



Louisiana Reading Association

Position Paper

DIGITAL LITERACY

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Traditional definitions of literacy derive from traditional tools – books, newspapers, magazines and other print media. However, students of today have lives that are filled with a variety of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as Internet search engines, webpages, e-mail, podcasts, e-books, and blogs. These technologies, and any ICTs that emerge in the future, require that we redefine the nature of reading, writing, and communication.

Digital literacy is the ability to effectively navigate and create information using a range of information and communication technologies. In addition, students must traverse these ICTs critically, using evaluative skills to interpret digital information and assess its value and accuracy. Because digital tools are so pervasive in our students' daily lives, literacy instruction must help students use these tools to acquire knowledge, perform academic tasks, evaluate resources, create products, solve problems, think critically, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others.

The Louisiana Reading Association recognizes the importance of developing digital literacy skills in our 21st century classrooms. First, and perhaps foremost, equity issues must be resolved so that all students have access to a full range of information and communication technologies. In addition, LRA understands that instruction, professional learning, assessment, research, and state educational policy must adapt to ensure that all students become competent and confident digital citizens.

Information and communication technologies must be incorporated in instruction across all curricular areas. Teachers should be encouraged to work collaboratively to design lessons and units of study that integrate the Internet and other ICTs in all content areas. Lessons should be structured so that ICTs are an integral part of lesson and unit plans, not a secondary or supplemental component.

For appropriate and effective instruction to occur utilizing information and communication technologies, teachers must take full advantage of professional learning opportunities to explore new instructional strategies and digital resources. They must read professional publications on a regular basis to keep up with current research, new digital tools, and best practices for using ICTs in the classroom. School administrators, district leaders, state leaders, and undergraduate and graduate educators must have procedures and policies in place to support professional learning in the use of ICTs.

Assessment methods should incorporate the use of digital resources to measure a range of skills, knowledge, and understandings. Students can use a computer or other ICTs to complete

objective tests, constructed-response items, and performance-based tasks. Additionally, assessment methods utilizing ICTs allow for interactivity and the use of multimedia techniques. In Louisiana, upcoming Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments demand that students be digitally literate in order to participate in these state-mandated online assessments.

Educational researchers play an important role in understanding and communicating the impact and application of information and communication technologies in today's classrooms. Researchers can support the appropriate use of ICTs by informing educators about implications related to technological advances, identifying effective instructional strategies utilizing ICTs, and reporting findings about effective ICT implementation to policy makers and educational leaders.

The responsibility of policymakers is to remain informed about expanded definitions of literacy as it applies to new technologies. Policymakers should support initiatives that guarantee access to the Internet and emerging technologies for all schools and libraries. In addition, policymakers should support funding for professional learning and teacher education in integrating ICTs into the curriculum.

In summary, digital literacy is the ability to effectively navigate, create, and critically analyze information using a range of information and communication technologies. The Louisiana Reading Association supports efforts to ensure that teachers utilize ICTs effectively to instruct and assess, and that all stakeholders are cognizant of the importance of ICTs and support the implementation of information and communication technologies in 21st century classrooms.

Resource

International Reading Association (2009). *New literacies and 21st century technologies: A position statement of the International Reading Association*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.