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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Teaching and Learning: Bilingual Education (ASL-English)

by

Adam Michael Stone

Committee in charge:

Tom Humphries, Chair
Bobbie M. Allen
Carol A. Padden

2010

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This thesis of Adam Michael Stone is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego
2010

DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to Rohana Special School in Matara, Sri Lanka and California School for the Deaf in Fremont, California. Though they are worlds apart, my journey towards becoming a teacher would not have begun without these two schools.

I also express my deepest gratitude to my family and my classmates for all their support through the past two years.

EPIGRAPH

Dos idiomas son dos alas, con dos puedo volar.

Two languages are like two wings; with two, I can fly.

Bob Gomez

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics

by

Adam Michael Stone

Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning: Bilingual Education (ASL-English)

University of California, San Diego, 2010

Professor Tom Humphries, Chair

A major goal in elementary education is to explore stories in their many forms, including comics. Based on Cummins' framework for the empowerment of minority students, a bilingual curriculum centered on comics was designed and implemented based on reading and creating narratives in the form of comics using American Sign Language (ASL) and English. Deaf students gained experience in working with comics and the narratives within, and acquired the linguistic abilities to do so, in both ASL and English.

I. Introduction and Overview.

Many adults fondly recall reading and collecting comic books as a popular childhood activity. However, what many might not know is that comics also played a key role in their literacy development by providing them with narratives presented in an alternative, engaging form. It stands to reason that elementary students may benefit from the inclusion of comics in a literacy framework. Existing research confirms that comics do have a role, both as a literary genre and a visual medium, in elementary education (see Cary, 2004; McVicker, 2007; Ranker, 2007). When considering how Deaf students learn visually, the idea of teaching of literacy with comic strips becomes especially appealing to educators working with Deaf children (Smetana, et al., 2009) since literacy development in Deaf children has been a persistent concern of educators for decades. This document addresses the possibility of using comics as instructional tools for promoting emergent literacy in Deaf children learning American Sign Language and English. Specifically, students will explore narratives through reading and creating comics.

II. The Need for Bilingual Approaches to Deaf Education.

In the education of Deaf children, there are competing pedagogical approaches: total communication, auditory-oral, and Signed English, to name a few. Amidst the centuries-old debate, academic performance of deaf children has continued to lag behind hearing peers in language, cognition, and learning.

Mitchell (2006) estimates that between 40,000 and 400,000 Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the United States are under 18 years of age. Marschark, Lang, and Albertini (2002) rehash these well-known statistics that "on average, 18-year old deaf students leaving high school have reached only a fourth to sixth grade level in reading skills. Only about three percent of those 18 year olds read at the same level as the average 18-year old reader, and more than 30 percent of deaf students leave school functionally illiterate" (p. 157). Clearly, the "history of deaf students' poor academic achievement indicates a problem in the definition of appropriate academic and linguistic classroom environments for these students" (La Bue, 1995, p. 166).

Bilingual education, however, may prove to be a solution to advance Deaf children past this vexing juncture and onto a road towards lifelong success. With respect to this minority population, the school environment often represents the only opportunity for a child to establish a foundation in two languages. However, simply including ASL in the classroom is not enough. When coupled with multicultural education, bilingual education for Deaf children require a redefinition of the role of the interaction between the teacher and the student, between the school and the community, and throughout society as a whole. As it should be with *any* child, the

goal must be to empower him or her to intelligently confront issues of social justice and equity in the world.

However, deaf students have been disempowered—labeled as disabled, deficient, and being the loci of systematic, fundamental problems in Deaf education. Harlan Lane (1999) writes that society—abled society—determines who is disabled and who is not. Deaf people have been portrayed as socially isolated, intellectually weak, behaviorally impulsive, and emotionally immature—all of which makes school psychology, counseling, special education and rehabilitation necessary; the perceived failure of deaf education then makes medical intervention more attractive (p. 69). The means in which schools deliver that message—that "you are deaf, thus you are different"—strips Deaf students of their potential in what Valenzuela (1999) calls "subtractive schooling." In doing so, schools "divest these youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them vulnerable to academic failure" (p. 20). The school environment must teach the Deaf student that the label of being "Deaf" comes from within, not from outside, and that it is a mark of pride and uniqueness. That determination aligns with Cummins's proposed framework for empowering minority students. Empowered students "develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically. They participate competently in instruction as a result of developing a confident cultural identity" (Cummins, 1986, p. 23).

According to Cummins (1986), this process of empowerment occurs along four institutional characteristics:

1. Minority students' language and culture is incorporated into the school

program.

2. Minority community participation is encouraged as an integral part of children's education.
3. The pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge.
4. Professions involved in assessment become advocates for minority students rather than legitimizing the problem in the students' locus (Cummins, 1986, p. 21).

This framework will now be used to focus the body of research on education of Deaf children into an argument for empowerment using a bilingual, multicultural pedagogical approach.

Linguistic and cultural incorporation

Bilingualism has clear cognitive benefits for any child. Pioneering bilingual researchers Peal and Lambert (1962) found that English-French bilingual schoolchildren at a Montreal elementary school scored higher on verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests when compared to their monolingual counterparts. Several studies have followed up by discovering even more cognitive benefits of being bilingual (see Hamers, 1988, p. 54-60 for a list of relevant studies). To sum up, bilingual children have been found to "have greater metalinguistic competence and better-developed creative processes" (Hamers, 1988, p. 57).

But why teach ASL—a signed language—to Deaf children if they live in a predominately English-speaking country, as opposed to just English and perhaps a

different spoken language? ASL happens to be the most readily accessible language for the Deaf child; it is the more natural language to acquire even if it is not the language that the child's family uses. In fact, Mason & Ewoldt (1996) cite the U.S. Bilingual Education Act of 1988 as defining the "native language as the first language naturally acquired and used by a child, whether or not it is learned from the parents" (p. 297).

Theories and research suggest that proficiency in a first language will naturally lead to second-language proficiency. For example, Hakuta (1984) studied Hispanic children and found that students who started out with stronger Spanish skills were more likely to become balanced bilinguals—that is, equally proficient in both languages. That finding aligns with Cummins' interdependence theory, which suggests that proficiency in L2 is dependent on L1 proficiency. Because of common underlying proficiency, which is the idea that fundamental skills, such as literacy, are interdependent across languages, students do not need to relearn specific skills when moving from the first language to the second language (Crawford, 2004).

These theories have been supported by several studies of Deaf children. Many comparing deaf children of deaf parents with deaf children of hearing parents find that deaf children of deaf parents excel academically, because they had access to native sign language from birth (Israelite, Ewoldt, & Hoffmeister, 1991, cited in Mason & Ewoldt, 1996). A series of studies in the late 1990s in the United States all found strong positive correlations between ASL development and reading skills; increases in ASL skills were found to align with increases in reading development (Hoffmeister, de

Villiers, Engen, & Topol, 1997; Ramsey & Padden, 2000; Strong & Prinz, 1997). Chamberlain and Mayberry (2000) found these studies to be strong evidence in favor of Cummins' interdependence theory. A similar study in the Netherlands found the same strong, positive correlations between sign vocabulary tasks and reading vocabulary tasks (Hermans, Knoors, Ormel, & Verhoeven, 2008).

In additional to the cognitive and linguistic advantages of two languages, there are also pedagogical advantages. If students are limited to learning solely in a non-native language, they may experience negative influences in what Krashen calls the "affective filter" (Crawford, 2004), which includes anxiety, lack of confidence, and inadequate motivation to use the second language. Affective filter can raise barriers to learning. By delivering content in L1—ASL in the case of Deaf children—affective filter is reduced; learning becomes more effortless and students become less hostile to the classroom environment. A bilingual, multicultural curriculum, "merely by recognizing the value of a minority language and culture, can enhance the…child's self-esteem and provide a more comfortable environment for English acquisition" (Crawford, 2004, p. 192).

These claims, however, should not be taken to assume that Deaf children do not need to learn how to *speak* English or do not need to use listening devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. The bilingual, multicultural approach includes spoken English whenever appropriate. In fact, learning ASL is beneficial to oral language acquisition: Caselli, Ossella, & Volterra (1983) found that use of native sign language facilitates the learning of oral language. Bilingual teachers of Deaf children

are expected to collaborate with speech-language pathologists to determine the best way to include spoken English on a per-student basis.

Community participation

This framework for the empowerment of minority students requires that students' families participate in the child's education. In an ASL/English bilingual environment, the parents also need to take responsibility for their child's ASL development; language acquisition cannot occur only six hours a day when the student is in school. Positive effects can be realized from having parents participate all day, every day, in their children's ASL development in addition to other educational activities. For example, the Haringey project had parents participate in educational activities such as listening to their children read. Results showed that students who read to their parents made significant progress in literacy compared to those that did not read to their parents (Cummins, 1986).

In keeping with the growing ethnic and linguistic diversity of America's children, Deaf children come from increasingly diverse families. One might consider this diversity of families of Deaf children as a barrier to family involvement—if you have Spanish, Filipino, or Russian-speaking families trying to find success in an English-speaking country, how can they be expected to learn ASL as well? However, Allen (2002) found that Spanish-speaking families with Deaf children were more receptive to learning ASL and respecting it as a language when compared to English-speaking families with Deaf children. Educators should not dismiss the potential of parents to be enthusiastic about ASL acquisition. Eberwein (2001) suggests that a

Deaf-centered classroom (as opposed to a classroom that excludes Deaf identity and culture) includes parents being aware of ASL, Deaf culture, and the full potential of children. Families can be powerful change agents for the Deaf bilingual classroom, advocating for their children's language rights and helping introduce new or less-experienced families to the Deaf community and culture. Gerner de Garcia (1995) has written a list of recommendations that help empower linguistically diverse families, including making parents equal partners in education and providing them with opportunities to interact with the Deaf world.

