

Evolving Classrooms: Unlocking Teachers' Perceptions and How They Impact Digital Literacy Practices

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“Come on! You know what I mean. It’s not *real* reading and writing.” This was the start of a conversation I had with my students when I asked them about their digital doings when they left school each day. These particular students were not struggling, but what I call resistant. They did the bare minimum for what was required and didn’t “get” English class because they had not seen any purpose to it – yet. Instead, they saw their out-of-school literacy skills as completely separate from English class. I didn’t understand it; how did they get to my class thinking they weren’t active readers and writers when their digital selves were quite active and involved within their respective online and face-to-face communities?

After thinking about this question, I began to wonder how a teacher’s perceptions on literacy skills, specifically digital literacy practices, impacted his or her classroom and the students within it. In other words, I wanted to know how my students were actively consuming and producing out-of-school, and why they didn’t feel their digital literacy practices were validated in school. Here, digital literacy practices are quite simply how one is reading, writing, and communicating within digital spaces. For this reason, I knew I had to talk to the source of validation: teachers.

The problem is that while there is significant research done on digital literacy practices, which some schools are using, there is still a fine line between “too many digital doings” in schools and none at all, specifically regarding social media usage. While we know that adolescents are constantly using social media for a variety of reasons, many schools do not consider social media a viable or safe way to meet standards with students (Alvermann & Wilson, 2007; Alvermann, Beach, & Boggs, 2015; Beach, 2015; Dowdall, 2006; Dredger, Woods, Beach, & Sagsetter, 2010; Kajder, 2007; New London Group, 2006; Witte, 2007).

Furthermore, digital doings are often not validated within schools, especially in the traditional English classroom, which garners comments like the one from my students.

While I can understand the need to meet standards and set appropriate regulations for digital literacy practices for students, I also think researchers and teachers cannot continue to deny that many of our struggling and reluctant students are actually quite engaged in literacy practices outside of our school walls – whether they realize it or not (Alvermann & Wilson, 2007; Alvermann, Beach, & Boggs, 2015; Beach, 2015; Dowdall, 2006; Dredger, Woods, Beach, & Sagsetter, 2010; Kajder, 2007; New London Group, 2006; Witte, 2007). From remixing memes to blogging on a Ford F-150 discussion board, today’s students are navigating these mediated intersections in smart ways that schools are not necessarily acknowledging or willing to acknowledge.

Furthermore, I believe that we, as researchers and teachers, need to understand more clearly how and why our students are choosing digital spaces to create and share their identities while building relationships with people all over the world. The more we can connect with our students and understand how they view themselves and their literacy practices (Sandlos, 2009, p. 69), the more we can help make connections for them to their in-school literacy practices.

While many teachers feel that they are behind when it comes to using technology within the classroom (Bulcher & Moran, 2012, p. 65), they must also take into consideration that students are going to use it and be active within social media whether they do or not. “What [our] students walk away with today [from our classrooms] will [only] be re-digested multiple times and be a part of what they become” (Bulcher & Moran, 2012, p. 66). Thus, it is time for educators to acknowledge the potential that students’ social media use has to do with not only

who they are, have been, and can become, but also that literacy, as we know it, is evolving as we speak.

Though many are using new literacies practices in schools, many are still not thinking about the deeper implications these practices have in regards to creating lifelong learners (New London Group, 1996). Furthermore, if teachers are not using digital literacy practices within their classrooms, then how will students acknowledge that they are literate in many ways not always valued by state-mandated tests? How will students see that “we use reading, writing, speaking, and listening as a means to position ourselves in relation to the greater world around us” (Fecho, Davis, & Moore, 2012, p. 143)? For this reason, we need to focus not just on what our students are doing on their own, but also on how teachers are or are not using those skills on a daily basis.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the critical theory tradition was used as my framework. It is important to remember that critical theory’s goal is “not just to study and understand society but rather to critique and change society” (Patton, 2002, p. 131). Glesne (2011) states that the critical theory tradition is “guided by a *historical realism* ontology,” which means that it is shaped by “social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values” (p. 9). In addition, Glesne (2011) also states that the critical tradition makes use of and makes others aware of “*standpoint epistemologies*” (p. 10). In regards to my study, the group that has been traditionally “oppressed” by the devaluing of digital literacy practices would be my participants’ students; however, the teachers were also oppressed in the sense that they felt limited due to things they felt they could not control (Freire, 1970; Ranciere, 2011). In fact, the idea of “emancipation means: the blurring

of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of a collective body” (Ranciere, 2011, p. 19). Thus, in order for teachers to validate their students literacy practices, they must not wait on the collective powers around them to decide what their students are doing is important; instead, they must individually act to create an awareness and validation of their students’ literacy practices.

