The Earlier the Better; Expanding and Deepening Literacy with Young Children

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Most children born in the U.S. in this millennium have never known a time without the Internet, cellular phones, or television.[i]   Practically every U.S. household has at least one television set and about one-third of young children live in homes where the TV is on "always" or "most of the time" (Rideout, Vandewater & Wartella, 2003, p. 4). Before most children are 6 years of age, they spend about 2 hr per day with screen media,[ii] something that doubles by age 8, and before they are 18 they spend approximately 6½ hr daily with all types of media (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005).[iii] It is also estimated that nearly all young children in the U.S. "have products—clothes, toys, and the like—based on characters from TV shows or movies" (Rideout et al., 2003, p. 4). The implications for the amount of media enveloping today's youth is significant when one considers current research about literacy acquisition that suggests "the early childhood years—from birth through age eight—are the most important period for literacy development" (International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998, p. 1).

Technological innovations, expansion of global media empires, and unrestricted commercial targeting of children have all contributed to an environment where today's kids are growing up in a mediated world far different than any previous generation. While the technological advancements have created new possibilities for the free flow of information, social networking, and global activism, there is also the potential for corporations or governments to restrict

the flow of information and appropriate these new tools for profit and control at the expense of free expression and democracy. Now more than ever, young children need to learn how to critically question the messages that surround them and how to use the vast array of new tools available to express their own ideas and concerns. Since television programs, video games, computers, cell phones, music, and even toys have become our current transmitters of culture, tellers as well as sellers of the stories of our time, it has become an imperative to teach critical media literacy to children as young as possible. Numerous examples and analyses of media education with college students and teenagers are now available, but very little has been written about critical media literacy with young children in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. It is with these young children, between the ages of 3 and 7, that this chapter explores the possibilities of critically analyzing and creating alternative messages.

As described in the previous chapters, critical media literacy is a pedagogical approach that promotes the use of diverse types of media and ICT (from crayons to Webcams) to question the roles of media in society and the multiple meanings of the form and content of all types of messages (Kellner & Share,2007). Analysis of media content is combined with inquiry into the medium, the codes and conventions, the media industries, and the sociocultural contexts within which capitalism and media function to shape identities and empower and disempower individuals and groups. This approach is hermeneutical and skills based; critical media literacy pedagogy integrates production activities with the process of critical inquiry. The potential of critical analysis increases when questioning is conducted through production activities that encourage students to examine, create, and disseminate their own alternative images, sounds, and thoughts (Share & Thoman, 2007).

Critical media literacy offers the potential for young children to develop multiple literacies, engage with popular culture, media, and new ICTs in ways that are meaningful to them, experience the excitement of creating their own messages in many formats, and participate as productive citizens empowered to confront their problems and transform society. Critical media literacy involves a progressive pedagogy that combines an expanded notion of literacy (including all types of media, technology, popular culture, advertising, as well as print) with a deep analysis of communication (exploring the relationships between media and audiences, information, and power). Issues of race, class, gender, and power can be addressed through a multiperspectival approach that integrates ideas from cultural studies, critical pedagogy, and media literacy (Kellner, 1995). Following Paulo Freire's (1970) problem-posing pedagogy, criti- cal media literacy involves praxis, reflection, and action to transform society.

Often, false assumptions about children, society, and media keep many educators from exploring this new pedagogy. Popular ideas about what is and is not appropriate often prevent the possibility of discovering the potential of critical media literacy to engage young children in meaningful learning that develops their cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and political abilities. A large number of U.S. educators carry positivistic views of childhood that focus myopically on biology at the expense of considering sociocultural and political contexts (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). Many educators consider teaching a neutral and unproblematic activity, something Henry Giroux asserts is based upon an instrumental ideology that is tied to the culture of positivism and "the various modes of technocratic rationality that underlie most school practices" (2001, p. 209). Kathy Hall (1998) warns that this perspective is not actually apolitical as is claimed, and instead "many practicing teachers' political naiveté concerning literacy, teaching and schooling, serves to perpetuate the status quo" (p. 187). Howard Zinn calls this common confusion the myth of objectivity and insists that "[o]ur values should determine the questions we ask in scholarly inquiry, but not the answers" (1990, p. 10).

Critical media literacy challenges a positivist conception of children as voiceless passive entities that need to be controlled and regulated by adults. Instead, Shirley Steinberg and Joe Kincheloe suggest, we need a view of children that embraces "the child as an active agent capable of contributing to the construction of his or her own subjectivity" (2004, p. 7). Understanding children as active co-constructors of meaning helps teachers guide students to ask deeper questions about information and its relationship with power, as well as teach students how to critique, analyze, and express their own ideas in multiple formats. Hall writes, "Even quite young children can understand matters of equity, including matters like, say, sexist language practices and discriminatory social organisation. Young children's sense of fairness is usually acute" (1998, p.187). Determining what is appropriate education for young children is a complex task that requires understanding cognitive abilities, considering social and cultural contexts, and scaffolding teaching to meet individual needs and differences. Barbara Nicoll states, "Teachers who use developmentally appropriate practices are doing more to promote critical thinking than traditional teachers who believe children are too young to think well" (1996, p. 2). Examples provided in this chapter demonstrate that critical media literacy can be taught to young children.

In today's mass-mediated culture in which young children need skills for interacting with new media and technologies, educators should be considering which sensorimotor and cognitive abilities will be most needed and what are the best developmentally appropriate practices for facilitating their growth. This is

especially important when literacy is understood as a social, as well as a developmental, process of assimilation and accommodation. Rogoff and Morelli write that the role of "social interaction provides an essential context for development itself" (1989, p. 346). Marsha Kinder states, "Piaget claims that 'in order to know objects, the subject must act upon them, and therefore transform them'; in turn, the subject is transformed, in a constant process of 're-equilibration'" (1991, p. 4). As an example, Kinder asserts that video games "not only accelerate cognitive development but at the same time encourage an early accommodation to consumerist values and masculine dominance" (p. 119).

Victoria Carrington (2005) writes that the emergence of new media texts "situate contemporary children in global flows of consumption, identity and information in ways unheard of in earlier generations" (p. 22). A half century ago, Raymond Williams wrote that the effects of television are less about discrete items and more about a flow of programming running day and night. Tania Modleski describes Williams's concept of flow as the complex interactions and interrelations between various television programs and commercials (1982, p.

