A LITERACY PEDAGOGY FOR MULTIMODAL COMPOSING

Transforming Learning and Teaching

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Nicole: Who was Jim Crow? Why did he get to make laws?
Paige: I don’t think he was a real person, I think that the name came because a crow is black and the laws were for black people.
Nicole: Then where did Jim come from?
Paige: I don’t know.

In their class, 16-year-olds Nicole and Paige then moved immediately to the classroom computer to find answers to their questions. In a few minutes, they located some clues from a search engine and were off on an inquiry into multimodal texts (e.g., Library of Congress newspaper accounts and advertisements from the time, photographs, literacy tests, political cartoons). They pitched their plan to their teacher, who offered suggestions and gave permission for using music instead of narrative in some parts. Using historical skills to “read” these texts, they designed a story as a digital video in the genre of a movie trailer: it was set to the music of Billie Holiday singing the haunting words of “Strange Fruit,” as graphic images flashed across the screen. They also drew on vernacular history from their community about what they knew about the Jim Crow era and enacted scenes about segregation, using the school water fountain bearing the sign, “Whites Only.” From here, Paige and Nicole composed what was to become a startling digital video on discrimination and lynching in the post-Civil War era in the United States. Much as with professional filmmakers, their two-minute production took hours of research, corroboration of evidence through sourcing, conversation, takes and re-takes, and editing to integrate audio and visual modes. Their work culminated in a stunned classroom of urban teens moved by the “premiere” of For Colored Only—the eventual title...
A Story of Change through Multimodal Composing

In this classroom vignette, Nicole and Paige integrated their strategies for historical thinking and evaluation of sources learned in school with their strategies learned out of school for answering questions. They looked into their history textbook, sought valid information from their communities, and searched archives on the Internet. Reading an original newspaper advertisement for a lynching online stunned them—these were not spontaneous events. Seeing photographs of proud perpetrators sickened them (http://www.americanlynching.com/pic1.htm); contemplating a photograph of a man “saved” from lynching led to questions about how people could live with such emotional trauma; and hearing the stark haunting tones of Billie Holiday’s song shocked them into understanding the horror of who was hanging from the bloody trees. [To view their video, go to http://gse.buffalo.edu/org/cityvoices/festmov/featured.php.]

What made Paige and Nicole’s in-school inquiry for digital composing possible? We argue here that it was a convergence of conditions that worked to reframe what could happen in school. It’s important to consider that Nicole and Paige and their millennial classmates come to school with new literacies (new kinds of texts and uses of texts in their lives), which too often they are required to leave at the classroom door—like guns in the old West (Gee, 2004). Among many others, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) recommend drawing on these new literacies in school through immersion in experiences with designing meaning that make “intuitive sense” to learners because they appear in realms outside of school (p. 244).

Digital video composing, for example, is a high-status social and cultural practice with powerful attention-getting qualities and expert versions in the real world (e.g., Miller, 2007). The connection to youth-media culture (music videos, YouTube, vlogs) is strong, making it a high-interest endeavor that draws on student out-of-school knowledge. Understanding implicitly the purpose and structure of movie trailers as a media genre is part of youth culture—as evidenced by the numerous websites devoted just to these video texts. Use of this familiar media genre in DV composing created a school connection to the media sphere (e.g., Burgess & Green, 2009).

Further, Nicole and Paige’s innovative teacher Keith Hughes (an active participant in the Buffalo Digital Video Composing Project) provided them with the opportunity to compose a digital video movie trailer as a tool for understanding the Jim Crow era in America; their intense interest in pursuing the

of their movie that was “coming soon to a theatre near you.” In the end, they composed not just an understanding of the origin of Jim Crow and Jim Crow laws, but an orchestration of multimodal texts engaging the auditory and visual senses, and presenting a deep, critical understanding of lynching as a horrific event in America’s history (adapted from Lauricella, 2007, see also 2006).
questions they had raised and composing/publishing their own movie trailer led them to examine not only print texts but also other modes for understanding—images, music, enacted movement, narratives. In the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, these available multimodal resources and the girls’ orchestration of them, supported at points of need by their teacher, brought lived historical experience to the classroom and to their concentrated attention. “Doing history” requires the ability to analyze and read documents, which Paige and Nicole learned in the process of doing, moving beyond the collection of facts to tell a story. They “read” and sourced and analyzed the documents (Wineburg, 2001) and learned that “facts” changed depending on who was telling the story.