For these reasons, the critical tradition will help me not only interpret my participants’ perceptions, but also to critique the fact that teachers, their schools, and their school communities in general may not necessarily validate their students’ authentic (digital) literacy practices, even if they do consider and are using them within their classroom, due to the limitations they feel are out of their control.

Research Design and Methods

In this interpretive multicase study, I conducted interviews with three teachers of various grade levels (including elementary, middle, and high school) who are located throughout the United States in public schools and analyzed their perceptions on digital literacy practices in order to understand how their perceptions may impact their classrooms.

Within the case study approach, “the purpose is to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 447). Since my goal was to understand how teachers’ perceptions may impact how digital literacy practices are considered and used within their classrooms, I felt the case study design would be most effective in achieving it since this design takes into consideration interview data and contextual information (Patton, 2002, p. 449), which I gathered through individual interviews. Essentially, I developed my initial themes of analysis, which helped me build three individual case studies.

Furthermore, because this is an interpretive study, I am focusing on how my participants' perceptions on digital literacy practices "interact with language and thought of the wider society" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). In other words, I will not attempt "to reduce the multiple interpretations to numbers, nor to a norm," which is considered qualitative methods (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). Instead, my job was to access my participants' perceptions of digital literacy practices by asking questions and interacting with them to gain this information and apply it "in terms of the wider culture" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). This focus was imperative if I was to truly create case studies that effectively show my interpretation of the participants' perceptions on digital literacy practices.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to better understand how current perceptions of literacy education is being affected, if at all, by digital literacy practices carried out by teachers and students in and out of school contexts. The following research questions were used for this study: What do teachers understand digital literacy practices to be within their classroom, school, and school community? In what ways do these teachers' perceptions on their students' digital literacy practices impact their pedagogical strategies within their classrooms? How do they include digital literacy practices?

Research Participants

The participants, an elementary, a middle, and a high school teacher, may seem randomly chosen, but they were not as I had personal connections to them before the study took place as they are family and friends. In addition, "purposeful sampling with small, but carefully selected, information-rich cases" can be "selected and studied precisely because they have broader relevance" (Patton, 2002, p. 581). Thus, while I had access to a number of teacher family members, friends, and colleagues, I choose these teachers purposefully because they had varying

years of teaching experiences across varying grade levels, located in schools with very diverse student populations, and varying levels of access to technology.

Marie (pseudonyms used throughout) is a third grade elementary teacher who teaches in the southwestern part of the United States in a more rural town. Her Title I school is predominantly biracial, with many races stemming from Hispanic or Native American origins, and it has an active family resource worker who helps make sure that her students are fed in and out of school, clothed, and supplied with the necessary materials they need for school. Marie's principal has acknowledged her as a technology leader in her school, which means she helps other teachers integrate technology into their classrooms. Her definition of digital literacy is "using technology to introduce and model to students the 21st century skills that they do not have access to outside of school." Yet, while Marie has lots of technology in her room, such as iPads, iMac computer stations, Neo devices, and school-wide technology available to her, such as an iPad cart, she still feels limited by what she can do within her room regarding digital literacy practices for a variety of reasons, such as students' out-of-school resources, teacher resistance across all grade levels within her school, and internet connectivity issues throughout the school.

Kathleen also works at a Title I school in the mideastern part of the United States in an urban location. She teaches sixth, seventh, and eight grade multi-level history classes where she works with a population of students that is approximately 60% Caucasian, 30% African American, and 10% biracial with Hispanic and Asian origins. Her definition of digital literacy is "using technology for reading and writing skills in the classroom." Kathleen thinks her small class sizes and a focus on community relationships are important components of what makes her school unique. However, she doesn't feel that her and her colleagues get enough credit for all

they accomplish, especially with limited resources. For example, many of the computer labs and laptop carts in her school do not work. Yet, she is hopeful that the new school year will bring a “promised” new one-to-one Chromebook initiative to her school that she feels will help tremendously with incorporating digital literacy practices within her classroom.