It is for this very reason—the diversity of Deaf students nationwide—that the label "Bi-Bi," or "bilingual-bicultural" (Mason & Ewoldt, 1996) is not used here. Such a label forces a false and singular dichotomy between Deaf and hearing cultures. In reality, multiple cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds are at play in America's classrooms, and are reflected in prevailing literature concerning equity in education (see Banks, et al., 2005; Delpit, 2006; DomNwachukwu, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Therefore, the term "bilingual and multicultural" is preferred when discussing this pedagogical approach.

The ASL/English bilingual classroom cannot exist in a vacuum populated solely by educators and families; it depends on the resources of the local Deaf community in order to provide students with a richer linguistic and cultural experience. In keeping with the perspective that Deaf people constitute a linguistic minority, Nambo asserts that "appropriate education for…students of color can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture" (Michie, 2007, p. 5).

Valenzuela (1996) adds, “a community’s interest are best served by those [educators] who possess an unwavering respect for the cultural integrity of a people and their history” (p. 265). Thus, families and community members alike become important agents and allies in the empowerment of Deaf students.

Pedagogy

In a bilingual, multicultural classroom, the children take charge and become active generators of language and knowledge. Too often in traditional education for disabled or at-risk students, facts and “life skills” are fed to students; by eliminating student input in the lesson, the student’s identity and potential remains unrecognized. This type of "direct instruction" has been discredited by Schweinhart, Weikart, and Larner (1986) as offering no greater benefits compared to other instruction approaches and actually encouraging delinquency. In fact, this “banking” model of education is merely another way of implementing a subtractive schooling approach (Valenzuela, 1996).

Instead, a dialogue-based instruction is needed in order to provide opportunities for cognitive and language development. Mather (1990) studied Deaf classrooms and found that non-native signing teachers tended to ask yes/no questions, while native signing teachers tended to ask WH-questions (e.g. what, where, why). WH-questions are important in extending students’ understanding by encouraging them to reflect and analyze their thinking, all while using language. Such an approach fits in with Cummins’ framework because the more opportunities students have to be

active learners, the greater the potential is for language development and empowerment.

As long as “talking and writing are means to learning,” language use and development results directly from opportunities for students to participate in discourse. For example, allowing students to publish their signed or written creations can increase their self-confidence and encourage them to keep generating language and content in both L1 and L2. Therefore, a Deaf-centered classroom needs to provide opportunities for students to generate, record, and publish content in both languages, such as ASL storytelling videos and collaboratively written English short stories.

Assessment

Too often, assessment has been used as a tool to label, disempower, and "fail" deaf students due to assessment standards that are not culturally responsive. In fact, “failing” a specific assessment—the audiogram—is required for any child to enter the realm of Deaf education. Assessments for classroom placement are rife with inherent biases against minority groups. Cummins (1996) found that in Texas, Hispanic students were overrepresented by 300% in the learning disabled category, suggesting that there is something wrong with the psychometric tests rather than an intrinsic processing deficit unique to Hispanic children. Harry & Klinger (2007) cite statistics that show that African-American students are represented in the mental retardation category at twice the rate as their white counterparts and in the emotional/behavioral disorder category at one and one-half times the rate of their white peers, again revealing biases inherent in the testing approach.

With respect to Deaf children, standardized approaches to assessment do not provide very good information either. Lane, Hoffmeister, and Behan (1996) explain that many tests, even those developed for Deaf students such as the SAT-HI, do not appear valid, and are ultimately tests of English competence rather than scholastic achievement. Ewoldt (1987) suggests that standardized tests ultimately test the ability to take tests well, rather than the content the test is expected to assess.

In keeping with the empowerment of minority students, Cummins (1986) recommends that instead of becoming "test proctors," educators need to become knowledgeable advocates for students, taking it upon themselves to interpret the potentially discriminatory test results and recognize that these assessments are ultimately instruments of the majority society used to categorize, label, and disempower Deaf students.

Educators must move beyond these tests and what is known as "alternative assessments" that allow students to demonstrate knowledge according to their own strengths via verbal discussion and project-based tasks. O'Malley and Chamot (1994) recommend performance measures, text retelling, cloze testing, rubric-based scoring, and portfolios as methods of alternative assessment instead of knowledge-based quizzes and tests. In a bilingual, multicultural classroom, alternative assessment offers greater opportunity for students to use their cultural knowledge and language skills; in fact, the assessment itself should also be a time to exercise language skills, such as a retelling or presentation in ASL rather than a reading comprehension quiz.

When applied to the case of Deaf children, Cummin's framework for the empowerment of minority students mandates the use of a bilingual and multicultural approach. Introducing and respecting ASL as the natural and native language of Deaf children, involving their families and the local Deaf community, and using culturally appropriate instructional methods and alternative assessment will all go a long way in ameliorating the chronic academic underperformance of Deaf children.

III. Assessment of Need.

One way to potentially enhance the outcomes of Deaf education is to re-examine literacy and consider what it means in the case of Deaf children. The term "literacy" traditionally represents the ability to read and write. However, sign language has no written form; what does it mean if someone is "literate" in sign language? Is sign language literacy even possible?

Kuntze (2008) argues that the definition of literacy needs to be expanded to include modes of language beyond the written form; educators "cannot even begin to formulate a theoretically sound approach to supporting literacy development of children who use ASL given the narrow definition of literacy as a matter of learning to read and write" (p. 147). He suggests that "text" should be redefined to include any type of content that "is recorded and left 'suspended' in time" (p. 147). Such a definition allows room for sign language and visual imagery to be included in the overall theory of literacy. In fact, the comprehension of writing and the comprehension of visual media share many of the same cognitive skills (Kuntze, 2008).

Thus, Kuntze moves the concept of literacy beyond the simple form and into the realm of comprehension and analysis. "An important objective of literacy development is the development of skills to think about information and to respond to it thoughtfully…the actual process of becoming literate depends on whether one gets to be cognitively engaged with the content" (p. 154). Literacy development can occur regardless whether the content is encoded in text, images, audio, or sign language.

In keeping with Cummins' common underlying proficiency hypothesis—that fundamental skills, such as literacy, are acquired interdependently across languages rather than contained within individual languages—one could hypothesize that literacy development in one medium would transfer to other media and languages. Therefore, for Deaf children, who learn visually rather than aurally, a literacy development framework could include rich visual media such as ASL videotapes and comic strips.

Indeed, comic strips, in creating narrative, hybridize two forms of media: text and visual imagery. They are also a form of popular media, which can be used for extending literacy development in the classroom (Ranker, 2007). Just like how print by itself requires comprehension by the reader, "comics require the reader to blend the print and the graphics to comprehend" the narrative, providing a redundancy of information in more than one form (McVicker, 2007; Wright & Sherman, 1999). Therefore, McVicker (2007) adds, comic strips are an excellent approach to teaching children reading strategies. When considering how Deaf students learn visually, the idea of teaching of literacy with comic strips becomes especially appealing to educators (Smetana, et al., 2009).

Comics appear to have a number of positive effects for students learning English as a second language (a population that includes Deaf students who use ASL). The juxtaposition of image and text fosters the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies in developing readers (McVicker, 2007). Liu (2004) reported that low-reading-level students scored higher in reading comprehension tests when text was paired with comics than without. The illustrations provide contextual

support and clues to the written text, helping readers decode the text and increase comprehension (Cary, 2004). Kerr and Culhane (2000) compared children who read comic books extensively and children who did not, and found that heavy comic book readers seemed to have better vocabulary and understanding of verb tenses. This finding may not be surprising, since:

> …the average comic book introduces children to twice as many words as the average children's book and five times as many words as they were likely to be exposed to in the average child-adult conversation. Thus for Deaf students, who have not experienced many child-adult conversations in English, this genre provides a scaffolded resource for vocabulary and syntax. (Smetana, et al., 2009, p. 231)

Lavin (1998) suggests that reading graphic novels—an extended version of comic strips—may require more complex cognitive skills than the reading of text alone (cited in Schwarz, 2002). On the other end, most comic strips have low readability levels with lower numbers of words and sentences, making them "linguistically ideal for elementary and middle school age readers" (Wright & Sherman, 1999).

Krashen (1993) reported that light reading—which includes comics—positively correlates with reading achievement. Fortunately, comics are highly engaging reading materials; librarians have found that comics attract kids and motivate them to read (Smetana, et al., 2009). They are humorous, visual, and limited in text, which can "alleviate the negative viewing of reading for some children" (McVicker, 2007, p. 86). Smetana, et al. (2009) suggest that graphic novels may even be viewed as somewhat "subversive" to the school environment, enhancing their appeal with

students. Finally, comics can act as a bridge for disengaged readers to link their literary interests to more conventional text structures (McVicker, 2007).

Clearly, comic strips and books have a place in the elementary classroom, and a role to play in fostering the emergent literacy of Deaf children. However, there remains little research in the area of Deaf children and comics (see Smetana, et al., 2007), or using comics in the elementary classroom rather than the secondary classroom (see Ranker, 2007). There is also a lack of research in *creating* comic strips, which Wright and Sherman (1999) suggest is a valuable process that allows students to internalize literacy skills while simultaneously attaining the mental constructs that form the comic strip content.

IV. Review of Existing Materials and Curricula.

There is also a paucity of curricula for using comics in the elementary classroom. Just two educator-oriented books, focusing on comics and with multiple lesson ideas, were found (Cary, 2004; Frey & Fisher, 2008). Cary makes an excellent argument for the inclusion of comics in the multilingual classroom, citing second language acquisition theories and the use of authentic and engaging materials. The 25 activities Cary creates range from "Make a Title" for a given comic to filling in "Missing Panels" and "Act It Out." Others focus on comic creation, such as "Autobiography," or examining elements that appear across several comics, like "Pet to Pet." However, and not surprisingly, no mention is made of the potential connections between the comics and ASL, even though many of the theories and research presented can apply to ASL-English bilingual classrooms.

