Spring 2012

"I'm Tellin' Because it's Mine and I Can": Digital Storytelling Projects in Two Different Elementary Age Communities

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April 30th, 2012

Senior Honors Thesis in Educational Studies and English Literature

Swarthmore College

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Abstract:

Digital storytelling, a project designed to build communities and develop multi-literate community members, has been reserved almost exclusively for adults. This practitioner research project challenges this practice by bringing the project to two groups of elementary school students under the assumption that students from diverse backgrounds would be able engage productively with the medium. While running these two workshops over the summer, a pre-service teacher collected data on her students' experiences using ethnographic methods. This study looks at how these students engage with digital storytelling, what stories they decide to tell, and how they give and receive feedback. Ultimately, this study suggests that teachers need to do three things. They must recognize the complex process that takes place when students respond to one another's stories. Teachers must create spaces in their classrooms where students can develop skills through creative work. And finally, teachers must challenge who gets to use what tools while also thinking critically about where these tools fall short.

Table of Contents:

Acknowledgements:

Since my first experience with digital storytelling in the summer of 2009, there have been many, many people who have helped me make this project happen. From piquing my interest, to helping me organize these two workshops, listening as a rambled about my findings, to reading drafts, I appreciate the support you have all given me.

Thank you to my advisor, Diane Anderson, who has helped me every step of the way from conceiving the project to writing about it. Your enthusiasm, advice, and insight have been invaluable. Thank you for responding to my long winded animals, listening to me talk out ideas in person, and helping me problem solve (even when you were on vacation!) Perhaps most importantly, thank you for letting me take the lead and make my mistakes, while all the while assuring me it's ok if I prefer my practitioner hat to my researcher hat at the moment – and it's ok if that changes in the future!

Thank you to Jill Gladstein, my second advisor, for providing feedback and support. I'm thrilled to have had a methods-focused person on my side as well!

Thank you to Cynthia Jetter and Mark Linkins who helped me to find the students I ultimately worked with. Ms. Chambers very kindly let me join her community center team and the McCabe library staff gave their computer lab for the project. Without all of you, this project wouldn't have been much more than me telling stories to myself.

Thank you to everyone in Media Services, especially David Neal, who was incredibly helpful with all things technology-related during the project and Doug Willens who helped as I struggled to create a reader-friendly poster.

Thank you to Sharon Hart and Dave Tolland who made my first experience with digital storytelling so wonderful that I wanted to share it with others.

Thank you to my family and friends, especially Ryan Carlson, Mark Chin, KC Cushman, Nolan Gear, Wendy Hamilton, and Gabriela Moats. I really appreciate your willingness to listen to me talk about this project constantly and offer insights. Collectively, you helped me think through almost all of my findings, turn 40-pages of text into two tables, edit many, many pages, and stay on track during our theses dates. Thank you.

Thank you to all the parents who invited me into their homes for interviews and trusted me to work with their children.

And of course, thank you to all the wonderful students I got to know this summer. I'm very lucky you were willing to share your stories with me.

1.0: Introduction

In our final interview which took place directly after the public screening of the Woodville student's digital stories, I asked Rebecca what I should make sure I say when I write about her story and her experience at digital storytelling camp. She barely thought for a moment before she asked a question back to me "What do you mean about my story? I did that. I think you have to tell about *our* story…I thought your job was to write about the story of our camp? Hey, I think that would make a good digital story!" (Post-Interview, 7/22/12).

Taking Rebecca's advice, I've set out to tell the story of two digital storytelling camps that occurred concurrently during the summer of 2011. Over the course of the summer I moved between two different communities, Woodville and Daton, as we explored together how elementary age students engaged with this digital literacy project.

Digital stories are short one to six minute videos which include a recorded story paired with images, transitions, music, video, and text. Workshop participants develop these typically personal stories with the help of the other workshop participants. Digital storytelling students offer advice and feedback on one another's stories all throughout the process. In my research, I sought to challenge this assumption that digital storytelling is something designed solely for adults. Before beginning the project, I fully believed that students, even as young as eight-years-old, could develop beautiful stories through this process if given the chance.

2.0: Research Questions

As I developed my revised version of a digital storytelling workshop, I asked the following research questions:

1. How would these students engage with digital storytelling? How would they utilize this technology, which was typically only used by adults, in order to tell their stories?
2. What stories would these children choose to tell? How would students explain their choice of stories to their peers? What would they consider valuable enough to spend so much time on and how would they explain what made it good for digital storytelling?
3. How would students respond to one another's stories? How would they give feedback to one another? How would the accept feedback?
4. What role might digital storytelling play in a traditional classroom? How can this project be used to develop literacy in schools?

These questions framed my thinking throughout the project. By keeping them relatively general, I hoped to spend my time with the students with a very open mind. I wanted to be able to hear what they told me – whether or not it was what I thought I was looking for. Further, in keeping my research questions relatively open, the project focused on the students and what they created. I did not set out with plans to explicitly guide them to tell me certain stories or require that they incorporate everyone's feedback. Instead, I wanted to see how they would naturally engage with the project and each other. As is the case with all ethnographic studies, it's important not to generalize from this project. The data I've collected is about these students in this situation. While what I've observed will certainly be things I continue to think about in my own practice, I in no way will try to argue that this is how students as a whole work with digital storytelling (Heath and Street, 72).

2.1: The Story of the Questions

2.1.1: My Positionality

In order to best explain my research questions and methods, I believe that it's important that I first describe myself and some of the lens I see through. I am a student at Swarthmore College who's been thinking about, and working on, digital storytelling for almost three years now. I am also a white, middle-class woman from a very rural area in New England. At Swarthmore I've been pursuing my Elementary Teacher Certification in the hopes of working as an urban public school teacher after I graduate. I've known for as long as I can remember that I've wanted a career where I'm working with children, but it wasn't until high school that I realized I wanted to teach. And it wasn't until I came to Swarthmore that I learned to think critically about why I wanted to teach and began to understand the connections between teaching and promoting social justice.

The ideas behind teaching for social justice framed my entire research. In developing my project and questions I knew I wanted to be doing something that had me working with students throughout the duration of the project. Having spent three years doing observations in classrooms, I was eager to write my own curriculum and run the project myself. In essence, I wanted to try my hand at practitioner research. With this came the pitfalls that all teachers find doing research in their own classrooms. I was in a state of constant tension. I wanted to sit back and watch what my students did for the sake of the study. But at the same time I wanted to jump in and explain why it wasn't appropriate to use those words about someone's story, guide a student through revisions which would make their story more understandable to the outside audience, etc… Where to draw the line was always on my mind and a persistent topic of conversation with my advisor. Because I wanted all the students to come out of this summer proud of their story and positive about the group experience, I ultimately decided that the workshops needed

to be about the students first and my research second. As such, I can point to pieces of students' stories that are told the way they are because of my suggestions. Interview responses from the students discuss ways I handled different behavioral issues and I can see how my responses shaped how students behaved in the future. I also opted not to take notes during the actual workshop but rather to do so immediately after, if possible, or that evening at the latest. As such, dialogue in my field notes is reconstructed from memory. However because I was not caught up on catching ever detail, I was able to completely engage with my students.

In doing this research, I hope to have started what will be a long career in practitioner research. As a future teacher, I believe I owe it to my students, school community, and personal curiosity to "see ever lesson [as] an inquiry, some further discovery, a quiet form of research" as I "learn deliberately" about my students, their practices, and what I can do best to support them and their work (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 24, 1993).

2.1.2: What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling is an incredibly malleable project that's easy to adjust for different populations and time frames. Workshops can meet all day for four consecutive days, they can meet for an hour and half once a week for fourteen weeks, or anything in between. No matter what the structure of the workshop, the process of digital storytelling follows a few patterns. Next, I'll describe that major features of digital storytelling as

taken from my experiences and an informal conversation[1] with Eric Behrens, Media Services staff member at Swarthmore College and a digital storytelling facilitator.

Before the project begins, workshop participants are asked to think of a few stories they might be interested in telling. To start the workshop, a facilitator leads the group in a few creative exercises in order to help generate even more stories that might be particularly conducive to the project. Next, the facilitator engages the group in a discussion of ground rules. A major aspect of digital storytelling is the story circle. In the story circle workshop participants come together to listen to one another as they orally share their story. While the rules for each story circle may differ as participants have a say in creating them, they generally include similar guidelines. Typically, the storyteller is given a few uninterrupted minutes to share his or her story. Then, participants take turns sharing what they found especially compelling about the story and offer suggestions for clarifications, additions, or other improvements to the story. In the story circle, the facilitator stresses the fact that the story belongs to the storyteller. That means that he or she is welcome to take the suggestions given, but is not required too. It's important that the storyteller have the floor to him or herself followed by a few moments of silence before others comment.

After the story circle, individuals revise their story as then write it down. Once it's on paper, other workshop members can read it and offer more suggestions. After this round of revisions take place, members typically break off into pairs in order to record their story using what ever recording tool is available. Partners listen to one another as they give suggestions for the recording. These suggestions might discuss the speed at

[1] The conversation took place over the phone on 5-23-11. Mr. Behrens was helping me to brainstorm as I wrote the curriculum for my project.

which the teller was speaking, recommendations for pauses or better clarity, or thoughts on how to better express emotion and tone in the recording.

Once recording wraps the storytellers move their audio files onto a computer and into whatever program is available (most commonly iMovie, Final Cut Pro, or Windows Movie Maker). After the storytellers make any edits to their audio that they wish, they are able to insert pictures. Pictures come from a number of different places depending on the subject and tone of the story. Many people bring in pictures from their home that showcases important relationships or events in the storyteller's life. Others take pictures specifically for the project. In many cases, the storyteller does not have a picture that he or she needs for the story. In order to find appropriate pictures most of the facilitators teach the storytellers how to navigate the photo sharing website incorporated in the creative commons project, www.flikr.com/creativecommons/. This organization calls for submissions of photos, audio clips, videos and more from owners are willing to share publicly. Owners upload files to the searchable database with varying levels of restrictions. For digital storytelling, database searches are limited to those files with the least restrictions so the stories can be used in educational and professional contexts, if the storyteller chooses. For photos alone creative commons has over 32,000,000 files available on the lowest restriction level. Workshop participants save these photos to the computer, along with the username of the photo owner for the final credits of the story, and then load them into the movie making software. After photos have been added to the story, workshop members can also use creative commons or their own personal files to add music and video clips. Finally, storytellers can also insert text slides or captions throughout their story.

After the workshop participants have compiled and ordered all the different elements of their story, the next step is to add different transitions between the images and video clips. Each of the computer programs used for digital storytelling offers a variety of different transition options. These range from simple fade ins and fade outs to more elaborate ones which allow pictures to move across the screen, dissolve, and perform other eye catching motions. With transitions in place, the next step in the process is for participants to align their audio with the images by changing the amount of time different images appear. Typically, all of the work is done in a computer lab so participants are able to see what one another are doing, ask questions, and offer ideas.

Once the stories are complete, each workshop ends in a screening. This might be designed solely for the workshop participants or it might be open to a larger community. This depends on the purpose of the workshop and the wishes of the participants. At the screenings, each storytelling is given a few minutes to speak about their piece before or after it shows, depending on which they prefer. The audience is also given a chance to comment on the story. These discussions, while monitored by the facilitator, do not follow a set format. Rather, they grow organically from the community attending the screening.