Jessica, a high school English teacher, teaches at a Title I school, too. Her school is located in the southeastern part of the United States in a suburban area. The student population here consists of approximately 80% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 10% Caucasian and Asian. Her definition of digital literacy is “using technology to help students become engaged with the classroom lesson.” Jessica’s school uses a lot of its funds with its two-to-one laptop initiative and maintaining a SMART Board in every classroom. However, with technology at her fingertips, and the knowledge that her students are very tech savvy, Jessica feels disheartened when she tries to integrate digital literacy practices within the classroom because not many of her colleagues see the value in what she does and she is not always able to bring in students’ resources, such as a smartphone, so she loses confidence when using those practices.

Data Collection

As mentioned above, I knew each participant individually long before this interview study. For this reason, it was especially important for me to “work to make the [interview] relationship less hierarchical” (Glesne, 2011, p. 127) in nature. Thus, my intention for selecting family and friends was to create a familiar and comfortable interview setting, even though it was online, with teachers who would see me as an “equal” and not just as a “researcher.” Whether considered a new friend (high school), an old friend (middle school), or a direct family member

(elementary), each person was not surprised by my topic or the manner in which I interviewed them (via technology).

At the end of the day, interviews “affect people” (Patton, 2002, p. 405). In fact, we ask questions of our past, present and future (Patton, 2002, p. 353), and it is my hope that these interviews will only help to have an impact on the future of literacy education as it becomes increasingly digital.

Before I began the actual interviews, I worked to ensure that my interview guide (see Appendix A) was focused enough to help give my participants an idea of the questions I would be asking. Using an interview guide was also helpful because it ensured that “the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). For my study, especially since I was interviewing across grade levels, I wanted to make sure that all participants received the same questions. In addition, within my interview guide, I focused on adding a variety of questions that were open-ended so that I could be as clear as possible with my participants (Patton, 2002, p. 348). This focus also helped me be “anticipatory” (Glesne, 2011, p. 121) in my interviewing methodology and think critically about potential confusion my participants would encounter, as well as preparing myself to answer any tough questions thrown back at me.

Due to the location and schedules of the participants, each interview was conducted via Google Hangout and/or FaceTime. I made sure that I recorded the audio only from our interview through QuickTime, and I knew before hand what volume I needed my computer to be set on for the best clarity. In addition, I made sure that I had a notepad beside the computer to jot down key points made (Patton, 2002, p. 383) versus typing on the computer to limit potential noise

interference. Thus, I felt that I had a complete interview environment to conduct my interviews. Finally, I scheduled time after each interview to begin transcription immediately so that I could ask questions for clarification if needed. This last point was exceptionally important to ensure that my notes and the interviews were fresh on my mind and as accurate as possible.

Data Analysis

A constant case comparison, which is pulled from grounded theory analysis, was used in this study in order to see how each case varies “in terms of such things as events, participants, settings, or words used (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). I felt this was an important way to analyze my data because it would allow me to look at all three cases and compare them in a way that would acknowledge their differences and highlight their similarities.

Furthermore, since it stems from grounded theory analysis, I found that it works well to lead to the potential development of a new theory surrounding digital literacy within classrooms. “The constant comparative method, which can be seen as the ‘core category’ of grounded theory, includes that every part of data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, properties, and dimensions as well as different parts of the data, are constantly compared with all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences in data” (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143). In other words, a strength of this design and analysis approach is that it allowed me to look at all three cases even though the participants were from a variety of backgrounds.

However, though this design and analysis approach worked well, there are some weaknesses, including the fact that I did have a personal relationship with the participants. As Glesne (2011) states: “When studying in your own backyard, you often already have a role – as a teacher or principal or caseworker or friend. When you add on the researcher role, both you and

those around you may experience confusion at times over which role you are or should be playing” (p. 41). Thus, my participants admitted after the interview that they felt they should’ve said more about digital literacy or more about how they did use something within their classrooms. This reminder is important for researchers, like myself, to keep in mind because it suggests that when we go into the field, and people know us, they are always going to want to say everything just right or feel like we are expecting something from them when in reality, we just want to listen, analyze, and interpret what we found within their stories.

