

Multiple Literacies:
The Goal of a Comprehensive Visual Arts Education

By

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SUMMARY OF CAPSTONE PROJECT
PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS

MULTIMODAL LITERACY: THE GOAL OF A COMPREHENSIVE VISUAL ARTS
EDUCATION

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From the moment we wake up in the morning to the moment we climb into bed at night, visual images and communication technologies permeate our every activity. Images penetrate our daily lives, from the food packaging we eat, the posters and signage we see, to the print journals we read. Similarly, new technologies of communication are literally at our fingertips; cellular devices allow people to not only make phone calls, but also search the Internet and engage in online social networking. Jointly, images and technologies enable people to receive, interpret, and convey messages, making it even more essential that people are literate in all forms of communication.

Literacy is not a new topic of conversation within the realm of education, or in art education specifically. For a long time, literacy referred to verbal and print-based communications. Visual literacy, while a relatively new term, has been discussed at length throughout a number of disciplines including art education, which exemplifies its interdisciplinary nature. New media literacy refers to current technological forms of

information exchange, and intersects with visual literacy, enabling people to interact within and navigate an image-based world.

This project explores multiple modes of literacy, including visual and new media literacy, and how they relate to art education. In carrying out this capstone project, I was interested in learning how new media literacy relates to my own work teaching elementary art classes at a public school in Florida. I compiled my research into a literary review and constructed a series of tables that compared the skills of visual and new media literacy to the state and county standards in art. The result of this research led me on a path to develop a short video presentation of my reflections of my own art education practices and a series of handouts to present to art educators in the school district I work in, Polk County School District, as a way to generate professional conversations about our approach to teaching art to today's students.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Close your eyes and picture the last commercial you watched. Was it on television or on the Internet? What elements of the commercial do you remember, the images, the actors, the text? Was the commercial trying to sell you a product, persuade you to eat somewhere, or voice a public concern? The commercial utilized many modes, images, sounds, texts, together to entice you into making a decision. Were you prepared to understand the meaning or intent of the content within the message?

This is just one example of multimodal literacy in the 21st century. Literacy embraces multimodal tools, such as text, sound, and visuals together to express a message. In our global community, students must be multimodally literate in order to interpret meaning from messages as well as to develop appropriate messages to convey to others from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These messages take on a variety of forms themselves, from the creation of fine art to imagery from popular visual culture.

We are indeed in the midst of a visual, participatory, and global culture in which technology grants us access to an endless array of communicative resources, with the ability to interact with both visual and verbal texts at speeds unimaginable before. For example, people can take pictures, edit them, and email them in almost no time on handheld mobile devices. With this instantaneous access to technology, it is important that students interact responsibly with the messages they send and receive, not just with mobile devices but also in the art they observe and make. Hassett and Curwood (2009) state that “although possessing traditional print literacy skills continues to be

sufficient for many communication tasks, the demands of digital media and visual texts within a multimodal culture require complex new ways of coding and decoding image-text relations” (p. 270). Essentially, anyone can be an artist with these new media devices, and therefore, it is the responsibility of art teachers and students to critically read and make these new art and communicative forms effectively convey their intended meaning.

Literacy statistics focus on the level that individuals, from young children to adults, are able to construct meaning from text. While some research into the literacy rates of adults could be valuable, research indicates that language and literacy development begins at infancy and continues through school. With this in mind, my research focused on student visual and multimodal literacy at the elementary art level, ages 5-11.

Statement of the Problem

Although students are absorbed in visual culture, they may not necessarily be literate in it. Felten (cited in Avgerinou, 2009) explains that “living in an image rich world...does not mean students (or faculty and administrators) naturally possess sophisticated visual literacy skills, just as continually listening to an iPod does not teach a person to critically analyze or create music” (p. 29). Students have initiated conversations with me regarding artwork or projects they have seen online, such as *Wreck this Journal* (2007, <http://www.kerismith.com/>). Similarly, several of my 5th grade students use online drawing tutorials at home to help them with their drawing skills. The fact is that students are using these new media technologies, and it is critical to prepare

them how to use these tools with the same critical eye that they use when they make art using traditional methods (pencils, paint, clay, etc.).

It is also important to consider teachers who might be apprehensive about addressing and implementing these new literacies in the classroom. Pettersson (2009) explains that while much has been done to research visual literacy and its applications to many disciplines, “visual literacy has not been able to attract enough interest from society and enough interest from those responsible for school curricula around the world” (p. 38). Prior to this research, I did not know a significant amount regarding visual or new media literacy. The reasons for this vary, from my own negligence, to time, and a lack of resources. Without the proper resources, such as professional development, networking with colleagues, and ensuring sufficient time to research new information, multimodal literacy will remain vague and unfamiliar to most teachers.

The shift from traditional literacy to more integrated literacies indicates a shift in student learning. Carpenter II and Cifuentes (2011) explain that “our dominant pastimes involve visual media such as film, television, video games, and the Internet” (p. 33). From my personal observations, I have noticed that the majority of young people who enter my classroom have access to computers, the Internet, and many own smartphones, or at least know how to use them. In fact, several of my students have taught me about new websites and artists that they have found searching the Internet.

Antsey and Bull (cited in Towell and Smilan, 2009) ask the question “what does it mean to be a literate member of our global society in a world with multimodal texts, blogs, podcasts, interactive multimedia, and video games” (p. 18).

Looking back over my graduate studies at the University of Florida, I learned several new approaches to art education including *Backwards Design* for curriculum planning and the use of *Big Ideas* and *Essential Questions* as foundations for lesson planning. This new information conflicted with my prior educational practice, one that emphasized the elements and principles of art. It also conflicted with the curriculum plan for my district. In response to standards-based learning, our district prepared an essential criteria pre- and post-test for 5th grade students that could be used as tangible evidence of student learning in art (see Appendix A for an example of the Essential Criteria Form). This series of exams focuses on easily testable items, such as vocabulary terms. Naturally, I want my students to perform well on these exams, in order to demonstrate growth in art, but should vocabulary mastery be the most important thing that my students take away from my class? I began to wonder how a multimodal literacy approach could impact the quality of the art education experience for both students and teachers in Polk County.