Mowrey (2000), however, does make connections between ASL and comics in her master's thesis. In her curriculum, she planned a lesson, "Comic Strips," where ASL learners would retell comic strips to their peers, emphasizing ASL facial grammar. Mowrey writes, "the visual nature of the cartoons offers opportunities for students to break away from English word equivalencies and come up with a way to use classifiers, gesture, or other means to make the information comprehensible" (p. 179). The connections between ASL and comics end with that single lesson, however, and this lesson was written primarily for hearing students who are learning ASL in secondary school.

It is difficult to find other resources that encourage those types of connections between ASL and comics (see Phillips, 2010 for an interview with a New York City school librarian who used comics with her ASL-English bilingual classroom). For these reasons, I developed a curriculum that emphasizes comics with a bilingual approach, to be implemented in an elementary classroom with Deaf children.

V. Key Learning Theories and its Relevant Research.

In order to create a curriculum to meet the need for additional research in comic strips and the Deaf classroom and make connections among ASL, English, and these materials, a number of key learning theories were identified. The most important is Krashen's *comprehensible input*—the idea that messages in the second language make sense to the reader or listener (Crawford, 2004). As long as the input is high quality and intelligible, the brain will acquire and process the content and the language the content is delivered in. The implication is that language instruction should be based on providing messages that children can understand, either by providing background knowledge first or by accompanying the message with helpful aids such as visual images. Comics are an excellent example of comprehensible input: the English text is always accompanied by an abundance of visual cues (Cary, 2004). In addition, the i+1 aspect of comprehensible input is put into play as students are able to make reasonable guesses about unfamiliar words and phrases in comics with the support of the accompanying visual images.

When students learn a second language via comprehensible input, they also gain more content, on which they can build a base for metalinguistic awareness—the ability to think about language. Crucial for bilingual learners, metalinguistic awareness enables children to reflect on how they express a specific concept, and how that expression may change depending on the language used. Thus, children compare and contrast two different languages to discover commonalities as well as differences (Tunmer, Herriman, & Nesdale, 1988). Comics, when presented in a bilingual

curriculum that emphasizes the connections between ASL and English, can enhance metalinguistic awareness and further drive acquisition of both languages (see Nagy, 2007 for an excellent discussion on how metalinguistic awareness influences vocabulary development).

The varied elements that make up comics also serve to simulate what Howard Gardner (1983) calls "multiple intelligences." Schools often overlook the different ways children may be gifted, and instead focus on two types of intelligences: linguistic and logical-mathematical. If a child is gifted in a different type of intelligence (e.g. musical, bodily-kinesthetic, or interpersonal), then that child's strengths may not be recognized since he or she does not conform to more widely accepted views of scholastic achievement. Gardner recommends that educators present their lessons in a wide variety of ways and also provide varied assessment tools where students can exploit their strengths to show their knowledge. This theory aligns well with comics—the combination of text and imagery support linguistic and spatial intelligences, while acting out and retelling comics can promote bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

VI. The Curriculum.

The curriculum: "Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics," is divided into eleven project-based lessons, numbered "Project 1," "Project 2," and so on. The lesson order is flexible and can be modified by the teacher, although the introduction recommends always starting with Projects 1 and 2.

Each project is aligned with California and New Mexico state standards, and both the student and teacher objectives are delineated in the "In Brief" section. Also, each project has a "Materials" section to identify materials needed, as well as a "Prep" section to explain what needs to be accomplished prior to project implementation. Finally, each project has a "Lesson Plan" broken down into introduction, procedure, and closure sections. Post-project assessment methods and tools are described in the "Wrap-Up" section. Many projects are paired with rubrics numbered the same (e.g. Rubric 2 goes with Project 2) and follow the "Wrap-Up" section.

The curriculum begins with an introduction to comics and characters (Projects 1 and 2). Building on this new understanding of comics as a genre, students proceed to study how panels are the building blocks of comics and embody the narratives within (Projects 3, 4, and 5). Starting with Project 6, students begin to practice reading aloud comics and creating comic versions of existing ASL and English literature. In Project 9, students create comics drawing from their experiences either as Deaf beings or being part of the Deaf community. The culminating project (Project 11) has students creating original narratives in two mediums: comic strips and ASL.

VII. The Evaluation Plan.

To determine whether this curriculum was effective, I implemented an evaluation plan using several methods for data collection: field observation notes, student performance rubrics, and student-produced artifacts. The diversity of these methods helped ensure that I would collect sufficient data for later analysis.

For every day I implemented this curriculum, I wrote field notes following the lesson. These field notes included my reflections on the lesson I had just taught, as well as my observation of the students' performance during the lesson. Everything that I felt was notable—which ranged from simple notes on a student's individual learning to whole group activity outcomes or any circumstances influencing the learning process or the curriculum implementation—was documented. In addition, I wrote per-student notes so that I could monitor each student's progress throughout the curriculum and more easily find changes in learning and understanding. On occasion, I created post-it notes during the student work phase whenever I noticed something important, and used those post-it notes as prompts to further expand on my field notes following the lesson. Overall, these notes provided evidence of learning development and attainment of the curriculum goals.

In addition to the field notes, I used student performance rubrics throughout the curriculum. They were for the teacher to use, although for some projects, I shared these rubrics with the students in order to review expectations before proceeding with the project. These rubrics served a few purposes—to track my own progress in implementing the lesson, to track student progress, and to give feedback to students on

their work. The rubrics were completed at the end—or after—the project. Sometimes, I would use the rubrics during the activity itself so I could monitor my own progress and ensure I was meeting the lesson objectives. These rubrics proved to be useful as reference materials in writing my field notes and also as evidence of student learning and whether the curriculum goals were achieved.

Student artifacts were enormously important and useful to help determine how students had progressed throughout the curriculum. Because this curriculum was project-centered, every lesson plan encouraged students to create artifacts that showed how they applied the information, strategies, or skills they had just learned. Student samples included hand-drawn and computer-created comic strips, teacher and student co-created posters, and other kinds of work products. I collected every single piece of student work created and made both hard and digital copies. These student work samples showed evidence of quality of learning and application, as well as completion of student-required tasks.

All these methods of data collection listed above were crucial for measuring the effectiveness of my curriculum and for analyzing how I implemented it. The data sets provided for triangulation where I could examine all parts of the curriculum—how it was implemented, how well the students learned, and how the students applied what they had learned.

VIII. The Curriculum Implementation.

Description of Implementation Site

I implemented the curriculum in Spring 2010 at a small residential school for the deaf in a large, rural state; the school officially supports the ASL/English bilingual approach. I was placed in two different classrooms with two different cooperating teachers. One classroom was in the morning for Language Arts and Critical Thinking Skills, and the other was in the afternoon for Math, Social Studies, and Science.
I taught my curriculum in the Language Arts class in the morning, which was composed of six students, ages six through eight, and in the first through third grades. My cooperating teacher for this was a hearing woman in her third year of teaching at the school, with this academic year representing her first year of teaching at the elementary level. The Language Arts class followed a balanced literacy program, as done via various literacy activities including writing prompts, guided reading, literacy centers, vocabulary development, reading aloud, shared writing, sentence pattern development, class meetings, and viewing of the daily news show. Technology available in the classroom included a projector, an InterWrite Board, one PC and one iMac for student use, and access to a mobile lab with twelve laptops.

Three weeks after starting my internship, the Language Arts class's composition changed due to one teacher's unexpected departure. Previously, the Language Arts class had four students, all in the second or third grades and their literacy skills generally at the second grade level. The class roster modifications resulted in the removal of one student to another class and the introduction of three

new students, in the first and second grades and their literacy skills generally at the kindergarten or first grade level. Thus, when I began to implement my curriculum, the arrangement was still new to everybody and adjustments were still being made to the scheduling of support services (e.g. counseling, speech and language) and the availability of teacher aides and equipment. In addition, extenuating circumstances and teacher's intuition required that I change the sequencing of my curriculum; for example, Project 11 came after Project 5.

Individual Student Notes

The six students are described as follows (all were fluent in ASL):

1. AL is an eight-year-old girl in the second grade. She has a hearing mother, fluent in ASL and in an interpreter training program, who also worked as support staff at the school. Despite being a student at the school since the age of two, AL continued to struggle with low literacy and narrative skills.

2. BB is a six-year-old boy in the first grade. He has two deaf parents, both of whom also worked as support staff at the school, and a younger, hearing brother in the preschool class. The youngest student in his class, he possessed strong reading, writing, and narrative skills.

3. JP is an eight-year-old boy in the third grade. He has one deaf mother who is an alumna of the school. JP had low literacy levels as well as weak narrative skills.

4. JA is an eight-year-old boy in the second grade. He has hearing parents and commutes daily from an urban area one hour away. He also had low writing skills, but his reading and narrative skills were stronger. JA was on a strict behavioral plan

throughout my placement due to very frequent and ongoing incidents of violent behavior and was assigned a one-on-one aide. Whenever he has an incident, he goes to a separate room for extended time-out, which always lasts at least one hour.

5. LH is a seven-year-old girl in the second grade. She has deaf parents who are also teachers at the school, and a younger deaf brother in the kindergarten class. Out of everybody in the class, she had the strongest reading, writing, and narrative skills.

6. MM is an eight-year-old girl in the third grade. She has a hearing father, and had strong reading, writing, and narrative skills. She also functioned as a hard of hearing person and had frequent speech and language push-in and pull-out services; out of everybody in the class, her writing most closely mirrored appropriate English sentence patterns.

For the purposes of this implementation, my cooperating teacher and I divided the class into two ability groups: AL, JP, and JA, all of whom generally had weaker literacy skills, and BB, LH, and MM, who had stronger literacy skills. The same lessons, with modifications, were taught to both groups, and the results of all six students' progress are discussed here.

The Implementation

Project 1: Meet the Comic (April 15, 2010)

Prior to this lesson, I had assembled an assortment of written and visual materials including comic books, graphic novels, teacher resource books, single comic panels, classified ads with photographs, individual pages of Sunday funnies, popular

magazines, trade paperbacks, DVD cases, and newspaper articles. They were sorted evenly into three paper bags. I also applied a single line of masking tape to the classroom floor, and I placed the paper bags on the floor.

