

Designing curriculum literacies

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KEY POINTS

We continue the conversation we started in “‘The problem with the future is that it keeps turning into the present’: Preparing your students for their critically multiliterate future today” (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014) and show how:

- the four resources model can be used as design tool
- teachers can develop future-focused curriculum literacies collaboratively.

Teachers involved in New Zealand research conducted to develop forward-looking literacy pedagogy explained they needed ongoing support to make their new practices sustainable. This article responds to that request. We begin with a whistle-stop tour of the rapidly evolving literacy landscape, briefly reviewing key concepts of critical multiliteracies and the four resources model as we develop a rationale for the design of curriculum literacies. Next, we focus on one visual text to demonstrate how teachers can design curriculum literacies using the four resources model. Suggestions for collaborative curriculum literacies design conclude the discussion.

(Re)designing the literacy landscape

You can be literate in a whole manner of different varieties of texts, and particularly with new technologies ... you need to be literate in all of them ... you need to understand how they work and what the norms ... and ... conventions are. (Participating teacher exit interview, 2012)

New Zealand teachers have a mandate to design curriculum that is responsive to the strengths, requirements, and interests of their students and community (Ministry of Education, 2007). The national curriculum allows “considerable flexibility” (p. 37) for teachers to design curriculum. This flexibility is vital given that teachers face a context that is complicated by the increasing social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of students, rapid changes in technology, and economic instability all creating an unknown future for their students (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014).

The concept of critical multiliteracies responds to the changing cultural, political, and social landscape and attends to the rise in multimodal texts made possible by increasing access to digital technologies (for more discussion of the term *text* see Sandretto & Tilson, 2014). Describing a text as *multimodal* signals a shift in the way we think about texts for literacy curriculum and pedagogy. When designing texts, authors have at their disposal five semiotic systems: audio, gestural, linguistic, spatial, and visual (Bull & Anstey, 2010). In New Zealand schools we frequently privilege paper, written texts that use the linguistic system. An overreliance on linguistic texts, however, does not capture the complexity of the texts we engage with regularly, or the ways in which students need to develop a greater facility with the other modes that they have available to make meaning and construct texts. Thus, critical multiliteracies emphasise a literacy pedagogy that supports students to develop an array of practices to break the codes, make meaning, and

use, construct, and critically analyse a wide range of texts across a variety of contexts (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014).

Figure 1 comes from the Multiliteracies Working Group that the first author was involved with from 2007 to 2009, exploring synergies between literacy policy and e-learning (Jones, 2009). This figure captures the concepts discussed above and represents the direction in which the working group was headed in terms of revising New Zealand literacy policy. Unfortunately, a change in government meant that work was never fully realised. Just briefly, the clouds on the horizon capture the changing cultural, economic, social, and technological climate. The main figure is underpinned by the key competencies—attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values involved in lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2007). There is a bridge that links the traditional literacy practices of school, which are no longer sufficient on their own to ensure participation in community and economic worlds, to the wider literacy practices we participate in as a member of different social and community groups. At the centre of the figure we find a parent, student, and teacher, surrounded by the four resources model (Freebody & Luke, 1990).

The four resources model maps a view of literacy as a social practice. It supports teachers to move literacy curriculum, pedagogy and assessment away from “the historical question of the great debate—What is the best way of teaching reading?” to instead consider “What kinds of reading practices and positions should schools value, encourage, and propagate? (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 213). We have found the four resources model makes an excellent planning and audit tool for teachers (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014). First, *code breaker* practices involve students understanding the codes and conventions of all of the semiotic systems and how they may be operating in any given text. Secondly, *meaning maker* practices emphasise making connections to the cultural, social, technological,

Making Connections with Multiliteracies

Literacy is critical to students' success in education and throughout their lives. Rapidly changing technologies and cultural and linguistic diversity mean that the way we construct and communicate meaning has and will continue to evolve. Multiliteracies expands current understandings of teaching and learning by placing new emphasis on the range of literate practices that young people need to participate in and contribute to public, community and economic life. These practices include using information and communication technologies and negotiating the diversity of our globalised societies.

