A t the turn of the century, teach-
ers realized that their instruction
needed to accommodate the
many ways new literacies could enhance
their students’ learning. Fast forward 15
years—transmission models of teaching
have become less relevant and less preva-
ient in a digitized world where people
constantly interact with great quantities of
unfiltered information. Expert knowledge
is quickly checked and challenged as more
and more information comes from com-
munally managed websites. Inviting new
literacies into the 21st-century classroom
means remixing the lines between teacher
and learner and teaching and learning.
Social networks allow instant knowledge
of participants’ whereabouts, activities,
and thoughts. Best practice involves being
tuned in, or students will definitely be
tuned out.

Technology makes it easier for teachers to
introduce many ways of learning as they invite
students into blended learning situations where
they engage in synchronous and asynchronous
conversations and collaboration about topics ex-
plored through endless websites. This doesn’t
mean that students must be engaged with tech-
ology all day long. If you disagree, just provide
30 sixth graders with iPads and ask them to in-
dependently read and respond to articles for 90
minutes. At the end of the timeframe, you will
have many tuned-out, turned-off students. Ini-
tially, of course, students will be excited to read
a text on an iPad because the medium differs
from their paper copy experiences. But once the
newness of the device wears off, students are
not motivated unless the assignment includes
peer conversations with rich exchanges of new
ideas, initiation of real next questions, and pre-
sentations to broader audiences through screen-
casting, Weebly, and other mediums enabling
connections within and outside of the classroom.

Students are motivated by technology be-
cause of its potential for social exchanges with
a broadened community of peers about a myr-
riad of ideas. They are motivated to discuss and
challenge ideas in science—Will we ever live on
Mars?—and social studies questions addressing
fairness and social justice—How can children in
this country be starving? Of course, these ques-
tions must be contextualized within a setting that
encourages exploration and challenge because
such a setting allows students to become the pur-
suers of answers and the initiators of subsequent
questions. The teacher’s role, then, is to plan
very purposeful instruction, and then to step to
the side to allow student exploration while also
remaining close at hand, ready to provide needed
guided instruction designed to overcome any
learning interferences. The unfolding of the les-
on takes various paths because of the strengths,
needs, and interests of each student. Technol-
ogy provides a venue that supports students in
their collaborative exploration of ideas, allowing
for their own intellectual and emotional growth
even as it prepares them to succeed in their future
worlds of work where collaborative teamwork, problem solving, and communication are skills Fortune 500 companies list within the top ten they desire in employees.

The articles selected for this issue of Voices illustrate how to accomplish standards-related learning through instructional situations that arm students with knowledge of cross-curricular topics, as well as how to wisely use technology to expand their bases of knowing long after they leave the classrooms of excellent educators. To begin, David Cooper Moore and Theresa Redmond discuss five key ideas that support remixing instruction in ways that integrate media and literacy practices while also addressing the Common Core State Standards. Noting that as the boundaries of communication and content are stretched and blended through technology and media, so too should be the conceptualization of what constitutes mentor texts for classroom use. They promote marrying the themes of classic literature with similar ones portrayed through the contemporary films, television shows, and videogames that middle school students find so motivating. They encourage educators to re-focus attention from what the text is, to its purpose or how students access it—reading, listening, viewing, interacting with, and communicating with. Through these insights about students’ engagement with multiple mediums, teachers are supported in designing motivating blended instruction.

Concerned that her students were not learning to write well, Lauren Gibbons designed instruction that remixed the roles of teacher and learner as students grew in their understandings of themselves as writers. Using mentor texts, she invited eighth graders to study the use of repetition as a means to convey an emotional response in narrative writing. Students first explored several mentor texts and participated in a whole-class discussion about the effective use of repetition. Convinced they understood the power of repetition in writing, students were then invited to rotate in groups of four to interactive learning centers where they closely read additional texts, noted each author’s pattern of using repetition, posed theories about intent, and identified how they might use similar techniques to strengthen their writing. When reading this article, it will be obvious that revision centers could be used to examine other aspects of the writing craft used by well-established authors that are loved by middle school students.

Jessica Wertz illustrates how she engaged fifth- and sixth-grade summer camp students in literacy experiences that remixed the roles of teacher and student when they examined multiple digital tools as a way to better share their persuasive voices. Together they experimented with digital literacy while learning to write persuasive comic strips and digital storybooks. Using Bitstrips for Schools and Storybird websites, this learning community gained an understanding of the techniques of persuasion. Their collaborating and sharing of ideas resulted in expanding their literacy practices and voices as they created movie files of digital storybooks that addressed issues they saw as relevant and important.

Capitalizing on students’ love of sharing their stories digitally, Toby Emert and five college interns, serving as knowledge brokers, worked with newcomers to the US to develop their facility with written and spoken English. Crafting visual autobiographical stories, they developed an understanding of the structure of story that they then translated to film using movie-making software. The roles of teacher and learner shifted and blurred during the experience as the newcomers, the owners of their stories, became the designers of the films that visually depicted their life journeys. Anchoring storytelling in a digital medium shared with others supported these students’ beliefs in their abilities to acquire new language skills and knowledge.

The power of teaching vocabulary through multiple sources, including print, pictures, video, and digital sources, is described by Ruth McQuirter Scott. She shared the insights of 50 preservice teachers as they engaged with these mediums to learn the meanings of unknown words. Deeper insights followed as they con-
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EDITORS’ MESSAGE | Remixing the Roles of Teacher and Learner in the New Literacies Classroom Community

trasted their learning experiences with ones they could craft for their future students. New understandings of vocabulary acquisition prompted them to design instruction to support students in discovering their personal powers to expand their vocabulary, and the power associated with having a broad one.

Crystal Shelby-Caffey, Ronald Caffey, Cameron Caffey, and Kolbi Caffey drive home the point that middle schoolers today have never lived in a world that has not included the remixing of mediums. This reality supports the need to remix both the roles of teacher and students and the mediums used for everyday instruction in classrooms. Offering insights through their voices as parents and students, we gain understandings that support the need for classrooms to function as collaboratives where everyone’s voice has value in determining what counts as a way to learn.

The examples shared by the authors of this issue of Voices highlight the call to educators to embrace new literacies by remixing instruction, strategies, and the roles of teacher and student as a means to eliminate learning gaps and empower students to create knowledge for themselves and those with whom they share a world. We encourage you to expand on these ideas as you and your students remix teaching and learning practices in your classroom communities.