Why Multimodal Inquiry?

This story of an innovative classroom is not like most classrooms, though. In contrast, some schools have been focused only on print texts for many years and have been slow to change. Critiques of traditional schooling point to the “more compelling and motivating” multimodal learning that students engage in outside of school (Gee, 2004; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008) to explain the increasing student disengagement in classrooms. Although students outside of school use computers and cell phones (and other ubiquitous computing devices) to remain almost continuously linked to resources, people, and networks for information and communication, these phenomena have often been treated as separate, private and non-school-like. We believe many students desperately want to see school as connected to who they are and are becoming, but a striking majority of even the most successful students today feel that school is devoid of connection to their “real life” (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). In the DV Composing project, we have found that teacher engagement with the multimodal and digital lives of students can provide for curricular connections to their emerging new literacies and create new opportunities for teaching and learning (Miller, 2007, 2008a).

The digital explosion we are now experiencing has created a world in which such educational changes are more critical than ever before. New Literacy scholars have become categorical in their conclusions: “In the modern world, print literacy is not enough” (Gee, 2003, p. 19). Facility with interpreting and designing multimodal texts will increasingly be required by human beings to communicate, work, and thrive in the digital, global world of the 21st century. Many scholars agree, also, that important changes will be needed in schooling, in teachers, and, especially, in educational beliefs about the status/design of non-print modes as ways of understanding knowledge and representing meaning (e.g., Gee & Hayes, 2011). Those changes, we have found, can prompt transformations in student learning.

For instance, Paige and Nicole described how their video had a deep impact on their understanding. A week after they screened their For Colored Only video for the class, one steppe knowledge explained that it was serious? Explain why their new story inquiry led to action to

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For the class, Nicole and Paige encountered a school fight brewing over someone stepping on a friend’s white sneakers. In an instant, they brought their new knowledge of history to their lives, intervening to stop the fight. Nicole later explained, “Why would they fight about such a stupid thing? After everything that was fought for, why fight over this?” (Lauricella, 2006, p. 140). Paige continued the story: “But I think after our movie, look what they [African Americans and some Whites] had to go through. You’re arguing because your boyfriend looked at me, because your sneakers are dirty? You know? Is it that serious?” (Lauricella, 2006, pp. 140–141). Through their joint efforts, based on their new and deep understanding of their social-historical context, Paige and Nicole stopped this cafeteria fight. Their passionate grasp of their in-school inquiry led them to read their world critically and historically and, then, take action to transform it.

If educators value such deep knowledge and learning in schools (and we do), what can we do to help it happen? In our work in the New Literacies Group at the University at Buffalo, a major goal is understanding how best to help pre-service and in-service teachers in our classes to take into account their students’ lifeworlds (i.e., worldviews from lived experiences) (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) and their social futures in the 21st century (New London Group, 1996). We are not so interested in “how to use X technology” in classrooms, but rather in how to engage teachers in rethinking what we do in English Language Arts (ELA) and other content-area classes. For us, the needed changes in what some call “New Times” (Luke & Elkins, 1998) are less technological and more epistemological: the critical issue is what counts as knowing and, therefore, what counts as learning and effective teaching.

**Reframing Pedagogies**

We believe that a fundamental shift is needed in the way we in education think about subject-matter content in order to create pedagogical opportunities that not only meet the standards of state-mandated exams, but also connect to the longing of students for classrooms that are interactive, inspiring, and connected to their lives and futures. Our key concern is how all of us (teachers and teacher educators) can draw on and help to shape student identities through multimodal literacy practices afforded by the digital world, in order to create productive civic, personal, and social futures for the early generations of the new century.

