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Edited by

KATHLEEN A. HINCHMAN
Syracuse University

DONALD J. LEU
Syracuse University

CHARLES K. KINZER
Vanderbilt University

With the editorial assistance of

PHILIP H. LOSEBY
Syracuse University

LAURIE AŸRE
Syracuse University

JEANNE A. PETER
Vanderbilt University

DOROTHY FROOMAN
NRC Headquarters

AARON RICHMAN
A Good Thing, Inc.

Broadening the Lens: Toward an Expanded Conceptualization of Literacy*

James Flood and Diane Lapp
San Diego State University

TOWARD AN EXPANDED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LITERACY

In the beginning of his volume *Literacy in the United States,* Carl Kaestle (1991) reminds us that the study of literacy is a lively and often controversial field full of surprises, contradictions, and changes in people's attitude about what constitutes literacy. He points out that as recently as 150 years ago, literacy was defined and measured as the ability to sign one's signature as evidence of rudimentary reading and writing abilities.

While almost no one today would argue with conceptualizing literacy as the ability to read and write, most educators in the latter part of the 20th century also wanted the conceptualization to include the ability to speak and listen, acknowledging the interdependent relationships among the language arts. In this view, the term *literacy instruction* has equivalence with the term *language arts instruction.*

More recently, some educators have been seeking another change in attitude about what constitutes literacy. We are being urged to consider a broader conceptualization in which literacy is defined as the ability to function competently in the "communicative arts"—which include the language arts as well as the visual arts of drama, art, film, video, and television. The need to expand and explore a more extensive notion of literacy has been propelled, in part, by the proliferation of a variety of communicative technologies that have become integral parts of daily life in the 1990s (Alton-Lee, Huthall, & Patrick, 1993; Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). For example, Carey (in press) reports that today's average United States home has two televisions, six radios, and three telephones.

Visual media permeate almost every aspect of contemporary students' lives. It has been conservatively estimated that children spend more than 30 hours per week watching television, and additional time each day playing electronic games. Lemish (1987) reports that television viewing begins in infancy, when children respond to the

visual and sonic stimulation of television messages. As early as the age of 16 months, children show sensitivity to their parents' attention to TV, often looking at the screen when their parents do. The lure of television lasts through the childhood years and seems to abate slightly at about age 13.

Although television viewing is such a large part of most children's lives, few teachers today hold the animosity toward television that was prominent in the 1950s, when some teachers believed it was their natural nemesis. Attitudes have changed so dramatically that many teachers today are using mass media "texts" to enhance their own teaching and their children's learning, comfortably moving from textbook, to trade book, to film, to video, to computer, to atlas, to encyclopedia, to newspaper, as they attempt to bring primary source materials into their classrooms. Kinder (1991) makes a strong argument for this interdependence among texts in her study of the influence of intertextual relationships among books, television, video games, and film on the successful construction of narratives.

In particular, there has been increasing momentum to include analysis of media and media production activities as part of a daily integrated curriculum that demonstrates links among the language arts and the social sciences. While this has begun to occur in some schools, it is not yet common practice in all schools. Some educators have become so impatient about the lack of investigation into the role of visual media in schools that they have asserted that the study of visual media has been deliberately neglected for a host of reasons ranging from elitist notions of great literature existing only in print form to fears about the social effects of media. There is an inherent irony in this neglect because, as Hobbs (in press) points out, we live in a society where media has become *the* central leisure activity for most people and *the* most dominant source of information about the people and events in the universe. Many educators have urged investigation into visual media because they fear that we sometimes mistakenly think we are expanding our student's concept of literacy when we use television, computers, video, and film to teach *with*. They argue that a real expansion of literacy will require teaching *with* as well as teaching *about* television, computers, video, and film.

The problem seems clear: Students are growing up in a world where they are constantly bombarded with visual media in advertisements for candidates, products, and ways of thinking. This bombardment has the potential of increasing in schools as cable programming expands through PBS, CTW, Discovery, and a host of independent cable programming companies. Very soon, many television programs will be offered to students that hold the real promise of providing rich educational experiences that have the potential to expand and enrich their lives.