Significance of the Research

Students are not stagnant, and therefore education should not be either. It must constantly evolve to meet the needs of all our students. This is true in all fields of education, including the visual arts. Fostering visual and multimodal literacy in art education is a means of reaching students on their level, teaching them to navigate the visual worlds they inhabit through their own eyes and minds. According to a report from the *Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge* (TETAC), “art attains value, purpose, and meaning from the personal, social, and cultural dimensions of life” (Stewart and Walker, 2005, p. 42). This is perhaps one of the most crucial reasons that

multimodal literacy should be included in the art curriculum, as it directly relates to how people communicate with one another. TETAC further states that “change is fundamental to art” (p. 42). Change is a recurring theme in my research paper and documents, change in my personal teaching practice and change in the way Polk County art educators approach the art curriculum. I believe the most significant aspect of this capstone project is that it challenges the current vision and treatment of art education in my school district and sets the precedent for conversations among my colleagues about bringing our curriculum into the 21st century.

Limitations of the Study

Because multimodal literacy studies are relatively new, it has been difficult to find evidence regarding new literacy gaps and the impact these literacies have on student engagement. Consequentially, it will be challenging to determine what other factors play a role in the development of new literacy skills beyond those found in the classroom or school setting, such as socioeconomic differences. My research emphasizes multimodal literacy and how it relates to my district’s current art curriculum, but the process of initiating change will take time, so for the purpose of this project only the first step, which was to identify a need and propose change is documented. If more time was allotted for such investigations, I would be able to work with my fellow art teachers, engage in dialogue pertaining to their current art practices (surveys, polls, etc.) that would create a clearer argument for the need to develop and to implement these changes.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy is a labyrinth that presents many challenges to education. It is a lifelong journey with many turns. Literacy itself covers a diverse range of sub-specialties, including linguistic literacy, digital literacy, science literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, multimodal literacy, and new media literacy. Literacy now encompasses many skills and practices pertaining to *meaning making*. Hobbs (cited in Chauvin, 2003) discusses forms of literacy such as technology and media/visual by saying it is “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms” (p. 119-120).

According to Richards (2003), “learning to read is a complex process [one that] involves students knowing how to manipulate symbols (letters) of the alphabet in concert with the fundamental concepts and principles of the language of the teacher, the classroom, and that which is used in their textbooks” (p. 21). Richards goes on to suggest “being literate in the arts affords students a greater advantage in learning to read” (p. 21). For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that reading goes beyond text to include the ability to read messages within images as well.

Visual Literacy

Rudolf Arnheim was the founder of perceptual psychology, a professor at Harvard University and Sarah Lawrence College, and the author of several books including *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (1974). Perhaps Arnheim’s most notable contributions were in the areas of art education and Visual

Literacy (VL). Arnheim theorized that the act of seeing was cognitive in nature, and that visual language is often utilized before verbal language. Arnheim stated that “language cannot do the job directly because it is no direct avenue for sensory contact with reality; it serves only to name what we have seen or heard or thought” (p. 2).

Not everyone was supportive of Arnheim’s theories. Lanier (1974), for example, warned readers of the dangers of visual perception taking the place of verbal language, arguing, “terms such as visual language or slogans such as art is communication give the impression-whether they were originally meant to or not-that the visual image transmits ideas and information in the same sense that words do” (p. 13). Nonetheless, Arnheim insisted on the belief that we interpret visuals long before we use words and illustrated in depth how intelligence and perception interact cohesively. By identifying perception as an act of intelligence and explaining the psychology of the image, Arnheim shifted the way art education was viewed. No longer was it purely about creative self-expression, but a way to build visual thinking skills. It wasn’t long after Arnheim’s theory that the term visual literacy was actually defined by John Debes (Avgerinou, Para 1). Debes referred to visual literacy as “a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences” (Avgerinou, Para 2).

Since the emergence of *visual literacy*, scholars have been defining the term to fit their needs, but all the meanings still relate to the understanding of visual images. Visual images are a language because, according to Ausburn and Ausburn (1978), “like verbal language, they have vocabulary, grammar, and syntax” (p. 291). Visual language includes the elements and principles of art, as well as symbols, body

language, and object placement. In order to be visually literate, Ausburn and Ausburn explain, a person must be able to “interpret the visual messages, such as gestures or pictures, produced by others” in addition to constructing, or “writing” images for others to interpret (p. 291). Consider that even letters of the alphabet and sign language utilize visual thinking in order for communication to work effectively.

Although the term visual literacy was only developed a little more than 40 years ago, using pictorials and visuals to communicate is not new. Velders (cited in Peterson, 2009) explains that “the history of visual communication goes back to the cave paintings 30,000 years ago, the description of it only 2,500. . .visual literacy is 2,500 years old (as a skill) and 30 years young (as a term)” (p. 38). Yenawine (2003) states that “beginning in infancy, we learn to recognize, categorize, and sort out all manner of objects, people, activities, and phenomena such as weather, colors, or moods” (p. 6). Yenawine (2003) further explains that “over time, we encounter images in many media that go beyond simple representation and include documentary evidence of events, people, and places, as well as stories and material that are open to interpretation” (p. 6). The activities of the art classroom serve as the foundation for developing visual literacy by exploring and investigating both fine art from museums and galleries to everyday media and imagery.

Visual Culture

To understand visual literacy, it is important to look at visual culture. For the purposes of this discussion, visual culture refers more to items mass-produced and consumed, rather than the fine art found in museum spaces. These items can include images that serve entertainment purposes such as television, magazines, and books.

