



WHAT DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY LOOKS LIKE

Sophie and Ms. Cruz – An Annotated Hypothetical

As part of her effort to get to know her four-year-old charges better, Ms. Cruz has asked that they draw a picture of where they sleep. When Sophie finishes her picture, Ms. Cruz invites her to have a conversation about it.



After Sophie shares a few details, Ms. Cruz asks, “What is outside the frame?” Sophie knows what this means because yesterday the class had done a project where they cut out the middle of an index card, held it up and saw how they could move “the frame” to include certain things or leave them out.



After Sophie describes her sister’s bed, which is also in the bedroom but wasn’t in the picture, Ms. Cruz asks, “How would someone know that this is your bed and not your sister’s bed?” Sophie points to some scribbles that she identifies as her stuffed animals. Introducing some media-related vocabulary, Ms. Cruz offers that media makers include these kinds of “props” when they create “sets” so the viewer can tell where they are. Ms. Cruz wonders aloud if there are any other props that Sophie might want to add to her drawing. Sophie thinks for a minute and returns to drawing.



Later, Sophie shows Ms. Cruz the things she added to her picture. Ms. Cruz comments on the “props,” repeating the new vocabulary word, and asks “Whose eyes are we seeing through?” Sophie knows this question, too. When the class watched an episode of “Clifford, The Big Red Dog,” they paused the DVD and noticed how different things looked from Clifford’s point of view from up high than from T-Bone’s point of view down low. Sophie proudly announced, “My eyes!”



Ms. Cruz was tempted to continue the conversation, either asking Sophie to compare her bed to where Clifford sleeps (which had been a focus of the episode they viewed because they were starting a health lesson about sleep later that day) or asking her what sounds she would hear if she were inside her picture, but she could see that Sophie was antsy, so she wrapped things up.



She invited Sophie to sign her artwork, helping her with some of the letters of her name when Sophie got stuck after “So...”



Then Ms. Cruz asked Sophie if her picture was important enough to scan and e-mail to her Auntie. Ms. Cruz had the Auntie’s e-mail address because at the beginning of the year she had explained to families that she would introduce children to e-mail as a language tool, and asked for contact addresses for a few special people who might be interested in receiving messages from their child. Sophie’s parents had provided their own e-mail addresses and also the address of an Aunt who was close to Sophie.



Sophie agreed that this was an important piece of art and that she would like to scan it. They walked over to the computer. Sophie put her drawing on the scanner bed. Ms. Cruz helped Sophie open the correct software program, find the scan button, and save the file to Sophie’s portfolio. Ms. Cruz asked Sophie what she should name the file: “What would be a good title so that people would know what this picture was?” Sophie was unsure, so Ms. Cruz moved on. She knew that not every question needed an answer. Part of her job was just to model asking questions so that children would eventually pick up on the habit and ask their own questions. Ms. Cruz labeled the file “Sophie’s picture” and added the date while letting Sophie know that they could come back and change the file name later if Sophie decided on her own title.



They attached the picture file to an e-mail and Ms. Cruz asked Sophie if there was anything that she wanted to tell her Auntie about the picture. Sophie dictated a brief message and, with Ms. Cruz’s help, pressed “send.” Ms. Cruz made a note to herself to help Sophie check the e-mail for a response the next day and checked the clock to see if there was time for Sophie to share her drawing with the rest of the children and for others to share their drawings with her.