The decision to explore digital storytelling with elementary age students came from my own positive experiences with the project. After faculty and administrators at Swarthmore College participated in digital storytelling workshops, the project began to spread across campus. I made my first story in the summer of 2009, after my freshmen year. Along with two environmental service technicians I learned how to record my voice and use Final Cut Pro to combine images with this recording. I agonized over what

transitions to use and made the tough decision that my story didn't actually need any music. Most importantly, I learned about my two staff member partners while at the same time learning how wonderful it felt to share my story. This experience sparked my thinking about who else could learn a lot from digital storytelling.

3.0 Literature Review

In order to contextualize this research, we must look briefly at some of the research related to digital storytelling in order to then compare some relevant aspects of reader-response theory. Understanding some findings in these fields will help us to think critically about that data and analysis in this study.

In the literature, digital storytelling is considered a diverse group of practices connected by their common goal of telling stories with digital technologies. These practices can include everything from the short movies my students created, to podcasts streaming on NPR's website, to a blog a college student keeps to document her study-abroad experience. Digital stories are the Web 2.0 way of constructing and sharing narratives (Alexander, 2011 and Vasudevan, 2010). For the purposes of this study, when I use the term digital storytelling, I am referring to the project and process that my students and I utilized. In discussing digital storytelling it's important to look at the practice from a few different angels.

Given the emphasis on *telling* stories, it's no surprise that digital stories are seen as an incredibly social practice. Their social nature makes them an excellent tool to use to bring people together. The process of making a digital story is one that deliberately puts many different literacy events into social and cultural interaction. Digital storytellers share their own oral stories with others. Then they are asked to share their writing and eventually their expression of visual literacy. And all the while, digital storytellers are expecting other participants to interact with the shared story in order to help shape it. Digital storytelling requires multiple social and cultural practices to explicitly create and revise our stories – a process that occurs every day though we're often less aware (Gee,

1999). Given their incredibly social nature, digital stories are currently an excellent tool to use as we examine how we interact with narratives, how they are mediated, and how we can use narratives (Erstad and Wertsch, 2008, and Bell, 2010).

This project takes a specific interest in how students chose to use these narratives. For many, digital stories are seen as extensions of traditional narrative forms. Before an individual develops the technical skills to shift the emphasis of her work to the digital aspects of this practice, the digital side of digital storytelling is used to support our traditional narrative senses (Alexander, 2011). Through digital storytelling, we can not only tell our stories in a more social way, but these multimodal projects allow us to think about and explore what makes a story understood. Through digital storytelling, we are able to play with music, images, and tone of voice in order to alter how others interpret our stories (Labbo and Ryan, 2010).

While digital storytelling places importance on authorship and ownership of work (Friedlander, 2008), we also know that the digital storytelling works to foster a collaborative atmosphere. As we ask students to listen, read, and watch these stories in various stages of their development, we ask them to be a part of the authors' experience developing and understanding her own work. By asking students to respond to these often personal stories of identity and memory, we are asking them to be a part of the reflective process of the storyteller (Campano, 2007).

Responding to stories is no small task. As we've come to understand the role of the reader, we know that "The 'meaning' [of the text] does not reside ready-made 'in' the text or 'in' the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between the reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1994). In other words, as the workshop participants

listen/read/watch whatever state the digital story is in, their experience, their responses imbue the text with meaning. Because the author is present and capable of changing the content and aesthetics, the participants can literally shape the text. Performative responses to text, those that show the students entering the text to steer or shape come alive in digital storytelling (Sipe, 2008). It's a medium that both encourages student response, and requires it. As students make meaning out of each other's work, the author is better able to make meaning out of their own story and writing process. Digital storytelling a "conversation" between the storyteller and the story, the story and audience, and the audience and the storyteller. This conversation is one that changes as each party involved responds to the other (Alexander, 2011).

Beyond responding, digital storytelling also requires direct feedback. This study found a difference between the two. Responding often involved students making personal connections or having broad conversations about tone, clarity, and flow. These rarely ended in suggestions but served as general comments Other times, students made very direct suggestions for changes about word choice, content or organization. I have named this feedback. Unfortunately, there is very little literature available that looks at the feedback processes of young children. Students receive feedback from teachers and adults regularly. However, standard classroom work rarely requires that they provide direct suggestions to the formal books and texts used. Instead, they are asked to respond. Because student-to-student conferences are typically directed by a teacher's rubric, there is little fieldwork done that looks at students natural tendencies to provide feedback on writing to one another (Tunstall and Gsipps, 1996).

Moving forward, I will look at some the specific frames I held as I constructed and ran my study. These frames have ground my analytic work .

4.0 Theoretical Frames

I developed my methodology and analyzed my data primarily through three frames. First, I designed my study as a piece of practitioner research as I planned to work as the teacher for these two projects while simultaneously collecting data. Second, because I was challenging assumptions of who should have access to certain tools, I saw this project as an example of teaching for social justice. Through digital storytelling I would not only share this medium with people who would otherwise not have access to it but I also decided I would not compare across my two sites. Uninterested in defining either community through deficits, I opted instead to bring attention to the good work that happens in both communities. And third, I worked under the belief that literacy is inherently social. It is something that we learn through, practice with, and develop alongside others.

4.1 Practitioner Research

As we think about learning in and from schools, classrooms, and students, it's important that we think about the best ways to access these spaces without being intrusive. Further, it's important that we also think about who might already hold some of the information we seek and who might be able to help us learn the rest. In either case, Cochran-Smith and Lytle urge researchers and academic institutions to include classroom teachers in research as "they have daily access, extensive expertise, and a clear stake in improving classroom practice [but] no formal ways for their knowledge of classroom teaching and learning to become part of the literature on teaching" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, p. 5). While teachers hold a wealth of knowledge about their students' classroom practices, they are typically cut off from avenues which would allow them to

share what they know. Teachers are also in the best situation to continue to learn about students and to watch as patterns develop because they are in the classroom every single day. Because it's natural for teachers to be in the classroom, their presence does not disrupt or alter classroom normalcy the way the presence of an outsider might. Teacher research works to complement existing methods that see teachers as the object of study by adding practitioner voices into the academic conversation. By participating in action-research, teachers add their frames, questions, and expertise to scholarship which, ultimately, works to better their classroom practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, p.7). By carrying out my own "systematic and intentional inquiry about teaching, learning, and schooling in [my] classroom setting," I too tried to jump into the conversation as a teacher who is interested in translating my questions into effective future pedagogy.

4.2 Teaching for Social Justice

Oppression, Freire argues, is a mutual process that the oppressor and the oppressed reify. In order to overcome inequalities we need to reframe our teaching practices with socially just theory. Rather than seeing students as inferior 'banks' who need to be filled with knowledge, Freire argues that teachers must work towards a mutual learning environment where students and teachers alike are aware of their gaps and work together to fill them as they shed their dehumanized identity (Freire, 1970). Through this process we can break the stability of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed and [pursue freedom] constantly and responsibly" (Freire, 1970, p. 47). We most apply this social justice frame not only to who and how we teach, but also to what we teach. Teaching for social justice means constantly challenging assumptions about who has knowledge and who should be a part of creating new knowledge. By exploring

digital storytelling with relatively open research questions with a population who had never used the medium before, I wanted to create a situation where my students and I could engage together in order to make something meaningful given the knowledge each of us already possessed. Further, I decided to run two iterations of the project in order to make sure a variety of students participated. I chose not to compare the two groups of students because doing so would likely imply that one group either had more knowledge or more valuable knowledge than the other. Teaching for social justice, however, means recognizing and drawing on the assets of students in order to help them achieve rather than assigning students an identity grounded in perceived shortcomings.

4.3 Literacy is Social

An enormous amount of research in educational studies suggests that literacy, by nature, is social (Gee, 1990, Street, 1995, and The New London Group, 1996). Meaning is made not individually but through and with other people. A group of students may all hear one peer read his story aloud in class, but the meaning of this situation varies for each student based on their cultural context and identities. Digital storytelling depends on the social nature of literacy. It not only recognizes it, but encourages it. Digital storytelling encourages people to share their stories so they may be interpreted and understood by others. Because feedback and response is such a large part of the process, authors have the opportunity to revise their story after the story circle in order to try to achieve a different response. In moving forward with this project, I recognized that social interactions are inseparable from literacy events. Given this, my research questions involved not only paying attention to the social interactions occurring, but looking

specifically at how the intensely social experience of digital storytelling affected how students revised their work.

5.0 Methods

After developing my research questions, my next step was finding students interested in participating in a digital storytelling workshop. Originally I'd hoped to work with one group of racially and socio-economically diverse students. But given the area I was working in, this would have meant transporting some of the students outside of their community to do the project. Logistically, this would have been very difficult. Further, requiring students to leave their community in order to engage with my project seemed to go against my research questions and some of the goals of digital storytelling. To solve this, I decided to run two different sessions and partner with two different community organizations.

5.1: Gaining Access to Daton Students

Early in the summer I met with the director of a community center in Daton multiple times in order to explain the project, show examples, and learn about the center and its students. Before the project started, I spent two week at the center volunteering as a staff member in order to get to know the community and the facility better. During this time, I also spoke with parents about the project and sent students home with an informational letter *(See Appendix A)*. Early in the summer, participation at the community center was low, but by the time we started the project at the end of June, fours students had signed up. Throughout the project, I met with the kids at the community for about an hour and half to two hours each day it was open. I also stay at the center to volunteer for another hour or so after the project. This allowed me to not only give back to the center for the help they were providing me, but also to get to know the students and the organization better.

5.2: Description of Daton

The first iteration of the project ran in the Small Daton Neighborhood's (SDN) community center in Daton. Daton is a small urban area located less than 20 miles from a major northeastern city. Daton is about 4.84 square miles and in 2010 its population was 33,972 people – a 3.4% increase from 2000[2]. The city is predominantly black. About 74.7% of its residents identify as black – a very large percentage especially given that in the state as a whole only 10.8% of residents identify as black. About 17.2% of people in the city identify as white.

In Daton, about 77% of residents 25 years or older hold a high school diploma, which is about 10% less than the state average. Of this same age group, about 8.7% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, where as the state average is 26.4%. Poverty is a big concern in Daton as 35.1% of people live below the poverty line, almost three times the state average.

Though Daton is a small city in terms of its area, the city is divided into many different neighborhoods. The Small Daton Neighborhood is one such area. Though many of the neighborhood lines in Daton are fairly informal, there is an especially strong sense of community in the SDN. A high percentage of the community attends one of the two local churches, many of the people in the area are related and stay within the neighborhood generationally, and the geographical layout of the area with small residential side streets coming off of one large main road means it's a neighborhood where people are able to socialize on their block easily. Further, as the director of the community center explained, the SDN neighborhood, "is a place where everybody cares

[2] All numerical data about Daton and Woodville comes from quickfacts.census.gov.(additional info edited to protect privacy)

about each other and cares about makin' their community good. We got organizations here that help people get their education, learn how to buy your home, and lots of stuff that make people want to be here. The people here, they're all family and that means they care about each other" (Field Notes, June 13th, 2011). Over the course of the summer, there were many different incidences where I found the director's description to be true. Many of the students who came to the community center were related and almost all of them went to church together. In the beginning of the summer some of the staff members and I flyered around the neighborhood in order to advertise the summer schedule of activities. On seven different occasions someone who did not have any children recommended the address of a family member or of close friend who may be interested in the center's programming.

