

Running head: CRITICAL LITERACY AND WEB 2.0: EXERCISING AND NEGOTIATING  
POWER

Critical Literacy and Web 2.0: Exercising and Negotiating Power

Critical Literacy and Web 2.0: Exercising and Negotiating Power

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Abstract

In this article, the authors describe Web 2.0 as tools that have increased the urgency for students' and teachers' critical literacy skills and have also participated in the implementation of critical literacy. The authors define and position both Web 2.0 and critical literacy. Further, students' and teachers' power dynamics within both critical literacy and Web 2.0 are explored. Examples of combining Web 2.0 and critical literacy illuminate the critical literacy principles in the context of schools.

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The new functionality of Web 2.0 has opened many possibilities for learning and collaboration as well as new challenges. In this article, we discuss how Web 2.0 elevates one such theory, critical literacy. With the rate of information increasing by five exabytes per year (one exabyte = one billion gigabytes; School of Information Management Systems, 2000), the need to understand the validity, reliability, and motives of the sources of information is more crucial than ever. Critical literacy is the thinking process involved when texts are read and considered from a critical stance, analyzing their content, structure, function, and purpose (Green, 2001). Readers of the 21st century cannot be the unquestioning, passive receptacles of information of past generations. They must carefully consider authors' intent and context and determine the purpose, reliability, and credibility of information. Learners of the 21st century must be able to think abstractly about problems, work collaboratively in teams, critically evaluate information, and perhaps even speak multiple languages (Wallis & Steptoe, 2006). Critical literacy is no longer optional, but now must be viewed as a fundamental ability for all students. Schools must be more conscious of the need to teach literacy from a critical stance and Web 2.0 not only creates the urgency, but also is an active agent in the critical literacy process.

#### WEB 2.0 DEFINITION

To understand Web 2.0, it is useful to compare it to Web 1.0. Under the old Web 1.0 paradigm, users who wanted to publish to the Web were forced to program in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and understand the Internet protocols for using HTML. While this requirement likely did not intimidate many of the readers of *Computers in the Schools*, it clearly narrowed the pool of users who created Web content. In fact, most Web users were simply consumers of content. Conversely, Web 2.0 has been called the Read/Write Web (Richardson, 2006) because of the ease with which users can now create new Web content. To use another

analogy, Web 1.0 was one-way communication, a lecture or a monologue. Only those with enough resources or specific knowledge could actually do the “talking” while all others remained mute. Businesses, governments, organizations, and select individuals created content, sometimes based on consideration of the users, but usually based on what each organization deemed appropriate for its visitors. Thus, in this paradigm, power rested solely with those who had the knowledge or resources to program in HTML. Web 2.0 can be compared to a dialogue, an engaging class discussion or two-way communication. It is also one in which the barriers to producing Web-based content are so low that all one needs is the desire to produce it. By using blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other Web 2.0 tools, individuals now have an equal voice with businesses and organizations, and importantly have equal power.

Web 2.0 has not only democratized content creation and restructured power dynamics; it has essentially rewritten many of the rules of communication. The tools of Web 2.0 encourage and facilitate collaboration (Tapscott & Williams, 2006) and collective intelligence (Surowiecki, 2004). Further, these tools allow product or information users to become an integral part of the creation process, adding value to the product while accomplishing their own goals (Friedman, 2006) and thus claiming and asserting power for their own purposes. Importantly, Web 2.0 sites are not static Web pages where content is updated annually, for example. In fact, many Web 2.0 sites are updated weekly, daily, and sometimes hourly. These updates are strongly context dependent as each user/contributor brings his/her own unique perspective to bear on the topic. Indeed, Web 2.0 can be described as tools that empower the community to collectively create meaning and value, which is a socially mediated constructivist view (Vygotsky, 1978; 1987) that honors, encourages, and extends natural communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)!

#### CRITICAL LITERACY DEFINITION

With the barrage of information available at the stroke of a single key, learners need to develop skills and strategies to determine the quality, reliability, validity, purpose, and intent of the information that they can easily access. Critical literacy is a way of evaluating text in terms of determining the author's perspective or intent, the reasons the text was written from a particular perspective, and the reasons certain elements related to the text were included and/or excluded. Much like the more participative Web 2.0, this critical stance elevates the status of the reader from a passive recipient of the views and ideas of an author to a critical thinker who questions the author and the text, examines information or ideas based on what is included and what is left out, and reflects upon the change that transpires within himself/herself as a result of this process. When readers consider issues beyond the text, question the author's perspective and intent, and reflect upon how they are changed because of the encounter with the text, they are approaching reading from a critical perspective or stance. While traditional views of reading give power to the author and the text, this critical perspective of literacy brings a more powerful role to the reader.

