

ALEA 2027 National Conference Abstract

30-minute research presentation

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Empowering Young Storytellers: Embodied, Aesthetic, and Affective Practices in Multimodal Literacy

Practical literacy pedagogies require more than acknowledgment that emotion and embodiment matter; they require principles teachers can enact. Yet guidance often remains abstract, disconnected from the conditions that enable aesthetic experience to emerge. This paper draws on a professional animation workshop, designed to bring to life a collaboratively authored picture book created by and for children, to articulate principles for sense-rich multimodal literacy practice. The study asks: In what ways does children's participation in a professional animation workshop illuminate principles for designing embodied, emotionally engaged, and creative literacy pedagogies?

The workshop, conducted in a community setting with five primary students (aged 8–12), generated a creativity-supportive environment where cognition and emotion worked together. Drawing on observational data, children's artefacts, and post-workshop interviews, the analysis applies Bundy's (2003) tripartite framework for aesthetic engagement alongside Dewey's (1934) conception of aesthetic experience. This analysis reveals how connection, animation, and heightened awareness operated not as discrete stages but as an assemblage, emerging simultaneously through children's multimodal, embodied, and relational engagement.

Connection appeared as children linked workshop activities with their prior authorship, linguistic repertoires, lived experiences, and imaginative worlds. Animation emerged through vocal experimentation, playful divergence, and embodied performance. Heightened awareness developed through moments when the professional environment prompted children to perceive their creative capacities and identities in new ways.

Rather than proposing the workshop as a replicable model, the paper uses this bounded context to make visible three principles often obscured in busy classrooms: trusting children's imaginative detours as generative rather than off-task, designing structures that enable possibility thinking, and treating multimodal composition as an embodied, communal process. These principles offer practical

guidance for literacy pedagogies that nurture creative and critical thinking while empowering young voices.