Literacy and Web 2.0:
What Families Should Know

What is Web 2.0?

The term Web 2.0 was coined by Tim O'Reilly (2005) and refers to the shift in the role of web users from consumers of information on web pages to a two-way communication between site and users. Everyone and anyone can produce knowledge and share their thoughts and ideas on the web! Some examples of Web 2.0 include sites for blogging, online collaboration such as Wikis, social media, video and audio sharing such as YouTube and Podcasts, and 3D virtual worlds such as online gaming communities (Hew & Cheung, 2013).

Children and Web 2.0

Today children who enter the classroom are immersed in a world of technology. Findings from Common Sense Media's (2017) Zero to Eight study suggests that children under the age of eight spend an average of *2 hours and 19 minutes* with screen media daily. Blanchard & Farstrup (2011) identify two reasons for this surge in technology: (1) interest in entertainment and communication technology as well as business and industry interest in technology for productivity and efficiency have increased the speed of development and (2) governments have invested in technology as a means of societal advantages.

How Techno-literacies Occur in Schools

Our need to integrate technology into the school curriculum stems from the requirements for technology that our modern-day students will face when they enter the workforce. For instance, the Internet is one of the most commonly used technologies in the workplace and, therefore, school Internet instruction mirrors that of the workplace (Blanchard & Farstrup, 2011). Furthermore, technology standards have been incorporated into the English Language Arts Standards in the Common Core. For example, a third-grade informational text standard requires students to "use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017).

Leu et al. (2015) identifies five processing practices that occur during online research and comprehension: (1) reading to define important questions, (2) reading to locate online information, (3) reading to critically evaluate online information, (4) reading to synthesize online information, and (5) reading and writing to communicate online information.

Recommendations

There are many processes and higher-level thinking that go into reading online and children should be commended for growing up in an era of literacy that requires so much of them. Follow these suggestions to create a balance between printed and digital literacies.

1. **Read from both digital and printed picture books.** Children develop reading skills by relying on the text and the illustrations of books. Digital picture books have some exciting features that printed picture books do not such as the integration of text, sound, and sometimes even animation that is interactive and engaging for children. Before selecting a digital picture book, ask yourself "What benefits can this digital picture book offer my child that a printed book cannot?"

2. **Have a Device-Free Day** to focus on good old fashion talking and storytelling. Plan a hike, day at the park, board game night, or special meal in which everyone in the family unplugs.

3. **Monitor how long and what your child is doing on screen and on the web**. There are many great apps and website for children, and some not so great ones. Ask your child to share what he/she is interested in doing on the device and help him/her navigate the web. Some great educational apps for kids include: Shadow Puppet Edu, BrainPOP Jr., and Book Creator. Focus on apps that put your child in the role of creator, rather than the role of information consumer. Also, Reading Is Fundamental offers a free digital platform, Literacy Central, with thousands of resources tied to many popular books (RIF.org/Literacy-Central).

4. **Be a role model for navigating and reading on the web**. Involve your child as you navigate the web. Looking for a good place to eat? Allow your child to help you use a search engine, type in key words, look through websites or read reviews, and ultimately decide based on what you have read. These are all skills that will transfer to what children are being asked to do in school.

5. **Don't forget to DISCUSS books with your child (even when it is a digital book).** One way that children's reading develops is through conversation with an adult or peer. This is one of the many reasons why reading aloud to your children is so important. Even if a device is reading aloud to your child, still take the time to discuss the book (e.g. favorite parts, author's messages or morals, connecting the story to your own life). Engaging in conversations surrounding a book are a central part of reading.

Source: Written for Reading Is Fundamental by Erin Bailey, MA using the following references:

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