#### *Roots of Critical Literacy and Critical Theories and Their Relationship to Web 2.0*

For the majority of the 20th century the prevailing theory of reading, *new criticism*, assumed that the reader's role was to glean specific information and interpretations of texts, with the text alone being central to meaning. Individual interpretation was discouraged or prohibited (Church, 1997; Squire, 1994). This would now be considered a one-dimensional stance in which the text is central and the reader and context surrounding the reading was inconsequential. Though I. A. Richards (Squire, 1994) did initial research on the reader response to literature in 1929, Louise Rosenblatt (Church, 1997; Squire, 1994) is attributed to the *reader stance* and the *transactional theory*. She explored the transaction between the reader and

the text focusing on the power of the reader's personal experiences in shaping the resulting interpretation of text (Squire, 1994). Rosenblatt posits that readers enter and engage with a text from an "efferent" stance, seeking information, and an aesthetic stance, based on personal experiences and emotions. These responses fall along a continuum, and the reader may engage to differing degrees in either stance. Although her initial work, *Literature as Exploration*, was published in 1938, the ideas of a personal interpretation of text were not influential to practicing educators until the 1970s.

While *transactional theory* clearly opens text to new forms of interpretation and meaning and is part of critical theory, Luke and Freebody (1999) believe that there is also a third stance that co-exists with the efferent and aesthetic: the critical stance. In this stance the reader assumes the role not only of text decoder, text user, text meaning maker, but that of text critic and as such, readers examine their prior experiences and new knowledge to consider the positioning of the text. A critical stance understands that texts are not neutral, but are written from a particular viewpoint to influence reader perceptions and possibly empower or disempower particular groups. Once the role of text critic is understood, the power of the information is not held solely by the author because critical readers assume a powerful role as well to decide how this text will affect them personally (Australian Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002). Indeed, both critical literacy and Web 2.0 are revolutionary in that they are both collaboration of meaning making on a particular topic, project, or idea. The dialogue or discourse that occurs contributes to the meaning of all the collaborators and others who benefit from resulting work. Further, Web 2.0 has the additional advantage that users may join the dialogue at any point and/or add a unique perspective to the topic.

## CRITICAL LITERACY AND WEB 2.0

McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) offered a succinct definition of critical literacy which “views readers as active participants in the reading process and invites them to move beyond passively accepting the text’s message to question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors. It focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action (Freire, 1970)” (p. 14). They further delineated four principles that connected with Web 2.0:

*1. Critical Literacy Focuses on Issues of Power and Promotes Reflection, Transformation and Action (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 14)*

Critical literacy calls students into reflection and transformation in response to their broadened power role. Further, students must act upon their new knowledge (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Although access to the Internet and digital information has certainly broadened the awareness of the need to approach literacy with a critical stance, this way of thinking did not originate with the dawn of the Internet. The underpinnings of critical literacy emerged as a source of personal power from oppressed peoples and also as a way of understanding the process of comprehension as more than just the transfer of information or ideas from the author to the reader. Freire’s philosophically thoughtful work with the working poor of his native Brazil illuminated the idea that all people are capable of looking critically at complex issues and, with the proper tools, deal with and transform their situation (Freire, 1997).

Currently, with such unprecedented access to information, teachers are not in control of information. Children can now control information as well (Warlick, 2004). Further, Tapscott and Williams (2006) noted that, with the advent of Web 2.0 tools, children are for the first time experts in something that is important in the adult world. This can be tied to Freire’s (1997) premise that “education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students”

(p. 53). Thus, we must be responsible to our children and teach them to critically evaluate and reflect upon what they read. We also must be responsible to listen to and learn from the children as they make sense of the text.

Further, aligning with the ideals of critical literacy, students must be encouraged to act upon the text. This action is what Schmocker (2006) interprets in critical literacy as writing and arguing. Because Web 2.0 offers a similar power structure to critical literacy, it is a natural, authentic, and purposeful venue within which students can act. Indeed, users around the world are engaging in critical literacy on Wikipedia already, not only by cocreating the entries, but by engaging in behind-the-scenes, but accessible, discourse as well.