I also think it is important to note that before the interviews, I did not examine any official artifacts and documents. However, I now think that perhaps going back to look at each participant’s school website and/or personal website would have been helpful to see how digital literacy is portrayed in online spaces, too, especially since websites are often seen as an extension of the classroom. Yet, despite these limitations, the data provided by the interviewees was rich enough to answer the research questions of this study, which will be highlighted later within this paper.

The data analysis included thematic coding of the interview transcripts in order to interpret how digital literacy practices were perceived by teachers. However, it is important to note that these emerging themes fit and explained the interview data versus being forced on the data by any preconceived notions (Hallberg, 2006, p. 144). The themes developed represented the similarities and/or differences between the teachers’ perceptions on digital literacy practices and whether or not those perceptions had an impact on literacy practices within the classroom.

As noted previously, the constant comparative approach to data analysis allowed me to look at each individual data set and beginning to develop codes and categories. As Charmaz

(2014) states: “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (p. 113). With this point in mind, my job was to grapple with what I found in the interviews and make meaning from them, which, in this case, was to see if the teachers’ current perceptions of literacy education is being affected, if at all, by digital literacy practices carried out by them and their students in and out of school contexts.

As I worked to develop my codes (see Appendix B), I realized that going line by line really helped me focus solely on the data and not any preconceived notions that I had due to the fact I knew about the participants’ schools ahead of time. In addition, grounded theory “prompts [one] to keep interacting with [one’s] data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 115) and helps the researcher to “relive and re-view [one’s] earlier interactions with participants” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 116). The following codes show how I continuously interacted with the data to make my codes as specific as possible: Classroom (General classroom), ClassR (Classroom resources), ClassO (Out-of-classroom connections/resources), and Class21 (Classroom 21st century literacy skills).

When I first started to develop my codes, I started very generally before working down into the intimate details of what Marie, Kathleen, and Jessica’s comments were. Pulling from the codes listed above, I focused on anything classroom related with the “Classroom” code to start; then, I moved to the specific examples of digital literacy skills and resources that they would give. For example, when moving to the “ClassR,” Marie stated that she had resources within her classroom, such as iPads, iMac stations, and Neos; Kathleen had limited resources that didn’t always work; and Jessica had laptops and a SMART board. These distinctions were important for me to start to see how the participants viewed digital literacy practices.

However, after I developed my codes, I knew I had to begin thinking about how each individual case would matter in the big scheme of things related to the purpose of this study: to see how teachers' perceptions may or may not impact digital literacy practices within the classroom.

In order to make connections across the codes and begin to really use the constant comparative approach to data (Glesne, 2011, p. 208), I really worked to focus the analysis on Marie, Kathleen, and Jessica's individual perspectives. After all, if [I] ignore, gloss over, or leap beyond participants' meanings and actions, [my] grounded theory will likely reflect an outsider's, rather than an insider's view" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 121). For example, Marie said: "My principal supports me, but my colleagues don't," which resonated with Jessica's feelings on when she incorporated digital literacy practices within her classroom. Yet, Kathleen felt that most teachers and administrators were on board with technology; they just couldn't get it to work. For this reason, I found connections across the data while still valuing each participant's voice and experiences.

Findings

Essentially, I began to see four key themes stand out: school support with digital literacy practices, school non-support with digital literacy practices, digital literacy practices within the classroom, and "at-risk" labels used within the classroom that impact digital literacy practices.

School support with digital literacy practices is defined by positive experiences with digital literacy practices within the school setting at the district, school, or classroom level. This theme means being open to technology use, providing technology resources, and using technology resources. These types of characteristics are evident when all educators are focused

on what most benefits the students through the use of technology. For example, Marie said, “My principal is willing to get us what we need to use in our classroom, so I tell him what I need” and “My two iPads are always out . . . my iMacs are always up and running . . . there is always something they can use to continue learning and exploring.” In addition, Kathleen said, “Our school operation plan includes opportunities to add more technology for our students to use . . . my administration expects us to use these tools . . . and we do have a district person come in that will meet with us individually to help us set up anything we want.” Also, Jessica said, “I’m still learning [how to use technology effectively] . . . my district is trying to build in a technology rollout to work with what our students have and what they can have through the system.” Here we see that all three teachers have shown that from the classroom, school, and district levels, they have support to provide them with the tools they would use to integrate digital literacy practices within their classrooms.