Influential thinking related to these issues and our own research findings suggest that what we call multimodal literacy pedagogy is a promising framework for 21st-century teaching and learning. By *multimodal literacy pedagogy* (MLP) we mean a reframing of teaching that connects the literacy identities and practices of our students through purposeful multimodal activities in supportive social spaces to potentially change classrooms and learning (also see
Boyd & Canteen, 2008; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2007, 2008a,b; Miller, 2007, 2008a,b,c, 2010a,b; Thompson, 2008).

From our sociocultural perspective, with an eye to the changes needed in traditional education, we believe a theory of pedagogical change is needed to integrate theoretical explanations with classroom practice in order to elaborate the role of purposeful, mediated multimodal activity in the complex dynamics of schools. The design of the pedagogy needs to be central if it is to guide teachers and teacher educators in creating 21st-century classrooms. We propose that our framework for a multimodal literacy pedagogy provides such an integrative theory for designing pedagogical change in a changing world.

Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy: Designing Transformative Classrooms

This pedagogical theory for multimodal teaching and learning integrates identity-making literacy practices with attention to purposeful multimodal design in order to reframe teaching for the 21st century. The principles that we have derived from our analysis of relevant theory and our own multimodal composing research in schools and teacher education classes identify the dynamics of multimodal pedagogy and explain the transformative nature of its defining ideologies, tools, materials, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

The following sections provide an overview of the central framework elements by drawing on the dynamics of the classroom in which the digital video For Colored Only was designed and produced by Paige and Nicole.

Creating Supported Social Spaces for Designing Texts

From the multimodal literacy pedagogy perspective, the notion of knowledge as only a propositional language product held by the teacher and transferred to individual students changes to the notion of knowledge as multimodal, co-constructed, and performed or represented, not absorbed (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2006). For instance, Paige and Nicole’s teacher, Keith Hughes, describes the social space he developed to provide the tools, resources, and opportunities that he felt students needed (Miller, Hughes, & Knips, in press):

The physical set up is another variable that I can control in order to facilitate the students’ experience. [Figure 8.1] is a visual representation of my physical classroom. This will become an important multimodal element in order to put into context many of the other methods I will be discussing, including digital video instruction … as well as activities steeped more heavily in traditional modes of meaning such as reading and writing. Students pick up their work when they walk in and sit around what I like to call, the electric campfire. My lecture stand is set up with a Mac for LCD use with stereo sound. Thirteen aging Macintosh G3’s grace the
changes needed in change is needed to n order to elaborate complex dynamics it is to guide teach- ns. We propose that such an integrative tld.

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learning integrates poseful multimodal The principles that id our own multi- classes identify the mative nature of its values.

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outskirts of the room [only 5 work dependably], leaving a comfortable amount of space for up to three students to be working on one computer. The first one-third of classroom when you enter is open, allowing for student filming and other classroom activities. In front of the room white space has become my digital blackboard with my trusted mini-mac sending its contents through the LCD. As students enter the room they are met with a five foot by five foot image of classroom messages.

This design represents Keith’s pedagogical knowledge and principles for his multimodal literacy pedagogy. The space communicates his goals for routines (pick up handouts, read projected announcements) and innovation (spaces for group work at computers and in performance areas). In addition, the walls are completely covered with multimodal historical texts—e.g., depression photographs, political cartoons, and documents like the Bill of Rights—interspersed with startling things like a large Pinocchio puppet. The room is alive with tools, artifacts, and evocative objects (the prop box with a hodge-podge of items, including a graduation mortar board, a length of cotton, aluminum foil, lab coat, etc.) (see Pahl & Rowsell, 2010).

In this space Paige and Nicole conducted their multimodal inquiry. Their classroom social space permitted them to develop jointly a question important to them and then to take their inquiry to the Internet, where they were able to find relevant multimodal texts others had published there. They enlisted the social support of their teacher, other students (they prepped and paid the student enacting a scene of discrimination), and their relatives in the community (Nicole’s mother suggested the “Strange Fruit” music). In their collaborative

FIGURE 8.1 A social space for composing understanding
team they discussed at length whether the lynching pictures were too “gruesome” or whether they were necessary to communicate the full outrage they wanted the audience to feel.