To date, however, there has been insufficient education in the visual arts because teachers have had a limited, almost exclusive focus on mastery of the printed word. While written language skills are even more important in today's world, language is only one symbol system which humans use to express and share meaning. During the past few decades our understanding of the communicative arts has expanded; we have now begun to more fully understand communication as a social, cultural, and contextual phenomenon that exists with relations to many forms of symbolic expression, including visual images, sounds, music, dance, and electronics.

The notion of expanding literacy to include many different knowledge representations has been advanced by many educators from a variety of fields. For example, Eliot Eisner (1994) has consistently argued for a conceptualization of literacy that would allow for multiple forms of representation. His argument is closely related to Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner contends that different cultures value different intelligences and consequently develop specific forms of literacy within their cultural contexts. In parts of the Eskimo culture, for example, spatial

intelligence is highly valued because physical survival depends so heavily upon it, but in the United States we have consistently rewarded linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence over all other forms of intelligence. Eisner (1994) points out that the limitation of rewards to "word" and "number" has a deleterious effect on students whose intelligence and consequent literacy is in other areas. He contends that students whose intelligence and literacy is in "word" and "number" receive unfair status advantages in gaining access to a variety of systems in society.

In this paper literacy will be addressed within the larger context of the communicative arts, with special emphasis on the visual arts. Recent studies have placed a great deal of emphasis on the social aspects of literacy, relatively little emphasis on the visual aspects of literacy, and almost no emphasis on an integration of the visual arts within a theory of literacy as overall communicative ability (Sweet, in press).

The link between the communicative arts and visual arts almost seems self-evident. Our daily language exemplifies some of the links that exist between spoken language and visual image. For example, in a conversation between two people, one might say "I *see* what you mean," or a person looking at a portrait in a museum might say, "This picture *speaks* to me," or a person upon hearing a command might say, "I *read* you."

Visual "Literacy"/ Media "Literacy"

Communication scholars have sometimes used the terms *visual literacy* and *media literacy* as they discuss the roles of images and media in learning and knowing. There seems to be a great deal of confusion in the field about the distinctions between the two. Some scholars use the terms interchangeably, and some have rather precise distinctions, describing *media literacy* as the understanding and production of messages through physical devices, whereas *visual literacy* is often limited to art, drama, television and film.

The proliferation of different "literacies" does not seem particularly productive as we try to understand how words and images interact both in our comprehension and production of messages. On the contrary, it seems far more productive to broaden our definition of literacy to include word *and* image and to focus on the process components of literacy that students need to develop. There are six such process components: the ability to access, analyze, synthesize, interpret, evaluate, and communicate messages.

These six components provide a useful framework for understanding the ways in which people develop the skills they use in communication. The first of these, the ability to *access* messages, includes the skills of decoding and comprehending as well as the skills of locating and retrieving information from many different sources.

Access, as a process that includes locating and retrieving information from many different sources, is an issue in literacy that has received limited attention, and this oversight is quickly becoming more problematic than it has ever been in the past. In helping students access information, it is important that we acknowledge the political, economic, and social barriers that often constrain access. There are also new technological barriers that inhibit the acquisition of literacy, and these barriers will remain quite *real* until computers and contemporary technological products really become tools and not tasks that magnify the difficulty of literacy development. It seems that this will not happen until there are a larger numbers of computers and televisions in classrooms. Carey (in press) maintains that a low computer-to-student ratio in classrooms creates an environment in which the computer is essentially a display device for teachers; that a moderate computer-to-student ratio is a time-shared work station; and that only when there is a high ratio will computers become a personal enabling tool for each student.

The information superhighway and the Internet are examples of exciting contemporary technologies that students will need to access as they become literate. However, the Internet is not yet available to all students, because of financial and technical problems that sometimes seem insurmountable to many teachers, students, and parents. The proposal of Vice President Al Gore to "give every American the chance for the best education on the superhighway" through universal cabling is an important step in helping students learn to access as a part of literacy development. But until these efforts are realized, we need to acknowledge the cruel fact that access is not equal.