I called the first group—AL, JP, and JA—to their desks and asked them what they thought were in the paper bags. They said toys, books, and candy. I then wrote the word "comic" on the whiteboard and asked them what the word meant. They did not know. I had them spell it out and asked them again if they knew what it meant. They still did not know.

I then displayed a *Peanuts* comic strip and told them this was a comic. I asked them if they had seen comics before; JA and JP said yes, but AL said she had never read anything like that before. I asked them to show me the ASL sign for this medium, but all three did not know. I showed them the uninitialized sign FUNNY, pointed at "comic" on the whiteboard, and explained that things like the *Peanuts* comic strip were examples of comics.

I then explained the purpose of the three paper bags and the line of masking tape on the floor. We would sort the objects in the paper bags into two groups. The left side of the line would contain items we thought were comics, and the right side of the line would contain items we thought were not comics. To check their understanding, I placed the *Peanuts* comic strip on the non-comics side and asked if this placement was correct. All three said no, so I moved the comic strip to the left side; all three said yes. I distributed one paper bag to each student; they started sorting the contents of the

paper bags while I observed how they considered each item and communicated with each other.

I noticed that JA put several novels in the comics pile, and put all the single sheets of news articles in the non-comics pile; he appeared to be sorting books from other miscellaneous items. JP became frustrated with JA's sorting and insisted that the novels belonged in the non-comics pile. One challenge of this activity was that students were very curious about the comics and wanted to read them. I had to frequently remind them that they needed to focus on sorting rather than reading, and that they would have plenty of opportunities to read the comics in the next few weeks. I realized that I had forgot to explain my expectations to the students prior to starting the sorting activity.

After all three students had finished sorting, I asked them to stop touching the materials and look at me. I began discussing specific items. For example, I picked up a novel that had been placed in the comics pile, and asked them whether its contents looked like the *Peanuts* comic strip. JA, who had placed that novel in the comics pile, said it did not, and immediately moved all the novels to the non-comics pile. Then I pointed out a sheet of Sunday funnies that AL had put in the non-comics pile, and AL moved it into the comics pile.

I also noticed that JA placed a DVD in the comics pile. In his defense, the cover of that particular DVD case was composed of characters drawn in little boxes, resembling comic panels. I discussed with all three students whether DVDs could be comics. JA said yes, but JP and AL said no, and AL moved the DVDs into the non-

comics pile. (The discussion about whether DVDs counted as comics was later continued in Project 2.) I also pointed out a strip of photographs from the classifieds, which was in the non-comics pile, and asked them if that strip was a comic. All three agreed that it was not, and kept it where it was.

Through this discussion, I was able to support the students in constructing a general sense of comics and how comics differed from other media. AL, in particular, was very excited about some "more girly" comics that she had found in her bag, and really wanted to keep them instead of sorting them. This was in contrast to her earlier statement that she did not like comics.

Following the sorting activity, I displayed a blank t-chart on the smartboard and elicited responses from the students on what features we saw in the comics pile and the non-comics pile (see Figure 8.1).

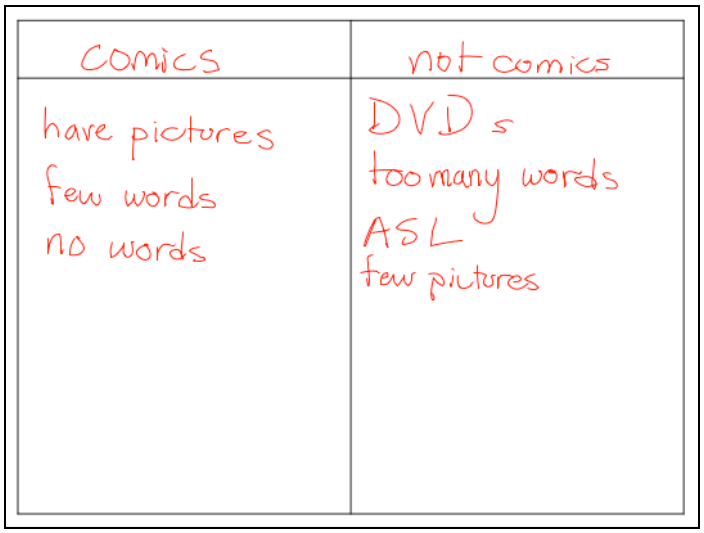


Figure 8.1: What are Comics? T-Chart.

Through discussion, we assembled the T-Chart and agree that comics had pictures, few words, or no words, while non-comics were DVDs, or had too many words, or were in ASL, or had few pictures. Before closing the activity, we reviewed the chart and then I explained to them that we would be studying comics for the next four weeks. Finally, the students were instructed to put all the materials back in a crate I designed as the "comics box."

I then switched groups, asking BB, LH, and MM to come to the front of the classroom. While I was instructing the first group, the second group was focused on literacy centers but stole several peeks and glances at what the first group was doing, especially the sorting activity. As a result, the second group was very curious and anxious to have their turn. I pointed to the word "comic" on the whiteboard and asked them what the word meant. All three immediately signed COMIC (signed like FUNNY but with a C handshape). This initialized sign was different than the uninitialized one I showed to the first group. I had not really noticed what the school used as the sign for comics prior to teaching this lesson, so I checked with the students whether they used the initialized (COMIC) or uninitialized form (FUNNY). They confirmed they used the initialized form, and I told them we would be using COMIC from now on and that we would explain that to the first group later.

I then showed them the *Peanuts* comic strip and asked them what it was. All three said COMIC right away. I then opened up the comics box and gave the same instructions, asking them to sort the materials into comics and non-comics piles on either side of the masking line.

Again, students showed high interest in the materials. When they were nearly finished with sorting the materials, I started participating in sorting the remaining items in the comics box, asking them why they sorted this item or that item. I pulled up a Venn diagram to record what students said during the sorting activity; this was different than the approach I took with the first group. With the first group, I had used a t-chart came after the sorting, instead of during the sorting. For the second group, I hoped to discuss differences and similarities; a Venn diagram was more appropriate than a t-chart which only discussed differences.

BB said that anything with pictures went into the comics pile, including the strips of classified ads with many photographs. Anything without pictures went into the non-comics pile. I pointed out that there were a few newspaper articles with accompanying photographs that were in the non-comics pile and asked him how that fit his earlier statement. He then said anything with just a few pictures did not really belong in the comics pile. I wrote these statements on the Venn diagram.

I also noticed that MM had placed single-panel comics in the non-comic pile, and asked all three students if single-panel comics counted as comics. They all agreed that it did, and moved these into the comic pile. Then LH started to describe panels using a classifier sign. I immediately seized on LH's description, and wrote the word "panels" on the Venn diagram and told the students that "panels" meant boxes like they see on a comic strip.

Then I noticed MM had placed a comic I had created using photographs and Comic Life in the non-comic pile, and I asked her why she did that. She said real

things and real people go into the non-comic pile; since my comic had photographs of real people, it was, therefore, not a comic. I added this erroneous observation to the Venn diagram under “non-comics” and made a note to discuss this item later.

I noticed that two items confused the students: *The Man in the Ceiling* by Jules Feiffer, and *Going Graphic—Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom* by Stephen Cary. Both are texts that include occasional comic panels as supporting illustrations. Because of these comic panels, the three students had deemed them to belong in the comics pile. I asked them if mostly-text materials could be considered comics, and they all said yes. I then pointed out that there were many newspaper and magazine articles in the non-comics pile that were also text-heavy; the students then explained that sometimes text-heavy items could be comics and sometimes they could not be. I added these observations to the Venn diagram.

I then asked them if there could be comics without words. BB said no and that comics need to have words, but then LH pointed out to him that the two "Owly" comic books, in the comics pile, had no words. Both observations were recorded on the Venn diagram (see Figure 8.2).

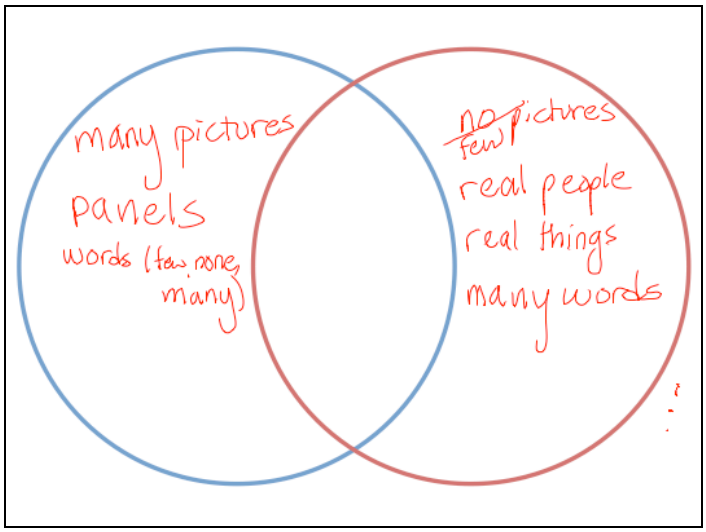


Figure 8.2: What are Comics? Venn Diagram.

The four of us then had a discussion/review of the Venn diagram we had co-created, and then told them we would be studying comics for the next four weeks. Before closing the activity, I checked to make sure they knew the signs for "comic" and "panels" and asked them to put only materials in the comics pile back in the comics box. Then we decided that the comics box should be placed in the corner of the classroom, next to the bookshelves, and that they could read comics during free reading time.

I felt it was a mistake to use the Venn diagram with the second group. The three areas in the Venn diagram did not match up with the two piles on the floor; I should have continued to use the t-chart instead.

Project 2: Creating Comic Characters (April 19-20, 2010)

I prepared a Powerpoint deck, which included two things: a t-chart that combined the students' input on the t-chart and Venn diagram from the previous

lesson (Figures 8.1 and 8.2), and an assortment of drawings of different comic characters.