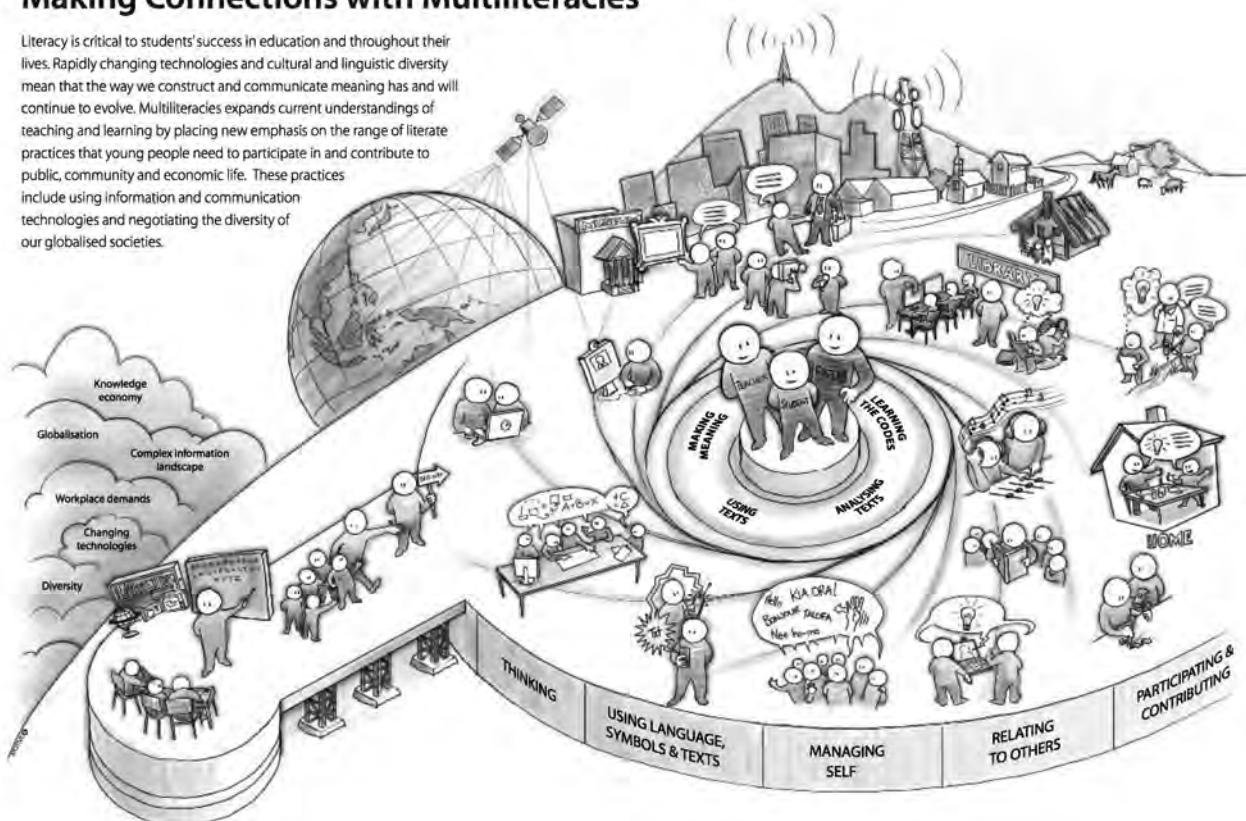


FIGURE 1. MULTILITERACIES (REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION)

and literacy knowledge that one has in order to make meaning from texts. The name *text user* does not reflect the complexity of this third resource. To be a skilled text user, you have to draw upon code breaking, meaning making and text analyst resources in order to use and/or create texts. And lastly, *text analyst* resources involve critiquing texts to consider relationships between language, power, and representation (Sandretto & Critical Literacy Research Team, 2006; Sandretto with Klenner, 2011). The model recognises the different, but interrelated, roles necessary to be literate in the complex information landscape. The resources are not hierarchical or developmental. For example, students do not have to be fluent readers to be text analysts. Literacy pedagogy and curriculum that attend to the development of *all* four resources support students to “be active designers- makers- of social futures” (New London Group, 1996, p. 64).