A sustaining impetus for these efforts was the ultimate publishing of their inquiry in a quintessential multimodal form—as a digital video screened for their classmates and published back to the web. Through the supportive classroom social space, then, they collaborated and felt themselves part of the network of knowledge production that the digital age affords. With support at points of need, they used digital and human resources to create a new multimodal text that represented their new knowledge and meanings co-constructed through historical inquiry.

Drawing on a social view of learning and instruction and our research, we have found that this mediation or support provided by others is a central necessity in multimodal literacy pedagogy. Out of school, online, and in-person conversation can supply support for engaging in multimodal activities in groups organized around a joint endeavor. In school, students and the facilitating teacher can provide support during the whole process of multimodal composing activities.

The supportive talk during multimodal activities allows teachers and students to create openness to perspectives and contributions from multiple participants. This talk also provides opportunities for making the discourse of participation in composing explicit and for collaborating on diverse strategies for making sense of the curriculum and the world.

**Drawing on Identity Lifeworlds As Literacy Resources**

People are aware of identities as sister, father, friend, but often we have not systematically taken into account our identities shaped by affinities for reality TV, rap music, fantasy films, personal blogs, anime, YouTube, or chess. For example, reality TV fans bring their knowledge of social group interactions (who should be voted off next) to their “reading” of shows, read other’s opinions online—and share their own on blogs, on TV-related web sites, and around the water cooler or coffee shop.

These out-of-school identities contribute to teacher and student literacy practices and, thereby, can serve as resources for re-seeing what is possible in classrooms. Too often we leave these practices and identities outside the classroom, thinking that they are separate from what goes on in schools. This false dichotomy (in- and out-of-school literacies) assumes that what students bring into classrooms does not matter (e.g., Hull & Schultz, 2002). Instead, we aim to make the identity resources of our students and teachers and their lifeworld experiences central to planning for and engaging with various modes of textual representation (i.e., with multimodal texts). The lifeworld experiences of millennial students provide a worldview that is important for students to use as a lens to connect what they know to what they are learning.
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teh consciously to sell an idea (curricular concept) or narrative (curricular chronicle);
and (c) publishing the DV on the web made it part of the emerging clip culture
(YouTube appeared in 2005), connecting it to the high-status youth practice
of remixing culture to communicate ideas. Keith’s students have “sold” such
cepts as the Elastic Clause to the U. S. Constitution and Sisertox, a remedy
from Seneca Falls for the injustices against women. An iSpeak contrasting the
printed text-book interpretation with the realities of Hiroshima can be seen at
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lgUBka-nio.

Keith Hughes was the first of the CVCV teachers to propose using media
genres students already knew well in composing videos. For example, he intro-
duced the digital video “uncommercial” genre and the movie trailer genre.
These media genres had three important benefits: (a) students had implicit
knowledge of media culture and advertisement structure that they could draw
on and make explicit; (b) the familiar purpose of the form was appropriated
and (c) publishing the DV on the web made it part of the emerging clip culture
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Paige and Nicole knew about movie trailers from their lifeworld experi-
ences and were able to connect this media genre knowledge to their inquiry
into Jim Crow, a topic that they did not know. They knew about discrimina-
tion from their own experiences and from the vernacular history they learned
from parents and others—and drew on this knowledge as the impetus for and
content of their movie, including the “Whites Only” sign above the school
water fountain. In searching for music, Nicole asked her mother who helped
her remember the “perfect” song she had heard long before. In such endeavors,
students’ identities and lifeworlds present potentials for their active engagement
and connection inside multimodal literacies pedagogy.

Constructing Felt Purpose for Embodied Learning

As in all literacies, those authentically engaged in multimodal literacies are
driven by a genuinely felt purpose for their embodied learning. By embodied
learning, we mean engaging in learning through all the senses and forms of
representation to understand deeply the specific meanings and ideas situated in
the experience, not just literal, linear, propositional ones (Gee, 2004).