100). According to Alan O'Connor, a critical point of Williams's analysis is the notion that the flow of television is constructed to prepare viewers for advertising and it is "mainly irresponsible" (2006, p. 47). Beverle Houston explains, "The flow of American television goes on for twenty-four hours a day, which is crucial in producing the idea that the text issues from an endless supply that is sourceless, natural, inexhaustible, and coextensive with psychological reality itself " (1984, p. 82). She goes on to argue that this flow is one of desire and consumption in which the structured interruptions only enhance the desire for endless consumption.

Much of commercial children's television programming has advertising breaks every 5–10 min. During a typical half-hour show on Cartoon Network, a child watches about 20 commercials. This advertising often uses the same cartoon characters from the program that she or he is watching (Scooby Doo hawk- ing Gogurts) or movies (The Simpsons toys at Burger King) and other popular culture to sell products. These crossovers and merchandising relationships are examples of what Kinder refers to as transmedia intertextuality. Kinder writes that Saturday morning television and "home video games, and their intertextual connections with movies, commercials, and toys, help prepare young players for full participation in this new age of interactive multimedia—specifically, by linking interactivity with consumerism" (1991, p. 6). However, this is no longer just Saturday morning cartoons; the flow is now constant with Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Disney Channel, and the Internet (that now offers program-

ming and accompanying games); children's television is available all the time, for those who can afford it.

Children's transmedia intertextuality reaches from the bedroom to cyber- space, as everything from cartoons to junk food is available 24/7, with games to play and merchandise to buy. Children have become a multibillion dollar consumer market that are bought and sold, observed and analyzed by some of the largest corporations in the world (Buckingham, 2000; Kanner, 2006). Merchandising and mass marketing construct a flow that links everything together: television, movies, music, Internet, toys, food, clothing, and sometimes even school. The system functions so well that it often goes unnoticed as a natural part of the cultural environment. This normalization veils the historical construction and corporate planning of highly sophisticated marketing strategies and techniques targeted at children. While this may seem commonplace today, it is important to remember that advertising to children is a relatively new concept. Jyotsna Kapur points out that "[i]n the early 1900s, there was a certain embarrassment in profiting off childhood" (1999, p. 128).

Ideas of media flow and transmedia intertextuality supplement Horace Newcomb's and Paul Hirsch's notion of television as a cultural ritual. New-comb and Hirsch (1994) write that television functions as a cultural ritual and "ritual must be seen as a process rather than as a product" (p. 505). They focus on the cultural role of entertainment and TV as they quote James Carey about the ritual view of communication that is directed toward "the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs" (1983, p. 504). Herbert Marcuse (1991) and other theorists from the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) stress that while media are imparting   information,   they are also perpetuating   ideologies, shaping epistemologies, and socializing consumers. The common experiences children have with their media encounters at home are then acted out and shared in schools and playgrounds, and interconnect with other media texts in the private and public spheres. By contextualizing media as a cultural ritual, the focus moves away from a specific television program or episode to focus on media as a whole system, the flow, the viewing strip as text. This notion of media as ritual and flow offers a larger contextual framework for analysis to situate media in relation to other social influences such as parents, schools, government, church and the like. A broader vision can also reveal the manner in which media position audiences. Using this "culturalist" approach, Buckingham suggests:

> Rather than attempting to measure the effectiveness of news in communicating political information, we should be asking how it enables viewers to construct and define their

> relationship with the public sphere. How do news programmes "position" viewers in relation to the social order—for example, in relation to the sources of power in society, or in relation to particular social groupings? How do they enable viewers to conceive of the relations between the "personal" and the "political"? How do they invite viewers to make sense of the wider national and international arena, and to make connections with their own direct experience? How, ultimately, do they establish what it means to be a "citizen"? (2000, p. 175)

It is also important to consider the political economy and ways that power and ideology are used by corporate producers of children's media culture. Steinberg and Kincheloe (2004) assert that children today are growing up in a kinderculture, a consumer culture dictated by corporate concerns for profit. They write, "Since the 1950s more and more of our children's experiences are produced by corporations—not parents or even children themselves" (2004, p.30). Kincheloe states, this kinderculture has rerouted children's cultural identification and affect, "working twenty-four hours a day to colonize all dimensions of lived experience" (2004, p. 131).

These changes in society and media require a paradigm shift in education from a purely cognitive psychological model to one in which psychology embraces sociology in the understanding of literacy as a social process embedded in the contexts of history, politics, economics, culture, and power (Luke & Freebody, 1997). While children are growing, their cognitive abilities are not isolated from their social and moral development; therefore literacy should be taught as a social process in which critical questioning becomes a regular strategy for engaging with all texts, as early as possible.

Another factor that often prevents educators and parents from engaging young children in questioning and creating media is an excessively protectionist attitude toward young children and media that overvalues the power of media and undervalues children's abilities. As mentioned in Chapter Two, media educators who embody this protectionist model do not provide their students with a critical or empowering pedagogical experience.

The point is not that media have no effects and that children are all powerful and should be allowed to view any media any time. Media representations can have direct effects causing nightmares, anxiety, and even trauma when children are exposed to images and/or content that is too scary or disturbing for them. All children have the right to live free of fear and violence and they need to be

protected from dangerous influences, both in fiction and in nonfiction. Some media experiences are more pernicious to children when encountered in nonfiction, such as news programs, than when viewed in fictional entertainment (Buckingham, 2000, p. 136).

However, most media effects are indirect and long term (such as rein- forcing male privilege within a patriarchal society or contributing to eating disorders in a culture obsessed with body image), repeated as transmedia inter- textual flows that permeate society in the information age. This process cannot be censored; the best protection we can provide children is education that will empower them with critical autonomy[iv] (Masterman, 1994) and prepare them to participate as active citizens in critical solidarity[v] (Ferguson, 2001) with the world around them.

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While it is important to protect children from inappropriate experiences and representations, it is also important to understand that most children have the ability to begin questioning their media much earlier than often occurs. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, both students and teachers have the abil- ity to understand many of these complex ideas when they are taught through active media production and developmentally appropriate analytical activities. Experiences with my own son have also demonstrated that from a very early age[vi] some children can understand many basic media literacy concepts of me- dia construction, multiple perspectives, and commercial motivations. Young children not only have the ability, but for the sake of developing critical teenagers and active citizens, it is essential that we start as early as possible to plant these seeds of inquiry. Rather than denying young children opportunities to explore controversial ideas about media because of assumptions about children's inabilities and deficiencies or fears about the dangers of media, we should investigate with children the possibilities for connecting their personal experiences and concrete ideas with critical questioning about their lives and the mediated culture in which they are growing up.