However, school non-support with digital literacy practices is not far behind the positive experiences. This theme developed from the negative experiences noted with digital literacy practices within the school setting at the district, school, or classroom level. It essentially means being turned off by the idea of technology use, not using available technology resources, and worrying about the use of technology. These types of characteristics are evident when all educators are not focused on what most benefits the students through the use of technology. For example, Kathleen said, “Most of the teachers just choose to use technology 50% or they just didn’t do it” and “[technology] hasn’t been the top priority . . . so I’m not sure what he [the principal] would say [about getting working resources in the classroom].” In addition, Marie said, “Some of my colleagues complain about using tech even when it’s something that could help their students! They just don’t want to do things differently, which makes them hard to

work with and help.” Also, Jessica said, “At times I feel like it [technology use] is jail-like because everyone is scared to use it, so they [the administration] tend to put limitations on how and what can be used.”

Yet, despite the negative situations, all of the teachers found ways to use digital literacy practices within the classroom, which is why this theme was important as well. Data falling under this theme included strategies and resources used within the classroom that incorporated technology. This means that the participants noted using technology in order to engage students, encourage collaboration, and explore digital doings. These types of characteristics are apparent when educators are using technology to challenge, engage, and motivate students by providing them with opportunities to utilize 21st century literacy skills. For example, Jessica said, “Students, I think, are naturally drawn to social media [or digital literacy practices] . . . and if I can bring that into the classroom at least through association, that will make them understand what we are doing better.” In addition, Kathleen spoke with enthusiasm about using a webquest to help her students learn about various key historical events “even though they may never be able to go visit those places in person.” Also, Marie said, “I try to incorporate videos [through the YouTube app on Apple TV] almost daily to prove to people [in her school] that there are little ways to help our students, but more importantly to give my students different ways of learning and reinforcing materials for them . . . they pay attention to a video clip!”

Though I was not surprised at the first three listed themes, I was surprised by the development of the last theme mentioned because it appears that while these teachers’ schools are very diverse, they are labeled as “at-risk” in ways that seemed to limit how they could use or had access to digital literacy practices. For this study, this theme focuses on labels placed on

students that would normally marginalize them based on learning ability, race, or socioeconomic status (SES). These type of characteristics are prevalent in many schools in order to identify and label “at-risk” students based on a variety of factors, such as those listed above, so that educators can take a proactive role in ensuring their success, as well as potentially receiving funding in order to help them achieve.

For example, Marie said, “We are trying to help our students learn the basic social and life skills because they do come from rough homes . . . if their families don’t have access, as in a ride to and from, the community resource center, then they’re really left behind some of the others . . . especially when my students can’t all have a device in their hands within my room and sometimes there is frustration because they want it [the device] all to themselves, to play by themselves.” Kathleen’s students aren’t taught from a young age about the importance of education because many of the parents didn’t finish education and started work instead to support their family, so “sometimes I wonder if funding for more technology and programs would matter if they won’t stay after school to get help.” In addition, Jessica notes that it is a 50/50 whether her students will have resources they can use when they leave school and that she thinks “a part of the reason they [teachers/her school] are scared of having technology out is because of theft [which has happened a lot]. It’s one of the reasons why they [the school administrators] haven’t pushed for it.”

Yet, despite these limitations, all three teachers alleviated the problems associated with this label by taking a positive position on what digital literacy will mean to their students. Marie used the example of one of her students who is new to the country and wanted to be a mechanic like his father. She differentiated her instruction by helping him learn about hydraulic fluids and

other airplane mechanical components through her iMac stations and from a flight engineer from the local military base. Here she was able to show her student how computers are used to make the planes fly, how to conduct research online, and the real world application from all that they do in the classroom. “My job is just to expose them . . . to make them think.”

In addition, Kathleen feels that even though she would have to spend extra time to show her students how to use technology [especially if that technology isn’t consistently working], she would like to give them opportunities to use technology as much as possible since she knows access is limited at home. She used the example of preparing her students for what’s to come and that it is her hope that eventually she won’t be teaching technology but just using it. “I need to make sure my students still learn [curriculum] . . . I need to have patience and be more positive . . . and ultimately I want technology to enhance what I do because I know that it does . . . [I need] to give them something [a device] that helps them learn and gives them the power to do so.”