The purpose for engaging in the actions and talk of embodied learning, we
argue, is usually deeply connected to participants’ sense of identity and felt need
for meaningful activity. When the “purpose” for school activities is motivated
by compliance or avoidance of punitive measures (e.g., bad grades), the
reflective engagement necessary for understanding is missing (e.g., Borowicz,
2005). Research in classrooms suggests that the guiding purpose constructed
for multimodal literacy practices in school cannot be for low-level comprehen-
sion and recall, but in some way must be about creating multimodal meaning
and representation to bring curriculum and youth culture/out-of-school litera-
cies and experiences together (e.g., Miller & Borowicz, 2006; Miller, 2008a,
2010a).
To negotiate an authentic purpose in his classroom, Keith Hughes took on a new role—what he called the “Executive Producer”: He would set the task, but left many choices for students; he required the production teams to pitch their ideas, but then let them go to work out details. He rotated around the room to monitor groups, but set up the space so students could perform, compose, and edit with support of each other. During class, Keith provided support to help mediate student work when they needed assistance beyond the group.

In the initial consultation with a high school student group, Keith typically would ask, “What do you want to show?” or “What’s your idea?” Focusing on students’ communicative intent was one way that he created a new classroom purpose and order. When groups faltered, he’d suggest, “Use your storyboard as your guide” and “Call me back when you’re done with your narrative.” After student groups pitched their DV ideas, he’d often prompt for detail—“How will you present the text visually?” (Miller et al., in press).

Paige and Nicole first felt the need to answer their generated question about Jim Crow (Who was he? Why did he get to make laws?) and, then, to communicate the shocking findings of their inquiry about the planned, accepted nature of brutal lynching. Keith created a consistent message that inquiring into this historical period to understand the context (e.g., of the progressive era or the milieu for pieces of literature) was “doing history” and the purpose for digital video composing (Lauricella, 2006). For students, the purposes for engaging in multimodal literacy practices in school seem to be connected to repositioning themselves as competent communicators with ideas, worth, intellect. The adolescents in our research all responded to contexts where they felt authentic purpose. For instance, Darius, a student constructed as a “thug” in school, felt competent for the first time in the classroom when he purposefully created a DV response to a class novel on the theme of loyalty. He followed that by composing a spoken word hip-hop poem to accompany a moving video elegy for a friend and a cousin (Borowicz, 2005). Co-constructing a felt sense of purpose beyond compliance may be the leading activity we as teachers need to take on as we bring multimodal composing to our students (Miller, 2010a).

**Focusing Explicit Attention to Meaningful Multimodal Design**

The idea of multimodal design emphasizes the active, generative process of creating meaning through multiple modes of representation, and not something governed by static rules (New London Group, 1996). This concept focuses our attention to the process of orchestrating representational (multimodal) resources and their interconnection. Designing is vital for composing a text that can meet the communication demands of new and future multimodal environments. Research shows, however, that in education we tend to under-use the affordances (i.e., available resources for performing actions) of multimodality because of our unconscious print bias and suggests that direct attention to the orchestration of multiple modes—to designing—is a promising approach to...
Hughes took on a task that set the participants to plot their pitch and the room to a, compose, and support to help group. 

Keith typically does this?" Focusing on a new classroom your storyboard narrative." After a question about the progressive "I" and the purposes to be connected in ideas, worth, excess where they asked as "thug" in his purpose.

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A Literacy Pedagogy for Multimodal Composing 123

this problem (e.g., Bailey, 2006, this volume; Miller, 2008a; Shanahan, 2006, this volume). The broad idea of designing includes the use of all the resources we have available to make meaning, the process of acting on those resources, and the product that represents transformed meanings and remediated textualities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2010). These multimodal semiotic (meaning-making) resources include such things as linguistic ways of interacting across contexts; visual resources for interpreting an event or idea through images—beyond reading about it in a print-based text; audio means of understanding through music, voices, or sound effects; and kinesthetic means of understanding through movement and enacting bodily performances.

The concept of design helps us to understand the social practices of multimodal representations made by people to communicate messages in the new landscape of communication where print is not necessarily the main mode (e.g., Kress, 2000, 2010). From the MLP perspective, knowing becomes a collaborative social activity that requires abilities to communicate, find, assemble, use and imagine new ways of envisioning assemblages of knowledge.

