to focus not only on the material that is being taught, but also on the skills required to successfully participate in these new types of interactions. A key component to instruction of these skills and strategies is to allow student thinking to guide instruction. Students should drive instruction as a form of discovery and exploration and educators need to be able to tactfully guide instruction while also following the path that students are leading them down.

For example, a reading comprehension lesson that focuses on making predictions may begin with an anticipation guide to motivate students to participate. The anticipation guide would include questions related to the text. In addition, prior to reading, the teacher can activate schema through questioning building student's background knowledge. Teachers would introduce key vocabulary terms and concepts. Websites such as

Quizlet.com can be utilized so that students can build vocabulary flashcards, play games with the vocabulary, and test their knowledge of the vocabulary. These pieces together can build student motivation and active their interest in text reading.

During reading of the text, students will be provided explicit instruction on making predictions through teacher modeling. Responsibility of strategy demonstration is gradually released to the students until they are able to independently utilize the strategy across various settings. The Internet and more specifically sites such as *Padlet* can be used to have students post predictions to pieces of text. This can be done whole group with one piece of text or in small groups with several pieces of text. Text can be print or non-print based. Utilizing *Padlet*, or websites similar to it, allows for social interaction via media technology providing students with different ideas and perspectives that will further develop their own background knowledge by assessing their peers thought processes. After reading the text and students have demonstrated independent practice of the skill, individuals and/or groups can present their predictions to the class and their reasoning for the prediction. If students are not comfortable presenting in front of the class, they can record their responses via iPad, cell phone, camcorder, or other recording device and display their recording to the class.

Scaffolding should also be provided as needed throughout the lessons, especially when developing the bridge between traditional and new literacies practices. Technologies and ICT's should be chosen based on what is the most appropriate fit to the purpose for using them for each lesson. Each subject area teacher is considered an expert of their subject area, so the selection of technology should be made in concert with them. They should be deciding how to meet the objectives of the curriculum and/or lesson

while utilizing the available tools and technology. It is important to remember that teachers each have a different skill set, including their ability to use technology and ICTs, and exemplary teachers should be utilized to support and encourage the novice teachers.

It is ideal to teach students how to use and navigate each piece of technology and ICTs through explicit instruction. Technology and ICTs include computers, Internet, iPads, laptops, and websites among many others. Integrations of online experiences and new literacies instruction should begin in the early childhood grades. Websites such as *Starfall* and *ABC Mouse* can assist young students, along with teacher scaffolding, to navigate the technology and begin to learn the necessary skills for consuming digital text. Beginning new literacies practices early will greatly benefit student progress in the future grades as the use of technology and ICTs becomes more difficult.

Since Internet sources are not as reliable or authoritative sources as traditional published sources, students need to learn how to determine the validity and reliability of each source they encounter over the Internet with teacher guidance. Educators need to teach and guide students to critically evaluate online information. Any of the strategies that are taught to evaluate traditional print text can also be used for digital text and vice-versa. However, since the Internet allows for anyone to post information, there is significantly more text available that should not be considered valid or reliable. Students need to learn how to assess the validity and the credentials of the person or source posting the information.

As students progress through the grade levels, use of technology and ICTs should along with the complexity of the technology. Online communication becomes more appropriate as students advance and interactions with peers become more valuable as a

teaching tool. Utilizing e-mail, blogs, and wikis are a great way to develop online communication skills and strategies for students of all ages. It is important for educators to be aware of the sources they are utilizing to teach these skills, especially with the importance of online safety.

There are multiple websites available for educators to use in the classroom that provide necessary protections such as *ePals* and *Gaggle*. (See Appendix for a list of additional New Literacies Resources.) When determining appropriate online resources, a meeting should be initiated with the administration to discuss the tools' usefulness in the classroom and suggest piloting the tool. As part of the curriculum development process, an approved list of sites should be developed and evaluated at least annually to allow for the inclusion of new sites and the elimination of sites which are not properly maintained or become insecure.

The Road to Professional Development Success

Once the lesson plans have been established, the team needs to examine the instruction they are providing. Administration and educators need to collectively determine the support that is needed to incorporate new literacies in the classroom. Professional development will be a key component in the success of new literacies integration. Mraz et. al. (2014) identify the purposes of professional development moving from an institutional goal towards a personal goal that moves along a continuum from student improvement to professional collaboration, then effective instruction to professional growth, and finally professional inquiry (p. 386). Schools need to develop professional development workshops that engage the staff in utilizing the technology and

ICTs they want students to engage and learn with to be successful in digital global society.