The abilities to *analyze, synthesize, interpret,* and *evaluate* messages, the next four process components of literacy, include the skills of categorizing concepts and ideas, generating inferences, making judgments, and assessing style and form. The last of the six components, the ability to *communicate* messages, is at the heart of the traditional meaning of literacy. The ability to communicate includes traditional notions of understanding audience, the effective use of symbols, and the ability to organize and sequence ideas. But it also embraces new notions about media that include three sets of production skills: (1) learning how to make effective choices about framing, point of view, and style; (2) learning how to use visual and auditory symbolism, and (3) learning how to manipulate time and space through editing. Each of these components of literacy requires new ways of thinking before effective instruction can be developed that will equip students with the knowledge and strategies that they will need in the future.

Broadening the Definition of Text

In many contemporary classrooms, reading/language arts educators have focused on literature as the core of the literacy curriculum. Many have argued cogently for using picture books, short stories, poems, plays, and pieces of nonfiction, because they motivate learning and engage students in a meaningful way. For instance, the California Framework states that "classic literature speaks most eloquently to readers and writers" (State Board of Education, 1986, p. 7).

Some students, however, find these classic works remote and disconnected from their experiences, whereas they find prime-time television programs and contemporary film to be connected and near. Some educators have even been comfortable with ignoring contemporary cultural products, especially television programs, even though many works of literature in the past which became classics began as popular works designed for mass audiences, as much of Dickens's work did (Beach, 1992). But these dismissals and oversights cannot continue to exist. Just as the debates have raged over the canon of acceptable literary works, so too it is time for the debate to begin about broadening the canon and the curriculum to include new access channels for students that can include television, film, video, and computer technologies.

To suggest that this expansion of the concept of "text" is a new idea is misleading. Many of us in NRC have included supplementary and alternative "texts" in our classrooms throughout our careers. It would also be misleading to suggest that we have not been in the vanguard of writing, designing, and producing many of these alternative texts. Several of our members have produced excellent videotapes for IRA, ASCD, NRRC, NCTE, and CSR that are now widely used in university classes to verbally and visually demonstrate a variety of aspects of teaching literacy.

Many of us have also done this in predominantly print-based media. In fact, pictures in professional journals, books, and teaching manuals have proliferated in recent years. One example of this is a paper that was prepared by Nancy Roser and us for

a collection edited by Dorothy Strickland and Lesley Morrow on emergent literacy. We were all convinced that pictures of the two master teachers working with children in their classrooms would significantly help to tell the story of how literacy happened in their rooms.

THE ROLES OF IMAGES IN LITERACY

As the roles of the visual arts in literacy are discussed, reference will be made to those aspects of literacy that concern themselves with images in both still and moving forms. However, even before we accept and embrace a broadened definition of literacy that includes the visual arts and its consequent instructional mandates, a basic question must be asked: Is it a worthwhile pursuit for educators to concern themselves with the roles of images as a part of comprehensive literacy development? Desmond (in press) suggests there is ample evidence that teaching students to be critical consumers who are aware of visual manipulation and stereotyping has beneficial effects on many aspects of literacy, from cognitive growth to aesthetic awareness. In his analysis he found that in every critical intervention program where students were taught to detect ethnic and gender stereotyping in images, gains in awareness were found. In large-scale studies in Canada and Australia, Desmond found that long term-goals attainment was reported, with evidence that students gained more information and insight from what they were watching.

As we start to answer the question of the efficacy of teaching visual education, we need to address four key questions:

1. Are there background requirements for understanding visual media?
2. Does visual education result in cognitive development?
3. Does visual education develop awareness of visual techniques and visual manipulation?
4. Does visual education enhance aesthetic appreciation?

Background Requirements for Understanding Visual Media

There is some controversy about whether there are background requirements for understanding visual media. Several researchers have argued that the ability to recognize (and consequently comprehend) the content of still or moving images requires prior familiarity with a set of representational conventions (Carey, 1982; Cohen, 1987; Gumpert & Cathcart, 1985). As Greenfield (1984) puts it, "Learning to decode the symbols of film or television is something like learning to read" (p. 10).

Messaris (1994) argues that there is mounting evidence to the contrary—that is, visual conventions require little or no previous experience on the part of the interpreting viewer, even in the case of some conventions that might appear to be highly unrealistic and, therefore, quite alien to the experience of novice viewers (Hochberg, 1984; Messaris, 1994). As Messaris (1994) notes, studies have shown that the viewer's ability to infer what is represented in a still or moving image is based on the fact that images reproduce many of the informational cues people make use of in their perception of physical and social reality. For example, even novice viewers can recognize a chase scene, or a reading scene, or dance scenes.(See Figures 1-4.)