*2. Critical Literacy Focuses on the Problem and its Complexity (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 15)*

Critical literacy does not attempt to simplify for the sake of clarity. In fact, part of critical literacy is problematizing in which students fully embrace the complexity of our world by raising questions and seeking various explanations (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). For example, once when Sheri was using a new text for teaching social studies to fourth-graders, one astute student noticed that two different people, Lorenzo de Zavala and Mirabeau Lamar, were both attributed the title of the first vice president of the Republic of Texas. After close reading and Internet research, she and her students discovered that Zavala was actually the first vice president, but had served during the ad interim government of the Republic of Texas. Lamar was the first vice president elected under the established Republic of Texas. This scenario illustrates that children are fully capable of problematizing and seeking resolution within a complex situation.

Complexity can arise in the definition of the problem as well. Tapscott and Williams (2006) coined the term *prosumer* to signify that users have transitioned from consumer to a more

active role that combines features of a producer with features of a consumer. Being a prosumer shifts students from accepting the problems and solutions offered by others and into the role of defining their own problems and solutions. Further, Web 2.0 tools enable users to become prosumers.

*3. Critical Literacy Strategies Are Dynamic and Adapt to the Contexts in Which They Are Used (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 15)*

Critical literacy does not take a linear, or an algorithmic approach, but rather appreciates the local context and calls for different approaches with different situations or texts. Further, critical theorists expand the concept of text (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Text includes books, Internet resources, audio, video, images, and animation. Text can also include sociocultural conditions and relationships (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). The dynamic nature of critical literacy not only applies to the literacy strategies, but also to the texts and to the students' understanding of those texts. Certainly, any "facts" we may be teaching now could be untrue in the future, thus we must offer students a view of the world that is sensitive to this dynamic reality (Warlick, 2004). Children can easily grasp this concept when considering the "truths" of earlier times such as whether the earth is flat or round and whether Pluto is a planet. Further, students' understanding of the language in a text can be viewed as dynamic also, as "a videotape that we can edit and re-edit as needed (Gee, 2001)" (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 27). We have more and different experiences each time we read a text thus we may "see" something differently on subsequent readings. Clearly, Web 2.0 is dynamic by its very nature and thus is a natural extension of Gee's metaphor. Further, students can come to view their own work as dynamic or as a work in progress (Richardson, 2006). Doing so will naturally situate the critical stance within the student's own work which can then be more easily transitioned to the work of others.

4. *Critical Literacy Disrupts the Commonplace by Examining It from Multiple Perspectives* (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 16)

Using multiple perspectives allows students to critically evaluate an author's perspective as well as their own (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Because of recent interest in multiple perspectives, many children's books have been written to give an alternative look at traditional views. For example, the story of *The Three Little Pigs* has been told from the wolf's perspective in *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf* (Scieszka, 1999) and *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (Trivizas, 1997) and from a different context in the *Three Little Javelinas* (Lowell, 1992). Further, children easily make connections to the Internet and print resources when considering the viewpoints of the Native Americans and westward expansion as compared with the viewpoints of Thomas Jefferson, Meriweather Lewis and William Clark. Indeed, multiple perspectives can offer scaffolds for students as they explore a domain, demonstrate domain-specific social practice, increase flexible future problem solving, and bring together distributed expertise (Schwartz, Lin, Brophy, & Bransford, 1999), as well as an opportunity to develop a critical stance. Using Web 2.0, students can be exposed to a variety of organic perspectives, not all of which are from designated "experts."

WIKI EXAMPLES: WAYS OF FOSTERING A CRITICAL STANCE

Two vignettes using wikis illustrate the value of integrating critical literacy with Web 2.0 technologies. The word *wiki* comes from the Hawaiian *wiki-wiki*, meaning quick or fast. A wiki is a Web site that anyone can edit, again without an understanding of HTML. Wikipedia is the best known example of a wiki and it aims to document knowledge in an encyclopedia type format. This knowledge is not created by a few select "experts" or editors, but by any user who visits a Wikipedia page, empowering all users to contribute and share their own unique context. Many react negatively to mass collaboration, with the belief that inaccuracies in Wikipedia are

rampant. However, an important study compared Encyclopedia Britannica with Wikipedia noting that Wikipedia has only a few more errors (Giles, 2005). Importantly though, Wikipedia's errors can be corrected immediately so that subsequent users have access to correct information.