The community center itself is run out of the upstairs of one of the churches. The space includes an office for the director and a refrigerator for snacks for the students, two large rooms, and a hallway with two bathrooms, a water fountain, and a closet. The closet holds the center's book collection and board games. Students are allowed to sit in the hallway to read quietly if they choose. The larger of the two rooms has bulletin boards that show off student art work, collapsible tables that can be brought out for activities, a T.V., a few movies, and a brand new Wii game system. Without a doubt the Wii game system is the most popular activity. Staff members regularly had a list running of students who were waiting to play the game. The other room has a table and counter space. This room was typically quieter and where students were able to use one of the four laptops the community center owned. Staff members also kept a waiting list for computer use as well. The second room is where we held our digital storytelling workshop. There was

room on the carpet to sit in a circle and talk, but also plenty of space to work in partners as we used the computers or to sit alone as the students wrote in their journals.

The community center was open this summer from 2pm-6pm on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from when school finished in June until the end of July. The community center is also open after school during the school year. Almost all of the students who regularly attended during the summer also attended regularly during the school year. However, participation in the center was low over all this summer, which is why the center closed for August. In June, there were rarely more than five or six students a day. But throughout July, the numbers increased and the center usually had between twelve and fifteen students. The center is staffed every day by one adult director, one teacher who had just finished her first year in graduate school pursing a PhD in Clinical Psychology, and four high school students working as teaching assistants. There were also three outside teachers, myself included, who came in to run Arts and Crafts, Zumba, and Digital Storytelling.

While the space for the community center had many advantages, there were some drawbacks as well. With the exception of the office, no other room in the community center had any windows. During the summer we had two power outages that left the community center completely dark and without fans. Because of this, one day we had to send students home after about an hour and another day we needed to close the center for the entire afternoon. The community center also did not have any air-conditioning. Because of the record breaking heat this summer, we had to close the center twice for 'extreme heat days.' The heat also meant that we very rarely took the students outside as there was no substantial shade near the church building. On the three occasions when we

did go outside, the students' favorite activity was jump roping in the parking lot. However, with our space limitations we couldn't let the students do this anywhere inside. At the end of the summer I informally asked some of the student at the center if they would be coming back in the fall. One girl who was 11 years old and did not participate in the digital storytelling project told me that "of course I'll come back. This is like my back yard but it also got lots of my friends here." Darren, one of the students who did participate in the digital storytelling project told me that "my Grandma really likes that I come because I get to do so many like activities and classes and stuff where I learn. But I don't even think she knows that it's like fun here too. I'd come without her tellin' me I had to go" (Field Notes, July 28th).

5.3: Gaining Access to Woodville Students

In Woodville, I got in touch with the curriculum director of the local elementary school. With his help, I sent out a letter to the families of all the students in 3rd-5th grade *(See Appendix B)*. From this letter, I received four responses. Of these four responses, three ended up either having conflicts with the dates of the program or needed full-day care. The fourth student participated in the project. The mother of this student recommended the program to a mother of twin girls who were also in the school, but passed over the letter. From this word of mouth, they got in contact with me and ultimately participated. The mother of the twin girls encouraged another mother who proceeded to sign-up as well. The other two participants in the program in Woodville were close family friends with my advisor, and signed-up after she told them about the project.

For the site for the Woodville project, I paired with the main library on the local college's campus. After I approached the librarians with the idea, they were eager to help and offered to reserve the library's computer classroom for us each day for the two week long workshop. Each day, I met the students in front of the library at 9:30am. When we did our final screening, we used a comfortable classroom on the college's campus that had a projection system. The campus was no more than a 15 minute walk from any of the students' homes.

5.4: Description of Woodville

Though a neighbor of Daton, Woodville is a very different community. A very small town, Woodville is about 1.4 square miles. As of the 2010 census Woodville had 6,194 residents. Of its residents, 82.5% identify as white, about 7.7% identify as Asian-American and about 5% identify as black. In Woodville, about 96.7% of people 25 or older have a high school diploma. Of these same residents, almost 81% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. In Woodville, 4.2% of people live below the poverty line, about 1/3 of the state average. Though small, Woodville boasts a number of different businesses on its main street. These include a CO-OP grocery store, coffee shop, multiple gift shops, a toy story, consignment clothing store, laundromat, many restaurants, and more. Woodville is a very residential community. When I did pre and post interviews with each of the students, I was invited into three different homes, all of which were easy to walk too. I did another interview at the local library, which is also easy to walk to. The other interviews I did at the project site, as that student lived on campus.

. The computer lab at the college were we held the camp was a large air conditioned room that had 13 working computers in it. One of the computers was hooked

up to a projector aimed at the front of the room where there was a whiteboard and a pull down projection screen. This computer classroom is generally used during the school year either for independent work or research demonstrations by the college's librarians. The library also had bathrooms and water fountains the students could use. While the camp took place mostly in the computer classroom in the library, we also used one of the quiet study rooms next to the computer classroom in order to record the stories. While not completely sound proof, these rooms provided a space where students could record their story with a partner without extraneous noise or interruption. Over the course of two weeks, when the heat permitted, we were able to explore the campus a little bit as we ate our snack outside and visited specific academic buildings based on students' requests. We also used the Education department's classroom in order to host the screening of the final projects for family and friends.

The digital storytelling camp met Monday-Friday for two consecutive weeks from 9:30am – 11:30am. Six students participated in the camp, all of whom except one showed up everyday. The one student who missed camp, stayed after one day so we could work one on one and catch him up. Most of the students learned about the camp through word of mouth, though one signed-up from a flyer sent home by her school. All of the students had been to the college before, but they had not all been to the library. Throughout the two weeks, the students remained very excited to be on a college campus. On multiple occasions students told me that they planned to attend this college, one girl even said "this camp is kind of like practice for when I go here. I'll already know my way around and know where I can study in the library" to which her sister responded "yeah, that's part of why we wanted to do this camp" (Field Notes, July 11th).

5.5: Chart of Participating Students

Daton

Name	Grade Completed	Story Title
Darren[3]	2nd	**"Darren's Time with the Computer"**
Soshanna	4th	**"Dear BJ"**
Kyra	5th	**"Being a Pediatrician"**
Elena	6th	**"Life!"**

Woodville

Name	Grade Completed	Story Title
Alyssa	3rd	**"Environment Reactions"**
Ismail	3rd	**"My Trip to the White House"**
Amanda	5th	**"Laertes the Weasel Steals the Show"**
Caitlin	5th	**"My Trip to Arizona"**
Rebecca	5th	**"My Trip to China"**
Sam	5th	**Untitled**

[3] Throughout the document student and location names have been changed in order to maintain privacy. However, names are not changed on the attached DVDs. Because of this, "Darren's Time with the Computer" is named differently on the DVD.

5.6 Data Collection

5.6.1 Interviews

Before the start of each of the two digital storytelling workshops, I interviewed each of the participating students. These semi-structured interviews were designed to move logically through predetermined topics while not preventing students from saying what they wanted to (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). For the students at Woodville, I did four of these interviews in the student's home. One I did in the hallway outside of her mother's office, and another I did at the Woodville town library. I interviewed all four Daton students at the community center in rooms where we were alone with the door shut. Each interview began with an explanation of the recorder I was using as well as the process of being interviewed. I assured each student that they could pass on any question that they wanted to and that we could stop the interview at any point if they wished. I also let them know that if there was something that they wanted to talk about that I did not bring up, they were more than welcome to do so.

These interviews served a few different purposes. First, they were the first one-on-one time that I had with any of the students. I wanted to get to know them and give them a chance to get to know me and ask any questions. The first few questions I asked were focused on creating a relaxed atmosphere for our interview. After learning some basic information about the students, I asked questions in a few different categories: general experiences in school, experiences with reading and writing in school, general, experiences giving feedback to peers at school, experiences at home, experiences with reading and writing at home, experiences with computers in and out of school,

knowledge of digital storytelling, ideas for stories *(See Appendix C)*. Each of these interviews lasted between 20 and 35 minutes and I transcribed all of them.

At the end of each workshop I tried to do a second interview with each student. At the community center in Daton, I interview two students immediately before the final screening and two immediately afterwards. In all four cases we did these interviews in the same room where we are able to talk uninterrupted. For the students from Woodville, I interviewed one student directly after the screening in the classroom where we'd shown the stories. Four of the other students I interviewed in the homes all within five days of the screening. Unfortunately, I was unable to successfully get in touch with the 6th student after the workshop and did not get to do a 6th interview. These semi-structured interviews were intended help me understand students final impressions of the project and to give them a chance to reflect on their experiences with digital storytelling. I also used this opportunity to ask questions about specific things that arose throughout the project. Because these interviews were tailored more to the individual students, these semi-structured interviews varied significantly between the students. However, for each student asked them to reflect on their own story, each others stories, what it was like giving and receiving feedback, what they thought worked or didn't work about the project, and what role they thought digital storytelling could play in their school. Wanting to honor their voices as much as possible, I also talked with each student about what they thought was most important for me to write about as I moved forward with my project *(See Appendix D)*.

5.6.2: Field Notes

Throughout the project, I kept extensive field notes on each day of the workshop. Keeping my field journal allowed me to do three different things. First , it encouraged me to look, meaning I was "looking critically, looking openly, looking sometimes knowing what [I] was looking for, looking for evidence, looking to be persuaded, looking for information (Clough and Nutbrown, 50).Keeping field notes helped shift my positioning from practitioner to practitioner researcher. Second, beyond keeping an account of what happened that day, my journaling time allowed me to reflect on what was working, what wasn't, and what trends I was starting to see. Because this project is new, it's unsurprising that it needed tweaking. Before it began, before I met the students and settled on the site, I wrote a rough curriculum for the project *(See Appendix E)*. By journaling at the end of each day I gave myself space to rethink this curriculum and make edits for the next day. Finally, journaling allowed me to capture unedited student voice. Without field notes, it would have been very difficult to look at how students responded to one another's stories. The journaling process allowed me to capture, though not exactly, how students interacted with one another.

5.6.3: Student Journals

In my hope to make the digital storytelling program a safe space where students could share what they were thinking and feeling, I asked each students to spend the last 10-15 minutes of our time together keeping a journal. I explained that the idea of the journal was for them to have a space to share with me what we did, what they liked, and what they didn't like. I asked that they use the journal to tell me what they're thinking and feeling about digital storytelling. I also said the journal could be a place where they could talk about something they might not wish to share with the whole group. If they

wrote anything that they didn't want me to read, they could mark that page and I wouldn't look at it.

I received an overwhelmingly negative response to the journal writing aspect of the project. While I'd hoped the students would take the 10-15 minutes to sit quietly and be reflective, almost everyone rushed through their journal. I was often asked what they should write about, how much they needed to write, was this good enough, and other questions that made it clear students were not seeing the journals as I'd hoped and anticipated. In many ways, I believe the journal felt too much like 'school' and the students were not interested in doing them in the context of the summer program. Ultimately, the student journals proved most helpful in that they allowed me to spend time moving between students individually at the end of each session. As they asked me questions about their journals, I was able to talk with them independently. In the post-interviews 8 out of the 10 total students said they did not like writing in the journals and all 10 (including those two who did say they liked it) offered the suggestion that I talk with them individually at the end of session. As Caitlin explained, "the journals were good because, like, they were private but I think I can just tell you private things. Maybe if something bad had happened, but I think I was always kind of tired at the end so I could have told you more saying it and not, like, writing it down slowly" (Post-Interview, 7/23/11).