Keith attended to design even as he introduced the movie trailer assignment. As he handed out a rubric explaining the requirements for the project, he reviewed the criteria for storyboard images or narrative text, live video, dramatic voiceover, music to fit the meaning, and a flow of meaning to hold the DV together. Next, he showed a professional movie trailer for a horror film. He asked the class to count the clips as it played, explaining that clips are different shots taken by the camera. Students counted 38 shots in the 60-second movie trailer, and he reviewed each shot on the screen, pointing out the effect of angle, lighting, close-ups. Next, he focused on the music used in the trailer, explaining that the genre of the music had to match the mood and genre of the movie.

While he moved around to support student groups, he'd shout advice from across the room, "Don't shoot into the light!" or closer-up he'd advise, "Angle the shot to get a different feel or concept." After teaching a student how to use movie software to repeat a clip, he'd tell the student, "Go show Bill how to do that, he needs to know." During editing, students would call him over to review some footage, and he sometimes suggested, "You might try slowing that clip to show your meaning better." If activity stalled, he'd introduce a next step for reflection: "What kind of mood do you want for your music?" He constantly focused attention on designing multimodally to communicate meaning, by modeling multimodality. He morphed from one mode to another as he guided understanding (pointing to the various printed texts around the room to help with context); offered ideas about lighting and "capturing" a shot; and directly pointed to software functions to extrapolate meaning behind a shot (the Ken Burns effect or "snow" on a black and white period piece). Keith "moves and shifts" and effortlessly changed roles as he glided through his classroom directly working with the kids at their point of need.
Such explicit attention to design in multimodal composing allows more conscious layering of representational modes to create complex meanings. In Paige and Nicole’s class, Mr. Hughes made clear to students that they had access to photographs from the National Archive (i.e., of lynching); non-copyrighted music databases online (freeplaymusic.com) and in the room; voices, images, and gestures created by themselves and their classmates; objects in the classroom; props they could create (the “Whites Only” sign) or bring (the kerchief their actress wore); school spaces, including a long hallway with a water fountain; and examples of the movie trailer genre.

During the active process of making meaning and connecting multimodal resources for purposeful literacy work, Keith asked Nicole and Paige to pitch their idea for the movie trailer to him, suggested that they enact scenes to illustrate day-to-day life, and asked for their rationale for deleting some of the required narrative they had written and substituting Billie Holiday’s singing of “Strange Fruit”—thus requiring their explicit explanation of their multimodal design elements. When they talked to an African American classmate to persuade her to wear a do-rag when they filmed her drinking at a water fountain with the sign “Whites Only,” they were explicitly designing the multimodal elements of their movie in response to explicit instruction and support for designing their message.

For Colored Only transformed the movie trailer genre into a moving representation of a curricular inquiry with much evidence of attention to multimodal design elements: quick cuts from journalistic images of discrimination juxtaposed with enacted student scenes in black and white, connected those times with our times in a startling way; the stark photographs of bodies hanging overlaid with the haunting lyrics, “strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees,” produced a chilling effect.

Paige and Nicole’s performance was not directed by fixed rules. They collaborated to orchestrate and connect multimodal resources to communicate a heart-felt meaning they wanted others to feel and see as significant. With their teacher’s support, they carefully layered the modes of meaning; they designed a message with deep impact for themselves and their astounded classmates.

Additionally, the discourse inherent in interacting with the material and evidence gathering, helped the girls to design their iMovie. If the old adage “you don’t know what you think until you have read what you have written” is applied to multimodal literacies construction, the girls didn’t: know what to make of the evidence they were gathering until they negotiated their iMovie scenes. They talked with invested stakeholders (mother, researcher, teacher, classmates) and acted (using various props, movements, stages), and shot scenes (lighting, symbolic shots, camera angle), and set the tone (music, dialogue). The visual editing of the video told the story. When they finished, the story represented what they meant, which evolved as they planned. As they thought about what to represent, ideas about history and life emerged. This process moves bey to creation.
moves beyond learning content: it explores the process of thinking and moves to creation of understanding.