Critical media literacy can also make abstract ideas more concrete when students create their own media and experience constructing their own representations. Learning through doing allows children to apply theoretical concepts through hands-on activities. When teachers create the space for students to experiment in multiple modalities with issues of representation, audience theory, political economy, and social justice, then students will be better pre- pared to understand these ideas in greater depth later. Teaching critical media literacy to young children is by no means an easy project, yet as

you will see in the examples provided, it is feasible to teach many children much earlier than most adults realize.

Teaching critical media literacy requires epistemological movement in two directions: a horizontal expansion and a vertical deepening. The horizontal motion entails a broadening of the definition of literacy to include multiple ways people read and write, view and create information and messages. This expansive notion of literacy consists of serious study of popular culture, advertising, photographs, phones, movies, video games, Internet, and all sorts of hand-held devices, and ICTs, as well as print. Along with analysis, it involves production, as students learn to create messages with different media and technology. Many of these ideas can be found under various labels, such as multimedia literacy (Daley, 2003), new literacies (Kist, 2005), multimodal literacy (Kress, 2004), multiple literacies (Kellner, 1998), information literacy (American Library Association, 2006), technology literacy/computer literacy (Thomas & Knezek, 1995), and visual literacy (Debes, 1969).[vii]

Some of the horizontal expansion of literacy also inclines to the vertical movement toward a sociological deepening that frames literacy as more than a purely cognitive thought process. Critical media literacy understands reading and writing as social practices embedded within social contexts. It is this socio-cultural framing that requires vertical movement to deepen the questioning of the interconnections between information, knowledge, and power.

According to a definition created by a panel from the American Philosophical Association (Facione, 1990), critical thinking involves cognitive skills ("interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regula-tion") and affective dispositions ("a critical spirit, a probing inquisitiveness, a keenness of mind, a zealous dedication to reason, and a hunger or eagerness for reliable information"). This cognitive/affective definition provides an im-portant part of understanding critical thinking; however, it lacks a sociological understanding of communication and information.

Meanings are not only created inside someone's head, but they are also always dependent on historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and numerous other contexts in which the text is created and in which the text is received. The social construction of knowledge makes it impossible for information to ever be neutral; it always connotes values and ideologies. In addition, the concept of an active audience suggests that individuals and groups of people negotiate meanings similarly or different depending on the experiences, values, feelings, and many other influences that shape their group and individual identities. Adding this sociological understanding to a cognitive/affective definition of

"critical thinking" opens up new possibilities to embrace the many social dimensions of how we think (Luke & Freebody, 1997).

The vertical movement in critical media literacy unites the skills and dispositions of critical thinking with a social consciousness and an understanding of knowledge as socially and historically constructed within hierarchal relationships of power. The rejection of the notion that education or information can be neutral and value free is essential for critical inquiry to address social injustice and inequality through transformative pedagogy based on praxis (reflection and action). Giroux writes, "Education is not training, and learning at its best is connected to the imperatives of social responsibility and political agency" (2001, p. xxiv). This type of pedagogy can be found under many labels, such as critical literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1997), critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003), critical reading (National Council of Teachers of English & IRA, 1996), and critical multiculturalism (Cortés, 2000).

For critical media literacy, the horizontal expansion of literacy and the vertical deepening of analysis are intrinsically connected, but for many educators they are often separated, as teachers working within one approach do not consider the need to link with the other. It is not uncommon that teachers doing excellent work in media production fail to engage their students in critical analysis of the very media they are creating. At the same time, many progressive educators have their students critically deconstruct the power relations in historical documents and books but fail to apply those same critical questions to popular culture, technology, or mass media. These myopic perspectives are even more shortsighted when working with young children because of the preconceived limitations that many educators have internalized.

Viewing these two educational approaches as separate can be helpful to understand their differences and similarities, but critical media literacy is built on the integration of multiple media and production with critical inquiry and social justice. To demonstrate the differences between the horizontal and the vertical movement, examples are provided from two teachers, each working primarily out of one of the two approaches. Both teachers demonstrate excellent models of developmentally appropriate teaching practices that are child centered, promote active learning, and encourage deep understanding (Geist & Baum, 2005). While the pedagogy of both teachers is first rate and does occasionally overlap the broadening of literacy with the deepening of critical inquiry, only occasionally do they unite the two ideas into a critical media literacy framework.

One of the easier routes for horizontally expanding literacy is available via ICTs and the current interest in technology literacy. Carmen Luke (2004) suggests that if media literacy can enter schools through "the 'backdoor' into computer literacy education," then it will have a better chance of being accepted. However, computer literacy is different from media literacy since the former is primarily a positivistic approach that appropriates new tools to unproblematic ally transmit content, while the latter requires problematizing media and technology to explore how the content and the audience are affected by the communication process. Recognizing the differences can help educators take advantage of the support and funding available for technology literacy to expand the notions of literacy on the path to critical media literacy.

Patty Anderson: Expanding Literacy

The first example comes from a public charter elementary school in the LAUSD in which the teacher, Patty Anderson, had the same students for kindergarten and first grade. Working with 20 bilingual children for 2 years, Anderson created a multimedia classroom that integrated technology and media into her core curriculum. For 2 years my son was a student in her class and I regularly observed and assisted the students and teacher.

Due largely to the conservative political climate and backed by requirements of the federal law, NCLB, the present expectations for early childhood education have become more academic and skills based. In LAUSD, like many other school districts in the U.S., the majorities of kindergarten classrooms are now full-day and are expected to have students reading before first grade. This movement is also ratcheting up academic expectations for children between the ages of 3 and 5 as most states have now adopted early learning standards in literacy, language, and mathematics (Neuman & Roskos, 2005a). Even Head Start, the longest running federally funded school readiness program, has been legislated to ensure literacy growth with several goals, including letter recognition and phonemic awareness (Dickinson, 2002).[viii] The focus on print literacy and phonics-based instruction has forced many kindergarten teachers to minimize art activities, playtime, and experiential learning for more standardized and often scripted phonics programs (Hemphill, 2006; Miller, 2005; Tyre, 2006). According to Susan Neuman and Kathleen Roskos, the skill and drill routine in early literacy instruction "may inevitably consign children to a narrow, limited view of reading that is antithetical to their long-term success not only in school but throughout their lifetime" (2005b, p. 2). They assert that reading achievement is less about sounds and letters and more about meaning. Neuman and Roskos write, "It is the higher order thinking skills, knowledge, and dispositional capabilities, encouraging children to question, discover,

evaluate, and invent new ideas that enable them to become successful readers" (2005b, p. 4). Since Anderson teaches at a charter school that runs a full bilingual program in Spanish and English, she has more flexibility and control over her curriculum than most teachers in her district who are required to follow the scripted phonics-based OCR program and the district pacing plan.