One implication of this view for curriculum development is that students can interpret visual images without pre-instruction. However, there are still some unresolved issues about the necessity for pre-instruction for a limited set of specific visual devices like the shedding of a calendar or the movement of a clock to depict time.

Figure 1. Chase Scene

Figure 2. Reading Scene

Figure 3-4. Dance Scenes

Cognitive Development and Visual Education

One of the most controversial issues in visual media education is in the area of cognitive development. Some educators have argued that experiences with visual media lead to enhancement of general cognitive abilities (Chideya, 1991; Greenfield, 1984). In particular, they have argued that experience with still and moving images helps to develop spatial abilities.

While this view may be alluring, it confuses the roles and rules of language and image. The argument assumes that visual education alone can provide students with an alternative form of access to knowledge. But images simply cannot do the same things as words because language has two distinct functions, description and analysis, whereas image has only one function: description. Description entails an account of a particular event or a series of events or the special features of an object or situation; analysis deals with generalities, classes of objects and events rather than specific cases.

Description and analysis are routine features of language. For example, in a single piece of conversation between a teacher and a parent, a teacher might describe the unexpected poor performance of a student on a particular assessment, and then go on to wonder aloud about the causes and discuss possible alternative learning experiences that might make the next performance more positive. Both functions of language, description and analysis, are part of these utterances.

Description and analysis are not totally compatible with the characteristics of images. Description certainly is —it's what images are all about. But images are not compatible with the analysis function of language because analysis deals with generalizations (not particular cases), causality, relationships, hypotheses, estimates, and evaluations. In verbal language these functions have conventions (individual terms and syntactic devices), but in the world of images almost no such conventions exist.

"Almost" no such conventions exist, but there seem to be some. Possible conventions might include the generic images of men and women on bathroom doors and the icon that depicts "No Smoking". These images are symbols for classes of objects rather than individual objects. But the range of generic objects is totally limited to physical, concrete objects.

A second possible convention used in the world of images might be the use of sequences of individual cases that leads the viewer to infer causality. One example is the Jergen's Lotion advertisements that show the hands of a mother and daughter. The viewer might infer that the use of Jergen's will keep hands looking young forever. The before-after contrast ads of people using Scope Mouthwash in the morning provide a symbol of sequence *and* causality that has become highly conventionalized. However, this is a weak equivalent to analytic language, because inferring the causal link may be difficult for inexperienced viewers without narration or captioning. A problem can also occur because there is unpredictability in the real world, and all events in a certain category may not be judged as similar by the viewer. The differences between language and image might be best illustrated in the difficulty of showing an utterance like the following that a political candidate might make: "I'm not always effective, but I'm more effective than my opponents." The difficulty of showing this in images and not words demonstrates both the complexity of analytic language and the limitations of images.

If linguistic analogy does not provide for an understanding of the possible cognitive effects of visual education, is there any other way to examine the link between cognition and visual education that might be more helpful? Gardner 's work (1993) provides us with a possible answer. He argues that intelligence should be thought of not as a single phenomenon but rather as a number of distinct mental abilities. In his theory, a variety of forms of intelligence are associated with distinct symbol systems, but the match is not always precise. In his system, there is no "pictorial intelligence" category, but there is the more encompassing category "spatial intelligence". The essence of this intelligence is the ability to envision relationships among objects in three-dimensional space. This ability plays an important role in art (painting, sculpting, dance), geometric thinking (in the design and construction of all solid objects such as building bridges, furniture), and our interaction with our physical environment. He suggests that visuals are important to these skills, that spatial intelligence can be enhanced through experiences with images.

Some researchers are arguing that the inability of still images to reproduce the full range of depth cues that people use causes experienced viewers to become more sensitive to depth cues and may, in turn, cause viewers to infer depth even though still images do not provide this information. If this argument is valid, it is possible that pictorial experience might enable viewers to make judgments about depth in the real world. This ability may, in turn, affect spatial intelligence and provide a link between pictorial experience and cognitive skills.

Figure 5. Visual technique: angle of the shot.

