

Visual Literacy and 21st Century Skills

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What does it mean to be visually literate?

Can students interpret, use, appreciate, and create images and video using both conventional and 21st Century media in ways that advance thinking, decision-making, communication and learning?

enGauge 21st Century Skills for 21st Century Learners

Visual literacy skills are part of a larger skill set known as 21st Century Skills. This skill set is comprised of skills that embody 21st Century Literacies, Inventive Thinking, Effective Communication, and High Productivity.

The nature of information has changed, and is defined by a new set of characteristics. Information is digital, networked, overwhelming (Warlick 2006), immediate, manipulatable, **participatory, and visual.**

There is a biological basis for visual literacy. How is the brain wired for visual information?

There are fundamental, core understandings about visual literacy that all students should know. These skills are exceptionally important when students create digital products such as presentations and digital stories.

Color: what do specific colors convey to humans? When should different colors be used? How can colors be combined to create the most effective combination?

Text: What size and color are appropriate?

Font Types: serif vs. sans serif?

Projected vs. Paper: what fonts should be used?

There is a range, or spectrum, of instructional applications that help students become more visually literate. This range includes using single images for a variety of instructional purposes, using imagery to convey meaning in presentations, to using multiple sets of images in VisualQuests and digital storytelling projects.

There are multiple sources of imagery online, along with instructional design tools, which help teachers build lessons that promote content acquisition as well as the attainment of visual literacy skills.

Examples of effective uses of visual imagery in classroom settings:

1. Using single images as writing prompts for creative writing, or for image analysis. These can come from any source, but consider Flickr.com and the National Archives as potential sources of appropriate imagery.
2. Using Google Earth or geotagged Flickr imagery as a data source for geography lessons.
3. Building VisualQuests with myprojectpages.com, where visual information contained in the online lesson represents a data source that is used to answer an essential question of importance.
4. Building student presentations where only visual images are permitted-no text is allowed except on the title slide. This requires students to internalize and understand their content instead of reading it from "digital note cards."
5. Building digital stories with iMovie, Photostory 3, MovieMaker 2, Pinnacle Studio 9, or digitalstoryteller.org.
6. Teaching students about intellectual property rights by designing lessons that utilize Creative Commons licensed imagery.
7. Evaluating the authenticity of visual information.
8. Using a variety of online tools to repurpose visual information in support of a learning goal, for example, with Filmloop or Captioner.
9. The use of Inspiration, or an online tool such as Gliffy.com to diagram concepts or storyboard.
10. Using tools from Intel.com for promoting critical thinking skills-Seeing Reason Tool (Mindful Mapping of Cause and Effect) and the Visual Ranking Tool (Analyzing and Prioritizing Information)
11. Building teacher presentations in PowerPoint, or by using Thumbstacks.com
12. Using Flickr as a repository for student or school imagery, project work, or the creation of a slideshow.
13. Using Flickr to analyze imagery or illustrate writing.
14. Using Flickr to create virtual field trips, visual arguments in science class,
15. The use of third party Flickr applications to produce classroom products, such as motivational posters, movie posters, Flickr slideshows, and mosaic makers.
16. The use of online video editors, such as Eyespot and Videoegg.

Warlick, David. "The Problem of Integrating Technology." 2 Cents Worth. 18 July 2005. The Landmark Project. 07 Apr. 2006 <<http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/2005/07/18/the-problem-of-integrating-technology/>>.

"enGauge 21st Century Skills: Literacy in the Digital Age 2003." EnGauge. 2004. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. 07 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.ncrel.org/engage/skills/skills.htm>>.

Resources from this presentation can be found at:

<http://www.jakesonline.org/visual.htm>