Anderson is a young teacher who enjoys using media and technology in her daily life and recognizes the importance of teaching her students to be- come technologically literate as early as possible. In kindergarten, Anderson began teaching her 4- and 5-year-old students how to take photographs and use photography to communicate. She comments, "I think a lot of us use pictures in our daily teaching, but I think it's more powerful to use pictures that the kids actually take." She explains how most kindergarten teachers she knows purchase commercial packets of photographs that illustrate specific themes or concepts, but through working with her students to create their own images, she finds that abstract ideas become more concrete and the students take more ownership of their learning.

Her students began kindergarten studying the theme of "caring," so Anderson had them discuss how they could visually show this idea. Once a student was able to act out caring, another student would photograph one moment that the class agreed conveyed the idea of caring. Using a digital camera, Anderson then downloaded the images that the children took and printed them out as minibooks with just the pictures and the title in Spanish, "cariño." Each child was able to take home their own book that same day to reinforce their learning and encourage a love of books. During math, Anderson had her students take the digital camera around the room and around the school to photograph all the different shapes they could find. By searching for shapes in their everyday environment through the lens of a camera, they were connecting math to their real world and seeing the familiar with a new set of eyes. These pictures were printed for the students to cut out and sort according to different attributes. The students' experiences with photography were also supported by miniles- sons about photography that I helped provide which can be found online at the CML Web site (Share, 2005).[ix] Throughout the year of kindergarten and much more in first grade, the students were allowed to use the digital camera often as another instrument in their literacy tool kit.

Anderson teaches in a low socioeconomic area and has many students who begin their education in kindergarten, without any preschool experience. Therefore, one of her first goals in kindergarten was to teach the children how to recognize and form letters. One activity that supported this learning required the students lay down outside on the grass so that they could be photographed from

above   as they used their bodies to form different letter shapes. These photographs were displayed in the classroom and printed on homework pages as friendly graphic reminders. Along with the use of photography, Anderson utilized her own laptop computer and an LCD projector to demonstrate concepts visually whenever the lesson warranted it. Her school has a broad vision of literacy and the arts therefore all the students have an art and music teacher visiting their classrooms on a regular basis. During kindergarten, Anderson videotaped all her students for a movie they presented to the parents at the end of the year. This was something that in first grade, her students were able to play a much greater role in the production process.

In first grade, Anderson moved into a new room with her same students and with four computers. With the new technology, she was able to finally implement her desire to have her students create multimedia projects. During that year, I was able to volunteer a couple days each week and work with small groups of 4–8 children at a time. Most of the children had no experience with a computer and took considerable effort to learn the most basic concepts, like how to double click and drag and drop. Since the children were already familiar with photography and visual imagery, we began teaching them PowerPoint. We scaffolded the teaching of new computer skills incrementally: the first writing they did was with WordArt and then later they learned to insert a text box. Inserting pictures and animation was simple and fun so it made it easier for them to learn about folders and subfolders. As their skills progressed, the tasks became more sophisticated and the students began creating more computer projects that addressed the themes and content from their core curriculum. They used Microsoft Word for publishing their Writer's Workshop stories and PowerPoint for creating posters and presentations. The Internet was occasionally used with adult guidance, but the students were not permitted to surf the Web alone. Anderson's incorporation of ICTs into the core curriculum added to student's literacy development but did not replace other experiential and developmental activities, like drawing, painting, printing, acting, and singing, discussing, experimenting, playing, and socializing.

While the school had a computer lab, other students rarely had the opportunities that Anderson's students had to use technology to communicate and create. This is in large part because of Anderson's philosophy that media and technology should be tools to empower students. Unfortunately, her school administration viewed media and technology as neutral conveyers of content for transmission, as opposed to teaching students to analyze these new tools and use them to create their own messages. At Anderson's school, most of the computers in the lab did not have a writing program but they all had a math game. While the kids loved to play it and the teachers saw their student's math

skills and spatial reasoning improve, it would be a mistake to assume that this was computer literacy. Each child logged on to his or her own computer and for 30 min to an hour, he or she answered math questions with plenty of audio and visual stimulation. While students did indeed interact with this computer game, it was a closed type of interaction, one in which choices were limited by the few options provided. This contrasts greatly with Anderson's classroom where the projects that students created on the computers entailed much more open interactivity and student control as the children had many more choices about content and form.[x]

At the beginning of first grade, each student created a guidebook about another student, in which they had to photograph and interview a partner. Anderson gave each child a blank book in which to write about their colleague based on their interview, and attach the photographs to accompany the text. The 4–6-page books were shared with the whole class and swapped around during reading time. The series of photographs each student took of his or her partner were archived in all four classroom computers for use in other literacy and art projects. These archives grew as students photographed every field trip, guest speaker, and numerous class activities. They also began using the teacher's mini-DV camera to document their interests with sound and motion.

One of the obstacles keeping many teachers from even considering these types of activities is the fear that young children cannot be responsible with expensive equipment. Anderson states, "It's true that a lot of the fear I think that teachers have, that probably I had at the very beginning of kindergarten, is that they're going to ruin these things and that they're going to drop them or they're going to not be safe with them. But obviously, teaching them from the very early age how to handle that, then you get past that." Beginning in kindergarten, Anderson taught her students to always wear the strap around their neck and treat the camera as an important tool, not a toy. Since the technology has become so simple, no longer does the photographer have to set the light meter or even focus the lens. The old Kodak slogan, "You press the button and we do the rest" has been surpassed as now any child who can press a button can take a picture and see the results immediately. In the 21st century, any school or teacher that can afford a digital camera can easily make photography a valuable literacy tool for young children.

Throughout the 2 years, Anderson had her students create many projects, individually and collaboratively. The use of technology in the classroom was greatly facilitated by group work and peer teaching. A type of "interthinking" occurred as students collaboratively used language for thinking together to create media and solve problems (Mercer, 2007). The final culminating projects

that Anderson's first graders produced included a movie about first grade and a PowerPoint show on endangered species. The purpose for their movie was to reflect on and document their learning and also to show new students what to expect when they begin first grade. Because of limited technology (only one camera and no editing software in the classroom), the students could not physically edit their movie. While they were able to film most of the scenes, narrate voiceovers, and discuss planning and editing choices, Anderson did most of the editing work herself.