5.6.4: Stories

By the end of the two workshops, each student had completed their own digital storytelling project. These completed projects served as a crucial piece of data. Not only did they show what stories students chose to highlight, but paired with their initial drafts

of their scripts, first audio recordings, and rough cuts of their work, these stories show how students opted to incorporate their peers' feedback into their work.

At the end of each workshop, students presented their stories at a screening. In doing so, the students were given a few minutes to talk about their story, share their experience, and answer any questions. These screening allowed students to reflection on their experience through their story.

5.7: Coding

In order to analyze my data, I adopted Smith and Osborn's coding schema they develop for Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The goal of IPA, they explain, is "to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency of IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events, states hold for participants…[it] is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event" (Smith and Osborn, 53, 2007).

In order to do this, Smith and Osborn describe a process of working through an entire set of Data for one case. After themes with in this case have been noted, the researcher looks for connections between these themes. Next, the researcher repeats this process of every case and finally looks for connections between the themes of each case (Smith and Osborn, 67-75, 2007).

For my study, I first moved through the interview transcriptions, field notes, journals, and finally the stories for the all the students from Daton. After I'd noted themes and connections, I followed the same steps for the students from Woodville. After I looked for connections between the themes in each site, I cross-checked my coding scheme by working through the data again, but this time by student. I looked for themes

that came out in individual student's experiences by reading just their interviews and journals and analyzing their story and their sections in my field notes. I followed this process for each of the students. In the end I divide my finding into two major categories and five subcategories which I will discuss in detail.

6.0: Discussion:

From my coding I've pulled out five major themes that I will discuss. The first two themes relate to the process of digital storytelling. Students noted significant difference between 'writing' in school and 'writing' for digital storytelling. While in school students focused on small sentence level skills, in digital storytelling students focused on large scale aspects of their writing such as their content and flow. Beyond discussing these differences, students also showed that responding to one another's stories is an incredibly complex process which delineates a difference between 'response' and 'feedback.'

The last three themes I'll discuss all relate to what stories students choose to tell, what these stories told them, and what these stories told others. In creating digital stories, student explored goals they have for themselves in the future. They validated and solidified important relationships and experiences. And while students felt ownership over their stories, they also discovered they had varying degrees of agency when it came to shaping their story the way they wanted.

Ultimately, I'll use my discussion of these five themes to discuss possible implications for practice as well as directions for future research.

6.1: The Process of Digital Storytelling

6.1.1 School Practices versus Digital Storytelling Practices

For all of the students involved, digital storytelling was a brand new medium. None of the students had ever made or seen a digital story before and only two of the ten

students had ever worked with our movie making software. While the digital side of the project was new, all of the students had at least some level of comfort writing. In fact, in their pre-interviews, ever student except one discussed the fact that part of the reason they wanted to participate in the project was because the liked to write. Some told me they liked to write stories and other mentioned journals they keep at home. Elena told me she likes to make up characters and come up with biography's for them. After she finds pictures of clothes, shoes, make-up, houses, cars, and other things she thinks might belong to the character she makes up "I will, like, write down all the things that go with them. Like, what they are and what they do. And sometimes, I'll write like, you know those things people always say. Not like habits, but like, um, their uh, catchphrases. And sometimes, I'll write like a conversation they might have with someone else" (Pre-Interview, 6-20-11). Elena' descriptions of the character studies she creates were by far the most elaborate kinds of writing I heard any of the students described. But all of the student told me about some kind of writing they did at home.

Writing, I learned, was also a main focus of every students' day at school. As Rebecca explained to me "We have to write like in writing. That's where we practice our different kids of writing like how to convince or how to inform. But we also have to write during reading and during math when we do word problems. And sometimes in science when we observe something. We write a lot" (Pre-Interview, 7-8-11). All of the students told me writing was something they do frequently in school. However, not all of the students seemed to like writing in school the way they do at home. As Sam explained to me "You've got to write it a lot, like you have to write the same thing a couple of times

because each time you do it my teacher will circle things I did wrong like with my spelling" (Pre-Interview, 7-7-11). Darren described this same phenomenon when he said:

> D: "We do writing but we only really write like one thing for a lot of days. Like…on Monday I'll write my paragraph and I won't write anything new for like, for like forever! First I got to do my rough draft and then I got to do my second draft. And sometimes I got to do another draft and then I get to put it on the good paper and hang it up."
>
> H: "Wow, that's a lot of drafts! What kinds of things will do differently in second or final draft then you did from your first draft? What do you change?"
>
> D: "Just like, what the teacher tells me. Like I have to fix my letters and how clean I write them. I got to change my spelling and I forget to indent a lot."
>
> H: "Do you ever change parts of your story? Like, will you aad in more details or write something brand new? Or would you say you mostly edit?"
>
> D: "I mostly edit. I sometimes, like I sometimes put in another, uh, like, uh, a word that describes. But usually no. If I put new stuff in I'd have to write it again and my teacher she, like, she'd want me to look up more spelling words" (Pre-Interview, 6-21-11).

While the students recognized that they were 'writing' in school, they noted a difference between their time in school spent writing and their time in school spent revising their work on a sentence level. The content of their work rarely changes. Both of these students describe the pains-taking process of re-writing their work in order to get to the "final draft" version. Students repeatedly quantified the difference between what they saw as 'writing,' meaning drafting out a new story, as opposed to editing and re-copying that took up so much of their writing time.

As our project progressed, students noted some key differences between the way we wrote stories for digital storytelling and the way they did writing in school. As we first began telling our stories orally, most of the students took to it quickly. Kyra eagerly volunteered to share her story first. She told it slowly with a few self corrections:

> "Kyra began telling the story of how she would like to be a pediatrician when she grows up. Kyra began describing how she plays with younger siblings, the responsibilities she has to take care of them, and how she sees these skills translating to her future career. On a few separate occasions Kyra paused and retold her story. Her entire telling had an air of theatricality to it. She told her story not as if she was having a conversation, but as if she was reading a book aloud to one of the younger students at the community center. After she finished and we all took a minute or two to think about her story, Kyra said she was ready for comments. Different students gave different kinds of comments, and for almost all of them Kyra practiced a kind of revision orally. For instance, Elena suggested that Kyra share what she liked best about taking care of little kids. Kyra responded by saying essentially, "oh, so I should say like 'It make me feel happy' right?" to which Elena responded, "yeah, but like why? What about it?" This led Kyra to go back and revise her story orally again, saying "It make me feel happy because they get use to me and that mean that they're calm with me because I'm taking good care of them" (Field Notes, 6-30-11)

This vignette represents a pattern I saw in many of the students' experiences with our story circles. Students made significant content changes to their stories and revised these drafts by telling what their story would sound like with the suggested changes. The first revisions of the students' stories took place before they'd physically written anything. This means by the time I asked students to write out their scripts, their stories had already been fleshed out with details and clarified through improved organization. After students wrote out their revised drafts, I helped them by typing their work as-is. Then, students worked in pairs to make final revisions. They made their revisions directly on the computer. Because these stories would never be seen in print, the spelling, punctuation, and formatting did not matter. The students made these edits only to the extent that it was necessary for them to be able to read their work aloud smoothly. Their sentence level edits had a direct purpose which was clear to the students. As Rebecca said, "I made a lot of different kinds of changes. I put in a lot more details and I think I thought more about how my story sounded than like how it would look and stuff. I kinda decided that I needed to change some normal stuff. Like, I made more paragraphs because then it would

give a break when I was reading. And like, I did that with commas too like so I would know take a breath and not read too fast" (Post-Interview, 7-22-11). While there were some sentence level edits, as Rebecca described, these were mostly initiated by the students as they deemed these edits important. The vast majority of changes that happened to student stories were focused on content. Elena specifically named this shift saying, "I got to think about what my story was really about. And like, everyone else did too…they helped me make my story better and not just my writing. It's my story I want to tell it good" (Post-Interview, 7-21-11). Excitement like Elena's was a feeling almost every student discussed in their post-interviews. Digital storytelling allowed them to think focus on and improve the content of their stories and not just their spelling, grammar, and formatting skills.

There is an enormous amount of literature on these conflicting focuses. Strong writers are those who show both 'fluency' and 'skills' (Delpit, 1986). To be a fluent writer means that one "feels comfortable putting pen to paper", is developing their voice, and is "writing in meaningful contexts" (Delpit, 16, 12, 1986). A skillful writer is one who can abide by the rules of Standard American English in order to 'communicate effectively in standard, generally acceptable literary forms" (Delpit, 18-19,1986). Delpit argues that students do need more space to develop their fluency in school. Minority students in particular, she asserts, are already very fluent, though this may not be commonly recognized. What these students need is the opportunity to learn skills in order to bring their voice into the dominant discourse. Delpit urges teachers to recognize that "if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to truly progress we must insist on 'skills' *within the context of* critical and creative thinking" (Delpit, 19.

1986). While Delpit suggests that teachers often over emphasize the need for minority students to gain fluency and need to also teach these students concrete skills, my students argued otherwise. Students from both Daton and Woodville described their writing programs as ones that stress skill building above all else. And overwhelmingly, these students seemed exhausted by it. Digital storytelling, however, offered students the chance to expand on their existing fluency. Expanding their fluency led students to think critically about their writing and what it communicated to their readers. Even more, this work came from a place of excitement that I didn't hear in the students' descriptions of writing and revising in school.

I believe digital storytelling actually did help these ten students develop their skills as well. This skill building happened primarily in two different ways. First, as Rebecca described, some students made sentence level edits to their story in order to make it more readable when it was time to record. These edits were done in an incredibly meaningful way as students discovered for themselves what they needed to change in order to be able to communicate the story they wanted in the way they wanted to communicate it. Because the students didn't need to focus on getting ever word spelled correctly, all of their punctuation exact, and their handwriting clear all at the same time, these edits were made without inducing the exhaustion the students' complained of with their classroom writing and recopying process. Beyond the sentence level, students were also able to develop larger scale skills as well. Throughout the oral storytelling process, students were able to rework organization, discuss topic sentences, flow, transitions, and other key elements for a clear piece of writing.

The students' experience with digital storytelling suggests that this project is one that helps to create well-rounded writers. Not only did this project encourage the students to tell their story and think critically about the content of their writing, but it also provided them an avenue to develop a wide range of skills in a meaningful context. Perhaps most importantly, our digital storytelling project seemed to excite the students more than the writing process they described in school. Students were engaged, enthusiastic, and eager to imagine what their next story might be.

6.1.2: Complex Responses

Unlike the school practices students described, digital storytelling is a project that depends on collaborative work. Student stories are critiqued at essentially every step in the process of making them. Students share their thoughts on others' work when it's still just an oral story, once it's written down, as it's being recorded, as pictures are included, and once it's a complete project. Going into the project I was eager to see how students responded to one another and how they accepted feedback. In analyzing the data, I saw that the students took on a complex process that required empathy, perspective taking, confidence, and sometimes thick-skin.

Part of what made this process seem so complex was my own initial lack of precision in language. When I first coded my data I used 'response' and 'feedback' interchangeably. However, looking at the data it's clear that both of these words carry a level of nuance worthy of their own short discussion.