The term *design* is powerful; it is both noun and verb (Kress, 2000). In terms of literacy, *design* as a verb allows for teachers to focus on pedagogy and curriculum that emphasises students as agentive meaning makers who can draw from a repertoire of practices to make meaning and communicate in “transformative, creative and innovative” ways (Kress, 2000, p. 141). For literacy, *design* as a noun captures the multimodal text making of students; the finished designs they create using the different semiotic systems to (re)make and (trans)form existing resources

and designs within particular cultural, historical, and social contexts (New London Group, 1996).

Previously, we argued that “critical multiliteracies enacted through the four resources model supports you to become a teacher of curriculum literacies, rather than teaching literacy in isolation” (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014, p. 55). We detailed why teachers should enact critical multiliteracies and how they could do so. This article continues that conversation by illustrating how teachers can use the four resources model to design curriculum literacies.

Curriculum literacies represents a view of literacy in curriculum areas that moves beyond an understanding of literacy as a generic activity that one applies to any given topic, to a view of literacies as specific repertoires of practices developed by experts in subject-specific ways (Wyatt-Smith, Cumming, Ryan, & Doig, 1999). Using a curriculum literacies approach means teachers will explicitly model vocabulary and text structures, and how the various semiotic systems are privileged and deployed according to the demands of a particular subject area. For instance, the report genre is very different in science compared with a book report or a news report. Teachers can use a curriculum-literacies approach to implement critical multiliteracies in the classroom.

The design approach we promote in this article comes from New Zealand research that explored

the development and implementation of critical-multiliteracies pedagogy with 19 teachers and their students in Years 7–8 (ages 11–13) from seven schools (see Sandretto & Tilson, 2013, for more information on the research design). As captured in the quote at the beginning of this section, the participating teachers were supported to expand their understandings of literacy. In this article we illustrate how teachers can design curriculum literacies that will support their students to develop “*all* four resources to confidently communicate across a broad range of purposes, using multiple modes and text types” (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014, p. 54). We found that teachers needed ongoing support for planning if they were going to be able to realise the potential of critical multiliteracies for their students. This article seeks to provide some of that ongoing support.

Planning: “[How] to make it sustainable and meaningful ... rather than ... just doing random lessons”¹

Each year we conducted exit interviews (EI) at the end of teachers’ participation in the project, and each following year we held follow-up interviews. Teachers raised concerns around planning, particularly when asked questions around how they intended to integrate critical multiliteracies into their programmes and the kind of support they needed to make it a sustainable practice. The participating teachers identified the need to develop a literacy curriculum and pedagogy that was responsive to the strengths and interests of their students (EI, 2011).

They also emphasised the importance of integrating critical multiliteracies into long-term planning to ensure it held “a regular place in the classroom programme” (EI, 2012). Teachers described the value of developing “a shared understanding within our school” to allow for “long-term planning opportunities for children to be learning about multiliteracies so they can unpack the work that they’ve been doing across the curriculum” (EI, 2012). To achieve this:

it’s important that we actually think about multiliteracies when we are planning our units so that it’s not something that we just do along the way, spur of the moment sort of thing. It needs to be planned for and it all should be based around the topics that we are teaching. (EI, 2012)

And lastly, teachers explained with their newly developed awareness of critical multiliteracies, they could make their planning decisions clearer to the students by making the connections to the four resources and semiotic systems explicit throughout a unit (Follow-up interview, 2011).

In response to the issues raised around planning and sustainability of critical multiliteracies, we used the four resources model as a planning tool to collaboratively design a critical-multiliteracies unit at the end of the research project each year. The participating teachers found this scaffolding valuable: “the planning of a unit for next year ... has given me more clarity about how it would fit in and where I would start” (EI, 2011). Next we sketch a sample unit designed around the visual text *Hahei Pathways*³ by Tony Ogle (see Figure 2) using the same design approach we used in the research project; by starting with the four resources and an engaging text.