Encyclopedia Britannica, on the other hand, must wait for a new publication date to correct any inaccuracies and still the errors remain on many shelves where old volumes sit (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). The reason that Wikipedia can be so accurate is that hundreds or thousands of users who are passionate about a topic are empowered to contribute to and monitor the Wikipedia entry for that topic. Collective wisdom (Surowiecki, 2004) with communities that include traditional "experts" and passionate users establish high standards organically and the sheer volume of community members watching and discussing an entry creates an information flow that is unmatched by the small group of experts and editors for print-based media.

#### *Wikipedia and the Unnoticed Discussion Tab*

Immediately next to the edit tab, which tends to garner the most attention, the discussion tab appears to go unnoticed. However, critical readers are wise to explore the discussion tab. Navigating to that page opens readers to the domain of collaboration and critical thinking that is happening worldwide and organically. If we do not move past the debate on the factual accuracy of Wikipedia, we will miss the community of critical thinkers who are passionate and serious about not only "getting it right," but also being part of the discourse. In addition to making decisions on factual accuracy, communities of prosumers care deeply about the clarity and organization of information that is personally meaningful to them and to a particular community of practice. For example, examine the following entries from the discussion tab on Wikipedia's Critical Literacy entry (Talk:Critical Literacy, n.d.):

There are multiple perspectives on Critical Literacy [sic] and part of the ambiguity between this article and other similar articles lies in this ambiguity. I'd like to propose that we reorganize this article to reflect the major schools of thought around the topic.

The text currently under the heading "Details" seems to describe specifics of work by Allan Luke, Michele Anstey, Geoff Bull, J. Elkins, Peter Freebody, and the New London Group, among others. This represents major work being done in this field in Australia in recent years. The bulk of that text was posted by someone working in an Australian school in 2005.

Another approach to Crit Lit [sic] is Frierian, springing from the works of Brazillian Paulo Freire. This could also be described as neo-Marxist, and this perspective is reflected in the works of Peter McLaren and Jean Anyon, among many others. (This is also the perspective most strongly represented in the current version of the Wikipedia article on Critical Pedagogy [sic].)

A third perspective could be headed Critical Utopianism, as described by Henry Jenkins and others.

Acknowledging that there is still considerable overlap between these three perspectives, I think it is useful and accurate to describe Australian, Neo-Marxist/Freirean, and Critical Utopianism [sic] as three major schools of thought within the field of Critical Literacy [sic].

[Jlwelsh](#) 02:30, 28 September 2007 (UTC)

I think that by rearranging the text into these perspectives, it will take away the dry text/list feeling, and contribute to the discussion that makes an encyclopedia so useful

and accessible. [Hires an editor](#) 15:14, 28 September 2007 (UTC) (Talk:Critical Literacy, n.d.).

Clearly, readers and contributors are discussing perspectives, debating context, and dealing with complexity—all dynamically! Indeed, while McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) noted that all four principles of critical literacy do not need to be present at any one time, the discussion tab of any Wikipedia entry might very likely include all. Thus, even users who do not directly update a Wikipedia entry have the opportunity to discuss the topic, share perspectives, or just read input from others who have done so and perhaps be drawn into the critical stance. As further example, examine the following entries from the discussion tab of the Web 2.0 entry (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.):

Is the last paragraph of the Criticism section as good as it could be? It is certainly possible that Web 2.0 targets too small a market of potential Internet users. But I would argue that the concept is too ill-defined for that criticism really to stick. If it is “all singing, all dancing” Web apps, as described below, then yes, they won’t “degrade gracefully” and will be unusable by most ordinary people. But when I think of Web 2.0, I think of sites like [flickr](#) and [del.icio.us](#), and, to a lesser extent, [Amazon](#), [Google](#) (especially the maps - with their AJAX backend, and the personal homepage feature), and social networking sites like [Facebook](#) (especially in its latest iteration, with Mini-Feed, etc.). Sites like that have a much larger user base than 50,000 people, although only Google and Amazon are really making money (and that, it could be argued, is for other reasons that [sic] their “Web 2.0”-ness [sic]). Thus, it seems that Koppelman’s criticism is out-of-date or irrelevant. And the parenthesis about the site later getting more users

seems, to this outsider, in-jokey at best. I'm going to get rid of it. [Evan Donovan](#) 20:35, 10 September 2006 (UTC) (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.).