Not all images in visual culture are meant to entertain. Think, for example, of political advertisements, public service posters, and photojournalism.

Visual Culture is closely linked with what Henry Jenkins (2011) calls participatory culture. Within a participatory culture, the public is able to not only consume messages, but also create them as well. With access to technology, all members of a society are able to create and share communications and it is up to them to decide to participate or not. Participatory culture allows members within a community to feel connected, not isolated with one another (Jenkins, 2009, p. 6).

New Media Literacy

New media literacy is the newest terminology pertaining to multiple literacy dialogues. Just as visual literacy relates to the ability to interpret visual culture, new media literacy addresses the ability to traverse in participatory culture. New media expresses a shift from print-based communication to digital communication. Kress (2003) explains that “these are, on the one hand, the broad move from the now centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and, on the other hand, the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen” (p.1). This is clearly evident in technologies such as electronic book readers and computer tablets.

According to the website, NewMediaLiteracies.org (2011), while new media literacy addresses literacies with technological and communicative devices, these skills can be mastered without the use of computers, although having them provides students with more opportunities (Para 3). However, even if you have computers in the

classroom, they aren't always utilized to the fullest. While I have three computers in my classroom and students use them sparingly for research and little more. With students actively engaged in online activities, they need to learn the skills to participate effectively and responsibly, rather than acquiring only the technical skills (how to use a computer). Students need to learn how to interpret and create meaningful messages from the Internet, including the images shared on blogs and media hosting sites.

Multimodal Literacy

Multimodal literacy refers to the ability to receive and interpret meaning through a variety of methods. Kress and Jewitt (2003) explain that a "mode is used to refer to a regularized and organized set of resources for meaning-making including, image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech, and sound effect" (p. 1). What came to my mind as I researched multimodal literacy were multisensory learning and multiple intelligences. Gardner's (2008) Theory of Multiple Intelligences identified different learning styles, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Para 3). Similarly, multimodal communication employs a variety of senses and tools for interpreting and conveying forms of communication.

Technology and media lead the way to new modes of learning beyond textual information. Hassett and Curwood (2009) mention that "consequently, being able to navigate the Internet, use digital media, or read a children's book involves being able to decode and comprehend alphabetic print in conjunction with other socially and culturally shaped forms of representation, that is, in conjunction with multiple modes" (p. 272). Art itself encompasses a variety of modes and media, such as paint, fabric, clay, digital

photography, and vide, and therefore utilizing multimodal literacy within the field of visual arts will create a more comprehensive instruction.

Challenges

What challenges are presented when implementing a multimodal literacy art curriculum? It is well documented that gaps in socioeconomics play a role the development of literacy. According to White and Kim (2009), “many low-income children and English language learners have limited word knowledge, which negatively affects their reading comprehension in the upper elementary and middle school grades” (p. 1). Research indicates that students from less financially secure families are also less likely to be prepared for new literacies. According to data from *Literacy Today* (2010):

Children aged 8-15 in DE households (defined as those households where the chief income earner is either a semi-skilled or unskilled manual worker) remained less likely than households with children in other socioeconomic groups to have access to digital television, DVRs and the Internet. (p. 20)

Jenkins (2009) identifies a *participation gap*, indicating that students in urban communities are more likely to have access to computers and wireless Internet access than in rural areas (p. 16). Naturally, those students who have access to technology and the Internet are more likely to be literate in new media than those who do not, but merely having access to technology does not mean that students will be literate. Surprisingly, in a study conducted by Pew Internet and American Life Project, urban youths were more likely than suburban and rural youths to be media savvy (Jenkins, p.

3). Perhaps this is because urban environments offer more wireless service. For instance, when I am in the downtown area of my hometown, it is easy to find wireless hotspots, where Internet access is available freely. In contrast, the more rural areas of town, where businesses are more scarce and empty land more prominent, it is quite difficult to find free access, if you don't have mobile service or the Internet at home it could prove challenging to find opportunities to browse online.

In addition to potential gaps in visual and multimodal literacy development, there is also the challenge of educators' resistant to this potential integrated structure. Heise (2004) believes that "new media technologies and postmodern theory invite visual culture in the classroom, leaving some teachers with feelings of confusion and ambiguity about appropriate art pedagogy" (p. 41). Furthermore, not all art educators support visual culture art education because they view it as a threat to the traditional disciplines within fine art education. Yujie (2007) answers by saying, "though questions raised by visual culture may be painful for some art teachers to consider, it is worthwhile to rethink the legitimacy of the division between fine arts and other visual forms in today's world" (p. 2). Visual and new media literacy are important parts of this new visual culture art education. Visual culture and visual literacy do not necessarily replace art education content that already exists, but create new learning objectives within art education for students to be able to make connections with their constantly changing environments.

Interdisciplinary Approach

Art education is just one of many disciplines that have broached the topic of literacy development. Teachers in disciplines such as science, reading, and psychology also acknowledge the importance of visual literacy in their classrooms. For example reading classes utilize mind maps, concepts maps, sentence diagrams, and pictorial representations with vocabulary words to help visualize the content that they are reading or writing about.

Humans are interdisciplinary by nature. For example, even silent films were accompanied by music. According to research by Renata and Geoffrey Caine (cited in Stewart and Walker, 2005), the human brain does not separate information but rather “creates a complex web of information that recognizes patterns” (p. 108). When carefully integrated, art and other disciplines can work together, such as applying geometry and measurement skills in drawing and sculpting. Reading and writing occur often in my class with the use of picture books with younger students, studying both the text and the illustrations and the relationships between the two.