Also, Jessica shared that though many of her students didn’t have direct access at home, they could usually find it at a friend’s house, a cousin’s, or the local library. She said, “I send out a survey at the beginning of the year to get a better idea of what they [her students] have access to, and then I work with what I know they have or what I can give them.” Taking the fact that her students are working on-the-go due to potential limited access, Jessica uses many free programs, such as Google Docs, so that her students always have access to their work. “We live in a world where not having technology isn’t an excuse to get the job done; I want to give my students as many options, as I can so they can’t be limited.”

Ultimately, the most powerful emerging theme I saw develop was how the “at-risk” label was being used for reasons why these teachers had access or did not have access to technology,

and how they felt these students were benefitting or were not benefitting from the use of digital literacy practices. Thus, even though these teachers were finding ways to use digital literacy practices, sometimes it appeared that their biggest obstacle was getting over the perceived limitations of the at-risk label in order to effectively implement those practices within their classroom and school culture.

Discussion

The interviews with these three teachers led me to better understand how their perceptions of literacy education is affected by digital literacy practices used by their students within their classrooms and school communities. In fact, their interviews even suggest further information regarding how professional development could enhance the use of digital literacy practices, how diverse student populations may benefit from digital literacy practices, and how teachers do or do not use digital literacy practices within their classrooms.

First, it is important to note that I did not provide the teachers with my definition of digital literacy practices because I wanted to better understand how *they* viewed the term. I found that all three teachers used the term as a basic way of describing reading and writing skills using digital tools. They also continually noted how they still used digital literacy practices despite whatever limitations they faced. For this reason, if district, school, and classroom educators work together to use technology resources effectively, students may potentially be more engaged with their school work and prepared for the real world with 21st century literacy skills that extend beyond the classroom walls. However, teachers need support in the form of professional development, for example, in order to bring about those changes within their classrooms.

In addition, despite the potentially negative connotations associated with “at-risk” labels, the three teachers showed that there are ways to make connections with all students through technology. Even “at-risk” students will use technology positively when given the opportunity to do so to challenge, engage, and motivate them with their own learning.

Furthermore, when teachers utilize digital literacy practices within the classroom, students are given more differentiated opportunities to apply 21st century literacy skills within the classroom and in the real world. These teachers reminded me that while technology will always change, it’s our job to be open to those changes and model for our students what life long learning looks like in the real world.

In addition, since I have a lot of experience with digital literacy within the classroom, I picked up on a lot more information that my participants did not necessarily even register as being a part of a “digital literacy practice/experience.” For this reason, not all of the digital literacy practices their students did outside of school were used in-school even though all three acknowledged that their students used a variety of apps, for example, in their personal lives. I think that even though teachers may be incorporating digital literacy practices into their classrooms, they are not necessarily thinking about the hows and whys behind doing so, as well as perhaps limiting those practices to only what *they* know. For this reason, as stated previously, the more teachers have access to support before, during, and after they integrate digital literacy within their classrooms, the more likely they will start to think critically about how it can help their students. When teachers feel liberated by positive support, they, too, feel like they have the power to validate their students through digital literacy practices.

Further Implications

This multicase study helps us all look at how teachers in a variety of locations that include a diverse student population, such as with Marie, Kathleen, and Jessica, view literacy education. Even though “we live in an era surrounded by [digital] media that bombard us with messages through text, images and sound” does not “necessarily mean we recognize or understand its content or intent” (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009, p. 472). Furthermore, when we bring an “understanding of ideology, power, and domination” to help us and our students explore “how power, media, and information are linked” (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 8), our marginalized and subsequently often silenced and labeled as “at-risk” students have new realms for their voices to be heard within all things digital. I believe that a future, follow-up study that include even more teachers’ voices, who work with diverse populations from all over the United States, would be valuable to help guide professional development and offer support to teachers as they strive to validate their students digitally literate identities and practices.

Thus, teachers need support. This support doesn’t just mean to hand them a new iPad, but instead give them opportunities to play, learn, and grow so that they can model what real learning looks like and make real changes within their classroom culture. After all, “becoming literate is a lifelong process” (Glenn, 2012, p. 7). For this reason, what makes this issue even timelier is the fact that “we need to develop [media] literate readers and writers; but we need to accept the fact that schools are largely anachronistic and unwilling to accept the cultural texts that students engage with” (Glenn, 2012, p. 27). In other words, if we don’t give teachers the support they need in order to value these new, digital literacy practices, then we are not valuing all that our students are bringing into the classroom today.