Visual Technique/Visual Manipulation

One major contribution of visual education is its benefit in helping viewers gain information and insight about technique and visual manipulation. *Three* standard visual techniques in still and moving pictures that students can quickly grasp are *framing, angle, and lighting*. The first, framing, is a technique in which the creator of the picture determines what he/she wants the viewer to see. The second technique, the angle of the shot, influences a viewer's interpretation of size and distance; it is exemplified in the following picture in which the infant's size is illustrated by comparison with a group of stuffed animals. (See Figure 5.)

The third technique is the light tone of the shot, which can influence a viewer's interpretation of mood. This technique has been used by many filmmakers and photographers. For example, in *Dead Poets Society*, the dark lighting at the beginning of the movie foreshadows the ominous events that unfold throughout the story.

An understanding of visual manipulation also enables the viewer to be a more informed critic of images. Four distinct principles of manipulation that account for a wide variety of individual devices will be examined briefly in this paper. These four principles are: *analogy, false continuity, implicit propositionality* and *associational juxtaposition*.

Analogy.   In *analogy* (as a type of visual manipulation), the symbol reproduces a distinctive feature of its referent and evokes the referent's qualities. Examples abound in television ads in which intimate conversations between two people are shown, one recommending a product to the other. The point of view chosen by the creator of the ad is frequently one of seeing the product through the eyes of the recipient of the information. Here the analogy to real life is quite concrete—the visual image reproduces the abstract feature of directness of orientation or an actual situation involving a two-person intimate conversation, which evokes feelings of intimacy, trust, and credibility.

False continuity.   *False continuity* is a type of visual manipulation that relies on the viewer to make uncritical, generalizing leaps from the contents of one particular image to other events or situations. The potential consequences of this type of manipulation were demonstrated by Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang (1971) when they studied the televised visit of General Douglas MacArthur to Chicago in 1951 after he had been relieved of his command in Korea. This may be the earliest published research on visual manipulation.

The well-known finding of this study was that viewers who saw the edited events of the day on television were given a selective view of wildly enthusiastic crowds which varied considerably from what was seen by trained observers on the scene of the "live" event. Since MacArthur's firing by Harry Truman was a politically controversial issue, the selectivity of the television coverage probably had political consequences of its own.

A second aspect of false continuity has to do with the illusion of film and television. In editing, two shots are joined together in the context of a broader narrative; the conjoined image is "read" by the viewer as a coherent whole even when the shots are taken at separate times and places. A familiar example of this is the conjoining of footage that has been shot from several different cameras. Frequently, the news will include footage from a political debate that has been edited from film shot from more than one camera. In the editing process, a reaction shot can be skewed. For example, a political candidate can be shown to be more confrontational or more agreeable in the conjoined image than was the actual case. This type of visual manipulation is very difficult to detect, and the tendency to succumb to it is very strong and may pose a challenge even to experienced viewers.

Implicit propositionality.   A third type of visual manipulation is implicit propositionality. It rests upon two principles: (1) generalization through the dependent connection/linkings of particulars and (2) the use of nearness/kinship to imply causality. An example of this was a Ronald Reagan reelection advertisement in 1984 in which two sets of images were shown, one of Reagan being sworn in in 1981 and the second of a variety of Americans at work (farmers, factory workers, office workers). The footage cuts back and forth between the two sets of images, but the sound track carries only the presidential oath of office. The covert message seems to be that Reagan's first term as president led to an economic renaissance. As the ad ends, Reagan refers to his 1981 inauguration as a "new beginning." Reagan might have gone on to assert that economic revival occurred during his first term, but statistical data might not have been able to support the claim. In using visuals, however, generalizations can be implied.

Associational juxtaposition.   A fourth manipulative device, associational juxtaposition, usually pairs the product/candidate with a desirable situation. Even when the viewer does not make a conscious connection between the two images, it is assumed that over time the connection will become established in the viewer's mind. Many examples from print media clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of this device. The ubiquitous cigarette ads that depict healthy people in the great outdoors pair a product with an unlikely outcome, but over time, the two become linked, and the viewer associates the product with healthy living.

Aesthetics

Aesthetic response goes well beyond response to printed literature; it also concerns itself with response to other art forms, including film, television, and children's picture books. Kaelin (1989) suggested that aesthetics "may be thought of as the discipline concerning itself with artistic communication—with the description of creativity of works of art, of artistic appreciation" (p. 71).

