

## Digital Narrative as a Curriculum Framework

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### Abstract

The University of Central Florida has recently opened its Center for Research in Education, the Arts, Technology, and Entertainment (CREATE). One of its goals is to investigate the role digital media can and does play in the overall curriculum plans and daily lives of educators. This article discusses the resurgence of the narrative-based curriculum and how digital media can interact to provide new ways to motivate and stimulate the sense of wonder in school that has been missing so long in today's digital kids. Results of preliminary and pilot studies that indicate that the activities described were effective in changing participants' attitudes and skill levels will be discussed.

### A Changing Narrative Paradigm

Most would agree that they have noticed that today's youth use computers and other visual media a lot. The actual statistics reveal some astonishing results. As many as sixty-five percent of children in the United States are already online prior to their teen years—many even as young as two years of age. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates the current growth rate for Internet use at 2 million new users per month; the majority of which are children and teens (NCREL & Metri Group, 2003). Today's youth are being inundated with technologies that are allowing them to actively participate and communicate in a world of their own with a variety of new forms of media (Serim, 2003). It is most revealing to note that, while we label these advances as *technology* and *new media*, children view these new forms as neither being technological, nor new. As Alan Kay once said, technology is only considered to be 'technology' if it was invented after you were born (Tapscott, 1998).

The use of computers, videos, DVDs, and television are popular forms of digital media that have long become a part of education. They have been found to be effective because they combine moving pictures and audio, and have the ability to appeal to a variety of learning styles (Fletcher, 2001, 2004; Honey, Pasnik, Saltrick, 2004; Mayer, 2001). What is different today from previous generations of technology integration is that the democratization of the technology has advanced to the point that there is an ever-increasing use of digital media in leisure time activities. This ever-increasing daily use has drastically changed the way children think, learn, and how they give and receive information (Dresang & McClelland, 1999; Neiderman, Kenny, Sanchez, and Croft, 2005). Before students enter kindergarten, they become well accustomed to non-linear technologies such as CDs, DVDs, and the Internet that allow them to choose their learning paths. Students entering school today do not know of a world that does not include the Internet. In a study conducted by the Kaiser Foundation researchers reported that children ages zero to six spend an average of two hours per day using screen media which includes television, videos/DVD, computers, and video games. On the other hand, they only spend an average of 39 minutes a day reading or being read to by others. Among that same age group (6 and under),

36% of children have televisions in their bedroom, 27% have a VCR/DVD player, 7% have a computer, and 3% have Internet access in their bedrooms (Rideout, Vandewater, & Wartella 2003). Studies have supported researchers' claims that children spend an average of four thousand hours over their teenaged years in front of video or computer screens (Healy, 1998; Tapscott, 1998; Prensky, 2001).

Several studies have supported claims that today's teenagers' brains have been actually rewired by this increased exposure to computerized media (Tapscott, 1998; Fiore, 1997; Diamond, 1988; Healy, 1998; Moore, 1997). While not everyone can agree to the extent this has happened, there is no question that today's media-centric youths somehow perceive and learn differently than previous generations (Prensky, 2001). Further, Prensky and others like Mitchell Stephens (Stephens 1996) make the case that today's "games generation" has such familiarity in the digital domain that *digital* has become so ingrained into their being that it has become their native and primary form of communication. The so-called generation gap is more likely one of differences in the choice of preferred communication modes rather than one of age: media centric youths speak digital: they are digital natives, if it were. Those who regularly travel outside of this domain are digital 'immigrants' (Rushkoff, 1997; Prensky, 2002).