For the final PowerPoint show, students were able to do all the production work themselves. They worked in pairs to create 4–8 slides about an endangered animal of their choosing. They researched about the animal from books and Web sites and then discussed why the animals are in danger of extinction and what they could do about that. They explored issues of global warming, habitat destruction, poaching, and contamination of the oceans and discussed ways they could help by minimizing pollution, encouraging their parents to drive less, and not dumping trash down drains that lead to the ocean.

Each pair inserted photographs, WordArt titles, and text boxes with information into their PowerPoint slides. Following the writing process, they wrote, shared, revised, edited, and published their work with the help of their partner and other students. The process required considerable work to make sure the photographs and the words worked well together, a literacy skill important for reading and writing. Anderson reflects on this process, "I hear them having this conversation about, 'well we shouldn't put a picture of an animal that's playing around when we're talking about something that's bad,' which I think is really good. And I've heard other pairs talk about the kind of pictures they want to include and where." After one pair discovered a mistake or something new, they would share it with others and before long everyone was making similar changes. The sense of ownership and exploration that students felt while working on this project led some to take the project beyond the teacher's expectations. On their own, one pair discovered symbols and inserted a red circle with a slash through it, and soon others began inserting different symbols to accompany their photos and text. Working with the music teacher, the students wrote their own song about protecting endangered animals and performed it for their parents.

Another important aspect of both culminating projects was that the students were creating their presentations for real audiences beyond the teacher. Performing their PowerPoint show to other students and their parents gave the first graders a strong sense of purpose for their work and genuine feedback. By reading the text they had written in each PowerPoint slide, the students had the

opportunity to read and present publicly to an audience, thus meeting several state standards for language arts. Creating and presenting projects for a real audience   is one of Foxfire's[xi] Eleven Core Practices and is an important element of good pedagogy because it motivates students and provides deeper learning opportunities that are less likely to arise otherwise. After presenting to a kindergarten class, Anderson's first graders returned to their classroom and debriefed the presentation. The students were disturbed by the reaction of the kindergarteners to a photograph in the show of a dead whale with red blood in the water. They discussed the picture further and talked about the reasons for the presentation and the seriousness of the topic. While some students expressed their dislike of the picture and felt it shouldn't be in the show, others discussed the importance of saving the animals and the need to have a serious photograph, like that one, to communicate to others that animals are dying. The discussion that evolved from a real audience response to their work and picture choices took these 6- and 7 year olds into an analysis of the power of visual imagery and the appropriateness of their choices for specific purposes and particular audiences. This inquiry linked their concerns and use of different media with much deeper theoretical concepts of semiotics, audience theory, and the politics of representation. Neuman and Roskos (2005b) state, "Literacy development is not just a matter of learning a set of technical skills. It is a purposeful activity involving   children in ways of making, interpreting, and communicating meaning with written language" (p. 5). Anderson's students accomplished Neuman and Roskos's purposeful content-rich literacy description and bumped it to a higher level by expanding the notion of literacy beyond just written language.

While Anderson did not design her class around critical literacy principles, she did engage her students in many critical concepts through questioning, discussing, and taking action by creating their own media messages. The atmosphere of open inquiry that Anderson created encouraged the autonomy and curiosity necessary for the development of critical thinking. Nicoll (1996) asserts that "Critical thinking skills can only be taught in an environment that encourages the children to ask questions, to devise ways of answering those questions, to make decisions about how to proceed, and to evaluate the quality of their answers." Engaging with the students' popular culture and asking questions (such as who created the message, how, and why) encourages students to critically reflect on the media they use and the media they create. Anderson also used interactive journaling, where she could correspond one-on-one with students, to encourage critical reflection.

 For young children, posing questions that aim to reveal the construction   of media messages can help them start to think about media differently and con-

sider different ways of knowing. While it is important not to negate children's media culture nor destroy the pleasures they get from it, the denaturalization of media is necessary for children to be able to ask different questions. For example, when a movie is considered just entertainment and not understood as a construction of reality, then the questions that one can ask tend to be limited to the content of the movie. Anderson mentions, "I think in this age group, they have a tendency to think they know the difference between fantasy and reality, but a lot of the times, they struggle with it, they really don't know what is true and what isn't true. In a movie like Ice Age, there are elements of it that are true, that are based on the fact that there was an ice age, but what about the animals and what is created and what isn't. I think we talked that day about, someone had to write the movie, someone had to animate it and draw the pictures, because of the cartoons, so we got into a conversation about that."

Many of the mandated standards that students are expected to learn in elementary school cover media literacy concepts such as the California State Content Standards for language arts that list kindergarten students "Distinguish fantasy from realistic text" and they "Identify types of everyday print materials (e.g., storybooks, poems, newspapers, signs, labels)."[xii]

Anderson clearly demonstrated that integrating media literacy concepts and technology skills into a kindergarten and first-grade curriculum is not only feasible but can be highly successful. While she faced many obstacles in terms of limited resources and difficulty in negotiating time constraints, she managed to make the lessons developmentally appropriate for her students and provided numerous opportunities for them to communicate with different ICTs. The deficit thinking and protectionist fears that keep many administrators and educators from engaging young children in these types of activities are not helping the students. Administrators need to let go of these misconceptions and place their time and energy in training teachers (not only how to use the new tools but more importantly how to teach with them and about them), providing ongoing teacher support, purchasing and maintaining ICTs, and then allow- ing teachers and students to use these new tools as components of an integral literacy program. Educators, like administrators, also need to relinquish old fears and embrace these new tools and new pedagogies as exciting opportuni- ties to link classroom learning to students' lived experiences and mediated lives. Technology must not replace drawing and other experiential activities; instead it should expand children's full capacities by providing more developmentally appropriate opportunities to communicate and create (Miller, 2005).

Anderson's engagement with media and technology expands her literacy pedagogy horizontally yet only occasionally deepens her teaching vertically

into a more profound analysis and critical action. For this type of critical literacy and sometimes critical media literacy, Vivian Vasquez offers some excellent examples and advice.