Day 1: I used the same groups as in the previous lesson, and called AL, JA, and JP to the front of the classroom. I asked them if they remembered what we did in the last project, and pointed to the comics box in the corner to jog their memory. They all said they worked on sorting different things into two piles, one with comics and one without comics. I observed that they used the sign COMICS, so I asked them if they could spell the English word. None of them could spell it accurately.

I displayed the combined t-chart and had the students read aloud the t-chart. They did not know what "panels" meant (since it was a word from the other group), so I explained to them that panels were the little boxes used for drawing comics.
I displayed several comic books and strips and pointed out the panels; I checked their understanding of this concept when I showed text-heavy materials and asked if they could see any panels. Using the Sunday funnies, I also had them discover that some comic strips had one panel, while others had three, four, or five panels.

JA protested that DVDs were in the wrong column; he said that DVDs could be comics. After some inquiry, we figured out that he had seen several movies featuring characters from comic books, such as Batman, Spiderman, or the Hulk.
I asked him if he could actually see comic panels in the film; he said no, but repeated that DVDs still could be comics anyway. I wrote a modifier next to the DVDs: "can be from comic (sic)" and JA was satisfied with that (Figure 8.3).

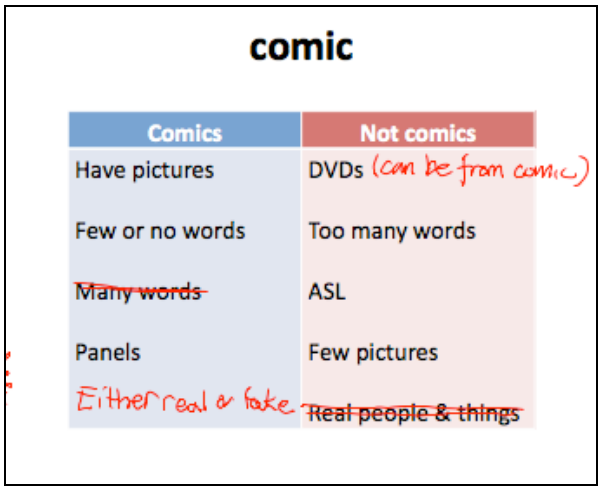


Figure 8.3: What are Comics? Final T-Chart.

Then I proceeded to the next slide, which displayed the word "comic character." I showed them the sign CHARACTER; they all accurately copied the sign and spelled the English word. Then I showed them the assortment of comic characters I had collected (Figure 8.4), and they pointed out interesting characters such as Betty Boop, Superman, and the Human Torch. I explained that all of these people were characters, which they appeared to understand very easily. To check their knowledge, I pulled out a few comic books and, using the cover, asked them who the characters were in each comic book. For example, I showed them a Batman comic, and they said Batman, the large villainous monster, and the green-skinned woman they saw on the cover were all characters.



Figure 8.4: Comic Characters.

Then I told them they would now make a comic character of themselves; in other words, a comic self-portrait. I switched the display to the computer, and pulled up the Bitstrips for Schools website. They looked very excited as I logged into the website and my comic character showed up (see Figure 8.5). I asked them if the comic character looked like me; all said yes. I ran them through the process of creating their own comic character using the Character Builder, and told them they would have today and tomorrow to make their comic character. Then I distributed little strips of paper containing log-in instructions for Bitstrips for Schools, and they started working on their comics.

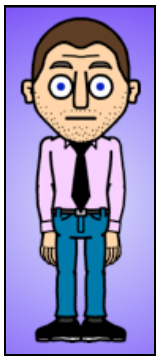


Figure 8.5: Teacher's Comic Character.

Then I called the second group—BB, LH, and MM—to the front of the classroom and repeated the same lesson. What differed this time was our discussion of the combined t-chart. First, I pointed out that I had written next to DVDs, "can be from comics," and explained the discussion I had with JA about how movies could be inspired by comics. The three students agreed with this modification to the chart.

Then I pointed out a contradiction in the comics column; there was a line reading, "few or no words" and the next line read, "many words." I asked them if this was a contradiction; they all did not think it was. I asked them if a comic could have a lot of words, like a regular book, and displayed a novel and a comic book to compare. LH said the novel had many more words than the comic book. I followed up by asking LH if she thought the chart needed to be changed. LH suggested crossing out "many words" and the other two students agreed, so I did that (Figure 8.3).

Last, I wanted to discuss MM's statement in the previous lesson that comics could only be fiction; anything with real people or real things was therefore, not a comic (Figure 8.2). I asked MM to review the statement on the combined t-chart. Then I showed her two comic books showing superheroes and asked if the superheroes

were real. MM said no, they were not real. Then I showed her a comic about President Obama, and asked if President Obama was real. She was flummoxed at this point, and said, “Yes, he is real, but this is a comic book and it’s not real.” I showed another comic book, that was a biography of Wilma Rudolph, and MM said that one had “real” characters as well. LH suggested that comics could include real or fake things, which MM now agreed with. I modified the chart by crossing out “real people and things” under the not-comics column, and adding “either real or fake” to the comics column. They approved of this change.

Then I proceeded to the discussion of comic characters and creating comic characters of themselves using Bitstrips for Schools, and this part did not differ from the first group. By the end of class, all the students, except MM, had finished making their comic characters. This surprised me because I expected them to take two days to do it, but they blazed through the software. I observed a lot of interactions between the students as they worked on their characters; some would run across the classroom to talk to another student to point out an interesting feature or tell a funny story. In particular, LH had discovered a control for chest size for female avatars, and was playing with it and telling MM and AL about this control. BB had found a way to change one’s skin color to blue or any other color, and JP found out how to place a hat on the comic character’s head. It was not easy to have them stop and save their characters; they were very eager to continue. I told them they would be able to refine their characters tomorrow, and they left for the next class.

Day 2: On the second day, we had a regular Language Arts day that included literacy centers, shared reading, and independent work. Their task for independent work was to "polish" their characters. They did this easily and with enthusiasm, and called on me only when they needed help tweaking a certain feature or when the software did not behave as expected. They all really wanted to show each other's characters, and I told them they would have an opportunity to share their characters at the end of the week.

Project 4: Add a Panel (April 21-22, 2010)

For this project, I had prepared enlarged copies of several comic strips from assorted sources, with each copy containing plenty of space to draw additional panels. I also prepared a Powerpoint slide for vocabulary review.

Day 1: Again, I taught the two groups separately. I called the first group—AL and JP—to the front of the classroom where the smartboard displayed the first slide of my Powerpoint: "comic." JA was in extended time-out as part of his behavioral plan, but I had given his one-on-one aide all the materials she needed, and JA was able to complete this project.

I asked the two students what that word meant, and both signed COMIC. I went to the next slide, which read, "comic book" and "comic strip." I asked them what these words meant. Both were able to say COMIC BOOK, but did not understand what "strip" meant. I signed COMIC STRIP, and then asked JP to go to the comics box and find an example of a comic book and a comic strip. He did this correctly, and

I asked AL to identify which item was the comic book and which was the comic strip; she did this correctly.

Then I went to the last slide, which contained the word "panel." While I introduced this word in the second project, they did not remember what it meant. I pulled out a comic strip and outlined the boxes on it; JP suddenly signed PANELS and AL copied the sign. Then I pulled out a sheet of the Sunday funnies and tested their understanding of the word by pointing at different strips and asking them to tell me how many panels were in that strip.

Now I was ready to introduce the add-a-panel project. I displayed an enlarged copy of an excerpt from *Jack and the Box* (see Figure 8.6). I read it aloud and then asked them what they thought came next. Not surprisingly, all said the jack would pop out of the box. I told them that I had a different idea, and that I would draw one more panel to either continue or finish the story. I took a ruler and demonstrated how to draw a new panel, and then I explained how I came up with my idea and how I was going to draw the content. At this point, I told them that they could not use stick figures, and made a drawing on the whiteboard of a stick figure and then an X over it. Then I drew the scene, which showed a frustrated Jack stomping on the box. To finish off, I wrote a sentence under the new panel to narrate what was happening, and we read aloud the sentence together (see Figure 8.6). The students understood what to do; I let them choose from a pile of enlarged comics and they started working on their add-a-panel project.

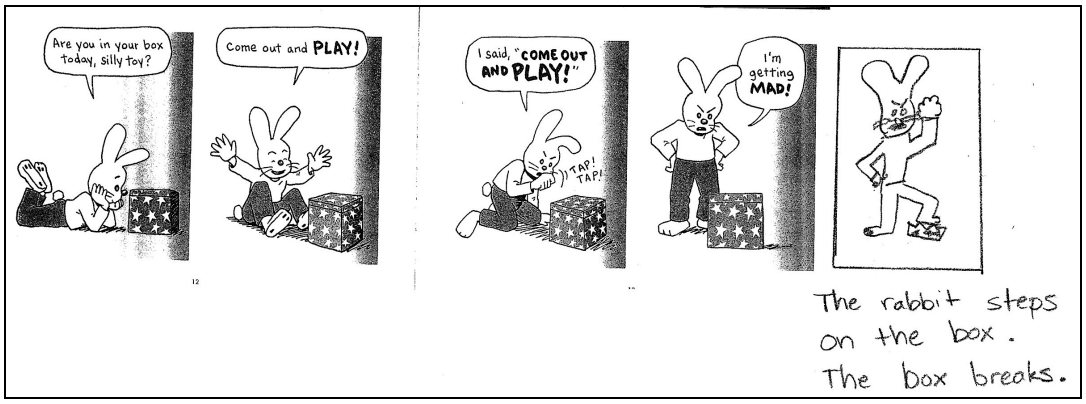


Figure 8.6: Teacher's Add a Panel Demonstration

Immediately, I noticed they had difficulty using the ruler to draw the new panels. Apparently, drawing lines using a ruler is an acquired skill, so I drew the panels for them, letting them tell me how big or wide their new panel should be. JP effortlessly extended the story by two panels, while AL grew frustrated by the challenge of making a good drawing. I told AL she did not have to make the drawing perfect, but after one too many drawing mistakes, she gave up and gave herself a time-out in the corner to calm herself down. At that point, JP was done (we would work on the sentences the next day), so I switched groups and asked BB, LH, and MM to come to the front of the classroom.