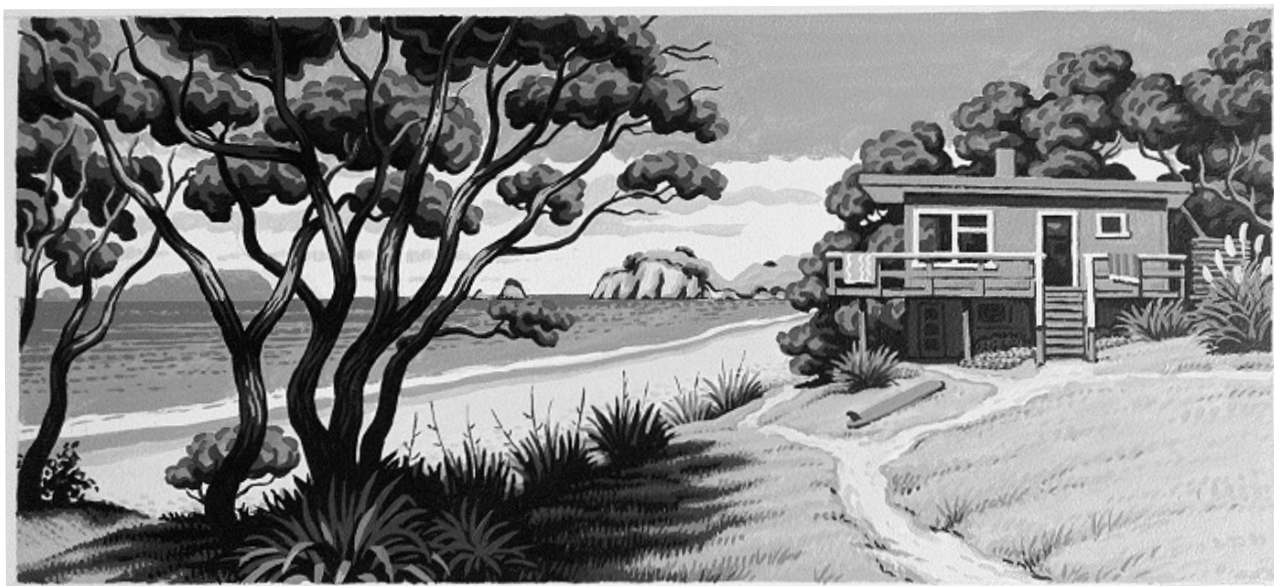


FIGURE 2. *HAHEI PATHWAYS* BY TONY OGLE

Reproduced with permission.

For more information, or to view the screen print in colour, go to: <http://www.tonyogle.com/>

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Firstly, we wish to emphasise that there is no one right way to design curriculum literacies. This section outlines how the four resources model can be used as a design tool, as well as “a systematic way of interrogating practice” (Freebody & Luke, 2003, p. 57). The focus of the proposed unit is *New Zealand identity today* (see Table 1). It is framed by two key questions.

- What does it mean to be a New Zealander today?
- Which New Zealand place do you identify with?

We are aware that many students today may not be New Zealand citizens. But to discuss your place and how you identify is not limited to citizenship. By attending school in New Zealand, students will be developing varying degrees of connection and affinity with different places in New Zealand. To discuss your place and the place of your classmates provides multiple opportunities to stand in someone else’s shoes and relate to others, one of the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007).

While we present the four resources in a particular order, it is important to remember that it is not a script to be followed, rather a reminder to plan for a literacy pedagogy and curriculum that is responsive and flexible (Freebody & Luke, 2003). Teachers will use their professional judgement and knowledge of their students and context to determine the order, number of lessons, pacing and so forth.

Code breaker

We begin with code-breaker lessons (see Figure 3) because students will need multiple opportunities to develop the metalanguage, or the specific vocabulary, of the visual system that they will use throughout the unit (see Table 2). Table 2 illustrates key visual metalanguage of colour, line, point of view and texture with a series of

questions that will develop code breaker resources. The lesson(s) developed to support students to break the codes of the visual system as used in *Hahei Pathways* will help them to understand the broader codes and conventions of the visual system.

Meaning maker

The lesson(s) designed to support students to make meaning (see Figure 3) encourage them to draw on: their developing knowledge of the visual semiotic system; experiences they may have had with places like the one in the text; and, experiences they may have had with other visual texts or artwork (see Table 2). Questions such as those listed in the table can support dialogue to develop meaning maker resources. The code-breaking and meaning-making lessons go hand in hand. Students’ meaning making will be enriched with access to the codes of the visual system.