Vivian Vasquez: Deepening Literacy

Vasquez is a teacher who has written methodically about her experiences teaching young children critical literacy. She builds her curriculum on social justice concerns with an affirmative approach that seeks to empower students to confront injustice. Vasquez asserts that critical work with students "does not necessarily involve taking a negative stance; rather, it means looking at an issue or topic in different ways, analyzing it, and hopefully being able to suggest possibilities for change or improvement" (2004, p. 30). In line with Paulo Freire's (1970) problem-posing pedagogy and Robert Ferguson's (1998, 2004) concept of productive unease,[xiii] Vasquez writes, "A critical perspective suggests that deliberate attempts to expose inequality in the classroom and society need to become part of our everyday classroom life" (p. xv).

> Through posing critical questions, Vasquez aims to disrupt authorial power and problematize social situations. Exposing the social construction of infor- mation and knowledge is necessary to unveil power inequalities. Vasquez fol- lows the theoretical work of Alan Luke and Peter Freebody (1999) in Austra- lia, who developed the Four Resources Model promoting a sociological emphasis in literacy education. Vasquez writes:

Luke and Freebody assert that reading should be seen as a nonneutral form of cultural practice, one that positions readers in advantageous and disadvantageous ways. They argue that readers need to be able to interrogate the assumptions and ideologies that are embedded in text as well as the assumptions that they, as sociocultural beings, bring to the text. This leads to asking questions such as, Whose voice is heard? Who is silenced? Whose reality is presented? Whose reality is ignored? Who is advantaged? Who is disadvantaged? These sorts of questions open spaces for analyzing the discourses or ways of being that maintain certain social practices over others. (2003, p. 15)

When a child raises a question   about issues that are unfair or unjust, Vasquez explains that a teacher has basically three ways to respond. The teacher can take a traditional banking (Freire, 1970) educational approach by treating the student's question as a fact, thereby positioning the teacher as expert and the

student as a passive recipient of a seemingly "objective" factual answer. This response often ends the child's inquiry and curiosity with the false notion that information is neutral and memorization is the goal. A more constructivist teacher can turn the question back to the student and ask her or him what she or he thinks. This was a common response that Anderson used to encourage her students to be more independent and reflective. While reposing a question can be a useful strategy to stimulate cognitive critical thinking, it does little to transform the problem or the student. The critical response that Vasquez uses moves the student further toward empowerment as she challenges her students to collaboratively take action by asking them: "What can we do to change the situation?" (2004, p. 98). Encouraging students to take action is an essential component of transformative pedagogy and a necessary element of critical media literacy. The editors of Rethinking Our Classrooms (Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner & Peterson, 1994) explain, "If we ask the children to critique the world but then fail to encourage them to act, our classrooms can degenerate into factories of cynicism. While it's not a teacher's role to direct students to particular organizations, it is a teacher's role to suggest that ideas need to be acted upon and to offer students opportunities to do just that" (p. 5).

During the 1996–1997 school year, Vasquez taught a half-day "junior kindergarten" in suburban Toronto, Canada, with 16 students between the ages of 3 and 5. For 10 months the students and teacher worked together to develop a critical literacy curriculum based on everyday texts and issues from their school and community. They created an audit trail, a bulletin board with artifacts, and commentary that visually documented their learning and the way incidents and themes flowed from one issue to another. Even though junior kindergarten is voluntary, the school board had a required curriculum from which Vasquez departed, yet she was careful to assure that the curriculum she negotiated with her students exceeded the requirements of the mandated program.

Rather than just adding social issues to a predetermined curriculum, Vasquez worked with her students to build their own course of study as they went—a dynamic approach that allowed them the flexibility to flow with student interest and connect ideas as they arose naturally. Barbara Comber (2001a) asserts that centering teaching on the concerns of the students and engaging local realities are crucial aspects of critical literacy. Some critics suggest that promoting a social justice agenda necessarily contradicts a student-centered curriculum. While this can be a bit of a balancing act, since negotiating curriculum with students requires listening as well as guiding, that does not mean that the two are contradictory. Carole Edelsky (1999) explains, "What makes a critical direction for a topic seem like an imposition of the teacher's agenda but a noncritical

direction seem like neutral guidance is that the former disrupts prevailing ideologies" (p. 4).

Kathy Hall supports the idea of critical literacy playing a role in early childhood education, yet fears that if it dominates instruction it could "take the joy out of learning and living" and lead to cynicism (1998, p. 191). However, taking the pleasure out of learning is a problem that is more likely to occur when education fails to engage with students' interests, does not connect with their lived experiences, and provides them little opportunity to act on their learning. Vasquez's transformative pedagogy empowers children to actively engage with meaningful problems for the purpose of improving the situation. She writes, "The conversations that we had and the actions we took, although often serious, were very pleasurable. We enjoyed our work because the topics that we dealt with were socially significant to us" (1998, pp. 30–31).

This freedom to allow the curriculum to evolve in negotiation with the students is a luxury that Anderson and many teachers in the U.S. do not have without risking their employment. Especially now in the U.S., as NCLB pro- motes stringent accountability and high-stakes standardized testing, many teachers are mandated to teach from commercially produced scripted curriculum with predetermined pacing plans that aspire to have all children on the same page, on the same day, throughout a district. While integrating social issues into a core curriculum may be the only option many teachers have to bring progressive ideas to their students, Vasquez's work demonstrates an ideal situation. According to John Dewey (1938/1963), a defining characteristic that distinguishes progressive education based on experience from traditional banking education is that children's experiences are problematized and become the basis for learning. Dewey writes, "The new facts and new ideas thus obtained become the ground for further experiences in which new problems are presented. The process is a continuous spiral" (p. 79).

It is because of the current state of affairs of public education that the work Vasquez has done with young children is so important to demonstrate alternative pedagogy and the value of critical literacy. Vasquez organized her class around a daily meeting chaired by a student who followed an agenda of interests and concerns that students list before the meeting begins. Read-aloud literature is also shared daily and often generates topics for class discussion. At the beginning of the year, a children's book that Vasquez read prompted student interest in the rainforest, which led to letter writing action and the production of a rainforest play that highlighted the need to save the animals by not cutting down trees. On another occasion, an advertisement brought from home sparked media literacy analysis of the construction of advertising, which led to an

inquiry of gender stereotypes and inspired some students to create alternative Halloween costumes.