As discussed in the literature review, reader-response theory explains that meaning is not inherent in text. Instead, meaning is infused in the text when the reader interacts with it (Rosenblatt, 1994). Similarly, when a workshop participant shares his or

her story, the listener/reader plays a crucial role in making meaning. While this was never explicitly stated, the students seemed to understand this. One of the two most commons ways students engaged with each other's work was by responding to it aloud. Students frequently made text-to-self connections. Sometimes, the author of the story was excited about the connection and started a dialogue. For instance, after Caitlin finished her first telling of her trip to the Grand Canyon, Ismail spoke up to draw a connection between their two stories:

> "Ismail very excitedly raised his hand to comment on Caitlin's story after she finished sharing. I got him to stay quite for a few moments to give everyone a chance to think, but it was clear that he was desperate to go first! When he spoke up, he told Caitlin how he thought both of their stories were very similar because they both talked about trips. Ismail went on saying "You did something fun with your family and I did something really fun with my family too. And I liked your story 'cause it reminded me about when we went out to eat in Washington and we were really hungry so we stopped at this restaurant but it turned to be really gross but we didn't leave because we were so hungry." Ismail went on to make other connections between the two stories. At first, I was concerned that other students weren't getting airtime to speak and I was worried that Caitlin would be frustrated that Ismail kept directing the attention her story should have been getting back to him. But surprisingly, she wasn't at all! In fact, she encouraged it by smiling and even asking him questions so he'd talk about the connections even more" (Field Notes, 7-12-11)

By the time the project was over, I was still confused by Caitlin's response. I asked her about it in our post-interview where told me that she'd been excited about his connections. When I asked her why, she explained that "he was feeling all the things I felt. I knew it was funny we could only see the buses and that the gross food was so gross at the restaurant. When he told a funny story and said my story reminded him of it, then I figured he also thought my story was funny. That's what I wanted" (Post-Interview, 7-23-11). Caitlin understood immediately in the moment that while Ismail's behavior may have been attention seeking, it also proved that her story had the tone she hoped. Her story elicited the response she hoped it would. Given this and other positive

feedback, Caitlin made few revisions to her initial draft other than cutting out a few examples to keep the story more focused.

Other students also looked for specific responses from their peers, though they did not always get them. When they got a response they were not hoping for, students often tried to imagine or ask questions about what had caused a particular reaction so they could alter their story in order to receive the response they wanted. Sometimes, however, especially when students were past a certain stage of their project, there were unable to make the changes they wanted. Darren, for instance, struggled with recording his story. Clearly nervous, he read very quickly and with little emotion, even though his story was about being excited about computers. In our post-interview, Daren described a response Shoshanna shared with him outside of the story circle. "I know Shoshannah was always tellin' me to slow down when I was like recordin' my story. I shoulda done that better, like practice more? Because once I got it in my story she was like 'I thought you'd be excited in your story because it's all happy but you sound like you're nervous to be on the computer,' like I shoulda slowed down 'cause I meant her to know I was happy" (Post-Interview, 7-21-11). Unfortunately because of our time constraints we were not able to go back and re-record Darren's story. Despite this, it was interesting to see Darren take on Shoshanna's perspective and realize what he needed to do to do to his story in order to initiate the kind of response he had intended.

Many of our story circles centered on students responding to one another by either making connections to themselves, making connection to something they know, or asking questions that reveal their interpretation. But these responses did not stand alone. Students often paired their responses with direct suggestions for feedback. These

suggestions typically pinpointed one or two elements of a story that the author needed to work on. Whether something as focused as word choice or large as overall clarity, students made lots of suggestions to one another. As it so happened, sometimes these suggestions were not well received. While some students were very careful about how they phrased their feedback and tried hard to follow the constructive criticism guidelines we developed in our project sites, some students were more eager to get their ideas out quickly. In Daton, Shoshanna was notorious for this. She gave feedback which prefaced her suggestions by saying "your story won't be very good unless you…" or "it didn't make any sense when you said…" Generally speaking, Shoshanna gave excellent feedback. She had a keen ear for what could be cut from long stories and had a clear understanding of the whole project form the beginning. She often pointed out that some things people made stories for would be very difficult to show with pictures. However, because she gave feedback in such a negative way, most of the other students stopped listening to her. After about seven group meetings, even when her ideas was spot on and she tried to be empathetic, Elena and Kyra would not incorporate her suggestions. Unfortunately, I was unable to help work this problem out before the workshop ended. The two older girls didn't like Shoshanna's attitude, and Shosanna was hurt that no one would listen to her ideas.

While digital storytelling is full of positives, there also some aspects which cause tension. The collaborative nature of the process is one that not only calls on students to both respond and give feedback, but it requires that do so in a way that others will find receptive. Among other things, digital storytelling offers an opportunity to develop patience.

6.2 Why do we Tell our Stories? What do they Tell Us? What do they Tell Others?

Without a doubt, all of the students involved in this project created complicated stories with personal ties. While each of these stories are unique to the teller, a number of different patterns emerged across many of the different students' stories. Overwhelming, I saw the students engage in a rich process of identity construction as they selected stories to tell, collaboratively developed their project, and adopted a stance as an expert. With the help of digital storytelling, these students solidified their important goals and relationships. They actively shaped how their peers understood them and they recognized the power that comes from controlling the telling of ones own story. In this section, I will look closely at few different students and their stories in order to discuss these trends that permeated our digital storytelling experience over the summer.

6.2.1 Possible Selves

Before I interviewed each student, I showed them a few different examples of digital stories. While I tried to offer a diverse set of examples, the majority of the students recognized and commented on the fact that I didn't show any stories made by *kids.* I explained to each student that part of the reason I wanted to do this project was exactly that: I didn't have any digital stories by kids![4] After explaining this, I asked Kyra in our pre-interview what she might want to tell a story about. She paused for a moment before saying "I really don't know, like, I got nothing. Like all them stories talk about things people did and stuff but I, I only done some stuff and I don't think, like, I don't think I really have a good story to tell" (Pre-Interview, 6-21-11). While I tried to assure Kyra that of course she has a great story to tell, she was not interested in engaging. We moved

[4] I did show all the students one or two examples from a 4th grade class' digital poetry project. But all ten students told me in one way or another that they did not like poetry and wanted to do something very different.

on with the interview until about six minutes later right when we were finishing. Kyra initiated the following dialogue asking

> K: "Does that story have to be true, well like, not true, but does a story have to already have happened or can it still be gonna happen like in the, like, like in the future and stuff."
>
> H: "Oh! You can tell a story about something in the future if you want. You can also totally make up a story. It's anything you want. Why? Do you think you might have an idea now?
>
> K: "Yeah I think I'm gonna talk about like how I like really like babies and how I'm gonna be a pediatrician when I get older and go to college and stuff."
>
> H: "That sounds awesome! I'd really like to hear more about that."
>
> K: "Yeah 'cause I like know a lot of stuffs about it and can like tell about what you gotta do to take care of a baby. Yeah, yeah I think I'm gonna do my story about bein' a pediatrician" (Pre-Interview, 6-21-11).

Kyra was one of many students who decided to either focus their story on future aspirations, or at least include these future aspirations in their story. While Kyra started out unsure what she might talk about, some of the other students knew immediately.

When I sat down with Elena to begin her interview, I didn't even have a chance to turn on the audiorecorder before she told me she planned to name her story "Life!" As we began talking, I pressed her for details about her story. What about life did she want to discuss? What was the main focus of her story? Was it her life? Someone else's? Though unable to give me specific details at that point, Elena exuded an enormous amount of confidence that she knew just what her story would say, telling me "You don't need to worry, I got this. It'll be about life and why it's precious. I know a lot about it and I'm gonna talk and explain it and show it" (6-20-11).When Elena wrote her story and read it for the first time to the group, we were all blown away. Elena had crafted a short piece which shared not only the importance of doing well school and working hard, but also her

own plans for college, a successful, creative career, and a family based on mutual love and respect. When Elena received feedback on her story from her peers for the first time, it was clear that they too recognized the power of this story:

> After Elena finished sharing her wonderful story, there was a longer than usual pause – long enough that Elena spoke up and asked "isn't anyone going to say anything?" Kyra spoke up first and effusively praised the story. She used the word beautiful multiple times before ending saying "you got it. You know what you want and you said it and you gonna get it now. I think you're gonna do all that." Elena responded with a smile before saying, "that's why I had to get it down." Darren spoke up next and said that he liked the details about what kind of jobs she wanted to have and thought the story would be good because Elena would like finding pictures because it was all stuff that she liked. He also told Elena to make sure to find a pretty picture of her Mom "because I bet she would like that in your story. You sayin you like her and you sayin you gonna take care of her. You gotta use a pretty picture like she'll like." Shoshanna jumped in quickly and said they had plenty of those. Shoshanna then commented on the specific word choice of 'expired' to described her Mom after she's passed away, and Elena reluctantly agreed Shoshanna was right to tell her to change it. Shoshanna also said she like the story because "you say you gonna do stuff that's like stuff that would be good to do. Our Mom would be happy if you did any of that 'cause she tells us we are gonna go to college and get a job and stuff" (Field Notes, 6-30-11).

With overwhelmingly positive feedback, Elena went on to make only minor changes to her script. Instead, she spent significant time practicing how she would record her story because, as she explained to me, "what I wrote about was important to me. I'm gonna keep it and remember 'cause it tells what I'm gonna be. I gotta tell it right" (Post-Interview, 7-21-11)

Students from Woodville, as well as Daton, created stories that looked into the future. Alyssa, for instance, based her story off an experience she had watching someone liter. In her first interview, Alyssa described herself as an "animal and nature lover" who hates to see "anything bad happening to our world" (Pre-Interview, 7-8-11). In this same story, Alyssa repeatedly told me how one day she wanted to be a marine biologist and maybe work in an aquarium. When I asked her what she wanted to tell her story about she said, "I'm going to

make a story that teaches something. I want my story to teach people not to hurt the environment because we can't hurt it when we really need to help it" (Pre-Interview, 7-8-11). As Alyssa developed her story it became a piece that not only showed her strong emotions about conservation as she urged others to be responsible environmental stewards, but it also discussed her plan to become a marine biologist as a way to realize her environmental activist identity. Alyssa plans to be a marine biologist so she can "study all these ocean animals and fix things up!" (Finished Story, 7-22-11).

These stories of "something in the future" as Kyra described them, help the students do important work as they imagine potential identities for themselves as they grow older. Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that people hold concepts of a 'possible self,' or an idea of what a person might become in the future. These 'possible selves' come from our past and present self-concept and are a form of self knowledge that "should not be dismissed, for it is entirely possible that this variety of self-knowledge also exerts a significant influence on individual functioning" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.955). While our 'possible selves' are personalized, there are also incredibly social as they grow and develop through our social relationships as we compare our thoughts and behaviors with those around us (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954). While we know that 'possible selves' are concepts that change over time, we also know that acknowledging and directly addressing these potential identities work to incentive people to change their current behavior so it matches with their 'possible self.' A positive 'possible self' can be an enormous motivator (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.960-961).

Creating stories that explored 'possible selves' allowed these students to actively think and assess what's most important to them. It encouraged students to discuss what they need to do to achieve their goals – whether it's to be a pediatrician, a marine biologist, or someone with a Life! - with an emphasis on the exclamation point. Further, it allowed students to share these goals with others and hear their peers' similar desires. Our collaborative digital storytelling project not only gave students the space and medium to do this important identity work, but it also gave them a community in which to do it with support and peer models. Through out story circles, students were able to adopt the identity of 'expert' of their possible self. To our group, Kyra knew everything about babies and being a doctor. To the students in Woodville, Alyssa was an authority on the environment. Even when she didn't get everything right, as was the case when she explained that people through toxic waste into the ocean to kill dolphins so there are more fish for humans to eat, Alyssa was still seen as an expert by her peers. In our final interview, Kyra described her story as "a promise to myself for what I can do and what I'll become one day" (Post-Interview, 7-22-11). And it is. Kyra, along with many others in these two digital storytelling projects, created representations of their 'possible selves' that they will be to hold on to in many different senses.