Of course, it is important to always be mindful of the possibility of one subject merely serving other subjects, such as using art to prepare better test takers. Ulbricht (1998) warns that while it is important to consider an interdisciplinary approach to art education, one must not succumb to the trap that art serves as a “handmaiden” for other subjects (p. 16). An example of this in a multimodal literacy art curriculum would be that of artist journals where students incorporate texts, visuals, and history together. By embracing and implementing multimodal literacy and art together, students will see how

art is more than just developing talents and skills, but how art plays an integral role in the communication of ideas and concepts. Ultimately, art becomes more relatable, and students are more likely to participate rather than just follow predetermined criteria.

Implications for Art Education

Some people may ask, why art? I ask, why not art? As Krug and Cohen-Evron (2000) suggest, “the arts function to stimulate students’ multisensory perceptions” (p. 265). Students look at art works, critically analyze them, and play with a variety of media to create their own works of art. Art education currently focuses on four disciplines identified by discipline-based art education (DBAE): criticism, history, art making, and aesthetics (Stewart and Walker, 2005, p. 40). It would be within this framework that an emphasis on teaching towards visual and multimodal literacy could be addressed.

The line between fine art and visual culture is blurred, and has been for some time. Stewart and Walker argue that “without the inclusion of visual representations beyond traditional fine art forms, art students would not be fully equipped to understand the contemporary world in terms of social relationships, politics, race, gender, sexuality, and class- all aspects of cultural understanding” (p. 124). With this premise, visual and multimodal literacy would not overshadow the art curriculum as some educators fear, but would contribute to a comprehensive art education that is relevant to the students of today. Within the multimodal art classroom, students would interact with each other, share ideas, and create both individual and collaborative works. Students could utilize new media to create videos together, to share their work online, and to explore a much

broader range of art works from a variety of sources on a global scale—the potential for networking is limitless.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

At the beginning of my research, I was inundated with literacy terminology. For that reason, I decided to narrow my research to investigate two key literacies that stood out in my mind, visual and new media literacy, and how they pertain to art education.

I researched a number of sources to identify the key components of each type of literacy. I decided it would be pertinent to compare this information with the current state of art education in Florida and Polk County. My focus remained at the elementary level, but I decided to further narrow it down to 5th grade student data because they are the test group in Polk County for the elementary level.

The first data set that I created in a table was Avgerinou's (2009) Eleven Visual Literacy Competencies, which define the essential skills necessary for visual literacy (Table 2-1).

11 Visual Literacy Competencies

Knowledge of Visual Vocabulary	Knowledge of the basic components (i.e. point, line, shape, form, space, texture, light, color, motion) of visual language.
Knowledge of Visual Conventions	Knowledge of visual signs and symbols, and their socially agreed meanings (within the western culture).
Visual Thinking	The ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics, or forms that help communicate the information
Visualization	The process by which a visual image is formed.
(Verbo-) Visual Reasoning	Coherent and logical thinking that is carried out primarily by means of images.
Critical viewing	Applying critical thinking skills to visuals.
Visual Discrimination	The ability to perceive differences between two or more visual stimuli.
Visual Reconstruction	The ability to reconstruct a partially occluded visual message in its original form
(Sensitivity to) Visual Association	The ability to link visual images that display a unifying theme.
(Sensitivity to) Verbo-Visual Association	The ability to link verbal messages and their visual representations (and vice versa) to enhance meaning.
Reconstructing Meaning	The ability to visualize and verbally (or visually) reconstruct the meaning of a visual message solely on the evidence of given information which is incomplete.
Constructing Meaning	The ability to construct meaning for a given visual message on the evidence of any given visual (and perhaps verbal) information. (Avgerinou, 2009, p. 29-30)

Table 2-1

One thing that I noticed when reading through these competencies was how interrelated they are. Knowledge of Visual Conventions is constructed through the Knowledge of Visual Vocabulary. Some of them however, could be compressed together, such as Reconstructing Meaning and Visual Reconstruction. I also began thinking how these skills related to my current teaching practices. I realized quickly that although I would like to believe that I am incorporating these competencies in my classroom, I wasn't utilizing many of them. Due to testing requirements, I have focused

almost entirely on the development of art knowledge using the Visual Vocabulary and Visual Conventions, often overlooking the critical components, such as Verbo-Visual Association and Reconstructing Meaning.

Despite my dismay, I kept moving forward in my research, collecting information that related to multimodal literacy competencies, and found the 21st Century Skills, presented by Henry Jenkins (2011). These are skills that address new media literacy within a participatory culture, one in which communication technologies are multimodal and interactive (Table 2-2). The first skill on the list is Play, which reminded me of an article by Olivia Gude (2010) that talked extensively about play in art education and how it is an essential factor in developing creativity (p. 35). I wondered if I am allowing my students to 'play' enough, or was my curriculum too rigid? Students need to play with an expanded selection of media and materials, including technology, something that I realized needs to be addressed in my classroom.

21st Century Skills

Play	The capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem solving.
Performance	The ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.
Simulation	The ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
Appropriation	The ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.
Multitasking	The ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
Distributed Cognition	The ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.
Collective Intelligence	The ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.
Judgment	The ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.
Transmedia Navigation	The ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple media.
Networking	The ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.
Negotiation	The ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.
Visualization	The ability to translate information into visual models and understand the information visual models are communicating.

Retrieved from <http://www.newmedialiteracies.org/the-literacies.php>

Table 2-2

Another skill I noticed is networking, something that our district visual arts coordinator constantly provides opportunities for us to do through professional development and art workshops. Networking in this list refers to the ability to search and collect information. Our district consists of the best resources, our fellow teachers. Although teachers communicate, through this research I believe that using new media could help us to network even more successfully with each other and also teachers globally. Also, if it is important for us as educators to network with each other, then shouldn't we be providing opportunities for our students to network with fellow students and artists?