During the year, different literature experiences and personal incidents set off the students on many critical inquiries and actions. Their exclusion from the French Café (a school event that most of the other students were able to enjoy) provoked feelings of anger and injustice. To protest their exclusion, they observed and surveyed other students to learn who else was not allowed to attend the French Café. Then they discussed their findings and considered having all the excluded students write letters to complain. Vasquez explained to the students that if all the letters were going to say the same thing, then a quicker option is to create a petition. Their interest in using literacy to solve a problem demonstrates the motivational power of an audience beyond the teacher and the value of having a genuine purpose for literacy activities. The students circulated their petition and then included it with an audiotape of their discussion about the French Café for the event organizers. Through their investigation and action, these young children exposed the power structure of the school and repositioned themselves within the hierarchy by using their collective voice. Vasquez writes, "My role was not to tell the children what to think or how to act, but based on their inquiries, to offer alternative ways of taking action and a way of naming their world within the stance they chose to take" (2004, p. 101).

Vasquez's stated goals of fairness and equality, along with the encouragement to problematize issues, built a strong sense of social justice in her students. When the class discovered after the annual school barbecue that one of their peers was not able to enjoy the food because only meat was available and he was a vegetarian, they moved into action. They began with a textual analysis of the flyer inviting people to the barbecue. The 3- and 4-year-old students challenged the use of the word "our" in the beginning of the text, "Join us for our Annual School Barbecue." Since the choice of hamburgers and hotdogs excluded vegetarians, the students insisted that the organizers were not being fair. This incident became a powerful opportunity for the students to apply the discursive analytic strategies that Vasquez had shown them before. She explains that previously they "had done some analysis of the words used in magazine ads and how pronouns work to position readers in particular ways" (2004, p. 104). In the letter to the chair of the school barbecue committee, the student chosen to write it decided to begin the letter using "we" instead of just mentioning the one vegetarian. When Vasquez questioned her about this choice, the young girl reminded her of the petition and explained to Vasquez about the strength in numbers. This understanding and application of pronouns goes well beyond most state standards for language arts skills in the upper grades.

The interests in the marginalization of vegetarians led the students to dis- cover the complete absence of books about vegetarians in their school library. This, and curiosity about how other schools treat vegetarians, led Vasquez's students to send out many letters promoting vegetarian rights. She states that the letter-writing campaign "demonstrates what happens when young children begin to unpack the relationship between language and power by engaging in some form of discourse analysis" (2004, p. 111).

Teaching critical literacy involves vertical movement that encourages students to think more critically and analyze deeper the relationships between knowledge and power. Critical media literacy moves in this direction while also expanding horizontally to engage with many different forms of media and technology. The previous lessons about the French Café and the marginalization of vegetarians are excellent examples of critical literacy's vertical movement but barely expand the analysis horizontally to analyze and use different media and technology. In the next two examples, Vasquez engages her students with more of a critical media literacy perspective.

The first lesson began when one of her students spoke to the class about a news report she saw on television the night before. She told the other children about how pollution being dumped into a river was endangering the beluga whales that lived there. Based on this new knowledge, Vasquez decide, to re- visit the picture book and song Baby Beluga by Raffi (1992), "to see whether they would read the book differently given what they had just learned" (2004, p. 113). The students compared the two texts and charted the different words used to describe the whales in the news report and the words used in the song. Vasquez explains, "In essence, what I was trying to do here was to get at the dominant themes and discourses of each text" (p. 115). This comparison triggered a student to ask "which one is real?" demonstrating how difficult it is for some children to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Vasquez used this problem to discuss different perspectives and how the construction of a text shapes the way we think. The students decided to rewrite Raffi's song to present more perspectives about belugas. During the process of rewriting the song, Vasquez led the students to explore issues of voice (who was speaking?), audience (who were they speaking to?), and construction (how were they using words to position the audience?). They experimented by swapping pronouns and changing all the verses of the song to read "you" instead of "I" or "we." This activity concretely demonstrated how easily they could change the voice of the author and the positioning of the audience by simply switching pronouns.

The students continued to research the plight of the beluga whales and performed their song to other students as a way of creating awareness for the

dangers of pollution. They also raised money from their class store to donate to the World Wildlife Fund of Canada that was doing research to help the beluga. This critical media literacy activity began from student interest and involved analyzing different media representations as well as creating   an alternative song. Vasquez explains that the power of this learning went well beyond just learning about whales, "[d]econstructing the book text and the everyday media text provided   a space to explore the social construction of truth and reality" (p. 121).

By the time spring arrived, all of the 3-year-old students had turned 4 and many of the 4-year-olds were 5. They were also becoming better versed at critically interrogating texts as was apparent during a discussion about McDonald's Happy Meal toys. A small group of students began discussing the way McDonald's has different toys for boys and girls. The students shared how the people working at McDonald's expected boys to prefer cars and girls to prefer dolls, but that they didn't always agree with that. This discussion about McDonald's gender bias and the students' ability to transgress it began a bigger critique of consumerism. The children discussed how McDonald's continually changes toys in order to lure kids to buy the Happy Meal in order to collect the new toy. One boy spoke with his father about this and later told the class that McDonald's claims that the toy is free but actually charges for it in the price of the Happy Meal. Through their discussions, the students were recognizing ways McDonald's targets them as consumers. They also questioned the fairness of McDonald's marketing strategies for children who do not have access to Happy Meal collectables.

Vasquez encouraged the students to explore deeper the construction of a consumer identity and worked with them to deconstruct the Happy Meal as a text. She drew a web with the golden arches in the center and then wrote the students' first responses in a circle around it to the question: "what makes up a Happy Meal?" After listing their initial comments (hamburger, French fries, bag, toy, and drink), she pushed them to think about all the things that are part of those items. The second concentric circle grew larger and more profound as the students mentioned advertising, designers, packaging, materials, and so on. This activity brilliantly addresses the essential media literacy concept that all media messages are constructed. Vasquez continued with a third concentric circle to expand further all the items related to those mentioned in the second circle. With each circle, the students were peeling away the unseen layers to re- veal the complexity and subtexts of something as seemingly simple as a Happy Meal. Vasquez asserts that through critically questioning issues of gender and consumerism, her students were "disrupting taken-for-granted normality to consider how things could be different" (p. 131). This use of the students' cul-

ture and questions to deconstruct a media text, like the Happy Meal, is an excellent example of how critical media literacy can be taught through developmentally appropriate practices to young children. Experts in early childhood literacy assert that children learn literacy best, not by working in isolation, but through actively constructing meaning in an interactive and purposeful process (Neuman & Roskos, 2005a, 2005b).

Conclusion

Barbara Nicoll (1996) states, "From a developmental perspective, the process of growing toward being a critical thinker occurs very early in life. A necessary characteristic of critical thinkers is autonomy. As infants move into the autonomous stage of toddler hood the seeds of critical thinking have the potential to grow." Barbara Comber (2001b) asserts that when young children can learn to not only admire an author's crafting, but also disrupt it and see different possible representations, it can help children, who might not even be codebreakers, to start seeing texts as constructions   and engage texts with deeper questions about the form as well as the content.