Text analyst

All texts can be analysed and critiqued, even aesthetic texts (Misson & Morgan, 2006) (see Figure 3). Students can be supported to develop the resources of a text analyst with questions such as those listed in Table 2. These questions focus on issues of representation and power (see also Sandretto with Klenner, 2011). The dialogue focused on developing text-analyst resources will support the students to use and create texts.

Text user

In Table 1 we have listed a potential sequence of lessons. After the code-breaking, meaning-making and text-analyst lessons 1–2 listed in Table 1 we have suggested that the next lesson involves the students brainstorming and

<p>Code breaker</p> <p><i>How can I unlock the codes of this text?</i></p> <p>Students will develop metalanguage to discuss and analyse the visual codes and conventions used in <i>Hahei Pathways</i>.</p>	<p>Meaning Maker</p> <p><i>How can I make meaning with this text?</i></p> <p>Students will consider what it means to them to be a New Zealander and which places they connect with. They will compare and contrast their own understandings with the understandings of their classmates and the perspectives in <i>Hahei Pathways</i>.</p>
<p>Text User</p> <p><i>How can I make other texts?</i></p> <p>Students will paint/create a visual text, write a poem and develop a mihimihi that richly describes the place they connect with as a New Zealander. The students’ texts can be used to spark a social inquiry into New Zealand identity.</p>	<p>Text Analyst</p> <p><i>How am I shaped by this text?</i></p> <p>Students will critically analyse <i>Hahei Pathways</i> to consider how the author, Tony Ogle, has illustrated his place as a New Zealander. They will compare and contrast his representation with their own visual texts, poems, mihimihi and understandings.</p>

FIGURE 3. MAPPING A UNIT ON NEW ZEALAND IDENTITY WITH THE FOUR RESOURCES MODEL

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TABLE 1. UNIT PLAN OUTLINE

Unit: <i>New Zealand identity today</i>		Focus questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a New Zealander today? • Which New Zealand place do you identify with? 	
Text (title, type, source) Visual text: <i>Hahei Pathways</i> © Tony Ogle (http://www.tonyogle.com/Screenprints/Hahei+Pathways.html)			
Achievement Objective(s) [Level 3] (Ministry of Education, 2007) <i>Students will:</i> <u>English, Listening, Reading and Viewing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences. <u>The Arts, Developing Practical Knowledge, Developing Ideas, Communicating and Interpreting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore some art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes. • Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation and imagination, support by the student of artists' works. • Describe the ideas their own and others' objects and images communicate. 		<i>Students will:</i> <u>English, Speaking Writing and Presenting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences. • Use a range of written and visual features to create meaning and effect and sustain interest. <u>Social Sciences</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how people view and use places differently. 	
Key Competency Focus – Using language, symbols and texts; Relating to others			
Potential Lesson sequence	Resource Developed √ Code Breaking (CB)	√ Meaning Making (MM)	
	Semiotic System √ Audio (CB-A) □ Gestural (CB-G) √ Linguistic (CB-L) □ Spatial (CB-S) √ Visual (CB-V) √ Text User (TU) √ Text Analyst (TA)		
1.	Discussion and analysis of the visual codes and conventions of <i>Hahei Pathways</i> (CB-V, MM) (see Table 2)		
2.	Critical analysis of <i>Hahei Pathways</i> (TA, MM) (see Table 2)		
3.	Brainstorm/dialogue on what it means to be a New Zealander today. Discussion on your place. Students create web/brainstorm that they will use to create a painting and poem that represents their place. (CB-V, CB-L, MM, TU)		
4.	Students revise the visual elements (colour, line, point of view, texture) and plan how to use them in their painting that responds to the focus question- Which New Zealand place do you identify with? (CB-V, MM)		
5.	Students use their paintings and web/brainstorm to construct a poem about their place. One format is the <i>I am from poem</i> (Christensen, 2001). (CB-L, MM, TU)		
6.	Students develop a mihimihi of introduction. They will research the following: iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe, if appropriate), whakapapa (genealogy), te maunga (mountain), awa (river), rohe (place). One useful resource is http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/learning-maori/tikanga-maori/mihimihi-en-nz/ (CB-A, CB-L, MM, TU)		
7.	Students share their paintings, poems and introduce themselves with their mihimihi; comparing and contrasting their places with <i>Hahei Pathways</i> .		
8.	Students use the work thus far to develop a social inquiry exploring how others make sense of their place (Ministry of Education, 2008).		