It was then that I decided to look closer at how these skills and competencies are aligned with the Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) and the Polk County Curriculum Guide. I downloaded the NGSSS standards for grade 5, and found that there were five distinct Big Ideas listed and then three Enduring Ideas for each Big Idea (Table 2-3). I discovered that the NGSSS are comparable to both the visual literacy competencies and new media literacy 21st century skills. An example of this is in the statement, “The 21st-century skills necessary for success as citizens, workers, and leaders in a global economy are embedded in the study of the arts.” This last statement appears to be a significant element in my argument for curricular change within my district.

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Visual Arts (VA)

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for VA Big Ideas for 5 th Grade	Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for VA Enduring Understandings for 5 th Grade
Critical Thinking	Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.
	Assessing our own and others' artistic work, using critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, is central to artistic growth.
	The processes of critiquing works of art lead to development of critical-thinking skills transferable to other contexts.
Skills, Techniques, and Processes	The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the processes of creating, interpreting, and responding to art.
	Development of skills, techniques, and processes in the arts strengthens our ability to remember, focus on, process, and sequence information
	Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques
Organizational Structure	Understanding the organizational structure of an art form provides a foundation for appreciation of artistic works and respect for the creative process.
	The structural rules and conventions of an art form serve as both a foundation and departure point for creativity.
	Every art form uses its own unique language, verbal and non-verbal, to document and communicate with the world.
Historical and Global Connections	Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live.
	The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.
	Connections among the arts and other disciplines strengthen learning and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to and from other fields.
Innovation, Technology, and the Future	Creating, interpreting, and responding in the arts stimulate the imagination and encourage innovation and creative risk-taking.
	Careers in and related to the arts significantly and positively impact local and global economies.
	The 21 st -century skills necessary for success as citizens, workers, and leaders in a global economy are embedded in the study of the arts.

Retrieved from: <http://www.floridastandards.org/Standards/FLStandardSearch.aspx>

Table 2-3

I took a closer look at Polk County's art curriculum guide that specifies the vocabulary skills students are required to master (Table 2-4). The school year is broken

up into four learning segments, which we call nine-week periods. In the 1st nine weeks, students are required to master Line, Shape, and Color. I collected each nine-week's criteria and compiled them into a table so that it would be easier to read. The essential questions directly coincide with the vocabulary concept.

Polk County Art Curriculum Guide

Nine Week Grading Period	Concept	Essential Question
1 st nine weeks	Line	How do I create interest by using a variety of lines in my artwork?
	Shape/Form	How do I use shape/form to create interest in my artwork
	Color	How do I create color schemes?
2 nd nine weeks	Pattern	How do I create visual interest with patterns?
	Texture	How do I use texture to create visual interest in artwork?
3 rd nine weeks	Balance	How do I create balance in my artwork?
	Emphasis	How do I create emphasis in my artwork?
	Unity	How do I create unity in my artwork?
4 th nine weeks	Space	How do I create depth within my artwork?
	Contrast	How do I use contrast to create visual interest in my artwork?

<http://www.polk-fl.net/staff/resources/curriculum.htm>

Table 2-4

I then cross-referenced the data from the previous tables to see any correlations. For Table 2-5, I highlighted the skills into separate components. The yellow highlighted segments relate to skills and vocabulary, which could include the elements and principles of art. I highlighted the items relating to critical thinking green and the items relating to history and culture red. The blue highlights represent innovation and technology, such as new media technology. I also noted that several skills were shared and highlighted them with the multiple colors accordingly. The compelling detail that

stood out in this table is the fact that the Polk County curriculum guide only consists of the skills and organizational structure components. This is not to say that teachers are not including history, culture, or innovation within the curriculum, but there is certainly no notable documentation of such with the current state focused on testing for knowledge gains.

11 Visual Literacy Competencies (2009)	21st Century Skills, Henry Jenkins (2011)	Next Generation Sunshine State Standards Big Ideas (2010)	Polk County Schools Curriculum Guidelines (N.D.)
Knowledge of visual vocabulary	Play	Critical Thinking	1st nine weeks Line Shape/Form Color
Knowledge of visual conventions	Performance	Skills, Techniques, and Processes	2nd nine weeks Pattern Texture
Visual Thinking	Simulation	Organizational Structure	3rd nine weeks Balance Emphasis Unity
Visualization	Appropriation	Historical and Global Connections	4th nine weeks Space Contrast
(Verbo-) Visual Reasoning	Multitasking	Innovation, Technology, and the Future	
Critical viewing	Distributed Cognition		
Visual Discrimination	Collective Intelligence		
Visual Reconstruction	Judgment		
(Sensitivity to) Visual Association	Transmedia Navigation		
(Sensitivity to) Verbo-Visual Association	Networking		
Reconstructing Meaning	Negotiation		
Constructing Meaning	Visualization		

Table 2-5

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

My findings showed that while it was clear that multimodal literacy is an integral part of the 21st century and essential to a comprehensive art curriculum, they weren't emphasized at all in my county's art curriculum. Now I had a decision to make: How do I present this information to my district?

I have established what I think could be essential components (Table 2.5) of the multimodal art classroom. For establishing the principles, I referred back to and expanded upon the widely used DBAE model and its four components, art making, art criticism, art history and culture, and aesthetics. At this time, our district objectives do not list these components, but rather it is implied that we teach them. My goal is that these components will help guide us in the direction of embracing a multimodal art curriculum, worthy of the 21st century student body.

Looking closer at the first component, art making incorporates new media (digital technology) in addition to traditional media (paint, pencil). Additionally, I have included play and performance in this section, such as the use of interactive centers where students use materials freely or act out ideas with one another (create a play based on a work of art). The criticism component includes looking at a vast array of images, incorporating visual culture into the classroom. Often fine art images make their way into commercial art and vice versa, such as the Monet inspired Target gift cards and so all forms of art and media should be discussed. Within the art history component, students will understand how art is deeply imbedded in global cultures and shares the

stories of the people within individual communities. Students will access new technology along with the tools like conventional books and posters when learning the history of art, such as interactive online art museums and researching using bookmarking tools such as Delicious. The aesthetic component allows for students to form judgments for themselves what is successful, branching out to include the ability to determine not just what is a work of art, but what makes a successful communicative message.