These changes in perceptual, cognitive, and communicative styles bring up several interesting questions with regards to the kinds of mediated instructional strategies that might motivate today's reluctant but media-centric learners. For example, according Diana Kimpton (2004), there are two different types of reluctant readers –those who can read but don't enjoy it and those who find reading so difficult that they avoid it whenever they can. Both groups think reading is hard work and is anathema to members of the digital culture who often feel like immigrants in a literate society. Motivating reluctant readers in this new digital age can be a challenging task. Different types of inputs and supplemental activities motivate today's students. There is considerable research that links motivation to the effect on the person his or her past learning experiences, one's assessment of self-efficacy, and attitudes and perceptions (Keller 1983). Knowledge of the fact that 'digital' is the preferred natural language of today's digital kids may be of some help leading the way to possible solutions to learning problems in today's classrooms. Using the concept of teach to one's strengths and remediate the differences (Doman, 1984), a properly constructed multimedia tool could be a way to attract the attention of otherwise reluctant learners. Given that one agrees with those who believe that most personal experiences for today's *games generation* are more than likely digitally mediated in one form or another, then it is not too difficult to also believe that digital mediation should have a positive affect on things like developing literacy skills and specific academic subjects.

## Story and learning

One who studies the history of learning recognizes that story is the one of the oldest and most elemental forms of knowing. The use of story for knowing was eclipsed in the west over the last three centuries during what is known as the *modern period* when a shift away from story took place to a focus on scientific inquiry. Many attribute this change to Guttenberg when story (especially oral story) as a way of knowing became considered to be an inferior or backward kind of thinking and a primitive form of entertainment fit only for children, the illiterate and the uneducated (Ong, 1982). After Gutenberg, oral storying came to be perceived as embarrassingly

crude and a devalued currency (Bradt, 1997, p. 354). Initiated, perhaps, by early successes in psychotherapy (Coles, 1989) and aided by the advent of newer digital media technologies, we seem to be entering a post-modern era, where story is elevating itself from an art form into becoming a radical change agent, transforming imagination into action. For educators, this has translated into a situation in which story is enjoying a modest revival because it relates so well to constructivist ideas about teaching and learning. Educators are beginning to understand story as a way of knowing things –a “narrative epistemology” (Bradt, 1997, p. xi). The work of such scholars as Walter Ong, Eric Havelock, Millman Parry, Albert Lord, Jack Goody, and Ivan Illich has done much to reclaim the dynamics of story as a primary mode of communicating, thinking, knowing, and relating (Havelock, 1986).

The post-modern view of story as mediated through technology was first identified over thirty years ago since Marshall McLuhan’s famous treatise on the effect the communication channel has on the interpretation of the message it carries and how it exercises some form of control on thought. It has long been known, however, that story is a powerful mechanism to affect learning. Those who study story’s effect on learning environment know that stories “effect a change in consciousness, a surrendering of defenses, and creative engagement with the imagination” (Bradt, 1997, p. viii). Many educators relate the use of story to Bruner’s ideas about situated cognition, where it has been shown that situating information by embedding context helps learners retain and understand information for longer periods of time (Bruner, 1986). Situating what is to be learned in context through story helps the learner select, arrange, and organize things in manageable chunks. Because story requires one to suspend his or her beliefs in order to buy into the premise, a learner is already conditioned to accept change –a necessary pre-condition to learning.

### Why digital stories?

Due to the influence of new forms of digital media such as video games, today’s digital generation also comes in regular contact with narrative constructs. What is unique about story in the context of digital media is that it differs greatly from the kinds of knowing communicated by traditional literature. Literature and story as mediated interpersonal interplay are very different from one another. Literature as a narrative form has been preserved as a written text in its fixed, final form. In literature there are no interpersonal contexts. Getting today’s digital kids who are used to more interactive forms of narratives to buy into the premise of a piece of written literature is a significant challenge. Educators have long believed that the effort to get their students to become absorbed into the story line of literature is well worth the effort. They quickly and rightly point out the positive effect reading literature has on developing vocabulary and imaginations. The problems of getting the students to buy into the value of reading literature have been exacerbated by the preponderance of the use of technology in their daily lives and a corresponding denigration of the value of text in general. Today’s digital kids do not like to read because they feel it is simply boring or they have trouble visualizing the words they are reading. A constructivist would point of view, if literature is good for the imagination then it follows that interactive story in which students take an active role in learning and observing the world must be better. Further, the definition of the term literacy needs to be expanded to include developing skills in using newer forms of mediated interactions. To extrapolate Keller’s (1983) ARCS model to motivate students, reading and writing need to be presented in context of those

interactive narrative structures and technologies with which students are already familiar (such as video games, machinima, and the like).