discussing what it means to be a New Zealander today and discussing the places they identify with. During this lesson students construct a web or brainstorm, which will inform the development of text user resources. We have suggested three potential text user activities: painting,² poetry, and mihimihi. The students will use their developing metalanguage of the visual system, along with their brainstorm and direct instruction around painting techniques to paint a picture of a place they connect with. This could be followed by lessons developed to support the writing of a poem. One model is the *I am from poem* (Christensen, 2001), which scaffolds students into designing a linguistic text that “invite[s] the stories and voices of your students into the classroom” (p. 9). And finally, students could develop a mihimihi, or speech

of introduction. A mihimihi is a traditional te reo Māori introduction that connects the speaker’s whakapapa (genealogy) to their tūrangawaewae (their place to stand), which includes geographical features such as their maunga (mountain), awa (river), and moana (sea) (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2015).

After sharing and celebrating their paintings, poems and mihimihi, the students could be supported to compare and contrast their texts with *Hahei Pathways*. This discussion could be used as springboard to a social inquiry unit exploring how others make sense of the places they connect with (Ministry of Education, 2008). We do not suggest any lessons for this portion of the unit because it is important that it is collaboratively designed and constructed by the teacher and students.

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TABLE 2. VISUAL METALANGUAGE (adapted from Bull & Anstey, 2010; Trifonas, 1998)

Visual metalanguage and description	Questions to develop code breaker resources	Questions to develop meaning maker resources	Questions to develop text analyst resources
Colour — Can create mood or emotion	Describe the colours Tony Ogle has used. Are they hot? (oranges, reds) Are they cool? (greens, blues, purples) Are they light? Are they dark? Where are the colours placed on a colour wheel? (see http://www.colormatters.com/ as one resource) Which colours are next to each other (on the colour wheel and in the screen print)?	How do the colours Tony Ogle has used make you feel? How do the colours focus your viewing of <i>Hahei Pathways</i> and indicate what is important? (salience) How does the placement of the colours affect your mood?	Are the colours that Tony Ogle uses particular to New Zealand? Which colours might another artist from a different culture use to portray his or her place?
Line — Can create mood and direct the reader's gaze.	What is the quality of the lines in <i>Hahei Pathways</i> (thick, thin, heavy, light)? What type of lines does Tony Ogle use (vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, right-angled or forming a doorway)?	How does Tony Ogle's use of line affect your mood?	
Point of view — Refers to where the reader is positioned to view the text	What is the point of view in <i>Hahei Pathways</i> ? Where do you think the viewer is standing?	How does the viewpoint in <i>Hahei Pathways</i> shape your understanding of the text?	How would the painting be different if painted from a different point of view?
Texture — Can help the reader connect with the sense of touch to add more meaning.	Where is there texture in the screen print? How has Tony Ogle used colour to create texture? How has Tony Ogle used line to create texture?	How does the texture in <i>Hahei Pathways</i> make you feel?	
<i>Additional questions</i>		Have you [students] been to the beach? Did it look like the beach Tony Ogle has depicted? What other experiences do you have with art that help you make sense of this text? How do you connect with Tony Ogle's place?	What is missing from the text? What knowledge does the reader need to bring to the text in order to understand it? What view of the world is the text presenting? How will you paint/represent your place?

Where to next? Collaborative curriculum-literacies design

Given our experiences in the research project, we believe that literacy curriculum which is collaboratively designed provides a way forward for teachers to enact and sustain a curriculum-literacies focus. A number of the participating teachers mentioned the need to “develop ... a really strong professional learning community” (EI, 2011). Other teachers noted the importance of “a school-wide approach ... [for] everyone to be on board and then it would become part of our planning ... when we actually sit down and look at topics” (EI, 2012). Following a comment highlighting the value of everyone “singing from the same hymn sheet,” one teacher emphasised, “I know that I’ve mentioned that a lot already, but I think ... that’s very important” (EI, 2102).

