

Early years curriculum materials

Media literacies





Case study: Media literacies

Introduction

The following case study is not designed to describe a pre-planned unit of work; it is presented as an example of how a unit can emerge. Units can emerge by teachers drawing on children's interests and implicit knowledge, and using teachable moments and focused learning and teaching to develop explicit understandings about literacies.

Background

Media literacies experiences became part of the classroom program over an 11-week period. At times, media attracted a strong interest, then interest faded as children's other ideas were incorporated into the program, until interest in media re-emerged and gained momentum. Some learning experiences arose from discussions initiated by children, some by teachers. Some experiences involved the whole class while others involved only a small group or an individual. Children engaged differently with materials and ideas and their choices led them down different learning pathways. The children all emerged with new ways to talk about literacies and a feeling that they were literate in various media.

Although familiar media texts were of intense interest to this group of children, "media" would not necessarily be a topic for all groups of children to explore. Many of the ideas presented in this case study could be adapted to allow children to explore other familiar texts (oral, written, visual or electronic) relevant to their local community. From these texts children could make various aspects of literacy explicit through play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions, and focused learning and teaching.

Media literacies in action

The teacher observed that the group of Preparatory Year children regularly choose to discuss their personal experiences of familiar media texts as they ate lunch or in other group settings. For this group, familiar media television and video texts, favourite characters, jingles, logos and commercial products such as hats, T-shirts and lunch boxes, were meaningful and engaging texts that held their attention. The children read these texts with confidence by implicitly identifying contextual information, visual symbols, colours, text shapes and sounds.

These texts helped the children begin to understand explicitly that many texts use words, sounds and images to communicate meaning. After children used familiar media texts they could learn to read and co-construct texts and view themselves as capable users of cultural texts. This topic also provided opportunities to question meaning in texts and children's assumptions about their world.

By drawing on children's knowledge and interests, the teacher used teachable moments — resulting from spontaneous experiences and experiences initiated by the teacher and the children — to:

- explain how media texts are created using combinations of words, images and sounds
- develop children's language for talking about and comparing texts, and for beginning to question meaning in texts
- experiment with ways to construct simple texts by combining images, words, symbols and sounds
- make children aware of similarities and differences in personal preferences regarding media texts, and how media shapes their family, classroom and community experiences
- show children how to read, view and make meaning from texts
- teach children to use communication technologies meaningfully, to access information, and to use technologies to communicate ideas to others.

Early learning areas

Language learning & communication

- using spoken language (including home language, or signed or augmentative communication) for a range of purposes
- using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts
- experimenting with emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to communicate meanings

Active learning processes: Thinking; investigating technology; imagining & responding

- generating and discussing ideas and plans and solving problems
- investigating technology and considering how it affects everyday life
- experimenting with materials and processes in a variety of creative, imaginative and innovative ways
- discussing and responding to the qualities of their own and others' representations, experiences and artistic works

Social & personal learning: Personal learning

• acting with increasing independence and responsibility towards learning and personal organisation

Health & physical learning

 using and extending fine-motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects

Learning experiences

The following overview illustrates the main learning experiences that emerged from the explorations of media texts. The shaded boxes indicate the starting points, that is, how children initiated learning by sharing their interest in the topic and how they began to explore their implicit knowledge.

These experiences ebbed and flowed as children's interests shifted and changed. At times, only particular children were actively engaged and shared their experiences with peers. At other times the whole class was engaged. Some children followed their interests intermittently over a term, and others were involved for shorter, more concentrated periods of time.

Teacher-initiated focused learning and teaching

- Engage with and discuss examples of media jingles, logos, titles, and introductory sequences (sound and image) from familiar TV shows.
- Discuss and locate where words, images and/or sounds are used in a variety of texts — picture books, posters, websites, catalogues, video, story tapes (e.g. identify TV shows by only hearing the sound (jingle) or viewing the visual image).
- Compare familiar media products and identify links, e.g. use of similar logos or characters.

Teacher-initiated investigations and real-life experiences

- Visit websites ABC, Pokémon, ninemsn (Hi-5) using "favourites", back button, hot links.
- Identify and discuss characters on a website and compare personal experiences with representations in other texts, e.g. catalogues.
- Send emails to favourite characters using website hot links.

Teachable moments resulting from discussions initiated by children

Children regularly chat about favourite TV shows, characters, compare T-shirts and hats with logos etc.

Children spontaneously sing TV jingles.

Children discuss and compare personal experiences of media.

Teacher-initiated focused learning and teaching

 Children combine a scanned/copied image of themselves with a favourite TV or film character. They use these images to create simple texts (e.g. a recount, a speech bubble or personal response to media) using word-processing software or hardcopy.

Child-initiated and teacher-initiated focused learning and teaching

• Read logos and words on familiar packaging and in catalogues.

Child-teacher negotiated focused learning and teaching

 Create menus and signs for a restaurant using magazine images, letters from magazines and written texts (role-play writing, alphabetic writing, scribed print and co-constructed print.

Spontaneous, focused learning and teaching

 A small group of children debate whether some websites are designed for boys or girls and why they think this. The teacher challenges their assumptions.