Unfortunately, many educators do not attempt to teach young children critical thinking skills and even fewer teach critical media literacy. The vast majority of U.S. educators have no idea what media literacy is and would not know how to begin to teach it. For the few who do know about critical media literacy, many do not teach it to young children because of the assumption that it is inappropriate, as was expressed in comments by Ms. Ramirez and Mr. Harvey in the previous chapter. Yet, the pedagogy used by Anderson and Vasquez are far more developmentally appropriate than many currently mandated phonics-based curricula. Some teachers might resist exposing young children to media out of fear that it is too dangerous and young children are too vulnerable, while other teachers might avoid critical pedagogy believing that teaching is a neutral activity and literacy just a technical competence. The primary goal of this chapter is to dispel those misconceptions and demonstrate through the outstanding work of two practicing teachers just how successful young children can be with multimedia literacy, computer literacy, critical literacy, and especially when it all comes together as critical media literacy. In an article presented on critical thinking in K–3 education, Nicoll concludes:

> Children need to develop an ability to recognize differing points of view and a willing- ness to explore alternatives. They need to be organized in their problem solving and have good communication   skills. The teacher's role is to create an atmosphere which encourages these attitudes. The teacher

> models open-mindedness, encourages differences of opinion, and asks for reasons for conclusions. Primary children will then be able to develop critical thinking skills and more importantly, critical thinking dispositions. (1996, p. 9)

Some of the real challenges for critical media literacy are to encourage educators to see media and popular culture as productive tools and texts for critical inquiry into issues of social justice as well as the opportunity to bridge the gap between "the real world" and the classroom. Key findings from research conducted in England with parents and early years practitioners suggest that both parents and early childhood educators feel that media education should be taught to young children. These researchers also found that "[t]he introduction of popular culture, media and/or new technologies into the communications, language and literacy curriculum has a positive effect on the motivation and engagement of children in learning" (Marsh et al., 2005, p. 6).

However, as we have seen, this type of pedagogical change is not easy with the current neoliberal policies that mandate accountability through high- stakes standardized testing and back-to-basics through skill and drill banking education. The challenge is significant but can be overcome when the obstacles are correctly identified. The real obstacles impeding critical media literacy are not children's deficiencies or media's danger; instead, they are the lack of backing and funding for the training and resources necessary to support teachers' exploration and implementation of critical media literacy pedagogy. The obstacles also include the lack of understanding and commitment to social justice and the development of empathy, empowerment, curiosity, and autonomy.

Mandates from above are needed to create space in the overcrowded curriculum for these ideas, and support at the school site is necessary to train and assist teachers in their efforts to integrate and transform their teaching practices to become more critical and inclusive. As Vasquez demonstrated from her teaching that flowed from student interests, critical media literacy needs official endorsement, but it cannot become a scripted cookbook of lessons. Vasquez writes:

> there is no one-size-fits-all critical literacy . . . we need to construct different critical literacies depending on what work needs to be done in certain settings, contexts, or communities, and . . . it needs to be negotiated using the cultural and linguistic re- sources to which children have had access. (2003, p. 56)

Along with this mandate must come funding to pay for the training and for the purchasing of tools for students to create in multiple formats so that their voices and ideas can be heard and seen beyond the classroom. Anderson offered many examples of the production possibilities that 5 and 6 year olds are capable of creating. If we expand literacy beyond print to include popular culture, media, and technology and immerse that broader understanding of communication into a critical literacy framework, we have the potential to create transformative education for children from preschool on up. It is not enough to begin teaching critical media literacy to teenagers; we must start as early as possible, even if we are just planting seeds. Building awareness of how media operate, how we interact with ICTs, how ideas and culture are socially constructed, and how power is linked to all these processes is essential if we hope to create a world of media literate citizens who can participate in the struggle to recover democracy and transform society into a more equal and just place to live.

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[i] While all people born in this millennium have been alive since the invention of the Internet, cellular phones, and television, this does not mean that everyone can access this technology. Since approximately one third (about 2 billion) of the world's population still live without electricity, it is important to remember that billions of people are being left behind the so-called technological revolution.

[ii] This data is based on random telephone interviews in 2003 with 1,065 parents of children between 6 months and 6 years of age. "Screen media" refers to watching TV, watching videos/DVDs, using a computer, and playing video games. This research was reported in the Kaiser Family Foundation *Zero to Six* study.

[iii] The number of hours spent with media is based on questionnaires from a 2004 national sample of 2,032 students between 8 and 18 years of age, as well as 694 media-use diaries, as reported in the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) *Generation M* study. The figure of $6^{1/2}$hr per day, includes ¼ of that time spent multitasking with several different media

at the same time, thereby increasing media exposure to an estimated $8^{1/2}$ hr per day.

[iv] Len Materman (1994) describes critical autonomy as the ability and desire of students to think critically about media when they are on their own.

[v] Critical solidarity, according to Robert Furguson (2001), involves recognition of the inter-connections between people and information as well as empathy to be in solidarity with those marginalized or oppressed by these connections.

[vi] At 3 years of age, my son was able to explain that advertising was trying to make a product look more fun to trick him to want to buy it.

[vii] Kathleen Tyner (1998) offers insightful analysis of many types of literacies in *Literacy in a Digital World: Teaching and Learning in the Age of Information.*

[viii] In spite of this mandate and research supporting the effectiveness of early childhood education, the U.S. is still underfunding in these programs. According to an article in *Business Week,* Head Start's "6.5 billion-a-year budget means it can't accommodate three of five eligible children.

[ix] Lessons 2A and 2B are photography lessons that I taught these kindergarten students. Retrieved August 18, 2008 from http://medialit.org/pdf/mlk/02_5KQ_ClassroomGuide.pdf

[x] For three years I worked as an occasional substitute teacher in this school and had the opportunity to see how most of the teachers were using technology.

[xi] The Foxfire *Eleven Core Practices* are available online. Retrieved August 18, 2008 from http://www.foxfire.org/teaching.html

[xii] The California State Content Standards are available online. Retrieved August 18, 2008 from http://cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/engkindergarten.asp

[xiii] The disruption or denaturalization of media representations is something that Robert Ferguson suggests can create a place of liminality or unease that can become productive when teachers and students begin asking "what if" questions about the media and society (1998, 2004).

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