I used the same introduction, and this part proceeded much like the first group. As my demonstration for the add-a-panel project, I used an excerpt from *The Twilight Zone* comic, and asked them what they thought would happen after the man opened the front door. This time, all the students had different ideas. I went with BB's far-fetched idea that as soon as the man opened the door, Spiderman would surprise him

and shoot webs at him. I demonstrated how to draw the panel, create the scene (repeating again that stick figures were not allowed), and writing the sentence beneath.

Then all three students started working on their panels. BB took a copy of the same *Twilight Zone* strip and essentially copied my demonstration, but added two more beneath it. LH, who is a fast worker, drew new panels for two separate comic strips (see Figure 13.6). MM was very careful with her project, and spontaneously wrote a sentence to represent the new panels. At the end of the first day, everybody except AL had drawn panels, with MM already writing sentences for the panel. JA came in at the end of class and showed off his work: he took two comic strips, drew panels on the ends of both strips, and wrote sentences and speech balloons (see Figure 13.5).

Day 2: On the second day, I assigned the add-a-panel project for independent work for all students except MM and JA, who were finished with their projects. AL was apprehensive about working on this project, so I asked my CT work one-on-one with her; she was able to make a drawing she was happy with and write sentences for it. JP also needed to write sentences; with him I had developed a routine where he would sign out what he wanted to say and I would write the equivalent English sentences and he would read it aloud and then copy it down. I used this approach with him to help him finish his project (see Figure 13.4).

I noticed that BB wasn't really writing sentences, but instead making one-word dialogue balloons. I told him he needed to write a sentence *outside* the panel box, and he said he did not know how. BB and I have an English-writing routine similar to JP's,

but instead of writing sentences, I simply listed important words that he signs, and I asked him to string them together into a sentence. I did this with him, and he wrote two sentences for one of his comic strips and left the other one alone. LH was able to work independently on writing sentences, but she took it one step further and wrote a sentence for *every* panel, instead of one sentence representing the overall addition like the other students. When everybody was finished, I collected the panels and told them they would have a chance to share them the next day.

Sharing Projects 2 and 4 (April 23, 2010)

This day was the first time they would have an opportunity to share their work from the comic self-portrait and the add-a-panel projects. To add to the excitement, my parents were going to be observing their sharing, and they had prepared a question-and-answer session with my parents to occur after the sharing. I printed out their comic self-portraits, prepared their add-a-panel projects, and asked the students to line up the chairs audience-style in front of the smartboard.

First, I laid out some ground rules such as no talking while somebody is sharing, raise your hand if you have a question, and paying attention at all times. I then demonstrated how to share my comic character, explaining why it looks the way it looks. Then I showed how to share my add-a-panel project by reading aloud the entire comic strip. I randomly chose the student order, and explained that we would all share our comic characters, and then share our add-a-panel projects.

The students started sharing their comic characters, one by one. I noticed that JP, BB, and JA often turned their backs to the audience while signing so they could

look at the smartboard. I reminded them often to turn around and face the audience while signing. I also had noticed that some students' "stories" about their characters were more developed than others. AL, for example, simply said, "This is my character, and it looks like me," (see Figure 13.3) while LH had created a blue-skinned, Santa Claus-hat-wearing alter ego of herself (see Figure 13.1) and explained how this alter-ego came to be. I also noticed that students were not really asking any questions, so I modeled how to ask questions by raising my hand and making a comment. Still, the students did not ask any questions about each other's comic character.

Then it was time to share our add-a-panel strips. I reminded them about the ground rules again, and that they needed to read aloud the entire comic strip. What I noticed most about this sharing was that not one student needed help reading aloud the comic strip. Several of them were wordless, but for those strips with words, the students had an easy time reading them aloud. I felt this was evidence that the visual nature of comic strips does support reading the English text. Throughout the sharing, the students were very excited to see each other's work, and having them stay focused and not talk to each other was a challenge. On two occasions I had to interrupt the sharing to remind everybody to sit in his or her seats and not talk while sharing was happening. And again, they did not ask any questions. I think they might have treated this sharing event more as a read aloud experience where they listen passively, rather than an event to actively participate in by asking questions and making comments.

To conclude, I took their work and together, we posted it on the bulletin board in the hallway (Figure 8.7). I then told them we'd be working on comics some more in the next few weeks.



Figure 8.7: Comics Bulletin Board.

Project 11: ASL 6+1 and Comics (April 26-30, 2010)

The goal of this project was to create a comic by planning it in ASL first, and then making the comic using Bitstrips for Schools. Because of the challenge inherent in creating something from nothing and doing so in two languages and two forms of media (video and comic), I had planned to use this as my culminating project. However, the school had requested an ASL 6+1 video submission from all students by April 30, so I decided that this project fit well with the ASL 6+1 approach and decided to use this project in the third week of my curriculum implementation.

ASL 6+1, developed by the school's ASL committee and still in its developmental stage, is modeled on the popular 6+1 Trait Writing framework. This framework, according to Education Northwest's website, "is a powerful way to learn

and use a common language to refer to characteristics of writing as well as create a common vision of what 'good' writing looks like." The six traits are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and the "+1" is presentation. Nearly all examples of strong writing has good examples of all six traits; if one trait is missing or underdeveloped, the writing is not as strong or interesting. Teachers are to use a rubric based on these six traits to evaluate students' writing.

The school decided to take the 6+1 Trait Writing and modify it for ASL, creating their own rubric as well as ASL videos describing each trait. All students were asked to submit an original story in ASL by April 30, and these submissions served a dual purpose. First, they were to serve as benchmarks for individual students' progress, and second, the ASL committee hoped that the process of evaluating all the students' submissions would yield feedback that would lead to changes and improvements in the experimental ASL 6+1 framework and approach. The six traits of ASL are idea, organization, affect, sign choice, sign fluency, ASL conventions, and the "+1" is presentation.

After consulting with my CT, I learned that the students had not really reviewed anything regarding ASL 6+1 so far this year, so it was my responsibility to teach them what ASL 6+1 meant. Using the five-step drafting process recommended in 6+1 Trait Writing, I designed each day of the week as a separate step in the drafting process from Brainstorming to Drafting, Editing, Revising, and Finalizing. I created a progress chart using the students' comic characters to help them see where they are in the drafting process (Figure 8.8).



Figure 8.8: Progress Chart.

I also prepared a Powerpoint showing six videos made by the school last year, each one with a student explaining a trait. Much to my surprise, BB and MM were in these videos. I planned to show them these videos every day prior to working on their ASL stories. I also reserved thirty minutes every morning in the computer lab for each student to work on their ASL 6+1 projects, and laptops after that for them to work on comics that would mirror their ASL stories.

Day 1: On the first day, I introduced the ASL 6+1 project to the students. They did not know what ASL 6+1 meant, so I showed them the videos explaining each trait. BB and MM both vaguely recalled doing these videos, but they did not really remember. I explained to them that we would be working on a story all week, and every day we would go to the computer lab to revise and make our ASL stories better. Then we would also work on comics that would show the same narratives as our ASL stories. I also showed them the drafting progress chart and told them I expected all of us to move one step every day until Friday when we would all be at the Finalizing

stage. Then I did a short demonstration on Bitstrips for Schools showing how to create a new comic and how to add characters in the comic.

Before going to the computer lab, I set some ground rules. They could only do two things: review and record their ASL videos, and create their comics using Bitstrips for Schools. Doing anything else (e.g. playing games) would result in them being locked out of their computer for a few minutes. They understood and we went to the computer lab where all the students immediately made their ASL videos. Because the rules of ASL 6+1 require the teacher to not be involved in the drafting process, I was not permitted to give feedback on their ASL stories. However, I asked each student to show me their ASL story so I knew what they were talking about, and to confirm that they had completed their task before they started working on their comics.

All the students completed recording their ASL stories in less than ten minutes, and they moved to Bitstrips for Schools to work on their comics. What I noticed right away, however, was that they were still focused on editing their comic characters from Project 2 rather than making new comics. I asked them to please work on their comics and helped a couple students through the process of creating a new comic, but most of the students stubbornly stuck with editing their characters. I decided to indulge them since we still had four days to go for this project. When the students returned to the classroom, I moved all their comic characters on the progress chart from "Brainstorming" to "Drafting."

Day 2: On the second day, I assembled all the students in the front of the classroom and reviewed the Powerpoint again. Today's objective was to introduce the rubric and guide them through the process of evaluating an ASL story using the six traits. We reviewed the six traits of ASL through the videos, and then I displayed the rubric sheet on the document camera. I pointed to the headings for each column (e.g. Idea, Organization, Sign Choice) and asked them to tell me which trait each column represented. Then I explained that on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 meant lousy or terrible, while 5 meant wonderful or excellent.

With these in mind, I then showed them an ASL story showing my UCSD classmate, Ashley, narrating a story about her pet. The story was poorly narrated on purpose, with several false starts, flat affect, repetitive signing, messy fingerspelling, and an uninteresting premise. After showing the story, I displayed the rubric again and we filled it out as a group. I would point at each trait, such as Idea, and ask them, "So, did this story have a good idea or a boring idea? Would this be a 1, 3 or 5?" We would discuss this briefly and then circle the rating we agreed on, and move to the next trait. After this exercise, I reviewed the progress chart, explaining that the Drafting stage was where the students should sign their first draft of their ASL story. Then I stressed again the ground rules of using the computer lab, asked them to review yesterday's videos before creating their first draft, and reminded them to make a comic that mirrored their ASL story instead of fiddling with their comic characters.

We moved to the computer lab. The students watched yesterday's versions, and started recording their first drafts. Again, I could not intervene in this process by

offering feedback, so I simply watched their videos to confirm that they had done their first drafts before they started working on the comics. The quality of their stories varied; LH, for example, told about her trip to Costa Rica but with a plot twist involving soccer and a pirate ship. BB had a very entertaining story about Kobe Bryant and why he was the best basketball player ever. AL, on the other hand, told a very brief story about a bride applying lipstick and mascara before getting married.