Looking closer at the criticism component, I added the recommendation to introduce new terminology that relates to 21st century artwork and skills such as juxtaposition, recontextualization, and collage. Although I placed vocabulary in the art criticism section, it can be utilized in all four categories. Furthermore, I chose to add juxtaposition, recontextualization, and collage within the table, but there are other contemporary art terms that should be addressed in the art classroom such as appropriation, interaction of text & image, and hybridity (Gude, 2004, p. 9-10).

Discipline Based Art Education for the 21st Century

Art Making	Students will use new media such as digital devices (cameras and videos), photo and movie editing software in addition to traditional media (charcoal, paint, clay). Students will also participate in nontraditional forms of art making through interactive activities such as play and performance.
Criticism	Students will carefully look at, analyze, and respond to a broad range of visuals including illustrations, advertisements, journalism, and fine. Students will utilize both traditional art vocabulary (the elements and principles of visual art) and 21 st terminology such as juxtaposition, recontextualization, and collage.
Art History	Students will explore art forms and visuals throughout the history of art and visual culture, learning to appreciate and respect global cultures. Students will utilize a network of traditional tools (posters and books) as well as Internet based tools (Online museums, Pinterest, Delicious, etc.).
Aesthetics	Students will be able to make judgments of many forms of artwork, determine for themselves the effectiveness of various visual images, and engage in debates about what makes artworks, visuals, and multimedia messages successful.

Table 2-6

Video Development

The next problem I faced is how to best urge my colleagues to rethink the county's art curriculum as it stands now. I started with a PowerPoint presentation, which quickly progressed to a video. If I was going to talk about utilizing new media, then it was important that I was also engaged in the act myself. For the video, I used the program Windows Live *Movie Maker*®, a program that could be downloaded for free on my PC. I made a point of using free software because it would be more accessible for other teachers in the future rather than using costly programs. I strayed slightly with my idea of using free software when I edited some of the images, opting for software that I already had on my computer, Adobe Photoshop. I had to find a balance between text and images, so not to overwhelm and lose my audience in too many words. Eventually, the video transformed somewhat into a confessional, a diary entry that allowed me to reflect on my own education practices and represents the struggle that has plagued me since the start of my graduate studies.

The objective of this video was personal, to acknowledge my own need for growth and change as an art teacher. The video will be shared with my colleagues with the hopes that they will take a moment and reflect as well, and recognize their own art education goals and whether they need to reevaluate them as well. The final video can be found on Vimeo, following the link provided <https://vimeo.com/46986279>.

Supplements

In addition to the video, I created a series of PDF handouts for my colleagues to view. As an educator, I thought about what resources I would want to have if I was

considering the integration of multimodal literacy in my curriculum. Therefore, I decided that in addition to a video, I would need to develop a PDF handout that outlines the information that I have compiled (Appendix B). Eventually, this handout progressed into a proposal for professional development. The first page is a cover letter addressed to the Visual Arts District Coordinator for Polk County, outlining the purpose of the preceding documents. The second page brings attention to the research findings, explaining how our District goals compare to visual and new media literacy as well as Florida visual arts standards. The third page shares the objectives for multimodal literacy that I developed for the art classroom and some suggestions for activity starters. Next, I created a two page handout with links to a variety of online tools that will make implementing new media in the art classroom easier. I included links to social media sites, video and photo sharing, and to other art teacher websites just to name a few. The final document provides educators with some suggestions for how to proceed with multimodal literacy in the art curriculum, including the development of a committee of art educators to assess and modify the current art objectives. The goal of this packet is for it to be used as a tool by teachers, collaboratively, for creating changes in how we develop the future of our visual arts program.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was not to point fingers and identify weaknesses in art education within my school district. Teachers and administrators in the Polk County art department work tirelessly to provide students with the best art education possible while advocating the benefits of art in the schools. However, self-preservation has led us to use testing standards as virtually our only means of documenting student achievement in visual arts. If art education is going to be seen as part of the core curriculum, then it must address core issues. We must represent *all* of what art education encompasses, not just part of it.

Personal Multimodal Literacy Skills

In addition to realizing the need to increase my students' multimodal literacy skills, I recognized that I needed to hone in on my own. I took the objectives that I created in the proposal packet and used them to evaluate my own skills. The first objective, "students will be able to use a broad range of art media to develop critically meaningful works of art, engage in purposeful play, performance, and visualization" requires that I utilize a variety of devices to construct and complete my capstone project. At first, I thought I was reaching this objective by using photo-editing software, playing with the images I created. But, I realized that I wasn't doing enough and that I needed to reconsider the message itself. I was stuck reverting back to the familiar, rather than explore other options such as video technology, and the messages of multimodal literacy and personal educational practices were being lost as a result. I began looking to others for help via social media, and researched videos that fellow art education students created as references, which put me back on track. The next

objective states “students will use a variety of visual vocabulary and cognitive processes in order to critique and form aesthetic judgments about a variety of art and visual images, including their own work.” I utilized the vocabulary pertaining to visual and new media literacy, since they were the two key subjects I was researching. Often though, I wasn’t exploring other ways of expressing key ideas, and fell to the trapping of limiting myself to only what was in the text. For my classroom, I need to make sure that I remind students that vocabulary is important, but that they can explore and create their own meanings as well. The following objective “students will be able to study works of art and images throughout history to learn, understand, and make connections within the global community” refers to the art history and culture components, which I was able to make connections to what I was researching and how it related to my students. The last objective states “students will be able to access and use effectively the skills necessary to interact and communicate through art, use new communication technology, and take risks in the creative process in order to participate in the 21st century.” Consequentially, I realized that by taking risks, I was able to see what I was capable of creating and the same goes for my students and fellow educators. I believed that I was multimodally literate, but found that I too have room to grow with the construction messages through art and media.