6.2.2: Artifactual Boundary Objects

The idea of "holding" a story was one many different students discussed. By creating digital stories, students had more then their memory of an event or feeling. They had an artifact that engages many different senses and captures a

story from many different angles. Students had an object that they can share with others as they preserve a special time or experience in their lives. One student chose to create stories about a family trip filled with inside jokes. Another captured the feeling of succeeding in a school play when they didn't think they could. A third student chose to capture a special birthday party with his brother and dad while a fourth documented her experience traveling to China where she was adopted from.

Shoshanna's project serves as one strong example of a story that became an object. Shoshanna, the middle of three children, is two years younger than her older sister Elena and eight years older than her little brother B.J. She lives with her mother who, at the time of our project, was pregnant and due at the end of August. Over the course of our project Shoshanna and Elena argued a lot. Outside of our project they rarely participated in the same activities at the same time. Instead of hanging out with Elena and Elena's group of girl friends, Shoshanna opted to play with B.J. At two years old, B.J. was technically too young for the center, but attended anyway because his mom was the director. While there weren't many toys are activities targeted at B.J., Shoshanna was happy to color with B.J., read with him, chase him around the room, and most anything else that he was interested in. By the middle of the summer, Shoshanna was acting out a lot during our project and other activities at the center. Shoshanna's mother told me she was also frequently misbehaving at home. As soon as Shoshanna became frustrated with another student at the center, she retreated into whatever activity B.J. was doing. More than once, I had to talk to Shoshanna about giving feedback to the other students that was kind and constructive. When the other students stopped listening to what Shoshanna said,

she would often ask me if she could leave our room to go take pictures of B.J. for her project. Over the summer, it became increasingly clear how important B.J. was to Shoshanna. I believe this became increasingly clear to Shoshanna, as well.

In our pre-interview Shoshanna told me she wanted to write a story about going to college and what her life will be like when she lives in a dorm. When she came to the first day of our project, she'd changed her mind and brought in to two stories she'd written in school. One was about getting ice cream and the other was a fictional story about getting a pet zebra. She told me she wanted to make both of these into a digital story. We talked about how she might combine these into a story because we wouldn't have time to make two separate projects.

> "Shoshanna sat quietly for a minute while we thought about how to make her two stories fit together. After a minute or so, she asked me if she could just do the story she had originally wanted. I asked her if she meant the one about college, but she said no. The first one she wanted to do was going to be about B.J., "but Elena told me that would be real boring so I changed my mind." I told her I didn't think that it would be boring if that was story that she really wanted to do, so Shoshanna changed her mind. I told her that is she wanted to think about her story overnight before she shared with our story circle, she was welcome to. Shoshanna decided to wait and seemed visibly excited about this new idea" (Field Notes, 6-27-11).

When she came in the next day, Shoshanna told our group how her story would focus on B.J. and why he's a good little brother. She also told us that it would be funny because he's funny and she wanted the story to reflect him. As she told about her story, the group helped her think out certain details and what kind of pictures might fit with the story. As we began to wind down, Darren, who had been quiet, spoke up.

> "In an uncharacteristic way given how quiet he's been so far, Darren spoke up completely unprompted and asked Shoshanna, "But like, how come you want to tell about this. Like, how come about B.J. and like not the new baby?" When Shoshanna didn't give an immediate response, Darren continue by saying "I just think talkin' about the new baby would make a better story because it's new and like more excitin' and stuff." Again Shoshanna was quiet. I was unsure how she would answer this question at first. No one had really questioned her story up to this point. After taking a moment, Shoshanna calmly responded. She explained that she didn't know the new baby and she didn't want to write about someone she didn't know about. But B.J., she did know a lot about him "And I know that he's really sweet and he's really good at being a little brother

> and at like, bein' the baby in the family. When he get older I want him to know about how he was so good when he was little" (Field Notes, 6-28-11).

From the very beginning Shoshanna saw her story as having a purpose. She wanted it to be something for B.J. as he got older. Shoshanna used digital story in order to both highlight the story of her brother, but also to solidify it as an object that she could pass on to him when he got older.

Shoshanna used digital storytelling as a medium to create a 'boundary object,' a physical object which is infused with meaning and moves from the place where it was created (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010). A boundary object is something that "cross[es] borders and forge[s] new connections across those borders" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 16). It is an artifact that brings its infused meaning with it as a moves to a different community, or to a different person. In this case, Shoshanna's digital storytelling artifact will move not between communities, but between people and time. As a gift for her brother in the future, this physical story carries Shoshanna's current feelings about their relationship. It carries jokes, memories, and love. It carries Shoshanna's appreciation for having a loving little brother and belief that he is wonderful at doing what he does now: living as the baby in their family. In her story, Shoshanna shares what she's learned from B.J. and how he's affected her. Shoshanna boundary object, she hopes, will work to cross the border between their relationship before the new baby and their relationship after the new baby comes. By crossing this border, Shoshanna hopes to create a connection that will bring her feelings about B.J. and the strength of their relationship into the future. Shoshanna hopes that her story will be an artifact that shapes B.J. identity. As she explained, "I just want B.J. to know that he did a real good job of being a little brother and I think he was real good because he made me a good big sister. He's gotta remember that 'cause things are changin'. But he's always gonna be my little brother" (Post-Interview, 7-21-11). With

the help of Shoshanna's digital story, with the help of this artifact that bring the story of their current relationship up through time, B.J. *will* understand.

6.2.3 Ownership and Agency

I've focused on two different trends in the kinds of stories the students told. Moving beyond the subject of the students' stories and the end project, it's important to also examine the students' experience telling the story. Of course, each student had an individualized experience. But in our final interviews, every student discussed their feelings of ownership, or lack there of, over their story. In order to discuss this, I'll look at two students' experiences in particular: Sam and Kyra.

Before the project started, Sam was the least enthusiastic. He was the one student who didn't name a love of writing as a reason for wanting to participate in the workshop. Instead, he loves art and was eager to try the visual aspect of the project. In our pre-interview he told me that he's struggled with both reading and writing. He doesn't like doing either more than is required in school. This carried over to our project as well. He rarely wrote more than a single sentence for a journal entry and opted instead to draw sketches of different animals. His parents told me that he is both dyslexic and dysgraphic and his father in particular was excited for this project because he thought Sam would get to practice some of these traditional literacy skills that he struggles with while also combing his artistic and visual literacy talents. When we first started the project, Sam was by far the least engaged.

Over the course of the first few days, this began to change. Sam became more and vocal about his story and his ideas as the project progressed. After we finished writing and recording or stories, Sam hit a strong stride. He brought in great pictures to go along

with his story and took time carefully aligning them with his voice over. Sam put enormous effort his transitions, scrolling text, and his credits. By the end of the project, Sam's enthusiasm noticeably increased to the point that the other students were commenting on it. At our group screening, Sam happily stood in front of his chair and told his audience about the project and his story. When I talked to Sam after the project ended, I saw that he clearly recognized the change in himself as well. When I asked him how we was feeling about the project now that it was all over he told me, "I guess, I'd say I'm pretty, um pretty proud. I got to pick out my story and tell it. Usually I get stuck writing a story but this one was mine and I think it's pretty good because, I, uh, 'cause I showed something that I wanted to tell. And like, I got to be funny like with the credits just like I like to be" (Post-Interview, 7-23-11).

Sam's shift over the course of the project and his language in our final project suggest that a major part of his experience is the fact that he had ownership over his story. He was excited about the project because it was something he wanted to talk about and it allowed him to be funny like he is outside of the workshop. For Sam, digital storytelling was a process that gave him agency in shaping his story. When I asked Sam why he settled on this story to tell he said:

> S: "I wanted to, to talk about it because I had so much fun doin' it. This day was important to me and my brother, and my Dad. It was my brother's party, yeah, but like, this story is all about me. 'Cause I did it too so I talked about what *I* did."
>
> H: "That's great. I'm glad we got to hear your story from this day. Do you have any other stories you can think of now? Like, if you were to do this project again what might you want to do a story about?"
>
> S: "Oh I dunno. Just somethin' that's important to me. Something that like, I want to talk about. Digital storytelling, like the project, it was cool because of that. I came up with my story and then, it was like, like, it, like, I'm tellin' my story because it's mine and I can" (Post-Interview, 7-23-11).

For Sam, digital storytelling was more than just a way to practice his traditional literacy skills while drawing on his visual talents. Digital storytelling was a way of taking ownership over his stories and shaping them the way he wanted his audience to understand it. By adding his credits with the funny soundtrack, he constructed an identity as a funny student for his audience. As he shared this identity, it also solidified for himself. Why was the project good? Because he was allowed to by funny. And he's funny in real life. While he was relatively disinterested in the project at the beginning, digital storytelling ultimately proved to be a medium that allowed Sam to "actively take part in a social construction of [his] own identity" (Erstad and Silseth, 2008, p. 216). With our project, Sam found agency in constructing his identity through telling and owning his stories.

Unfortunately, not all students found digital storytelling to be a practice that encouraged them to own their stories. When it was time to find pictures for our stories, Kyra became very frustrated with digital storytelling. Kyra opted to pull pictures off of www.flikr.com/creativecommons/ rather than bringing in photos from home or creating her own. However, Kyra found the options on this public sharing site very limited. Even after both of us tried a variety of different search terms, we were unable to find any photos of black doctors or black babies in a hospital or doctors offices. Images of doctors and children in these locations were primarily while with a few exceptions of Asian male doctors. The very few images of young black babies pictured these children as dangerously thin and living outside. Despite our exhaustive searching, we could not find any photos that suited Kyra's needs. Ultimately, her story was filled with images of white doctors and babies. As this was happening, Kyra repeatedly told me that this was wrong.

These pictures didn't show her story. Unfortunately, given the constraints of our project, there wasn't anything we were able to do at the time to fix this.

After the project was over, I asked Kyra how she felt about her story when we were having trouble finding the right pictures. Kyra told me that:

> K: "I was just mad because like, I wrote about something and I couldn't find the right stuff to go with it. Like, when I show my story to people like they won't think of me. Like, they will hear my voice and that sounds like me like it'll be like me, but like the pictures they don't go with my at all voice."
> H: "I totally understand that. And I was really disappointed about that as well. How are you feeling now that you've showed your story? Is it still bothering you that so many of the people are white?"
> K: "I mean, I still created it so I'm happy about that. But it's like, it's like I created it even though it couldn't show me. I'm still the author. And sometimes authors don't show themselves. But this is different because I wanted to show myself like I tried to have a story be all about me but it's just that the pictures couldn't be about me" (Post-Interview, 7-21-11).

Kyra's explanation shows that, while generally speaking digital storytelling might be a tool that helps students find ownership over their stories and discover their agency in constructing their identity; this is not always the case. Some of the tools involved, like the creative commons public photo sharing website, do not align with all people making digital stories.

Kyra's experience, her realization that she didn't have agency to tell her story, pushes us to question digital storytelling in its current state. How can we offer digital storytelling workshops as literacy developing community builders when they leave some participants feeling disempowered? What needs to change so digital storytelling can be practice that lives up to its goals? How can we incorporate the still mostly positive experience of digital storytelling into classrooms? In my next section, I discuss these questions as I consider the

implications this study suggests for teaching practices and possible directions for future research.