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The lead of the article now incorporates a quote from John Dvorak of [PC Magazine](#). I removed it and [delegate](#) it to a footnote but Beachy seems to [disagree](#). I think that quote does not belong to the lead because it appears to be something definitive, when the truth is that quote only represent one point of view from one critic and is far from representative. What do other editors here think about this? --[Pkchan](#) 20:38, 2 August 2006 (UTC) (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.).

It seems that you favour the first paragraph defining “Web 2.0” as if it is a serious term with real-life, defined applications. You cannot understand that this view must also be balanced with the views of well-respected developers who believe the term is marketing hype. Your outspoken point of view is very obvious here. Beware of allowing your personal opinions and (obviously) copious amounts of spare time to overwhelm what could be a balanced article --[Beachy](#) 21:27, 2 August 2006 (UTC) (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.).

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The notion that “The human race has started to apply much of what it learned from the dot-com bubble” is ridiculous; individuals learn and grow during their lifetimes; the same may be true for the human race over a very long time span, but very little (if anything) changes in the collective aggregate psychological mechanisms that make us [as a race] do what we do. Bubbles have come and gone during history of man, and will continue to do so... Johanps 11:07, 25 August 2006 (UTC) (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.).

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The current version of the lead appears to focus too much on O'Reilly Media's creation and their intention, and does not address sufficiently the question of what it means and how it is used in the wider context in a descriptive manner. In addition, the list of examples cited, ie "social networking sites, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies", appear outdated and not sufficiently representative of what Web 2.0 stands for. I propose to re-write the paragraph as follows in order to address this and to dilute the "O'Reilly impression", while staying (as I believe) [NPOV](#). All comments are welcome. --[Pkchan](#) 09:23, 27 August 2006 (UTC) (Talk:Web 2.0, n.d.).

These examples from the discussion tabs of both the critical literacy and Web 2.0 entries are prime examples of the critical stance all readers, including young readers, must take with all texts. The power dynamics change as the critical community challenges and supports one another's thinking and thus strengthens the resulting content. Further, the public nature of the debate encourages all users to clarify and substantiate their position, even well-known experts. Essentially, the serious and passionate users are given equal status with the experts. When we reveal the discussion tab to our students they enter the authentic and transparent collaborative and critical process. With the abundance of information, educators worry about plagiarism and the possibility that students might "copy and paste" rather than learn and synthesize (Warlick, 2004). However, by assigning work differently using critical literacy and Web 2.0, teachers can not only remove that fear but also help students develop their critical stance. For example, instead of assigning a paper on a topic, students could start with the discussion tab from Wikipedia. From this starting point, students could identify issues, perspectives, or contexts of

interest to explore further. The needed content knowledge can be acquired in the midst of the students' identified focus in a way that honors the complexity of the subject matter.

*Using Wikis with Critical Literacy Principles in the Classroom: The Story of Story*

The next example took place at Story Elementary School and incorporated wikimapia (<http://www.wikimapia.org/>), whose tag line is "Let's describe the whole earth!" Wikimapia uses Google maps satellite imagery along with wiki functionality so that users can identify and describe any place on earth. This vignette is used as a relevant and authentic example of Web 2.0 and critical literacy in the classroom.

Two inquiry-based, multiage third- and fourth-grade classrooms in a north Texas suburb participated in a pilot program to collaborate on ways technology could be used as an authentic tool to enhance the curriculum and literacy skills. Part of the social studies curriculum included a study of the local community and "the lives of heroic men and women who made important choices, overcame obstacles, sacrificed for the betterment of others, and embarked on journeys that resulted in new ideas, new inventions, and new communities" (TEA, 2007). Working from a student's question, "Why was our school named after Alvis C. Story?" the two classes wanted to find answers. In this community, schools are named for important community figures, so researching a school namesake would clearly lead to important knowledge about the history of the community. However, this would be primary source research since no other texts were available on Alvis Story. Interviewing would be a major source of data collection and, while Alvis Story was no longer living, his son Chester and his daughter June agreed to come to the school for the interview offering students multiple perspectives into Mr. Story's life.