Increasingly, educators are beginning to find methods of instruction that include the student's right-brained strengths into the traditional curriculum. In fact, many have begun to realize that digital media provide an easy way to teach to a student's right-brained strengths by combining digital formats with the power of interactive story as the mainstay of the curriculum. Because digital kids show an affinity for all that is digital, introducing digital forms of story makes sense. Today's students consistently voice support for watching movies and DVDs, and playing video games rather than reading a book, so it makes sense to base instructional strategies around the construct and narrative structures found in movies and games. By using digital video and narrative-based games, for example, students get to construct and present their stories without having to be good writers. Vocabulary and sentence structure are the mainstay of written communication. If vocabulary and syntax are a student's weakness, then they are stumbling blocks to the successful completion of writing and reading assignments, leading to frustration and negative attribution. If, on the other hand, familiar tools are used in the beginning chances for positive outcomes are heightened. It may make more sense to teach vocabulary and syntax after narrative structures have been learned. This way, students learn that written form is only one of many ways to express thought. Narrative structure is then shown to be a basic building block for learning—a *meta-learning* principle. Because digital formats facilitate a shared experience in which the outcomes can be easily shown to their peers, students receive immediate feedback and are more incented to perform than any grade a teacher might provide.

### Theory into practice

There have been several instances of successes using mediated tools in teaching and learning in which students have been shown to improve word recognition, reading comprehension, and spelling skills and to boost reading scores and self-esteem (Taylor, Hasselbring, & Williams, 2001). In recent years, computerized reading incentive programs have increasingly become apart of school literacy curricula despite some debate over their validity. Opponents of these programs argue that the external motivation to read created by the system of rewards will fade once rewards are withdrawn (Biggers, 2001). But program sponsors like Scholastic (*Reading Counts!*) and Renaissance Learning (*Accelerated Reader*) claim that they have had successes in motivating students to read by using this system of rewards (Engwall, 1999). Regardless if one agrees with the alleged positive effect of these reward programs, classroom teachers have begun to recognize what librarians and media specialists have known for years –if you properly match potential readers to an author or genre, even the most reluctant will be more likely to complete the book and to read others from that favorite author or genre (Eriksson, 2002). Even though the bulk of his findings actually discredited much of these claims, Stephen Krashen (2002) in his comparative analysis to determine what aspects of reading incentive programs accounted for their reported success, noted that increased availability of high interest books and opportunity for sustained reading that were provided to students with access to the programs accounted for the lion's share of increased learning achievement.

The central idea of making story as the central organizing concept is to build narrative structure as a curriculum framework. This is done in three related activities: writing personal

stories, learning about books through the use of book trailers, and using stories as an organizing theme in other academic classes like social studies, math, and science. Narrative is what brings structure and conceptual framework to the curriculum. Students first learn about the basic narrative building blocks like plot types, character archetypes, scenario, and environments (many of the same elements used to build narrative-based video games). Students use these building blocks to develop their own personal stories, then to compare movies to written narrative forms, and finally to serve as advanced organizers to set the scene for math and science problem solving. In a round-table environment, students are presented with the idea of story and its historical role in teaching and learning. Students participate in story circles in which they are provided motivation, cues, and insights on how stories are generated. Each student is then invited to tell a personal story about an important event that has happened in his or her life. Anticipatory activities include story-building activities like the fantastic binomial generated from books like the *Grammar of Fantasy* by Gianni Rodari, and board games like *Pitch –It*, developed by Rick Stone, a nationally known storyteller. Students are introduced to the book trailer concept via an online portal specifically built to match reluctant readers with books and then learn how to make trailers of their own.