For success with new literacies integration, administration can provide time and support continuously throughout the year as “New literacies are deictic; they rapidly change” (Forzani, Leu, Timbrell, & Zawilinski, 2015, p. 345). Time is needed to examine and digest the changing technologies and ICTs. Administrators, along with the Reading Specialist, need to provide effective professional development to properly support staff in developing skills needed to teach these technologies and ICTs. According to Quatroche, Strickland, and Wepner (2014), it is the “responsibility of administrators and reading personnel...to guide the change process so that teachers perceive it as supportive rather than burdensome” (Quatroche, Strickland, & Wepner, 2014, p. 4). Teachers should be included in the professional development process in collaboration with administration.

To keep up with the changing technology, schools should introduce a technology coordinator. The technology coordinator should be someone who is willing and able to investigate, maintain, introduce, develop, research, etc. existing and new technologies that should be introduced into the classroom and determine what technologies are appropriate for what grade levels. The technology coordinator should set up an Online Support System to “Keep a running list of the best new online tools and resources that you encounter or know that are popular with students” (Quatroche, Strickland, & Wepner, 2014, pp. 204-205). This will allow teachers to utilize the most productive and popular online new literacies within the classroom. Teachers should be encouraged to add to the list with new resources that they believe can impact student learning.

Exemplary teachers can assist the technology coordinator with guiding the novice teachers in using the technology in the classroom. Each teacher brings a different level of skills and knowledge from which others can learn from. Professional development workshops should follow the same principals for developing a lesson plan by providing teachers with explicit instruction, guided practice, collaboration, and independent practice by those who are considered an expert in the area of professional development practice.

Assessment of New Literacies Success in the Classroom

After integration is complete, the question then becomes how is success of new literacies integration determined? The way in which assessments have traditionally been used needs to be altered for digital literacy interactions. Performance-based assessments would help teachers to evaluate student abilities of new literacies providing “more diagnostic information than do many other types of assessments, for they are administered while students perform authentic task” (Forzani, Leu, Timbrell, & Zawilinski, 2015, p. 356). Assessments can include having students locate sources on the web and summarize information. Educators may also have students evaluate the reliability and validity of a website by writing a short report via online tools such as a wiki or e-mail.

Informal observation strategies and think-alouds can also be used to assess student performance. Observation of students conducting online research, using online tools, and using the technology can provide insight of student understanding for teachers. Observing the performance of the student can guide instruction and allow for needed scaffolding. Think-alouds can help teachers gather information about student’s skill

development. Performing think-alouds for the class will also help other students providing them with new strategies for using the technology.

Digital portfolios can be used as an assessment tool in the middle school grades. Digital portfolios allow students to make decisions on their collection of work samples that best demonstrate their understanding and learning of particular skills and strategies. Mraz, Vacca, and Vacca (2014) identify that digital portfolios “can accompany a student through every year of their schooling, resulting in a visual demonstration of their learning and development even as the student transitions from one school or classroom to another” (p. 107). With this, teachers are able to collect multiple pieces of data, selected by both teacher and student, through digital portfolios and have a documented collection of student’s “attitudes, behaviors, achievements, improvement, thinking, and reflective self-evaluation” (as cited in Mraz, Vacca, & Vacca, 2014, p. 109). Digital portfolios can be motivating to students as they get to select what they consider to be their best work offering some additional insight to teachers on the student’s perspective.

Assessment is crucial to ensuring that students are gaining the skills, knowledge, and understanding of new literacies. Through these assessments, educators can also observe which technologies are motivating and engaging to students. Motivation and engagement keeps students moving forward in learning the skills. Understanding the motivating factors for student engagement offers opportunities to provide students with control in their learning. Through this, educators can help to build intrinsic motivation and move students toward a personal task goal rather than performance task goal. Motivation and engagement factors should be included in each lesson.

Conclusion

In conclusion, taking on a new literacies perspective for today's classroom is a process in which everyone needs to be an active participant for success. Districts, administration, school, and educators need to work together to determine how they are going to learn and integrate a new literacies perspective into the classroom and what is needed to ensure it benefits the students. Developing a flexible and accessible curriculum, creating a positive classroom environment, lesson plan development, performance based assessments, and professional development are key focuses for incorporating technology and ICTs in the classroom to enhance traditional literacy practices. Adopting a new literacies perspective requires significant effort from all participating parties to devise and effectuate a successful program but it is an important step for the development of students toward becoming literate persons who are prepared for the 21st Century global society.

