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Title: Digital Diet: Adolescents investigating the politics of food and farming through 21st Century storytelling.

Welcoming multiple literacies into the classroom makes it possible to help students understand the social nature of literacy and develop facility with the social practices needed to make meaning of and create both print and non-print texts (Bean, 2010). A growing body of literature (Alvermann, 2010; Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Lambert, 2009) indicates that multiple literacies can be an effective way to engage students in learning about traditional school-based concepts and more practical out of school concepts. More importantly, perhaps, engaging students in learning experiences that blend technology and literacy instruction stresses what Arthur Applebee called knowledge-in-action instead of knowledge-out-of-context (Applebee, 1996). This sort of instruction becomes rife with meaning and has the potential to make classrooms places where the love of learning can come alive.

Guided by these concepts, this paper will discuss our work helping a group of 7th-9th grade students at an expeditionary learning boarding school in the southeastern U.S. develop interviewing, digital audio recording, and photography skills to support an inquiry into the politics of food and farming. During an eighteen-day field trip, these students visited a range of sites involved in food production—small farms, traditional factory farms, pesticide producers, organic farm advocates, and others—and conducted interviews and took photographs in order to develop a web-based story highlighting what they learned during their journey. In addition to developing digital literacy skills, we sought to help these students learn to focus in a world where myriad media are vying for
their attention. Thus, the act of recording their learning facilitated their ability to pay close attention to the world around them and think critically about the issues facing us in the 21st Century. In addition to an example of the web-based stories created by the students, this presentation will include a discussion of how the students learned to focus their attention on the social processes at work when people engage in dialogue with one another, make meaning, and record their experiences.

References:


