# A/R/Tography and Teacher Education in the 21st Century

## Sean Wiebe and Claire Caseley Smith, 2016

**MJE Knowledge Mobilization Snapshots**

## What is the Multiliteracies Theory?

The multiliteracies theory "… encourages the engagement with multiple literacy methods – linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal – to learn and communicate." (Robinson, Lethbridge College Learning Connections, para. 3)
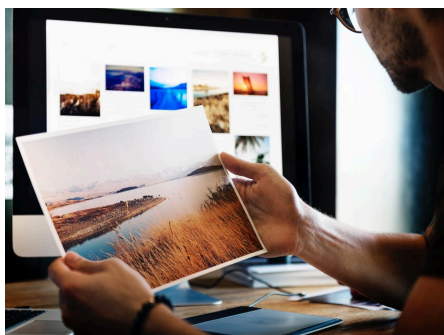
The Digital Economy Research Team (DERT) developed a concept map with overlapping skills and competencies for students to develop (Wiebe & Caseley Smith, 2016). It is suggested that teachers be made aware of the different thresholds on this map to better implement multiliteracies instruction in their classrooms (Wiebe & Caseley Smith, 2016).

The Digital Economy Research Team has found that teachers are familiar with digital and multiliteracies theory. However, there are challenges related to: 1) incorporating digital and multiliteracies theory in their teaching; 2) evaluating literacies as a whole; and, 3) thinking and making connections with the different literacies.

## The Teacher's Role

In current research, there is a need to place more focus on redefining the teacher's role (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2008). There is also a need to shift from the narrow, text-based measures of grading student literacy in English language arts (Crook & Bennett, 2007) to authentic, collaborative learning and testing based on constructivist learning principles (Dochy, Mein, Van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003; Pegrum, 2009; Senior, 2010).

According to constructivist theorists, "… teacher and learner [are] co-architects in the curriculum experience, not just to increase students' ownership of the process, but also because knowledge is socially constructed through lived experience and collaboration …" (as cited in Wiebe & Caseley Smith, 2016, p.1168).

## What is A/R/Tography?

It is a mix of research, art and teaching (Wiebe, 2008, 2010; Wiebe & Morrison-Robinson, 2013). More specifically, teachers can conduct research to advance their artistic teaching process (as cited in Wiebe & Caseley-Smith, 2016).

Wiebe and Caseley Smith (2016) acted as a/r/tographers in the current study.

## An A/R/Tography Study

In this study, Wiebe and Caseley-Smith (2016) worked as co-planners with a class of Grade 8 English Language Arts students to conduct a single-participant case study.

Caseley-Smith is a teacher, and was involved in the curriculum process. The conversations had with Wiebe throughout the six-week multiliteracies helped refine the threshold concept. Wiebe recorded the process, and had a main role in the research components (Wiebe & Caseley-Smith, 2016).

## What was the Purpose of this A/R/Tography Study?

The aim in conducting the study for Caseley-Smith and her students was threefold:

1. To associate as a/r/tographers
2. To gain knowledge in a/r/tography
3. To integrate art into learning and sense of self

The findings were determined after Wiebe and Caseley-Smith (2016) completed six Skype conversations together. In these sessions, Caseley-Smith's implementation was discussed, along with strategies and solutions for specific concerns that arose during instruction.
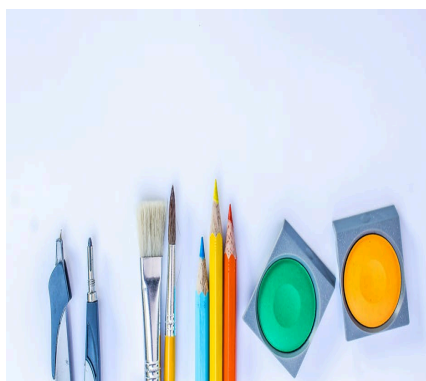
## What do Teachers Need to Keep in Mind?

Wiebe and Caseley-Smith's (2016) findings highlight areas for teacher and student growth:

1. Student use of mobile computing devices in "creative or critical" ways (Wiebe & Caseley-Smith, 2016, p. 1171).
2. Maintain students' artistic attention throughout several instructional units
3. Support students in making associations between art and critical thinking
4. Use of metaphor (e.g., haiku) and story as concepts to help students see consistency across different art forms
5. Students enjoy having the opportunity to be creative and are more eager to revise work

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