Because the aesthetic aspects of film, video, and television have been dealt with ably in several other reviews (Dondis, 1973; Messaris, 1994), this discussion of aesthetics will be limited to a discussion of children's picture books. In Roser and Martinez's (1995) volume on classroom literature discussion, Barbara Keifer (1995) notes that the children's picture book is seldom considered as a separate and unique art form that evokes aesthetic response. Although educators have regularly recognized the importance of picture books in children's language and literacy development, the relationships between the pictures and the words (the language arts and the visual arts) have not yet been fully explored. Bader

(1976) maintains that the art form of the picture book hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, and Marantz (1983) argues that picture books are a form of visual art that enhances children's overall literacy growth.

Keifer maintains that the verbal and visual arts have a great deal in common. Both have similar syntactic and semantic properties. Writers and artists organize through elements of composition, and both have style that is created through conscious choices of elements and principles. She argues that teachers can help children develop their aesthetic response to picture books by teaching them how illustrators communicate and how illustrations are integral to the meaning of the story. She argues that many beautiful children's picture books provide wonderful examples of the ways in which illustrator's choices contribute to the reader/viewer's aesthetic experience. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (1987a), written and illustrated by John Steptoe, is one example in which the story is told through words *and* pictures.

Keifer explains that Steptoe (1987b) created this book as a tribute to the ruins of a great civilization located in Zimbabwe which was neglected by historians. It contrasts and compares life in the past with life in the present, and the contrasts and similarities are best illustrated through the characters of two sisters—Nyasha, the kind and loving sister, and Manyara, the bad-tempered and selfish sister (Steptoe, 1987). Steptoe's artistic choices represent the underlying tension of the story. For example, he uses cool greens and blues to evoke the lush flora of the African setting, and he adds contrast and tension by using accents of reds and oranges, the color opposites of green and blue. He also uses value, varying degree of light and dark within the book, to reinforce his theme of contrast. By introducing principles of art into a literature discussion, Keifer cogently argues that aesthetic responses of children can be significantly broadened.

CONSEQUENCES OF EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

Motivating and Engaging Students

Many educators have already discovered that the analysis of contemporary media products and programs actually motivates and engages students as they build literacy skills that transfer to and enhance reading and writing abilities. When we encourage the study of media by analyzing issues of aesthetics, production, and visual technique, we help to develop skills which alter and reshape our students' relationship and response to media. Nehamas (1992) contends that serious watching which is informed, analytic, and evaluative disarms many of the criticisms commonly raised about television and film by students themselves, as well as by their parents. Analysis of a variety of texts (books, films, television) helps students gain interest in writing and speaking and nurtures their natural curiosity and motivation toward learning.

Building Bridges Between Classroom and Community

By now, criticisms of schools and classrooms are depressingly familiar: (1) Many students resist learning in school; (2) many students *can* read and write but *don't;* and (3) the school curriculum is fragmented and decontextualized, which produces indifference and dependency.

As a way of responding to these criticisms, some educators have begun to expand their conceptualization of literacy to include the communicative and visual arts, believing that a broadened conceptualization of literacy can help restore the important connection between school and home culture, making education more meaningful to everyone.

Such a broadened conceptualization of literacy enables curriculum and instruction to be developed in a context that permits interdependent and interrelated process, product, and content learning.

Carlos Cortes (1991) has consistently argued for an expansion of the definition of literacy to include media because "media can be used to stimulate students to consider multiple perspectives on current and historical multicultural dilemmas." A broadened notion of "text" as part of a new conceptualization enables us to think seriously about opening the canon of works to be studied in our classrooms. As difficult as it has been to open the literary canon for greater ethnic, gender, and cultural inclusion, so too will it be difficult to open it to alternative forms of art and literature that are created in visual forms. But the struggle is worth it— we *have* been able to significantly widen the canon to include a variety of perspectives and voices that reflect the diversity of our students. Soon, we may be able to open it to visual works that are such an important part of their lives.

