Literacy as Social Action: K-20 Multimodal Partnerships and the Common Core

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Research Question
How do multi-modal, social action oriented, and service learning pedagogies engage the authentic interests of K-12 students in the context of the Common Core State Standards?

What We Did
- Teams of K-12 teachers and UW students and faculty designed multimodal curriculum around the theme literacy as social action for predominantly low-income and multilingual classrooms
- UW faculty and students provided volunteer and material support for those classrooms
- Teams hosted the “Kollar Symposium” where K-12 students shared “Literacy as Social Action” projects on the UW campus

Literacy as Social Action Projects
- Projects at Olympic Hills Elementary
  - Last Year: Inspired by The Juice Box Bully, 3rd graders researched, planned and implemented an anti-bullying campaign for their school that culminated in multimodal projects (photography, painting, poetry, prose).
  - This year: Now in 4th grade, students will work on multimodal anti-bullying projects with 3rd graders and lead an interactive discussion with 2nd graders on the subject of compassion and inclusion.
- Projects at Shorecrest High School
  - Last Year: Students studied the Civil Rights movement, exploring the question of how individuals make change. Students interviewed and researched topics related to local change-makers involved in public advocacy, environmentalism, and veteran education. Groups designed multimodal Power Points responding to the question of how change is made.
  - This year: Students are writing a research paper on a "big idea" that matters to them and will work with UW students and TAs on their writing and revising process.
- Projects at Franklin High School
  - Last Year: Students selected public issues they cared about that require social action including, immigration reform, racial profiling, animal testing, and sports related injury. Student groups conducted research to create Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about their issues. The two-minute PSAs were shown at their school to raise awareness about the public issues.
  - This year: ELL students are writing research papers on immigration from their home countries and will work with UW students to transform their research into narratives written as children’s books to be shared with 2nd graders.

Results
1. Students demonstrated strong affinities with the real world literacy and social action dimensions of their projects.
2. Students had powerful experiences as presenters and participants at the Kollar symposium.
3. Students came to profound understandings about multimodal composition, social action, and their own developing identities as writers and agents of change.
4. Spaces for collaboration among UW and public school teachers and students led to small-scale K-20 "bottom up" curriculum planning and an enriched teaching community.

Discussion
- How can we design projects that appeal to actual audiences, explore salient public issues that matter, and engage in collective problem solving?
- How can we reimagine curriculum as both targeting Common Core standards and as having real-world consequences for students, communities, and the public?
- In what ways do multimodal projects not only engage students’ interests through visual, aural, and kinesthetic ways of knowing and communicating, but also enhance their capacities to learn more traditional school-based literacies?
- How do multimodal, social action-oriented curricula help support multi-lingual learners, in particular?
- What are the risks and rewards of K-20 service-learning partnerships?