Child-initiated learning

Children spontaneously create messages using blank speech bubbles, text and images of favourite characters found in magazines.



Child-initiated learning

Special needs child responds to images of characters and logos by singing jingles.

Media literacies

Teacher-initiated transition activity

 On a large laminated character with a speech bubble, the teacher writes simple messages (e.g. "Hello Kate!") to communicate with each child as they go to the bathroom and prepare for morning tea.

Teacher-initiated investigation

 During quiet activities children use large laminated characters with speech bubbles for messages to peers; they use roleplay, alphabetic writing, early phonetic spelling or copy names.

Teacher-initiated focused learning and teaching

- The teacher creates speech bubbles for characters/representations of people to communicate ideas to children, e.g. when the firefighters visit the centre, the teacher uses a poster of a firefighter with a speech bubble to communicate simple safety messages such as, "Stop, drop and roll".
- Create speech bubbles and images to retell a familiar story, e.g. Possum in the House.

Teachable moment resulting from a spontaneous event

While reading a story, children notice speech bubbles and ask what the writing says and why speech bubbles are used.

Teacher-initiated investigation

 Science area — explore ways to see the world through different viewing frames (e.g. cardboard cylinders or small and large cardboard frames), and explore sound and how it is made and transmitted.

Teacher-initiated real-life situation

 Listen to and discuss story tapes that combine voice and sound effects that match written texts.

Teacher-initiated focused learning and teaching

- View video (e.g. Corduroy) and examine the use of music, sound effects and visual images for communicating, ask, "How did you know...?"
 "What information did you use?"
- Model ways to construct and use different types of texts (e.g. recipes, menus, road signs, brochures, catalogues and magazines) for particular purposes in real-life contexts.

Spontaneous, focused learning and teaching

Children create and record sound effects for another group of children.

What did the children do to learn about literacies?

Identify and use codes	Make links between texts and contexts
Identify what codes are used — font/style of print, colour, shape of text, particular symbol/logo/image.	Use implicit knowledge of media texts — TV and video shows — and develop a language for expressing this knowledge.
Talk about letters and initial sounds for real purposes.	Compare personal experiences of media with peers' experiences.
Identify names/labels, e.g. character's name on website.	Identify similarities/links between texts (e.g. between a hat with a logo, and favourite show)
Identify and discuss what information to use to work out a message, e.g. initial letter/sound, image, sound, colour and context.	Identify how, when and where the children engage with media texts.
Use texts for real purposes	Analyse texts
Use speech bubbles to record speech that can be read to others.	Identify where and when images, sounds and words are used.
 Create texts for a purpose, e.g. signs used to sell items in a shop. Construct and co-construct different types 	Discuss why a producer uses jingles, logos and so on to, for example, get your attention or get you to buy something.
of texts with suitable formats, e.g. a menu, speech bubble, list, sign or price tags. • Identify where and how different text types	Discuss and compare media, e,g, TV shows or websites (that I like/don't like, that are violent, scary or make me happy, etc., that target boys/girls? Why? How do you
are used in real life, e.g. a recipe.	know?).
	 Question meanings in texts and examine stereotypes and biases, with support.

What did the teacher do to support children to learn about literacies?

Identify and use codes	Make links between texts and contexts
Explain particular codes that are use font/style of print, colour, shape of ten particular symbol/logo/image.	
Explain how letters and sounds are useful texts (and make links to children's knowledge and experience).	 Encourage children to share personal experiences with media, and question to help them compare experiences.
Draw attention to where names/labels/words/logos are used i life, e.g. a character's name on a wel	bsite. stating what they like about a TV show/character.
Guide learning to help children to drawhat they know to work out a messa e.g. using initial letter/sound, image, and/or context information.	ge, • Make explicit the similarities/links between
Point out relationships between text at talk.	Provide many opportunities to engage with familiar media texts and identify other times/places they experience these texts.
Use texts for real purposes	Analyse texts
Model and provide materials and scr children can create speech bubbles, help them to read/share these.	ibe so Provide a language for talking about how
Model and provide materials and scr children can create speech bubbles,	 Provide a language for talking about how texts are constructed using images, sounds and words. Discuss and question why producers use
 Model and provide materials and scr children can create speech bubbles, help them to read/share these. Model and scribe to help children cre texts for particular purposes, e.g. sig 	 Provide a language for talking about how texts are constructed using images, sounds and words. Discuss and question why producers use music, jingles, logos to get attention, get you to buy something etc. Listen to children's comments and ask questions to help them to elaborate their responses to media, and explore assumptions and biases, e.g. why a child
 Model and provide materials and scr children can create speech bubbles, help them to read/share these. Model and scribe to help children cre texts for particular purposes, e.g. sig a shop or menus for a restaurant. Provide real-life opportunities to cons different types of texts with suitable formats, e.g. a menu, speech bubble 	 Provide a language for talking about how texts are constructed using images, sounds and words. Discuss and question why producers use music, jingles, logos to get attention, get you to buy something etc. Listen to children's comments and ask questions to help them to elaborate their responses to media, and explore assumptions and biases, e.g. why a child feels that Dragon Ball Z is "yukky", or why