7.0: Implications for Practice

In large part this study was framed by my lens as a pre-service teacher interested in performing action research in my own classrooms one day. I believe that as practitioner researchers it is crucially important that we use our findings to learn more about students in order to improve their experiences. In my work, I see two major findings that I believe need to be incorporated into teaching practices. This research shows the importance of creating safe spaces in classrooms where students are able to pursue creative identity shaping work. However providing these spaces isn't enough. We must also give students the tools to be able to use these spaces in the best way possible.

Very early on in the project I began to see differences in the way students talked about their literacy instruction in school as compared to literacy development in digital storytelling workshops. Many of the students described writing in school as monotonous and drawn out. Marked by continual by-hand rewriting to fix errors, writing in school meant coming up with a story and then revising it heavily for spelling, grammar, and formatting. Students gave limited feedback to one another. Digital storytelling, however, did not focus on sentence level skills. Instead, it pushes students to think about the content of their work, their organization, and their transitions. Digital storytelling requires students to think about what kind of audience they are directing their story at and to take the perspective of this audience to see if their story is clear. Further, digital

storytelling looks to teach students to receive constructive feedback and understand their peers' responses while also teaching students to give feedback as well.

Digital storytelling works to develop multi-literate students as this project involves written, oral, visual, and digital literacy. I in no way mean to argue that the learning that takes place in a digital storytelling project is more important or that it should replace the learning the students described in their classrooms. Rather, I mean to argue that we need to find room in our classroom for both kinds of work.

I believe digital storytelling can be an effective tool for creating "third spaces" in classrooms (Rowe and Leander, 1997). A 'third space' is one where students are able to bridge their home practices with their school practices, there home knowledge with their school knowledge. A 'third space' is a place where home and school identities are combined. With the right mini-lessons and teacher-student workshopping, I believe digital storytelling is a project that can be used to teach students necessary skills to become strong writers while also giving them the space to explore possible selves, create boundary objects, take ownership over their work, and ultimately realize agency in shaping their identity. Digital storytelling can be part of a wonderful 'permeable curriculum' that allows students to bring in outside interests and knowledge and make them academically relevant and productive (Dyson, 1997). I believe this is exactly the kind of space we as teachers need to be developing in our classrooms so our students can feel safe to do the tough, creative, and important work we demand of them.

But this study taught us that simply creating the space is not enough. We must also give the students the proper tools to take advantage of the space. In part, I wanted to do this project in order to challenge the idea of who gets to participate in digital storytelling workshops and benefit from the experience. I believed that elementary age students also have stories to share and they'd be able to use the technology and work as a group to create impressive pieces. Further, I believed that students from a diverse set of socioeconomic backgrounds and experiences with the technology could excel in digital storytelling. And my students didn't let me down. They did wonderful work. However, I did not look critically enough at the different parts of digital storytelling to make sure they were equally accessible to all children. We need to not only provide students with tools as we challenge who gets to use what resources, but we must also challenge the quality of these tools we provide. Why is it there are no African-American doctors on creative commons when it's so easy to find white doctors? Why is it that according to creative commons black infants are born and live malnourished in the street while white chubby babies can be seen in all different locations including a clean hospital? We need to honor our promises to help students tell their stories and create positive identities by giving them the appropriate tools to do so.

8.0: Implications for Future Inquiry

Hopefully proof this is worthwhile research; I'm leaving this project with some new questions. Developing and running this project, I knew this was only a start. While this project was meant to put feelers out and begin to understand how

students would engage with this practice, now I have more targeted questions for future projects, based off of the findings from this iteration.

When I developed this project, I did not write a critical curriculum. Instead, my curriculum focused on introducing students to this medium. I wanted to create as many spaces as possible for students to respond to one another and I wanted them to have as much freedom as possible. But even without writing a critical curriculum, my student still had critical responses to digital storytelling. When Kyra struggled to find pictures that represented her, we could have had a conversation about what the pictures she did find told about who uses sites like creative commons and who doesn't. We could have discussed why those who are using this site don't have a more diverse set of photos. Even without focusing on this incident, I believe digital storytelling is a powerful tool for developing and examining identity. As such, I think it could be used to encourage students to think about issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and more. In future research, I'd like to see how teachers can use digital storytelling as a part of their critical pedagogy and how students use the medium to develop critical questions about themselves, their identity, and their community.

Beyond my interest in Kyra's critical response, I'm also incredibly impressed by the way so many of the students quickly began revising the way they offered feedback to one another in order to be constructive. In another strain of research, I'd like to use digital storytelling as a community building activity at the very start of a school year. After the students get to know one another through

the workshop format and we discuss and practice giving productive feedback to one another, I'd like to trace students' experiences giving and receiving feedback throughout the rest of the year. Do digital storytelling workshops teach students skills that carry over to their traditional literacy practices? Will the community building work we see happen in the workshops continue to develop throughout the year? Could doing digital storytelling early on in a community help prevent tensions that can arise around collaborative work, as we saw with Shoshanna?

8.1: Limitations of the Study and Final Conclusion

As I've described before, the goals of this study were to explore how students engage with digital storytelling, what stories students would choose to tell, and how they would respond to one another through the feedback sessions. I was not interested in comparing these two locations but instead believed that a socially just methodology meant offering this project to a diverse group of students and never doubting that all students would be able to succeed with the project. Because of the scale of this project and the nature of the data I collected, I am not comfortable extrapolating out. In the end, I only worked with ten self-selecting students. These experiences of these students may not translate to the experience of others. Further, because I was the only researcher and teacher at both sites, all of the data collection is filtered through my personal lenses. With a larger and more diverse research team, I would likely have seen much more and developed and even richer understanding of these two projects.

Despite these limitations, I do think we can learn a lot from the study. While we may not feel comfortable to extrapolate out from this data set, I believe

that the implications for practice described earlier could benefit many classrooms. On a more personal note, I also believe this study helped solidify my interest in becoming teacher. It helped me learn to really listen to my students and think critically about what I ask them to do and why. In the end, one of the major goals of practitioner research is to understand and learn to improve one's own practice. As I begin my student teaching in the fall, I know I will carry this experience and what I've learned with me.

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Appendix A

June 10th, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

My name is Hilary Hamilton and I am Education and English special major at Swarthmore College. My thesis advisor, Professor Diane Anderson, and I applied for and received funding from the college to pilot Digital Storytelling workshops for approximately 8 third to fifth grade students this summer. We want to learn more about how children compose in new media and respond to each other's digital stories.

Digital stories are short, three to eight minute long audio-visual pieces written and produced by the storyteller. As the name suggests, Digital Storytelling offers students the chance to learn new media literacies, while also supporting the development of traditional literacy skills.

Digital Storytelling includes:

- A story circle where students will share a story that is important to them
- Students working together to draft and revise stories
- Recording stories on the computer
- Learning to add images, music, and transitions to the audio-recording

After the stories are finished, we will host a screening that will allow students to discuss their writing and production process while sharing their final product

This workshop will take place from 2:00 – 4:00pm, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday in partnership with the [*edited for privacy]*. We will officially begin on Monday, June 20th and run for approximately three weeks. Though we will start on the 20th, we hope to introduce the project and conduct interviews this week. At the end of the program, each child will leave the program with his or her own digital story on a DVD.

The project has been evaluated and approved by the Internal Review Board at Swarthmore College to insure that it conforms to all criteria for ethical and sound educational research practices. Parents of students who participate in this project will be asked to provide informed consent.

Ideally, each workshop will consist of 6-8 students. **If your child would be interested in participating, please fill out and return one of the consent forms.** If you have any questions or would like any more information, you can contact me at:

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Sincerely,

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Appendix B

May 18th, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

My name is Hilary Hamilton and I am Education and English special major, about to finish my junior year at Swarthmore College. My thesis advisor, Professor Diane Anderson, and I applied for and received funding from the college for an action research project this summer. We would like to pilot two Digital Storytelling workshops for approximately 8 third to fifth grade students this summer in order to learn more about how children engage with new media, compose in new media, and respond to each other's digital stories.

Digital stories are short, three to eight minute long audio-visual pieces written and produced by the storyteller. As the name suggests, Digital Storytelling projects offer participants the chance to learn new media literacies, while also supporting the development traditional literacy skills.

The project starts with a story circle in which students will share stories of their choosing. Often these stories are important to the individual, but they can take many different forms. Students then work together in order to help draft their stories and revise them with the help of peer conferencing. After the story is completed, students record their stories. Students will then work together in order to help flesh out their narrative by adding images, music, and appropriate transitions in order to create a finished digital story. After the stories are finished, we will host a screening that will allow students to discuss their writing and production process while sharing their final product

Although we are still in the planning stages, we anticipate that each workshop will run five days a week for two weeks at *[edited for privacy]*. Session I will run Monday through Friday, June 20th to July 1st, and Session II will run Monday through Friday, July 11th to July 22nd. Each session will run from 9:30am to 11:30 am with two screening celebrations on the last day of each session. One will take place during the day with the students. The other will take place in the evening, and parents and friends will be invited. Each child will leave the program with his or her own digital story.

Ideally, each workshop will consist of 6-8 students. If more than 16 students are interested, participants will be chosen randomly from the pool of those who have expressed interest. If your child would be interested in participating and you would like more information, please complete the form below and forward to:

Hilary Hamilton
Swarthmore College
500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA
19081

The project has been evaluated and approved by the Internal Review Board at Swarthmore College to insure that it conforms to all criteria for ethical and sound educational research practices. Parents of students who participate in this project will be asked to provide informed consent and sign several forms. Further details will be provided to those who return the form below.

Sincerely,

Hilary Hamilton '12, Swarthmore College
Hhamilt1@swarthmore.edu

Diane Anderson
Associate Professor, Educational Studies, Swarthmore College
Danders1@swarthmore.edu

(Note: Ultimately there were only enough students signed up to run the second session)

Appendix C

Student Interview Protocol:

Background:
In opening up interview: If you don't want to answer any of these questions, you don't have to! Mostly, I just want to get to know you a little bit and learn about some of your experiences in school, at home (and in community center if applicable)

Begin more open-ended: Can you tell me about yourself?

1. What's your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What grade did you just finish?
4. What kinds of things did you do in _____grade?
5. Do you have a favorite subject? (Ask about reading/writing in particular)

6. When you read in school, what do you do? What kind of books/stories do you read? Do you talk about them afterwards? How do you do this? As a whole class? In partners? Does you teacher just talk about them?

7. Do you ever write about the books that you read?
8. What (other) kind of writing do you do in school?
9. Do you enjoy writing? What do you like/dislike about it?
10. Is there anything else that you want to tell me about your school?
11. I'm curious about your friends – can you tell me a little bit about them?
12. Are a lot of your friends in your class?
13. Do you get much time to work with other people in class?
14. When you do, what does that mean you are doing?
15. Do you prefer to work with others, or by yourself? Why?

Now, I'm going to ask you a few questions about things that you do outside of school, if that's ok.

16. You already told me about the reading/writing that you do in school – what about at home? Do you ever read at home?
17. What do you read? Where? With who?
18. What about writing?
19. When you read or write at home – how is it different than at school? How is it the same?
20. Do you talk to people or show people what you are reading or writing?
21. Who do you do this with and how?
22. Who lives in your house with you?

(Specific questions about family and reading / writing practices as appropriate)

23. How long have you been coming to the Community Center for?
24. How often do you come here?
25. Why do you come here? What kinds of things do you like to do here?
26. How did you hear about the Digital Storytelling project?
27. What do you know about Digital Storytelling? What about it are you interested in?
28. Do you have any questions about how it works?
29. Do you have any ideas for what your digital story could be about?