**Critical Reframing Leads to Transformative Teaching and Learning**

The changes in literacy practices in the digital age have already transformed what students bring to school. By drawing on the components that make up multimodal literacies outside of schools to critically reframe what happens in schools, we teachers and teacher educators can change the landscape of learning and teaching to redesign classroom pedagogy for the 21st century. In all, such change involves the process of reflecting on and redesigning pedagogy so that it (a) creates a supportive social space for mediating, (b) consistently constructs felt purpose for embodied teaching and learning, (c) draws upon the identity and lifeworlds of both students and teachers, and (d) provides explicit attention to and instruction in multimodal design. These critical refractions of what happens in classrooms can transform what counts as teaching, learning, knowing, and understanding in schools.

Figure 8.2 visually represents these principles of multimodal literacy pedagogy and suggests their transformative potential—through the critical reframing of teachers/teacher educators and their students in classrooms.

![Figure 8.2 Multimodal literacy pedagogy: A framework for change](image-url)
Of course, broader possibilities for change can occur when administrators in schools and policy makers in government also re-envision literacy and learning—a move visible in some policy reform documents (e.g., Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006; SCANS, 1999) and calls from professional organizations (e.g., National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, 2008; International Reading Association, 2001).

Integrating multimodal literacy pedagogy as a model for 21st-century learning in classrooms requires both teachers and students to take a reflective stance, stepping back to become aware of how design choices in supported social groups allow identity lifeworlds into schools and generate felt purposes for using multimodal resources to think, understand, and communicate in a digital world. Exploring why and how designing assemblages of images, sounds, music, and movements transform people and meanings is the central activity needed to broaden what we mean by literacy and to transform teaching and learning.

To contribute to this critical reframing of pedagogies, we as educators must attend to the identities of students, to critically consider how students’ lifeworlds shape meaning-making and can re-shape literacy as meaningful in schools—as it did for Nicole and Paige. The ultimate goal of the proposed critical reframing through MLP is to move towards a transformative pedagogy—that is, 21st-century teaching that can critically transform millennial adolescent learners and their social futures in a digital world.

Going back once more to our introductory vignette, we see evidence that Keith Hughes reframed the classroom space and his teaching by providing Paige and Nicole the support and opportunity to re-see the world through an historical lens. We believe Keith’s success emerged from his redesign of the classroom space to provide opportunity for the purposeful literacy practice of multimodal inquiry and digital video composing that for Paige and Nicole—and other students—changed the way they saw their everyday experience (see also Miller et al., in press). Narrative case studies of teachers and students working collaboratively to compose digitally in English and social studies classes provoke other portraits of how student lifeworlds and identities can be connected to the curriculum through authentic multimodal literacy practices inside the classroom (e.g., Blondell, 2009; Borowicz, 2005; Cercone, 2009, 2010; Costello, 2006; Lauricella, 2006).

Finally, the use of MLP to describe the dynamics of multimodal composing can provide an explanation of how embodied experiences provide authentic purposeful literacies that teachers can draw on to reframe and transform their teaching (Boyd & Canteen, 2008; McVee et al., 2008a,b; Miller, 2007, 2008a,b,c; Thompson, 2008). It is our goal to make multimodal literacy pedagogy an urgent priority for educators. The principles of MLP can transform classrooms, and, we believe, can bridge the artificial gap between in- and out-of-school literacies and identities. It can change the teaching and teacher education landscape toward social design practices for felt purposes—the kind of civic, personal, and government 1 & Hayes, 2011; R drawing on this N plary spaces for a Through the lens the possibilities fo

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of civic, personal, and workplace futures envisioned by scholars and business and government leaders (e.g., Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Miller, 2008a; SCANS, 1991). By drawing on this MLP framework, we can re-envision our schools to be exemplary spaces for authentic learning of the kind Paige and Nicole experienced. Through the lens of MLP, we invite teachers and teacher educators to consider the possibilities for what our schools can become.

Note

1. City Voices, City Visions (CVCV) was a partnership between the University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education and the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS). Over 260 urban teachers have participated in CVCV professional development institutes aimed at preparing subject-area teachers to use DV composing as a new multimodal literacies tool for their 6th- to 12th-grade urban students. See www.CityVoicesCityVisions.org for more information.

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