### Matching books with reluctant readers

Klimpton (2004) describes two types of reluctant readers. First are those who can read but don't enjoy it. The second group consists of those who find it too difficult, so they don't enjoy it either. The majority of today's student population is probably made up of some combination of these two groups. Both groups think reading is hard work and hardly worth the effort. Recall, they are immigrants in the literate world. Playing matchmaker is harder than it would seem. Other than the design and/or limited contents found on book jackets, there is very little that potential readers can use to identify books that they might want to read. Media specialists and teachers often find themselves being asked by students to make book selections for them. Media specialists have resorted to creating a series of questions to ask the students in order to identify their interests. The questionnaires include such things as favorite movies, hobbies and things to do, reading level, etc. Even the most probing of questions are not infallible. There is the risk that incorrect recommendations result and students will not like the suggested books and not finish them. Several wrong suggestions can result in even more readers becoming reluctant and being turned off to reading.

Today's kids live and communicate in a visual world. While some would argue that watching the movie first might ruin the intellectual experience found in exercising one's imagination while reading, there has been some early experimental research that would support the notion that seeing the movie first might help the reader better understand and comprehend what he or she is reading (Gropper, 1966; Nugent, 1982). The question, then, is how to provide media-related, visual pre-reading organizers without spoiling the reading experience. It would seem, therefore, that using digital book trailers would be an interesting compromise in the pursuit of these matchmaking activities. Just as movie trailers have been very successful in influencing audiences in selecting the movies they watch, it would seem logical that trailers made specifically for the books would do the same for books. These trailers, in essence, might be compared to an animated book jacket. They need to be created in such a way to both attract

potential readers and to crystallize the essence of the context of the books, using visualizations of the characters, themes, and metaphors, etc.

### Digital Booktalk

Digital Booktalk (DBT) (<http://www.digitalbooktalk.com>) is an online portal on which several successful pre-reading organizing strategies are used to match potential readers to books they might like to read and to provide a pre-reading visual to help them become familiar with the characters and context found in the stories. The trailers are one of a series of activities found on the website that aid in the book selection process. The number of titles of books on the site is growing and follows school recommended reading lists and those found on the rewards programs such as *Accelerated Reader* and *Reading Counts*, as well as state recommended reading lists. Using automated intelligence, the suggest-a-book feature replicates the “interest questionnaires” that generally take place between prospective readers and librarians, media specialists, and teachers. The questionnaire asks several questions regarding interests in things like movie genres, previously read books, hobbies, and reading level (if known). A list of suggested trailer titles is then presented based on matched results from its database. Students can then browse through the prioritized list of suggested trailers that they can watch to make a reading decision. A user profile keeps track of the results of the questionnaire (especially the question concerning previous books they may have read and movies they particularly like) so that in future sessions the system can remind them of their previous choices. In addition, utilizing a technique similar to what other commercial online booksellers use, visitors to the site are also reminded of similar books that others have selected with similar interests.

The intent of the trailers and associated activities is similar to recent marketing tie-ins between Pixar studios and marketers like Proctor and Gamble, McDonalds and others (Howard, 2004) in which characters from the animated film *The Incredibles* are introduced to the public before the movie is even released. Viewers already have a sense of identity with the characters when they attend the movie, and their enjoyment of the storyline has been preserved. In similar fashion, these pre-reading activities provide the same modicum of familiarity and readiness for the reading activity developed through the limited back-story information that is revealed while playing the games. Character identification is limited in that it only reveals enough memorable information about the characters so that the reader will become familiar with them but not so much that it spoils the discovery process that takes place while reading the books. The characters are identified only to the extent that helps to set the scene and to provide a small preview of the background or point of view of the storyline, similar to what is done in story circles and live booktalks.

