

TEACHING
LITERACIES

*PEDAGOGIES AND
DIVERSITY*

IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

EDITED BY ROBYN HENDERSON ◀◀

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▶ Contents

| | |
|--|--------------|
| <i>List of Figures</i> | <i>xi</i> |
| <i>List of Tables</i> | <i>xii</i> |
| <i>Contributors</i> | <i>xiv</i> |
| <i>Preface</i> | <i>xvi</i> |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | <i>xviii</i> |
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>xix</i> |
| Part 1: Engaging Students through Pedagogies | 1 |
| 1 Teaching Literacies: Principles and Practices | 3 |
| <i>Robyn Henderson</i> | |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Myths and realities of school literacy learning | 6 |
| Some principles and practices | 9 |
| Conclusion | 13 |
| Acknowledgements | 14 |
| 2 Planning for Literacy Learning | 18 |
| <i>Robyn Henderson and Beryl Exley</i> | |
| Introduction | 19 |
| Teaching literacies in the middle years | 20 |
| Framing literacy learning | 22 |
| Using multiliteracies pedagogy | 22 |
| Using the four resources model | 24 |
| Planning for content learning and literacy learning | 26 |
| Macro planning | 27 |
| Micro planning | 36 |
| Using process drama | 38 |
| Focusing on overt instruction | 45 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Conclusion | 50 |
| Acknowledgements | 51 |
| 3 Using Digital Texts to Engage Students | 57 |
| <i>Eileen Honan</i> | |
| Introduction | 58 |
| A sociocultural view of literacy | 58 |
| Changing views of reading and writing: Becoming <i>producers</i> | 60 |
| Creating intellectually challenging literacy tasks | 62 |
| The four resources model | 63 |
| Text participant resources | 66 |
| Code-breaking resources | 69 |
| Text using resources | 72 |
| Text analyst resources | 74 |
| Conclusion | 77 |
| 4 Popular Culture in the Classroom: A Plethora of Possibilities | 81 |
| <i>Leanne Dalley-Trim</i> | |
| Introduction | 82 |
| What is popular culture? | 83 |
| Popular culture in the curriculum: A site of contest | 84 |
| The case for using popular culture in the middle years classroom | 85 |
| Magazines: Popular culture for tweens and teens | 88 |
| Content learning and literacy learning: Possibilities for using popular culture magazines | 90 |
| Assessment tasks | 101 |
| Conclusion | 103 |
| Part 2: Ensuring Literacy Learning for All Students | 111 |
| 5 Teaching for Quality and Equity: (Re)Focusing the Lens to Make Diversity and Difference Visible | 113 |
| <i>Robyn Henderson and Annette Woods</i> | |
| Introduction | 114 |
| Positively diverse: Recruiting diversity in the middle years | 115 |
| Transitions across cultural spaces: Why is student diversity sometimes invisible? | 117 |
| (Re)focusing the lens for quality and equity | 123 |
| Refocus the lens | 124 |
| Use a wide lens | 124 |
| Consider multiple lenses | 124 |
| Avoid deficit discourses | 125 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Question assumptions about students and families | 126 |
| Identify students' strengths | 126 |
| Talk with students and their families whenever and wherever possible | 127 |
| Form real partnerships with students, their families and communities | 127 |
| Conclusion | 128 |
| Acknowledgements | 129 |
| 6 Literacy Learning for Students in Rural Communities | 132 |
| <i>Pam Bartholomaeus</i> | |
| Introduction | 133 |
| Literacies for rural students | 136 |
| How we understand literacy | 139 |
| Thinking about literacies in the community, home and school | 142 |
| Understanding context: School and classroom | 143 |
| Place-based education | 145 |
| Learning activities | 146 |
| Local heroes and local history | 146 |
| Additional learning activities | 154 |
| Conclusion | 158 |
| 7 Multimodal Literacies: New Approaches and Traditional Concerns in the Suburban Classroom | 166 |
| <i>Anne Cloonan</i> | |
| Introduction | 167 |
| Responding to change | 167 |
| Drawing on research | 169 |
| Designing pedagogies for engaged student literacy learning | 171 |
| Deepening knowledge of the multimodality of texts | 176 |
| Conclusion | 187 |
| 8 What Could Socially-just Literacy Instruction Look Like? | 190 |
| <i>Annette Woods</i> | |
| Introduction | 191 |
| Two key concepts: Recognitive and redistributive justice | 191 |
| Social justice in Australian schools | 192 |
| Thinking about social justice in one school context | 195 |
| Considering socially-just literacy teaching | 199 |
| Literacy pedagogy, Or the role of providing an education | 200 |
| Citizenship, Or the role of building a civic society | 202 |
| Wellbeing, Or the role of providing a supportive environment and the right to equitable outcomes | 203 |
| Conclusion | 204 |
| Acknowledgements | 206 |

| | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 9 | An Holistic Approach for Supporting Written Literacy Skills for EAL/D Learners | 208 |
| | <i>Russell Cross</i> | |
| | Introduction | 209 |
| | The distinctiveness of additional language learners | 210 |
| | EAL/D in the mainstream? | 213 |
| | What does this mean for developing literacy? | 215 |
| | Learning an additional language | 215 |
| | A caveat | 217 |
| | Classroom application and strategies | 218 |
| | Listening and reading | 218 |
| | Speaking | 220 |
| | Writing: Bringing it all together | 223 |
| | Classroom activities | 224 |
| | Examining a student's writing | 229 |
| | Conclusion | 231 |
| 10 | Valuing Diversity: A Multiliteracies Project in a Remote Indigenous Community | 236 |
| | <i>Beryl Exley</i> | |
| | Diversity of learners | 237 |
| | Tortol Island and its diverse languages | 238 |
| | The middle years multiliteracies project | 240 |
| | Considering pedagogy | 243 |
| | Putting pedagogies into practice | 248 |
| | Conclusion | 264 |
| | Acknowledgements | 266 |
| 11 | Teaching Literacies: Pedagogical Possibilities | 269 |
| | <i>Robyn Henderson</i> | |
| | Introduction | 270 |
| | Reflecting on the preceding chapters | 271 |
| | Complexity | 271 |
| | Balance and flexibility | 272 |
| | Final thoughts and a model for reflection | 275 |
| | <i>Answers to Chapter 9 tutorial exercises</i> | 279 |
| | <i>Glossary</i> | 281 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 289 |

► Contributors

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Dr Pam Bartholomaeus is a Lecturer in literacy and rural education in the School of Education at Flinders University, South Australia. She teaches undergraduate and graduate-entry students in the middle and secondary school program, in literacy education, students and learning, and in preparing for the professional role of teacher. She also works with doctoral students researching questions related to place, including values and discourses related to place and seeking socially just outcomes for people with a close connection to their place. Her current research focuses on rural education, rural sustainability, theorising about place, place-based education, colonisation theory, and colonisation and literacy education.

Anne Cloonan

After working as a primary school teacher and with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education Victoria, Dr Anne Cloonan now lectures at Deakin University in language and literacy education. Her research addresses teacher and student learning as they intersect with emerging technologies and language and literacy education, an area of increasing centrality. Her work explores the complexities of literacy education in transition and the opportunities and limitations of new technologies. Anne works with teachers to promote deep and coordinated teaching and learning of multimodal texts and multimodal literacies and transformed views of what it means to be literate.

Russell Cross

Dr Russell Cross is a Lecturer in second language education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, and coordinator of its newly developed Master of Education (Content and Language Integrated Learning) program. His background is in bilingual education and immersion, with his research focusing on the social, cultural, historical, and political nature of the knowledge base that informs second language teacher education. He is former co-editor of *TESOL in Context*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Australian Association of TESOL Associations, and his work appears in leading international journals in language, education, and policy, including *Language Problems and Language Planning*, *Language and Education*, and *Modern Language Journal*.

Leanne Dalley-Trim

Leanne Dalley-Trim is an Associate Professor at the School of Education, James Cook University, Townsville. She teaches undergraduate education students who are specialising in early childhood, primary, middle and secondary education, along with postgraduate students. More specifically, she teaches in the areas of language and literacies education and secondary school English curriculum. In addition to these areas, she researches and publishes in the fields of gender and education, Indigenous education, youth culture, and rurality. She previously worked as a teacher and Head of Department (English) in secondary schools in Queensland.