This time around, about half the students started working with comic strips. JA and MM were still modifying their comic characters despite my insistence that they start making comic strips, although MM started working on a strip near the end of class. LH wanted to explore the internet instead of making a comic strip, and I had to lock her computer until she was ready to start cooperating again. When the students returned to their classroom, I moved all their comic characters from the Drafting stage to the Editing stage and proudly announced that they were almost halfway finished. After class ended, I decided to review JP, MM, AL, and BB's comic strips and noticed that all four strips simply showed several expressionless characters standing in panels. There were no dialogue, props, scenes, or character poses—in short, nothing resembling their ASL stories. I decided that I needed to be more explicit about tying the comic to the ASL story, and modified the next day's lesson to include this.

Day 3: On the third day, MM was absent and JA was in extended time-out. I again reviewed the videos of the six traits of ASL; at this point, the students were signing along with the videos, which showed that they were internalizing the concept of ASL 6+1 and the six traits. Next was another rubric exercise; I had a second video

of Ashley signing her story much better and clearer than in the first video. I told the students that Ashley had gotten the feedback from the rubric we filled out yesterday, and improved her story based on our feedback. I showed the video of Ashley, and then I distributed copies of the rubric to each student. I told them they all did not have to have the same rating for Ashley; if one student thought Ashley rated a 4 for organization and another student thought Ashley rated a 5, that was fine. Then we filled out the rubrics together, discussing each trait at a time. I told them to think about these traits today since they were now in the Editing stage of the drafting process, and to use the rubric to help make their stories better.

Then I showed them a comic (hand-drawn since Bitstrips did not have a ferret image in its animals library) I had prepared yesterday, showing a story equivalent to Ashley's story about her pet. I asked them if the comic was the same as Ashley's story, and they said yes. I told them that it was time to start making their comic strips and that these comic strips needed to be the same as their ASL stories. They all confirmed their understanding, and, after reviewing ground rules again, we went to the computer lab.

All the students reviewed their videos and recorded new drafts of their ASL stories. At this point, I really wanted to intervene and offer feedback, but I could not do this because of the constraints of the ASL 6+1 project. Then the students started working on their comics. Again, almost all of them were simply populating their comic strips with various characters instead of creating stories that mirrored their ASL

videos. I was frustrated at their lack of progress; we only had only one or two days left to work on our comic strips.

However, upon closer observation, I noticed that instead of wasting time, they were actually exploring the program. I recalled that this was really only the fourth or fifth day of their exposure to the Bitstrips for Schools program; they were still discovering what they could do and could not do with the program. LH, for example, was furiously adding panels with different scenes. JP was playing with different character poses and BB had discovered how to add a basketball as a prop. Out of all four students, only BB seemed to be on track towards making a comic version, although he was still working on the first panel. I then decided perhaps it was better to abandon the comic strip aspect of this project, and simply give them free time to explore the Bitstrips for Schools program so they would be more capable of completing upcoming comic strip projects that I had planned.

When the students returned to the classroom, I moved four of them to the Revising phase, and left MM and JA's characters in the Editing phase. The present students seemed to really like this progress chart and were excited at how far they had come.

Day 4: On the fourth day, all the students were present except JA who was in extended time-out again. I changed up the routine by splitting the students back into their two groups of three students each, and teaching the same lesson to both groups.

I worked with the first group, AL and JP, while the other group worked in literacy centers. Today's plan was to have them evaluate each other's ASL stories

using the rubric. I displayed the six videos reviewing the ASL 6+1 traits; at this point each student had memorized at least four or five of the traits. Then I pulled up AL and JP's videos and distributed rubrics to them; their job was to score each other's videos. I would play one video, and then we would go through the rubric together, trait by trait, but I would not tell them what I thought the rating should be and instead encouraged them to think for themselves and decide on an appropriate rating. However, they both gave themselves and each other mostly 5's (while my personal opinion was that their ASL stories were mostly 2's and 3's). I did not have any time left to discuss these inflated scores before switching groups.

I repeated the same process with the same group: BB, LH, and MM. We reviewed the 6 traits of ASL, and then we scored each other's ASL videos. This time, the ratings varied more although they were still high; I saw some 3's, but mostly 4's and 5's.

Then it was time to move to the computer lab. I called all the students to the hallway. Before going into the lab, however, I reviewed ground rules and then discussed what to do with the comic strips. I told them that sometimes when I start working with a new computer program, I needed to play with it for a while before I can make something useful. I explained that I thought the students needed to do the same thing. I asked if that was what they were feeling, and they agreed with my observation, so I told them that they did not need to worry about making a comic strip that matched their ASL story, but that they need to keep exploring the software and not do other things on their computers.

In the computer lab, everyone watched their videos from the previous day and then recorded new ones. I noted how the students had become used to this routine; I did not need to remind them to watch their old video first or to try and improve their stories this time. However, I realized a little too late that I had forgotten to explain to them how to use the rubrics to improve their videos; the students barely looked at their rubrics when revising their ASL stories. The rubrics probably would not have helped much since they had very high rankings, translating into "little room for improvement." I noticed that MM completely changed her story; it used to be about shopping at the supermarket but now it was a story about meeting the Jonas Brothers.

Then the students started using Bitstrips for Schools, exploring the program and testing out its many features. I noticed that LH had started making a comic with a beach scene, a soccer ball, and a pirate, all which were elements in her ASL story. BB also did the same thing, showing a basketball player on a basketball court. The rest of the students (including JA, who returned to class later), were still in the exploratory stage. When we returned to the classroom, I moved all the students' comic characters one level ahead on the progress chart; four of the students were now in the Finalizing stage while two were in the Revising stage.

Day 5: Today was the day the ASL 6+1 submissions were due to be submitted to the ASL committee. The schedule this time was a little different; we would quickly review the six traits, then go to the computer lab and have about 15 minutes to sign their final drafts, return to the classroom for read alouds with the high school students,

and then finally share each other's ASL stories. There would be no working on comic strips for the day.

We reviewed the six traits without showing the videos; they were able to retell them correctly (although I had to give some hints when they forgot about Conventions and Sign Choice). Then I explained that we would go to the computer lab; this was the last time they would revise their stories and they had to make it perfect for the ASL committee. They went to the computer lab and focused on the ASL stories. Everybody was finished within ten minutes, so I collected their videos and sent them to the ASL committee while the students went back to the classroom for read alouds with the high school students.

After the read alouds, I asked the students to line up the chairs audience-style in front of the smartboard, and reviewed rules of sharing: no talking while sharing, paying attention, and raising hands before asking questions. In random order, I showed each video; this was highly entertaining for the students and I was able to see how far the students had come in revising their stories. AL, in particular, had transformed her story from simply being about a bride putting on makeup to a full story of the bride's wedding day, starting with preparing for the wedding, proceeding to the ceremony itself, and ending with the cutting of the wedding cake.

After sharing, I told them that I thought they did a wonderful job and were very committed to the project; to illustrate this, I pointed to the progress chart where I moved all the characters into a "starry" area I had drawn on the whiteboard, which represented completion. To wrap up the project, I told them they would have many

more chances to read and create comics in the next two weeks before my placement ended.

Project 6: Role-Shifting (May 3-7, 2010)

For this project, I prepared a Powerpoint slideshow with the words "dialogue" and "role shifting" as well as six different *Calvin & Hobbes* 4-panel comic strips. I also checked out a large book version of *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Raschka. All six students had just finished a two-week unit with the ASL teacher that focused on role shifting as a way to tell a story involving two characters. I decided to build on this knowledge by having the students create dialogue comics and using role shifting to read aloud these comics.

At the same time, my CT and I wanted to implement a new approach for vocabulary building. We were not happy with how the students kept losing their weekly vocabulary cards whenever they had to bring them home and then back to school the next day. So we decided to have them make two decks of vocabulary cards: one to keep at home and one to keep in the classroom. We started this approach the same day I started Project 6.

Day 1: I called the first group (AL, JA, and JP) to the front of the classroom. I asked them to spell COMIC to me and they spelled it correctly. Then I displayed the word "dialogue" on the screen and asked if anybody knew what it meant. When they said they did not, I provided several ASL signs which all roughly mean "talking," "conversing," "telling," and "dialogue." They copied these signs, and to check their knowledge, I pointed to "dialogue" on the board and they signed the various signs

I had just shown them. Then I displayed "role shifting" on the smartboard and asked them what it meant. They did not know, so I signed out the story they had created with their ASL teacher and asked them what interesting things they noticed about how I signed the story. JP said I kept moving my body from one side to the other, and I told him that was what role shifting meant.

I pulled out the *Yo! Yes?* book and told the students we would explore role shifting using this book. All three students remarked that they had seen this book before. I asked them what they remembered about it, and JA said he remembered there was one boy who was sad and lonely but then became friends with the other boy. I then read aloud the book, emphasizing the role shifting aspect of my retelling. After I finished reading aloud the book, the students were anxious to have their turn at role shifting, and each student took turns reading aloud the story themselves to the rest of the group. I observed that all of them had some difficulty moving their body appropriately while simultaneously reading the text; sometimes they would spin around or accidently switch character spaces. They were often able to self-correct, however.

After all three students had read aloud *Yo! Yes?*, I returned to the smartboard with the word "role shifting" displayed. I asked them what that word meant, and AL said it meant shifting your shoulders from left to right and back. Satisfied with this answer, I then displayed a *Calvin & Hobbes* comic strip and read it aloud. During the read aloud, I would pause with my shoulders in one space and ask them who I was representing, and then shift my shoulders to the other space and ask them who I was

representing then, and they answered correctly. After the first one, I displayed two more *Calvin & Hobbes* comic strips. All three students pleaded for opportunities to read aloud these comics, so I led all three students read aloud each one of the three comics (for a total of nine read alouds!). They really enjoyed this activity, and I noticed that they would help each other figure out the text if one of them could not remember what the text meant.