Help brainstorm, explain idea of coming in with an object to help spark. Wrap up.

30. Is there anything else that you want to talk about?
I'm really excited to do this project with you!

Appendix D

Student Interview Protocol:

Background:
In opening up interview: If you don't want to answer any of these questions, you don't have to – just like before!

1. What did you think of the screening? What did you like about sharing your story? What didn't you like?

2. What were your favorite parts of the workshop? What were the parts that you didn't like so much?

3. What did you learn by doing digital storytelling?

4. If you could change your story – or the movie part of it – what would you change?

5. If you were to do it all over again, what would you do differently?

6. We had kind of disaster in the middle with our problems saving – how did you feel about that?

7. What did you think of my solution to have work more together to finish the stories in a day?

8. Did you get along with the other students in the group? What did you think of the different group activities that we did?

9. Did you have any favorite stories in our group?

10. What did you like about them? What didn't you like about them?

11. What would you want to tell the other kids about their stories if we had another conversation about them?

12. Do you have any suggestions for how other people could change their stories or if other people were to do a brand new one?

13. You know I'm writing about this project – what do you think I should focus on? When I talk about your story and your experience with the workshop, what do you think is important for me to say?

14. Did you like writing in your journal? What else could I have done? What else would you have wanted to tell me that you didn't write down?

15. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

Thanks – you were great!

Appendix E

Overview of Digital Storytelling Workshop
Curriculum as of 6/8/11

(Rough outline created before all the logistics were worked out)

Week One

Monday - Getting to know each other and digital storytelling

On the first day, I think it's very important that we do a few different icebreakers in order to let the students get to know one another. I'd like to have one or two where the students are up and moving as they get to know each others names. This could be a game of Kaboom, The Great Wind Blows, or some other fun, fast icebreaker.

After icebreakers, I'd like to talk with the group a little bit about what we'll be doing and have us work together to come up with general ground rules and goals for the two weeks. I'll introduce the idea of journaling with students and give them all their journals.

Next, I'll explain what a digital story is and show a few different examples. I'd like to lead this part of the session similar to the way Joe did in his class. I'll show one story and then have us all discuss what we noticed about it, what worked, what didn't, etc… As a group, we can generate lists and webs of information we gather about digital stories. During this time, I'll also try to answer any initial questions the group might have about the project.

Snack break / Story – *Arthur Writes a Story*
Once the break is over each student will have a chance to share the object that they've brought in and tell a story about it. I'll make it clear that this doesn't have to be the story that they use for the project, but it can be if they want. We'll practice respectfully discussing what everyone has shared based on the rules we came up with earlier. We might add to the list at this point. I'll explain to the class that for tomorrow, they need to decide on one or two ideas for the story they would like to tell and remind them that they are more than welcome to bring in an object, photo, or some other item if that will help them to tell the story.

At the end, I'll give the student ten or fifteen minutes to write any thoughts or reflections that they have so far in their journal. If there is time left at the end while we are waiting for parents, we'll take a look at more examples of digital stories and discuss them.

Tuesday – Storycircle

We'll start out our second day with one more quick icebreaker to get things going again. Then we'll go over the ground rules that we wrote the day before and see if there is anything to change.

Afterwards, it'll be time to start our story circle. Everyone will sit in a circle and one person will start by sharing their story. After he or she has finished, others can take turns asking questions, sharing ideas, and generally giving feedback. We'll do this until everyone has had a turn.

Snack break / Storycorp Stories

Now that everyone has had a chance to share their story with the large group, they'll divide out into groups of two. Each person will re-tell their story to their partner with any changes they decided to make. The partner listening to the story will then give the partner telling even more feedback. After this conversation happens, the telling partner will outline the main points and any specific details he or she wants to make

sure he or she doesn't forget in his or her journal. The telling partner will do this with the help of his or her partner. After the outline is finished, the partners will switch who is telling and who is listening and repeat the process.

By the end of the session, every student should have an outline and notes written down about their story. They will then have ten or fifteen minutes to write in their journals before parents come.

Wednesday – Writing Stories

We'll start today with a conversation about what kind of writing the students have done in school, at home, or other places. We'll talk to about the different kinds of stories the students have heard, where they have heard them, and how. Hopefully, the conversation will get at the idea that some stories are told and others are written – and we'll talk about some of the differences between the two. I'll play an example of a story or two that is recorded on the Storycorps website. We'll talk about the fact that the students are going to write their stories out – but they will write it out the way that they want to record it.

I'll give the students about 30 minutes or so to write their story. They will be sitting in separate spots for this and I will be circling around helping people as they need it. After about 30 minutes we'll come back together as a group and give people a chance to share what they have so far. We won't spend too long on this as a whole group, but people will be able to get a minute or two of feedback.

Snack break / Story – this might be one or two more Storycorps stories to continue to expose students to oral storytelling.

Depending on where students are with their stories, I might give them another 15 minutes or so to continue writing individually. Afterwards, they'll divide off in pairs in order to conference with one another. They will read their stories to their partner and discuss the listening partner's feedback and suggestions before switching roles.

After this process, we'll come back together to check-in. Specifically, I'd like to discuss how students give feedback differently in the whole group rather than one-on-one. We'll see what people think about these two scenarios and see if we need to make any changes to our rules or practices.

Finally, students will have ten or fifteen minutes to reflect in their notebooks. I'll ask students to come to the workshop tomorrow with their story completed, if they haven't finished it already. As parents come, I'll let them know that I'll be available before the workshop on Thursday in case they want to drop their child off early so I can help them finish up their story before we start.

Thursday – Recording

We'll start off today with a couple of fun and silly exercises. I'll have different passages from stories that have different tones or express different emotions. We'll take turns reading some of them aloud. After we do this, we'll have a discussion about how our voice affects how we understand a story. I might show another digital story that features an especially expressive voice.

Once this is done, we'll all take a turn reading our story aloud to practice how we use our voice. The group will again give feedback to everyone.

Snack break / Story – *More than Anything Else*

After the break, students will divide out into partners. I'll give a brief tutorial on how to work the recorders and then the partners will take turns recording their stories. One partner will tell the story while the other works the machine. The listening partner can also constructively comment on the recording and might ask the telling partner to try something again. After one story is recorded, the partners will switch.

As people finish up recording, they'll move in to journal writing for ten to fifteen minutes. Depending on how much time is left, we might listen to a recording or two, watch another digital story, or I might start a tutorial on IMovie.

Friday – Introduction to IMovie

Hopefully, students will come in today excited to start really doing work on the computer. I'll leave a few minutes open for discussion on the work we've done so far in order to hear any comments or questions. But then, we'll move in to IMovie. I will briefly explain the different things that we can do in IMovie: put in our recording, put in pictures, create transitions, insert text, insert music, and insert videos. As I show the students I'll give them a little bit of space to play with IMoive on their computers.

Next, I'll show them specifically how to upload their recording file on to IMovie and create a title page. Given this is the first time we've worked with the computers, I'd imagine this will take a little bit of time and will come with a lot of questions!

Snack break / *The Mitten*

When we gather back at our computers, I'll show the students how Creative Commons works. Then, I'll give the students some time to poke around as they begin looking for images that they would like to have in their story. After about 20 minutes of this, I'll give them time to make a list of images that they know they have at home they would like to bring in. If there are students who would like to draw a picture (or a few) for their story, I'll give them time for that now. They are also welcome to create any pictures that they want at home. I'll let the parents know once again that I will be available before the workshop on Monday morning if they want to drop their child off. I can help them finish up any original art that they want to do.

After the students have found a few images at least, we'll begin inserting them into the program. Students and parents will be reminded that on Monday, they need to bring any other photos that the student might want to use.

As usual, we'll end with some quiet reflection time for the students to write in their journals.

Week Two

Monday – Photos and Transitions

We'll start on Monday with an icebreaker that allows students to talk about what they did over the weekend and reconnect to one another. Then we'll briefly go over our ground rules again, how people felt about the first week, and anything else relevant that students bring up in conversation.

Afterwards we will move back to our computers. Students will be given more time to search and save images as I help others to scan their photos or artwork on to the computer. Students will then place all of their photos in the appropriate order. They will partner up briefly and show off their ordering and discuss any feedback from their partner. I will then briefly give an explanation of how students create transitions between slides, zoom in or out on images, and adjust the time spent on any given frame.

Snack break / *Papa Please Get the Moon for Me*

Students will work independently on putting in transitions etc… I'll circle around to help. Once students finish up, we will project everyone's story. Students will receive feedback on their project so far. Students can comment on what one another have already done and/or make suggestions for the future.

We'll then move to journaling time. I might give the students closer to 20 minutes today just in case they've ever felt cut off on another day – this should give them time to finish up and catch up.

Tuesday –Music

At this point, students' stories should really be coming together. We'll start the day by talking about this - talking more about the stories that we saw at the end of last class. We'll talk about what's working, and what we think is missing. We can refer to the list we made at the start of the session and hopefully notice that music is missing. Then I'll show a few different digital stories that use music and we'll talk about what it adds to the video.

Next, students will divide into pairs and re-show their stories up to this point. With their partner, they will brainstorm what sections could benefit from music and what kind of music each part could use.

Once we gather back as a group, I'll give a quick tutorial about how we find music on creative commons and/or another place on the internet.

Snack break / Youtube music clips

Students will then have time to explore for music. After everyone has found one or two clips that they'd like to use, I'll interrupt to give another quick explanation for how we put music into IMovie and line it up with the right set of pictures. Students will work independently for this activity and I'll circle around to help.

At the end of the day, students will have another fifteen minutes or so to journal.

Wednesday – Text and Video

I imagine that finding and including music will take a good amount of time which means that we likely will not have time to share our stories on Tuesday. So we'll start out Wednesday talking about how text can be used in digital stories. We'll watch an example or two and come up with a list of ways that people have used it. On this list, I hope we'll have title page, credits, and any other things that students notice.

Students will first have time to fix up the title page they made earlier in the workshop and add a credits section. After this, they will pair off to show and conference about their story. In this conference, they are looking specifically for suggestions regarding their music choice and where any other text could/should be used.

After their conference, students will have some time to make any changes or additions to music and text that they want. Again, I'll be circling around to help.

Snack break / Youtube Video – *What Teachers Make* with Text

After break, we'll discuss why some people insert short videos into their digital stories. What does this add? How does this change our story? And students will brainstorm if this is something they would want to do, where would they put it in? Why would they do it?

Next, students will have time to search for video clips. I'll give an explanation of how to include the video, and hopefully most of the students will be able to finish up the video part today.

And of course we end with fifteen minutes or so of journaling!

Thursday – Tying it all together

Today is focused on wrapping things up. We'll start out with me conferencing with students and answering any questions or issues that we haven't addressed yet. Everyone will have a change at the beginning to get all caught up.

Afterwards, we'll have some writing time where I ask students to write in their journal to explain to me about their story. Why did they pick it? What does it mean to them? Why did they pick their photos? What does their music do? Why is their background the color it is? I'll ask for, essentially, a specific rational to go along with their story. This will be used the next day when we are discussing what kinds of things students can say when they present their story at our screening for family and friends.

Snack break / Game

Each student will have two one-on-one partner meetings today. Each partnership will watch each others' stories and give some last feedback about the story. This is essentially the last feedback each student will have about his or her story.

Once this process finishes, students will have free time to make any changes to their stories. Once they feel satisfied, they can work on their journal.

Friday – Showing!