We demonstrated with *Hahei Pathways* how teachers could begin curriculum literacies design with a rich text and develop a unit framed by the four resources model that grows to incorporate multiple curriculum areas in authentic and engaging ways. We believe this is the “secret recipe” to collaborative curriculum-literacies planning. For teachers to capitalise on a collaborative approach to curriculum-literacies design, they may need to develop some shared understandings of critical multiliteracies and the four resources model, as noted above by the teachers who participated in the research project. We have provided a list of additional readings at the end of this article that would support professional learning for curriculum literacies design.

Our process for curriculum literacies design is as follows:

- Step 1. Gather together colleagues or syndicate members.

Decide what you may need to do to develop shared understandings of critical multiliteracies and the four resources model.

- Step 2. Find a quiet space. Gather your favourite design tools (whiteboard and pens, laptop/tablet, or paper and pencil). Draw a two-by-two-grid (see Figure 3).
- Step 3. Select a rich text to ignite the unit (in this case we used *Hahei Pathways*), or alternatively choose the text you wish the students to design as an outcome of the unit (these were the painting/visual text, poem, and mihimihi in our sample unit).
- Step 4. Collaboratively design the unit, working through each of the four resources (code breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text analyst) to identify the practices students will need to develop to be successful in the unit.

We began our whistle-stop tour of the literacy landscape by considering critical multiliteracies; a concept of literacy that aims to address the rapidly changing ways we make meaning in an ever-evolving technological era. We argued (Sandretto & Tilson, 2014) that the four resources model provides the “how”, or a framework for curriculum literacies design. Next on the tour, we promoted a curriculum-literacies approach to literacy to enable students to develop “a broad and flexible repertoire of practices” (Freebody & Luke, 2003, p. 56). Finally, we suggested an emphasis on collaborative design, which has the potential to facilitate the agency of the designer. Design “sees the learner as fully agentive, as becoming fully aware of the potentials, capacities and affordances of the materials to be used in the designs” (Kress, 2000, pp. 140–141). While a focus on design is valuable for students, we believe a design approach can also enable teachers to develop their own “dispositions oriented towards innovation, creativity, transformation and change” (Kress, 2000, p. 141). In our view, this repositioning of teachers as agentive designers of curriculum literacies is vital. Teachers who engage in collaborative curriculum-literacies design may be able to realise the potential of critical multiliteracies for their students and develop “that breadth of what can be literacy” (EI, 2012).

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) that funded the projects referenced in this article. We also wish to thank our two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful engagement with an earlier version of the article.

Notes

- 1 Follow-up interview, 2011.
- 2 We recognise that the visual text, *Hahei Pathways*, is not inclusive of all New Zealand students’ life worlds.

However, it is not possible to select any one visual text that every New Zealand student will feel included in or have experience of. We offer the framework and questions in Table 2 as exemplars that will work with a number of different visual texts, appreciating that teachers may wish to select a different initial text for the unit. We strongly encourage teachers to both affirm and critique texts with their students.

- 3 While we have suggested painting as a text-user activity, the text-user role emphasises selecting the best modes to communicate meaning. Teachers and students may wish to make use of the affordances of a variety of tools, for example digital tools, to represent their place with a visual text.

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Additional Readings

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Integrating critical multiliteracies using the Four Resources Model: A New Zealand Guide

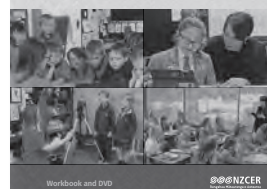
Dr Jane Tilson and Dr Susan Sandretto

This resource is for teachers who want to build their future-focussed literacy practice. Featuring video, reflective questions, discussion starters and support material, it is designed to help teachers shift their literacy programmes to encompass a broader view of literacy that includes visual, audio and multimedia texts. It will help teachers support their students to strengthen skills of code breaking, making meaning and using, constructing and critically analysing a wide range of texts in many different contexts.

The accompanying video features three lessons with Year 8 classes and three with Year 1/2 classes. It includes reflective interviews with the teachers, and an introduction to future-focussed literacy theories.

Integrating critical multiliteracies using the Four Resources Model: A New Zealand Guide

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RRP: \$65.00

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