### UB the Director

Given the nature of today’s media-centric students, it isn’t surprising that watching a movie is often preferred to reading a book. Teachers are faced with the inevitable question as to why their students need to read the book rather than watch the movie made from it. Most teachers prefer offering to watch the movie as a reward for reading the book in spite of the fact that there is some research that indicates that many students might actually comprehend more by watching the movie first (Gropper, 1966; Nugent, 1982). In spite of their strong opinions about whether

watching the movie first ruins the reading experience, teachers still struggle with how to answer the question in a relevant and appropriate manner. One way is to remind students that a movie is the result of someone else making creative decisions about what goes in it. Not all movies remain true to the book, and besides wouldn't they like to be the director of their own movie about the book (hence the title *UB the Director*)? The planting the idea that reading the book as if they are going to make their own movie about it is a positive way to motivate students, provide a reason for him or her to read the book critically for content and context, and reinforce the concept of visualizing while reading. The problem is that there isn't enough time in the classroom for each student to make a full-length motion picture about the books they read.

On the other hand, producing a one to two minute trailer is much easier to do in the time frame provided. To produce a trailer, the student still has to know enough of the details about the setting and context and needs to make insightful decisions as to which scenes need to be put into it. Students learn the principles of dramatic beats and story arcs working in a mediated visual domain with which they are familiar. They act as the director who uses a camera and special effects to create the scenes and address state standards for benchmarks for the core competencies for literature. Students are motivated to read, research, and write because they are doing so for a favored and familiar medium, doing the identical evaluation for the book that they would be asked to do in a traditional classroom setting. Only this time the assignment has more relevance and offers a much higher prospect of success because it involves a technology they are already familiar with. Once the trailers are produced, they are shown and evaluated in a shared environment by their peers.

### Science meets fiction

For other subjects like social studies, math, and science students use actual stories found in fiction, or those the teachers make up. The narratives introduce complex integrated concepts that span the subject areas and develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. For social studies, for example, students make several multimedia projects as they explore the concept of democracy, run for office, and face various social or scientific problems they must take a stand on. Books like the *Kid Who Ran for President* by Dan Gutman are used to set the premise, challenging students to create their own political parties, develop their own set of relevant issues, choose a presidential and vice presidential candidate and then present speeches on videos to persuade schoolmates to vote for them. Students use digital video cameras and video editing software like iMovie to film and edit videos of their campaign speeches that express their opinions, broadcast their platforms on newscasts and debates, and advertise their policies to persuade voters and discredit their opponents. The students use other products like Microsoft Publisher and MS Word to create a Web page and online newspapers that help propagate their issues. These lessons create learning opportunities for students to not only learn content and meet learning objectives but also to interact with various forms of digital media as they learn the content.

In science class teachers make up stories supporting force and motion studies about the day that gravity ceases to exist and how all the amusement parks would go out of business because their roller coasters would no longer operate. The 'presidential' candidates have to offer their opinions on how to avoid a nationwide panic and fix the gravity problem or those

associated with plants no longer making chlorophyll. All the projects involve investigation into problems, constructing answers, and reporting to the ‘public’ (i.e., classmates) using videotaped reports. The same students who typically do not do well reading textbooks or listening to lectures flourish in this classroom environment because they are actively engaged in a project that now has relevance to them. The stories are relevant and simulate the kinds of adventures now found in narrative-based video games. Through this project, students were motivated to learn a variety of research, writing, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. Students write and edit scripts, are assigned tasks, and work and manage their projects cooperatively.

### Collecting empirical data

There is enough anecdotal evidence to suggest that all three of these projects have achieved considerable success. For example, media specialists have reported that the *DBT* portal has successfully allowed students to become familiar with the books before they read them. Based on the fact that the website is receiving several hits from several schools, it is evident that the trailers are being used in classrooms throughout the state of Florida and in Europe. There are further reports from school media specialists who state that they can always tell when the trailers are shown in the classrooms because in the days that follow they run out of their limited supplies of those books featured on the web site. Further research has to be done to determine if this increased usage of the site translates into actual increases in students completing the books they are matched with. Further studies are being developed to review whether the *DBT* portal encourages students to critically analyze, reflect upon, and write about their selected book. In other words, does the portal effectively increase the values associated with the traditional concepts of literacy?