Finally, teachers, like myself, need to remember that we hold the key to setting our students free: validation. The more we validate and help our students make connections between their in and out of school literacy practices, the more success we will see in our standards-based classrooms. Furthermore, if our students are using digital spaces to define how they want to be seen by a particular audience, then we can also help them better understand how important digital citizenship is in today's world by opening up the doors of communication between the adults in charge of education and their students. When we focus on what works best for our students, when we give teachers the support they need, and when we make an effort to validate students versus just seeing them as a testing number, then that is when we will find true success within our schools and see that digital literacy practices can help play a part in that success within our evolving classrooms.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

The guide I have here contains some general questions that come to mind when I think about digital literacy; however, I imagine that as we talk, there may be a few more questions that come up from our discussion together.

As stated in the consent form that you signed, all information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription for the interview. Again, while the interview will be recorded to help with transcription, I will delete or destroy the audio-file at the completion of the project.

We can start any place you'd like to begin, and we will just go from there. Please keep in mind that you may decline any question or stop the interview at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. I want to know about your experiences and thoughts.

To begin, I would like to discuss your school culture.

A. School Culture → How would you describe your current school environment?

- General demographics in terms of race, socioeconomic status, or any other break down you feel is unique to your school
- Describe the students you work with
- General school strengths
- General school weaknesses
- Technology available in school
- Any other area you feel is important to explain

Now, I would like to discuss how your classroom is currently set-up.

B. Classroom

- How do you use digital literacy within your classroom?
- What technology do you use in the classroom?
- How has using technology been a challenge for you?
- How has using technology been beneficial to you?
- How do you see others using technology in your school?
- What do others say has been a challenge with using technology?
- What do others say has been beneficial with using technology?
- How do your students react when you use technology?
- What forms of technology are considered your “go-to” tools?
- Why are these forms of technology your “go-to” tools?
- What has been your favorite digital “doing” within the classroom with your students?

Since I have a better idea of how your learning environment is set-up

within your classroom, I would like to discuss how your students are using technology outside of home.

C. Out-of-School / School Community

- How do your students use technology at home?
- What type of devices do your students have access to at home?
- Have you seen any connections between the technology you have used in-school and how your students use technology outside of school?
- What technology platforms, if any, do you use to help your students outside of school?
- What digital spaces do your students participate in? (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
- Do you ever attempt to connect their out of school digital literacy practices to their literacy practices in school? If so, how have you created those connections?
- How often do you talk to your students about their literacy practices?
- Do other teachers in your school reaffirm students’ out of school literacy practices?

I now have a strong grasp of how you and your school utilize digital literacies. Thus, I would like to ask you some general, more personal questions regarding your views on standards and how you see technology playing out with your students.

D. General / Personal Opinions

- How do you see technology playing a role in your students' lives now and in the future?
- What digital spaces do you see creating bridges between students' in and out of school literacy practices?
- How is your school open to using technology especially at the middle school level?
- Your school has adopted the Common Core State Standards from what I have gathered, correct? Do the new Common Core State Standards allow your school to have more access to technology if the testing is all done on computers?
- How can teacher educators, like us, help other resistant teachers become more open to technology?
- Why do you think so many people only focus on the digital tools and not the literacy practice?
- What do you think the focus should be on when considering how schools should incorporate digital literacy practices in the classroom today?

E. Anything else?

May I call you again if I need more information? Also, please don't hesitate in contacting me with any questions that you may have. Thank you very much for your time and help shedding light on this important issue to me!

Appendix B

Code Book

Classroom	General classroom
ClassR	Classroom resources
ClassO	Out-of-classroom connections/resources
Class21	Classroom 21 st century literacy skills
NonSup	General non-supportive
NonSupD	District nonsupport
NonSupS	School nonsupport
NonSupC	Classroom nonsupport
Sup	General supportive
SupD	District support
SupS	School support
SupC	Classroom support
Risk	General “at-risk” label
RiskLA	At-risk due to learning ability
RiskSES	At-risk due to SES

RiskR	At-risk due to race
Teach	General teacher comment
TeachP	Personal teacher comment