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Appendix

New Literacies Resources

Digital Resource	Website	Grade Level	Function	Summary
Recap	https://app.letsrecap.com/	K-12	Video Messaging	Students are able to record video responses based on questions posed by their teacher.
Edublog/ Kidblog	https://edublogs.org/ https://kidblog.org/home/	K-12	Blog	Student friendly blogs that allow students and teachers to post, comment, and share videos/pictures on specific content.
Google Classroom (Docs, Slides, Sheets, and Forms)	https://classroom.google.com/	K-12	Blog/ Presentation	Students and teachers are able to post, comment, create presentations, and share documents.
Prezi	https://prezi.com/	K-12	Presentation	Web Tool for developing, sharing, and interacting with presentations individually or collaboratively.
Classcraft	https://www.classcraft.com/#modal-iste-2017	5-12	Game-Based	This game-based classroom management tool allows students to create an aviator to earn points for participation, behavior, and completion of assignments.
Padlet	https://padlet.com/	K-12	Student, Parent, Peer Collaboration	A social learning tool that allows students to create and collaborate with their peers through a digital platform.
Answer Garden	https://answergarden.ch/	K-12	Student, Parent, Peer Collaboration	A feedback tool that is used it for real time audience participation, online brainstorming and classroom feedback.
Today's Meet	https://todaysmeet.com/	K-12	Student, Parent, Peer Collaboration	A backchannel chat platform for classroom teachers and learners. This tool enables new activities and discussions, extend conversations beyond the classroom, and give all students a voice.
Edmodo	https://www.edmodo.com	K-12	Student, Parent, Peer Collaboration	A social learning environment in which teachers are able to connect and communicate with students, parents, and peers
Wikispaces	http://www.wikispaces.com	K-12	Wikis	Platform for developing wikis.
Quizlet	https://quizlet.com/	K-12	Learning Tool	Students can practice, and master skills taught through flashcards and games as well as collaborate with other students and teachers.

Digital Resource	Website	Grade Level	Function	Summary
EDpuzzle	https://edpuzzle.com/	K-12	Learning Tool	A learning tool that allows teachers to select a video and customize it by editing, cropping, recording audio, and adding questions to make an engaging presentation or lesson.
Kahoot/ Quizziz	https://kahoot.it/#/ https://quizizz.com/admin?newUser=true	K-12	Learning Tool	Formative assignment databases that store a collection of questions on specific topics. Students participate by responding to questions posed by their peers or teachers in a fun, game-like learning environment.
Wizer.me	http://www.wizer.me	K-12	Interactive worksheets	Create worksheets; share worksheets; push to google classroom; Wizer will grade the worksheets if you give them an answer key.
Symbaloo	https://www.symbaloo.com/home/mix/13eP29aBMO	K-12	Website limiter	Narrow down the website you let your students use when researching. Students can use just YOUR approved sites.
ePals	www.epals.com	K-12	Learning Tool	Child safe email that allow teachers to control who students can send emails to and change the settings to expand. Teachers can monitor correspondence as well.
ePals	www.epals.com/find-classroom www.epals.com/find-project	K-12	Collaboration	“Find a Classroom Match” or “Join a Project” with other classrooms around the world to collaborate on a project.
Gaggle	www.gaggle.net	K-12	Learning Tool	Child safe email that allow teachers to control who students can send emails to and change the settings to expand. Teachers can monitor correspondence as well.
ReadWriteThink	http://www.readwritethink.org/	K-12	Learning Tool	Provides ELA lessons developed by teachers with a wide variety of them utilizing online, interactive resources.
Google’s “Inside Search”	http://www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/index.html	K-12	Learning Tool	There are lesson plans, activities to improve search skills, daily search challenges students, and training webinars for both you and your students.
Starfall	www.starfall.com	K-2	Learning Tool	Assist students in building and reinforcing reading and math skills necessary for early childhood development.
ABC Mouse	www.abcmouse.com	Ages 2-8	Learning Tool	Focuses on skills for early childhood development with lessons, games, books, songs, etc. It provides progress charts that can be a useful assessment tool.