The *UB the Director* program has been successfully implemented in several schools during the past three years. Preliminary research findings gathered during pilot studies show *UB the Director* to be particularly effective in positively changing students’ attitudes towards reading and writing, in being a factor in increasing completion rates for the books they read, and motivating them in general towards reading. Two ten-question, likert scale personal preference inventories (attached as Figure 1 and Figure 2) were written that ask various questions about the role reading and writing has in participants’ lives and the way that they perceive things. At the end of the questionnaire are five open-ended subjective questions to qualify the answers asked in part one. The same questions are asked before and after the students participate in the trailer building activity. The goal for the pilot program was to evaluate whether the activities actually change students’ perceptions and attitudes about reading and writing.

Participants in the pilot program (n=138) came from several different schools in Central Florida and were of different demographic and economic backgrounds. The classes were conducted in various academic settings, ranging from English, Drama, and technology education classes and a one-week summer workshop held over the summer. Of the ten questions asked, three responses changed positively and significantly (at the .05 level) from the pre to the posttest. Those questions were the following:

- I understand the value of storytelling as a way of learning things.
- I get nervous when I think of trying to write a story.

- I would rather tell a story than watch a story or watch others tell one.

The fact that the remaining seven questions did not significantly change is also of importance because there was little or no expectation that the participants' attitudes towards those particular statements would change, or because some assumptions about their attitudes were wrong in the first place. For example, one answer that did not change was students feeling that their thoughts come to them in a visual way. Today's kids are visual thinkers. For those whose attitudes toward the importance of learning how to read and write did not change, it was found that their attitude towards the importance of learning how to write had been strong from the beginning. Analysis of the responses pointed that the reason participants were failing to read or write was not because they felt it was irrelevant or unnecessary. It was clearly some other reason, disproving the early notion we had that digital media would positively change students' perception towards the need to read and write. On the other hand, this activity did increase participants' perception of the value of story in their lives as well as lessen their nervousness and comfort for participating in telling stories. The results of this questionnaire have helped us adjust the motivational goals and assumptions as we go forward.

The open-ended questions at the end of the surveys also reveal the rationale behind those changes in attitudes that did change. For example, when asked about what they perceived to be the best medium to use to communicate stories participants responded that video was the best medium on a scale of almost three to one. Others responded that, as the result of participating in these exercises, the act of writing was not difficult as originally perceived. Responses to the final, open-ended question were very revealing. Some mentioned that learning how to use the technology wasn't enough and that story content is important. Almost all responded that they loved the activity and that it had a positive effect on their perceived ability to express themselves creatively. They not only learned how to develop stories but also now understood some of the whys. One student stated that she wasn't impressed at first because she didn't know where the activity was going but now that it was finished, she was pleasantly surprised. Perhaps the most revealing and possibly prophetic comment was the one student who explained that his video (i.e., story) 'would never be finished'. Most stated that they wanted to continue doing these kinds of stories and had the feeling that participation actually changed their views on the importance of story as a way to communicate ideas.

Responses and results for the narrative based activities in the social studies and science classes were just as reveling. Students researched, wrote, and created scripts, newsletters, flyers, and a variety of other projects that far exceed the typical paper and traditional classroom assignments. The same students that did not typically do well reading a textbook or listening to a lecture, flourished in this classroom because they were actively engaged in a project that had meaning to them. One student remarked, "I don't mind learning if its fun, I just don't think learning should seem like work all the time." Through this project, students were motivated to learn a variety of research, writing, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. They followed the election coverage using televised media, the Internet, and newspapers. Students gathered information, analyzed various points of view, and made decisions about how to run their own campaign. Students wrote and edited scripts, assigned tasks, worked cooperatively, and managed other students cooperatively. These fifth grade students created group video projects for book reports, point of view story retellings, and election broadcasts. Their teacher stated that her

students' literacy skills and reading and math scores improved, especially on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), a statewide, standardized test that assessed reading, writing and math skills. Based on these assessments and other in-class reviews it is obvious that the students' literacy skills improved. They were motivated to read more and complete assignments when the outcome is doing something that they enjoy instead of taking another test.