Future Direction for My Colleagues

I believe that my coworkers have the heart and the drive to make art education the best it can be. I know this because of the number of professional development opportunities we partake in, the countless art shows that showcase students’ art, and the many communications we have through email.

In terms of a comprehensive art curriculum that embraces multimodal literacy, I think that it starts with information. I don't believe that change will happen overnight. Presenting my research to the district art coordinator, then to my colleagues, would be the first steps, followed by the development of more networking opportunities. Creating a page for Polk County art teachers on Facebook and/or Art Education 2.0 can link us to one another and to other like-minded educators. The potential power of collaboration would be at our fingertips. For example, as I was working on my video for this project, I was able to interact with a classmate via Facebook, receiving valuable feedback that ultimately helped me in the production. If a private group was created, teachers in our district could communicate with one another, sharing lesson ideas, provide links to interesting and useful sites on the Internet, and ask/answer questions in a format that allows multiple users and sharing capabilities far more easily. Also, I envision professional development workshops that teach art educators how to use new media in the classroom; it is my belief that by educating others about new media, the fear of using it might be diminished. The premise behind building art teachers' skills with new media is that if they are more familiar and comfortable with these technologies, then they will use them in the classroom. Ultimately, the students will be better equipped to navigate the visually and technology propelled world.

Additionally, we as a district need to create an art curriculum that addresses and emphasizes more than just vocabulary mastery. We need to highlight how art education allows students to communicate ideas, navigate culture, and understand the history of our world. We need recognize and stress how art plays a valuable role in the

development of students who are capable of participating in 21st century global community.

Future Direction for Myself

First things first, I have to admit that I need improvement, which I do. I need to embrace my insecurities with new media technology, learn to play more, and not shy away from making mistakes. This project is the culmination of two years of intensive research and study in the field of art education, and in my own beliefs and practices. I have collected a wealth of knowledge that I want to share with my peers and with my students.

My new objectives for my own work include: Utilizing the three computers I have in my classroom to create a media hub where students are using multimodal literacy skills to research and create art. Moreover, I will reevaluate my lessons to ensure that they enhance students' multimodal literacy skills, which include visual culture and new media. I need to work with my colleagues to ensure that art education remains relevant in this visual and participatory culture. It is imperative that I become more vocal in my communication with students, administrators, and parents about the applied benefits of art education (ones that go beyond vocabulary development) in order to build a community of student artists who embrace big ideas and new media, and understand and exploit the power of their individual and collective voices.

APPENDIX A

Essential Criteria for 5th Grade Elementary Art Students

This document lists the skills to be mastered by students enrolled in visual arts programs when they exit 5th grade. It has been designed to help teachers and administrators assess the specific skills that should be taught during the school year, thus creating uniformity in the visual arts skills taught throughout Polk County.

% Entry Level Achievement (August/Sept.)	Students completing an elementary school art program will be expected to demonstrate the following skills with a minimum of 80% mastery. Teachers will record the percentage of students meeting mastery at the beginning and end of the 5 th grade year.	% at Exit Level Achievement (May)
	1. Identify primary colors (question # 1)	
	2. Identify secondary colors (question # 2)	
	3. Identify warm colors (question # 3)	
	4. Identify cool colors (questions # 4	
	5. Identify geometric shapes (question # 5)	
	6. Identify free form shapes (question # 6)	
	7. Identify parallel, horizontal, and vertical lines (question # 7)	
	8. Identify diagonal and angled lines (question #8)	
	9. Identify texture (question # 9)	
	10. Identify values (question # 10)	
	11. Identify asymmetrical and symmetrical balance (question # 11)	
	12. Identify pattern (question # 12)	
	13. Identify positive and negative (question # 13)	
	14. Identify emphasis (question # 14)	
	15. Recognize art as a career choice (question # 15)	
# of students tested:		# of students tested:
	Checklist	
	Exhibitions: 80% of the students will exhibit one piece of artwork during the year.	
	Portfolio: Contains demonstrations of skills and techniques in the following:	
	1. Landscape	
	2. Portrait	
	3. Still Life	
	4. Drawing from Observation	
	5. Artist's Statement and Self-Evaluation	

Teacher Signature

Date

Principal Signature

Date

School Name

Essential Criteria-07/08

APPENDIX B
Proposal for Professional Development Handouts

Jennifer Bishop
Dr. N. E. Roberts Elementary School
Lakeland, FL

July 23, 2012

Patricia Lamb
District Visual Arts Coordinator
Polk County Schools
Jim Miles Professional Learning Center
Lakeland, FL

Dear Patricia Lamb:

As you know, I have been pursuing my Master's degree in Art Education at the University of Florida. As part of my Capstone Project, I have been researching the place of multimodal literacy, specifically visual and new media literacies, in the art classroom. I would like to share some of my research with you and how it relates to our school district specifically.

While researching visual and new media literacy, I found some interesting data and ideas for how these apply to the art room. Visual literacy pertains to one's ability to interpret and convey messages through visual communication. This skill is extremely important when one considers how visual communications and art are constantly merging together in our global society. It is especially relevant in art education as we discuss visual images with students. New media literacy embraces technology and skills that allow students to become more active participants in the global community. Students are spending increasingly amounts of time with communication technologies. Students and teachers at all levels of education can embrace these multimodal literacies, learning how to embrace more creative play, innovation, and critical thinking in their art making and responses to artworks.