Beryl Exley

Dr Beryl Exley is an experienced classroom teacher who is now a Senior Lecturer in Cultural and Language Studies at the Queensland University of Technology. Beryl adopts a socio-cultural approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Her collaborations with some very inspiring teachers have resulted in the publication of over 40 journal articles, conference papers and book chapters. Her special interest is in the unlikely topic of grammar, as well as the teaching of reading, writing, listening and speaking in multimodal environments. Since 2005, Beryl has been an elected representative on the National Council of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association.

Robyn Henderson

Robyn Henderson is an Associate Professor (Literacies Education) in the Faculty of Education at the Toowoomba campus of the University of Southern Queensland. She teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate students in courses about literacy curriculum and pedagogies, and she is the doctoral programs coordinator. Robyn researches in the field of literacies. She is particularly interested in the education of mobile school students and in finding ways that education systems might better cater for students with mobile lifestyles, especially in relation to the learning of literacies.

Eileen Honan

Dr Eileen Honan is Senior Lecturer in English and Literacy Education at The University of Queensland. She researches the relationship between literacy and learning practices at home and school in a variety of contexts, including Australia and Papua New Guinea. Eileen is also interested in the use of critical reflection processes as part of professional learning for teachers in diverse contexts.

Annette Woods

Dr Annette Woods works in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. She teaches and researches in the areas of literacy, curriculum and pedagogy, and social justice. Her current research projects include an investigation into teachers' use of official curriculum documents, a study of literacy reform in low SES and culturally diverse schools, and issues related to assessment in the early years. She is also part of the core research team engaged in the evaluation of a large scale leadership reform program that aims to improve outcomes for Indigenous students in Australia.

► Preface

This book focuses on literacy education in the middle years, the years that span primary and secondary schools. This specific focus came from the long term interests of the contributing authors and their passion for literacies, for teaching, for working with students and teachers in schools, and for working with pre-service teachers in universities.

The middle years of schooling cater for students who have variously been called adolescents, young adolescents, early adolescents, youths, young people, teenagers, teens and tweens. This age group is often described as ‘troubling,’ ‘crazed with hormones,’ or ‘delinquents, deficiencies, or clowns’ (Lesko, 2001, p. 1). In fact, you may have noticed that the media, in particular, seem adept at telling stories that demonise young people (Bahr, 2010) and showing them as nuisances to society. This is evident in news headlines, such as ‘Teen girls “spit and punch” mother and daughter at Southbank’ (Munro O’Brien, 2011), ‘Teens questioned over swan killing’ (Flower & McGee, 2011), and ‘Teen in court over series of random violent attacks in CBD’ (Ross, 2011).

The media often tell deficit stories about literacy education and about literacy educators: It is not unusual to hear that literacy standards are falling and that this is the result of young people’s deficiencies, problems with the education system, poor teaching, or inadequate teacher education provided by universities. The following media headlines indicate the types of stories that seem to be told on a regular basis: ‘Australian teens’ skills falling in maths, literacy’ (Dillon, 2010), ‘Australia “falling behind” on Indigenous literacy’ (McDonald, 2011), ‘Opposition targets “shocking” rural literacy’ (Patty, 2011).

If we believed all of the gloom and doom stories about young people and about literacy education, then we would probably come to the conclusion that teaching in the middle years was an experience akin to being *Stuck in the middle with you*¹—not an experience that we’d really want to have. However, this is not a view taken by the authors of this book. None of the authors subscribe to negative or deficit views. Rather, they take a positive perspective, focusing squarely on classrooms as places where literacy learning occurs.

This book, therefore, sets out to offer productive and transformative ideas for literacy education in the middle years and to ensure that the learning of literacies is relevant and engaging for all students. The authors recognise that there is considerable public scrutiny of literacy education and increasing pressure on teachers to deliver better student results on mandated tests and measures. However, rather than becoming embroiled in the debates or getting caught up in what Rasinski and Fawcett called ‘accountability by acronym’

(2008, p. 1), they have focused on classroom practices and how the work of teachers might make a difference to student learning. In particular, the book highlights the authors' interests in making sense of student diversity and ensuring that literacy education caters for all students.

Notes

¹ Thank you to my colleague Brad McLennan who reminded me of the Stealers Wheel song, *Stuck in the middle with you*, and the possibilities for playing with the word *middle*.

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