### Summary and conclusions

For years most of the focus in literacy education has been to teach children to code and decode words. In spite of all the various efforts to teach literacy, the various report cards have continually indicated that, perhaps, a new way of doing teaching literacy should be investigated. Today's media-centric youths will benefit from using mediated programs to help motivated and talk to them in their own language. Several instances of successes using mediated tools for teaching and learning in which students have been shown to improve word recognition, reading comprehension, and spelling skills and to boost reading scores and self-esteem. Students learning *with* narrative-based media such as digital video incorporate the most important aspects of curriculum; reading, writing, listening and speaking into assignments in all academic areas while developing literacy and using a medium that is already familiar to them. By writing scripts, students retell events and facts in a logical and sequential manner in addition to summarizing and synthesizing facts from various sources; the ability to complete this task is a key indicator of comprehension. Students also gain fluency as they begin to perform their scripts and they learn self-correct skills because they see and hear mistakes that they might not have caught if they read their scripts alone.

Teachers also benefit from using narratives in their curriculum because they are no longer assessing students' recall of obscure facts. Stories provide an opportunity for teachers to conduct authentic assessment of the students' critical thinking skills. The teacher has the ability to monitor the students as they research and see where students' misconceptions are as they begin to write and perform; the teacher can then clarify or remediate immediately.

These activities comprise a pilot study to test assumptions and make corrective actions with regards to the actual lessons content. It was important that we discovered that these activities y made attitudinal changes with students and verified the correctness of certain notions we had about their (in)ability to write. Based on these assumptions, the researchers feel that the activities were successful and warrant further study, especially as it relates to longitudinal effects by repeated implementation of the concept.

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Figure 1  
Reading Preferences Inventory

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**For each of the statements below, please check the column that best describes your feelings. Please be honest. There are no right or wrong answers.**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. I feel that learning how to read is a waste of time.					
2. I think reading is enjoyable and stimulating.					
3. I feel anxious when asked to complete a reading activity.					
4. I understand the concept of reading but struggle with the words.					
5. I feel comfortable telling stories in front of people.					
6. I would rather watch a movie than read a book.					
7. I get nervous when I think of trying to read something and then tell someone what it is about.					
8. I do not like to read because I have trouble visualizing the action.					
9. When I think, my thoughts come to me in pictures instead of words.					
10. I can read things and understand them even if I don't like the topic(s).					

Short Answer

When you look into the future, what do you see yourself doing?
Do you think reading will be important in that future?
If you go to college, do you think liking to read will be important?
What do you think is the best way to communicate stories (writing, dance, drawing, video, etc). Why?
Do you think that learning to read novels is a worthwhile activity? Why/Why not?

Figure 2  
Writing Preferences Inventory

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by checking the appropriate box under the column that describes your feelings.**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. I feel that learning how to write is a waste of time.					
2. I think writing is enjoyable and stimulating.					
3. I feel anxious when asked to complete a writing activity.					
4. I understand the structure of writing but struggle with the words.					
5. I feel comfortable telling stories in front of people.					
6. I rather watch a story or watch others tell a story than tell one myself.					
7. I get a nervous when I think of trying to write about a topic.					
8. I like to tell stories but don't like to write them because I don't always know what words to use.					
9. When I think, my thoughts come to me in pictures instead of words.					
10. I find stories more interesting when I am in them.					

**Short Answer**

What did you learn about writing and story creation as the result of participating in this study?
Has your idea about story changed since participating in this activity?
What do you now think is the best way to communicate stories (writing, dance, drawing, video, etc).  Why?
As the result of participating in this activity do you now believe that video can enhance content?  How?