Developing ESL/Bilingual Students' Skills

Students who come to school speaking languages other than the mother tongue of the country will also be the beneficiaries of an expanded conceptualization of literacy. As Hirsch (1989) and many others have explained, instructional techniques that are most effective for second-language learners include drama, music, and a variety of visual experiences that help convey meaning and content. Hirsch (1989) explained that second-language teachers willingly supplement their textbooks with newspapers, television programs, commercials, children's books, and a variety of written discourse forms (photo essays, on-line journals, and E-mail) in their efforts to design authentic tasks and materials for their students. Rice (1984) found that the visual elements of television often help teach vocabulary by providing easily interpreted and redundant information visually along with the verbal message.

Many second-language teachers argue that if a language cannot be separated from culture, then television is a most appropriate medium for providing a dramatized, cultural context for language instruction. English-as-a-second-language and foreign language instruction has in recent years seen a great increase in the use of "authentic" TV materials. In many parts of the United States, foreign-language TV stations provide news reports, commercials, and dramatic entertainment programming that can be used for in-class exercises (Willmorth, in press). News reports have timely and relevant content and a predictable format, and they offer opportunities for practice with rapidly spoken numbers in sports and weather reports. News reports often repeat a limited number of vocabulary words that can help children acquire important general cultural knowledge about the language and the people who speak it. Television commercials contain intelligible native speech with idiomatic constructions and, like news stories, can reflect cultural assumptions. As teaching materials, television commercials often have the virtues of short duration and humorous tone. Willmorth (in press) stresses that using authentic materials increases student motivation, provides sustained exposure to a limited set of topics, and improves retention of vocabulary items and builds an awareness of cultural concepts.

Strengthening Parents-Home Connections

While parents in many schools have taken an active role in the education of their children, there are still some parents who are disenfranchised from schools. An expanded

notion of literacy may serve as a natural invitation for more parents to become involved in their children's schooling, because it potentially broadens everyone's role in helping to develop literacy. The inclusion of the visual arts as a part of the literacy curriculum can not only help to broaden and redefine *who* can be involved but can also help us think about new roles for parents, teachers, and students.

Many adults have serious ambivalence about mass media in schools. Bianculli (1993) contends that there are five major concerns that parents have about television/media: (1) Violence in film and television desensitizes children and alters their conception of the social world; (2) television has damaged the process of elections; (3) mass media organizations disrupt the private lives of individuals; (4) values of sensationalism that are created by mass media have reshaped culture and the arts; and (5) television will displace reading.

By acknowledging these concerns, parents and teachers can begin the process of analyzing, interpreting, and creating intervention programs together. They can begin by drawing upon the existing research in these areas. For example, the evidence for the last of these concerns, that television viewing displaces leisure reading, is actually very scant. In fact, Neuman (1991) found that television viewing did not affect leisure reading because television was tied to a different set of gratifications than leisure reading. However, she did find a curvilinear negative effect for children who watched a great deal of television, that is, more than 4 hours per day. Other studies suggest that there may be a critical period in childhood between the preschool years and Grade 3 when negative effects of sustained, unsupervised television viewing are most likely to appear (Reinking & Wu, 1990).

As we begin to discuss concerns about television, we need to realize that there are many different kinds of television shows. Just as we make major distinctions among the types of books our children read, so too do we need to make distinctions about the television shows our children view. In the October 29-November 4, 1994, edition of *TV Guide*, several TV shows were recommended to parents and children as "Best Bets." Because of the extensive readership of *TV Guide*, we, as researchers, need to investigate the criteria for these choices. In time, we need to generate our own "Best Bets" lists that reflect our criteria for outstanding "texts" that sustain literacy development.

Designing Classrooms for Authentic Learning Through Integrated Curriculum

An expanded definition of literacy also has the possibility of nurturing new relations between students and teachers, placing students at the center of the classroom where they direct their own learning through direct experiences with relevant tasks and tests that *they* value. This view of literacy provides a simple process-based model which can help students build important connections between reading/language arts, visual and performing arts, and social studies and science. But Shepard (1993) warns us that we will need to integrate media literacy into our existing curriculum as an integral part of daily life, not as a "sometimes add-on":

> If media literacy is presented to educators as just another add-on, there will be little hope for its adoption. If, however, media literacy is presented not just as something that meets students needs, but something that will meet teachers needs to integrate the disparate elements of a broad curriculum, then it stands a good chance of becoming an important part of the curriculum.