In the enclosed this packet, I have provided a series of handouts for your review and possible use in professional development workshops that engage to multimodal literacy, ultimately bringing our art curriculum into the 21st century, making it both relevant and necessary for our students. School will begin in a few short weeks and I look forward to talking to you soon regarding your thoughts regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bishop
Art Teacher

This Table provides information relating to Visual Literacy Skills, New Media Literacy Skills, the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, and the Polk County curriculum maps. It demonstrates how Polk County is documenting and emphasizing skills and vocabulary, but could progress to include technology, critical thinking, and global connections.

11 Visual Literacy Competencies (2009)	21st Century Skills, Henry Jenkins (2011)	Next Generation Sunshine State Standards Big Ideas (2010)	Polk County Schools Curriculum Guidelines (N.D.)
Knowledge of visual vocabulary	Play	Critical Thinking	1st nine weeks Line Shape/Form Color
Knowledge of visual conventions	Performance	Skills, Techniques, and Processes	2nd nine weeks Pattern Texture
Visual Thinking	Simulation	Organizational Structure	3rd nine weeks Balance Emphasis Unity
Visualization	Appropriation	Historical and Global Connections	4th nine weeks Space Contrast
Verbal-Visual Reasoning	Multitasking	Innovation, Technology, and the Future	
Critical viewing	Distributed Cognition		
Visual Discrimination	Collective Intelligence		
Visual Reconstruction	Judgment		
Sensitivity to Visual Association	Transmedia Navigation		
Sensitivity to Verbal-Visual Association	Networking		
Reconstructing Meaning	Integration		
Constructing Meaning	Visualization		

Color Key

Green: Critical Thinking Skills Blue: Innovation and Technology Red: Historical and Global Connections

Yellow: Skills, Vocabulary, Techniques, Organizational Structure.

Two or more colors together mean that a concept shares two or more skills.

Multimodal Literacy In the Art Classroom

Key Objectives for Multimodal Literacy in Art Education

- Students will be able to use a broad range of art media to develop critically meaningful works of art, engage in purposeful play, performance and visualization.
- Students will use a variety of visual vocabulary and cognitive processes in order to critique and form aesthetic judgments about a variety of art and visual images, including their own work.
- Students will be able to study works of art and images throughout history to learn, understand, and make connections within the global community.
- Students will be able to access and use effectively the skills necessary to interact and communicate through art, use new communication technology, and take risks in the creative process in order to participate in the 21st century.

Suggestions for teaching multimodal literacy in the art classroom

These are starting points for creating multimodal literacy art activities in the classroom. These activities utilize the objectives above and can be adjusted to fit the needs within your classroom.

- Create a biographical comic (look at graphic novels).
- Use the digital camera and take pictures of signs around the school to study and redesign.
- Have students make instructional videos in which they teach a skill or activity.
- Create visual journals or artist sketchbooks.
- Create a class website or blog and update often.
- Have students use contemporary art vocabulary when talking about their work and the work of others.



Online Resources

This is a brief list of some of the free online tools and resources that educators can use when incorporating new media within the art classroom. As always, please look over all online content PRIOR to student and classroom usage. The links are subject to change due to the nature of Internet sources.

Video and Image hosting sites

ArtBabble: <http://www.artbabble.org/>

Flickr: <http://flickr.com>

Picasa: <http://picasa.google.com/>

Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/>

Social Networking Sites

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/>

Arted2.0: <http://arted2.0.ning.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/>



Web and Blog Sites

Blogger: <http://www.blogger.com>

Glogster: <http://www.glogster.com/>

Posterous: <https://posterous.com/>

Weebly: <http://www.weebly.com/>

Wix: <http://www.wix.com/>

WordPress: <http://wordpress.com/>

Kidblog: <http://kidblog.org/home.php>

Bookmarking Sites

Delicious: <http://delicious.com/>

Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/>

Scoop.it: <http://www.scoop.it/>

Video Editing

Windows Live Movie Maker

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-live/movie-maker-get-started>

Animoto: <http://animoto.com/>

Audacity (sound editing):
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Photo Editing

Anymaking: <http://anymaking.com/>

Gimp: <http://www.gimp.org/>

Suggestions for further development of the Multimodally Literate, Comprehensive Art Curriculum in Polk County

- Form a network of teachers to explore ways to modify the curriculum that outlines new, 21st century art objectives.
- Form an online social network for all art educators to share ideas, links, lessons, and resources with each other.
- Create professional development workshops that teach new media tools.
- Continue to share multimodal art activities through workshops and lesson shares.
- Create art class websites for each school to share what students are doing in the classroom.

Art is "born from man's
need to understand
himself and the world in
which he lives"

-Rudolf Arnheim



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer Marie Bishop is an art educator and artist who currently resides in Lakeland, FL. Mrs. Bishop was born in Lakeland in 1982 and has lived in central Florida her entire life. Travel became a passion of Mrs. Bishop's life early on, every summer her grandparents would pick her and her twin brother up from school the last day and travel a region of the United States, learning about the history and culture of each place, opting for national and state parks rather than typical amusement parks packed with tourist trappings.

In high school, Mrs. Bishop had the opportunity to attend a European trip with her chorus group. The group spent 10 days traveling through Western Europe, with stops in London, Paris, and Heidelberg. In between performances, the group would visit castles, historic landmarks, and the highlight was of course, a trip to the famed Louvre in Paris.

After high school, Mrs. Bishop enrolled in college at Florida Southern College, and pursued two degrees, Art Education and Studio Art, graduating in the spring of 2006. Immediately following graduation, Bishop was hired as an art teacher in a local elementary school. 5 years later, Bishop decided to reenroll in school, applying for her Master's degree in Art Education at the University of Florida. In the meantime, Mrs. Bishop was awarded the prestigious honor of being named Teacher of the Year by her colleagues for their school, Dr. N. E. Roberts Elementary.