Meanwhile, students also were learning how the "Story of Alvis Story" could be published. Wikimapia seemed to be a perfect choice because the maps gave the students a sense

of connection to the medium and the wiki allowed students to authentically publish their work, creating powerful reading and writing experiences. When introducing wikis to the students, one student immediately worried that people might enter wrong or misleading information. The Giles (2005) study was described to the students, but to further clarify, Sheri used an example of something many of the children in the classes were both knowledgeable and passionate about, Pokemon. She said, “If you were reading an entry in a wiki about Pokemon and you read some wrong information about Charmander. . .” There was an audible gasp as several children said, “Not, Charmander!” Sheri continued,

You wouldn’t like that, would you? Well, you could go into the wiki and correct the information right away, so that it would be correct. Because you care so much about Charmander and you know so much about Charmander, you would want to make it right.

While exploring wikimapia with the classes, we clicked on one of our local schools, Rountree Elementary. As commonly happens, the school was labeled as a compound word, Roundtree. Sheri said,

Wait, I noticed something about Rountree’s label. It’s spelled wrong. I worked at Rountree once and I care a lot about that school. Lots of people think it is spelled like a round tree, but it’s not. I want to go in and correct the spelling of Rountree. I’m guessing the person who labeled Rountree really cares about the school or else he or she wouldn’t even take the time to label it, but they didn’t realize the spelling is not like a compound word. This person cared enough to label the school. I care enough that I want to make sure it’s spelled right, too.

A student navigated the computer and Julie guided the student through the process of correcting the error while the other students watched it immediately change. We had a

serendipitous learning moment in which we were able to authentically illustrate the care, knowledge, and passion of the “expert” user’s knowledge and the way wikis can be empowering, contextually strong, organically grown, and immediately corrected.

Working together, the children composed an entry about Alvis Story’s life and watched it emerge on the wikimapia site projected on the wall. Students brainstormed strong lead statements and then selected the best one. They also discussed the structure of the entry and then together composed the story. Thus, in this work, students not only individually and collectively synthesized the interview data; they also collectively created meaning through the joint writing of the wikimapia entry. (To view the wikimapia entry, navigate to

<http://www.wikimapia.org/#lat=33.097725&lon=-96.658573&z=14&l=0&m=a&v=2&show=/1759693/>)

Students interacted with critical literacy principles at various times throughout this project. Clearly, they experienced the complexity of life history research through interviewing multiple people. Further, this researched life occurred during the Great Depression, forcing students to gather additional perspectives of history within the context of an important man in their community. Throughout the project, students negotiated the power by generating the initial study questions, creating the interview prompts, conducting the interview, and using their collective voice to write the entry. In this case, students acted globally rather than locally. While this story is important to the entire school community, expanding the audience for the project increased the importance that appropriated more power into the student’s hands. Finally, the student work was and continues to be dynamic. By using a wiki, students are opening their personally meaningful text to the world for critique. Viewing their own text as dynamic allows students to broadly conceive of text critically, as a dialogue rather than a monologue. And,

wikimapia has a feature of many Web 2.0 tools where users can review the previous versions via a history link, so ultimately the student work would not be lost even if it were changed.

### CONCLUSIONS

The abundance of information available to students on the Internet coupled with the participatory nature of Web 2.0 have elevated critical literacy from a privilege of the educated elite to a fundamental ability for all students and teachers. Further, Web 2.0 not only facilitates the urgency of critical literacy, it also shares in the implementation.

We view the critical stance as essential for learners and thus for teachers also. It is not an additional element of the curriculum, it is a way of viewing the world and thus the classroom and the children. Teachers who view the classroom as a place to practice democracy and the children as capable of taking a critical stance will find opportunities to integrate it within existing structures and curriculum. Critically literate teachers might discover opportunities to support students in investigating discrepancies in a text, publishing their work, writing a text that is not available, problematizing, and attempting resolution. Further, Wikipedia's discussion tab can be a tool for discovering issues surrounding a topic of study and developing critical literacy using something the children are serious and passionate about, such as Pluto's recent status change from major planet to dwarf planet.

Critical literacy and Web 2.0 are ultimately about exposing power relationships and empowering users to discern what they understand and believe in a text. By critically evaluating the content of Web 2.0 resources and contributing to the knowledge base, students and teachers become critical consumers, knowledgeable producers, and powerful members of global communities.

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