Mass media products are relevant to all areas of the curriculum and provide opportunities for synergy among large groups of people. In several communities, educators are designing curriculum projects that fully integrate media literacy concepts and traditional

curriculum concepts. For example, in Billerica, Massachusetts, in the spring of 1994, teachers collaborated on a district-wide program to critically analyze tobacco advertising as part of the health curriculum. Students examined the historical, political, and economic dimensions of tobacco advertising. They began by reviewing and analyzing huge volumes of persuasive material that was designed to make smoking look attractive. They then created public service messages designed for their own community to persuade against smoking. More than 2,000 students in Grades K-12 participated by designing slogans, writing newspaper editorials, and designing billboards, bumper stickers, posters, radio ads, and videotaped public service announcements. A local billboard company agreed to put up a student's design on the major highway of Billerica, giving thousands of citizens an opportunity to read a child's message, creating a powerful learning experience for children that their voice can be heard.

A second example is closer to our own homes. Together with Sharon Flood, we were involved in a project in a local elementary school where the graduating sixth graders were putting a yearbook together. As we thought with the children about ways to capture the life of the school in photographs, we decided to do a feature on a "Day in the Life" in their school, Benchley-Weinberger Elementary School. In preparation for our day of shooting, we studied the *Day in the Life* photography-book series by analyzing the content and form of the books. We discussed daily life at Benchley-Weinberger, and we decided on activities, people, and places at the school that best expressed its character and uniqueness. Mike Franklin, a photographer from the San Diego *Union Tribune* who had one of his photographs published in *A Day in the Life of California*, was then invited to the school. He shared his experience with that volume, as well as ideas for photos for the yearbook. He taught the children about framing, angle shots, and light tone.

On April 1, 1993, we were set for our photographing. The sixth graders were assigned in groups of four for 30-minute intervals. Groups were assigned to specific classrooms, physical parts of the school, and specific activities; for example, the morning raising of the flag. When the photos were developed, the students selected the photos they wanted to use and they wrote the story of the project. Mike Franklin, the newspaper photographer, took the photo essay to the newspaper, where the feature editor selected six of the students' photographs to include in the May 1993 *Currents* section of the newspaper. (See Figure 6.)

The school and the community both were able to share the children's work, observing a routine school day from a child's perspective. The children, in turn, realized the power of the newspaper, its words and pictures, in a new way that they had not previously experienced.

Educators

Educators are just as ambivalent about media in the classroom as the rest of our society. As teachers, we have a wide range of attitudes about the value and consequences of broadening our conceptualization of literacy if it means widespread television and film viewing in our classrooms. We worry about the effects of media on children. We want to be absolutely sure that mass media will play a helpful role in the educational process. Even though we realize that many of our students have a tremendous amount of knowledge and interest in media, we are still reluctant to embrace media without a serious research effort that unequivocally demonstrates its efficacy. This will not be an easy task, but together as teachers, researchers, parents, and students, we can begin to design research projects that will help us understand the ways in which visual media can help to develop literacy abilities *and* the ways in which it hinders growth.

Figure 6. Newspaper article, about a day at Benchley-Weinberger Elementary School.

It is not a difficult task to move from teaching *with* media to teaching both *with* and *about* media. But it will take time to change attitudes and community responses that invite change. It seems that this attitudinal change will be translated best into instruction when school and communities come together to begin the process of creation. Individual teachers, school administrators, researchers, and members of the community must first come together to agree upon whether they want to expand literacy perspectives to be responsive to the power of mass media. We have to be patient, realizing it takes time to find out what will really help our students' literacy growth.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

As part of the oral presentation of this paper, two videos, several photographs, overhead slides, and film clips were included to make integral visual points in the address and to supplement verbal points. The opening and closing 4-minute videos invited the audience to contemplate the breadth of expansion that a new definition of literacy could allow. Although we are aware of the differences between this printed version of the address and the oral/visual presentation at the conference, we have included a handful of visuals in an attempt to give the "flavor" of the multimedia presentation. One of our colleagues said, "It's too bad that we couldn't make these kinds of addresses available to our members on a CD-ROM, because the visuals and words make it whole." Yes, we agree; that's the next challenge ahead.