After we finished the *Calvin & Hobbes* read alouds, I then opened up Bitstrips for Schools and directed them towards a new activity I had created on the students' home pages: "Role-Shifting Comic." I told them that after they had finished making their vocabulary cards, they could work on making a role-shifting comic showing a conversation between two people, like in *Yo! Yes?* or *Calvin & Hobbes*. I then showed them a progress chart much like the one I used in Project 10, except there were two levels: "I'm working on my vocabulary cards." and "I'm working on my role-shifting comic." I used the students' comic characters again; the progress chart's goal was to motivate the students to finish their vocabulary cards quickly so they could work on the dialogue comics.

Then we switched groups and I called the second group (BB, LH, and MM) to the front of the classroom. I used the same introduction, displaying the words "dialogue" and "role shifting." The explanation of each term proceeded like with the first group. Then I planned to go straight to the *Calvin & Hobbes* comics and read them aloud, but the students protested and wanted to read *Yo! Yes?* first since they had observed the first group reading from that book. So we read aloud *Yo! Yes?*,

emphasizing role shifting while retelling, and then we read aloud all six *Calvin & Hobbes* comic strips. I explained to them the progress chart and the "Role-Shifting Comics" activity on Bitstrips for Schools, and then the students went to work on their vocabulary cards. At the end of the class, none of the students had finished making their vocabulary cards, so nobody had a chance to work on their comics.

Day Two: I assembled all six students in the front of the classroom and quickly reviewed "dialogue" and "role shifting" and had them read aloud all six *Calvin & Hobbes* comic strips. Then I reminded them that they needed to finish their vocabulary cards before starting their role-shifting comics, and pointed to the progress chart to reinforce that routine.

However, as they started working again on their vocabulary cards, I noticed two students were starting from scratch; they had apparently lost the cards sometime between yesterday and today. The other students had difficulty finding their materials and seemed overburdened by the task of creating two decks instead of one. No one was able to finish their cards today, which meant that nobody had started working on their role-shifting comics.

Day Three: My CT and I decided to have a morning meeting to discuss the vocabulary cards and introduce a better storage system. Each student had four separate areas in which to store language arts materials: a wall cabinet shelf, a drawer in a plastic cabinet, a plastic box on a low shelf, and a blue box by the door. We realized there were simply too many storage spaces, and that our students were losing materials by storing them in so many different spaces. We decided to designate the blue boxes

as only for the vocabulary cards, and that those blue boxes would always go into the plastic boxes on the low shelf.

We discussed this new storage idea during the morning meeting, and the students agreed with this idea. We gave them five minutes to re-arrange their things and clear out the blue boxes of everything and place all their vocabulary cards in the blue boxes. Then we told the students to finish their vocabulary cards and then they could work on their role-shifting comics, and reinforced this plan by pointing out the progress chart on the whiteboard.

In the next hour, all the students had completed their vocabulary cards, and stored them in the blue boxes. By the end of class, everybody had started creating comics using their laptops. However, I noticed that LH and BB were the only two out of six that were following the instructions for the "Role-Shifting Comics" activity—choosing two characters, placing them in comic panels, and writing dialogue between those two characters. The rest of the students were doing the same thing they did the previous week: simply populating comic panels with several random characters. I also noticed that some students were having a hard time adding the same character to several panels (as is necessary for role-shifting comics).

Following the lesson, I experimented a little with Bitstrips for Schools and discovered that it had copy and paste functions; explaining these functions to the students would have made it far easier to create role-shifting comic strips with the same characters across several panels. I also noticed that all the students were using

the eight-panel comic format, instead of the three-panel format. The eight-panel format was proving to be too much work for some students.

Finally, I realized that all the students, except for LH and BB, did not really know what was expected of them; I had failed to model to them an appropriate role-shifting comic created in Bistrips for Schools, and to make clear my expectations for their work. I decided to remedy all these problems in tomorrow's lesson.

Day 4: Prior to class, I created two three-panel comic strips to serve as "good" and "bad" examples of a role-shifting comic. The "good" comic showed the same two characters across three panels, and both the dialogue and the narrative made sense (see Figure 8.9). Each panel in the "bad" comic had different characters and backdrops, and there was no narrative or story that tied the three panels together (see Figure 8.10). I also decided to describe to them Rubric 6 and make clearer how I would evaluate their work.

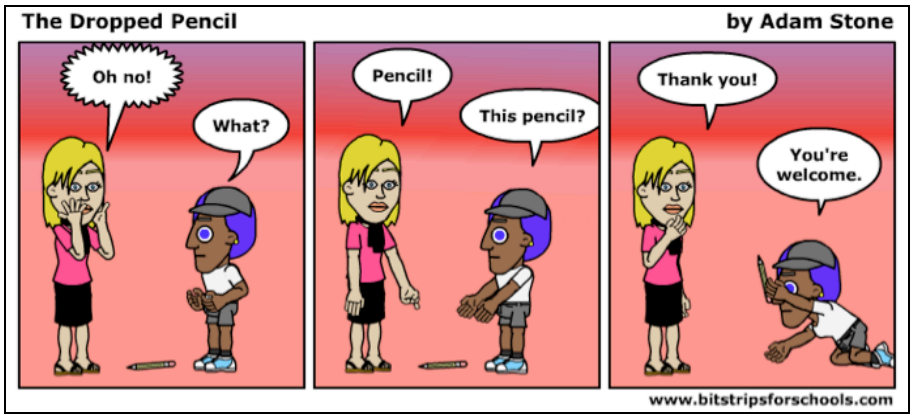


Figure 8.9: The "Good" Role-Shifting Comic.

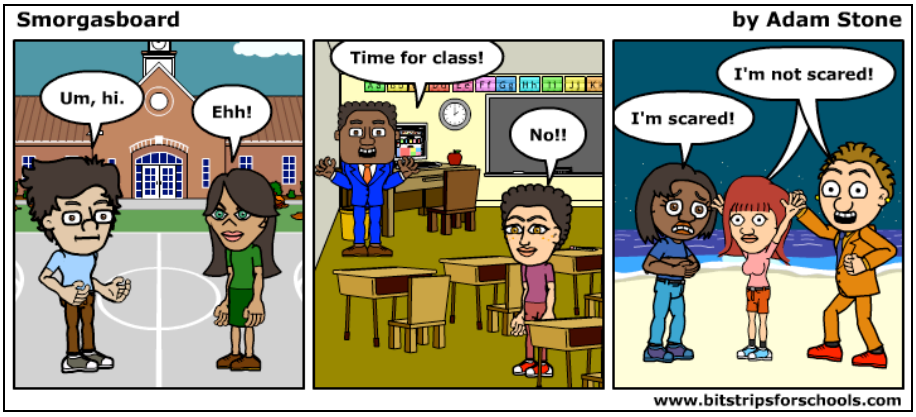


Figure 8.10: The "Bad" Role-Shifting Comic.

At the beginning of class, I assembled all six students in the front of the classroom, and reviewed the words "dialogue" and "role shifting." Then we read aloud one *Calvin & Hobbes* comic together to illustrate role shifting. Finally, I showed them the "good" and the "bad" comics. I asked them to tell me what they noticed were the differences between the comics. They noticed that the "good" comic had the same characters and background throughout the three panels, and the "bad" comic had various characters and backgrounds in each panel. I asked them to tell me which one they thought was the better comic, and they all agreed that the "good" comic was the better one.

Then I showed them Rubric 6, and read aloud each category. I asked them to remember the rubric they used for the ASL 6+1 project; 1 meant lousy, and 5 meant excellent. This time, I explained, 1 still meant lousy, but 3 now meant excellent, instead of 5. Using the rubric, we reviewed the "good" and "bad" comics. We agreed that the "good" comic got all 3's, while the "bad" comic got all 1's.

Then I explained that they need to make role-shifting comics that could get all 3's, and that they had to finish them today so we could share our comics with each other tomorrow and put them on the comics bulletin board. I showed them how to copy and paste characters from one panel to another panel in Bitstrips for Schools and how to select the three-panel format instead of the eight-panel format, and set them off to work on their comics.

This time around, I noticed that everyone was on task and making appropriate comics; apparently, demonstrating the good/bad comics and the rubric had made a difference. The students now knew what was expected of them; they had seen what a good role-shifting comic looks like in Bitstrips for Schools and were motivated to score high on the rubric. I helped students with using the copy and paste feature as well as giving their comic strips titles so they could save them. I also provided them with English words for the speech balloons when they asked for it, provided they were able to sign out the dialogue in ASL first. By the end of class, everybody had finished at least one role-shifting comic strip (see Figure 13.7 for JP's comic) except for MM, who chose to stick with the eight-panel comic format and only finished five panels. LH and BB both completed two dialogue comics each (see Figures 13.8 and 13.9).

Day 5: On Fridays, high school students visit our classroom for read alouds, we do vocabulary reviews, watch an extended version of our school's morning news show, and, at the end of class, share our work from the past week. When it was time for sharing, I had the students line up their chairs audience-style and be ready to read

aloud their role-shifting comics. I also invited the high school students to stay and watch our students share their comic strips.

First, I showed them again the rubric, pointing out that the last category was "read aloud." I emphasized that I would be rating not only their comics, but also how they read aloud these comics to the class. I pulled up the "good" comic I created earlier, and read it aloud twice—one very badly and one very well. I asked them what differences they noticed about my two read alouds. They said that during the "bad" read aloud, I forgot to face the audience, I kept spinning around, and I wasn't very clear with my signing. I asked them what score I should get on the rubric, and they all screamed, "1's!"

After this modeling exercise, the students read aloud their comics in random order, while I rated their performance using the rubric. All six students got 3's for their read aloud, and I was very happy with how they emphasized good role shifting behavior during read aloud.

Project 10: Comic Book Read Aloud (May 11-14, 2010)

This project was inspired by a request from the kindergarten teacher, whose class had learned about Smokey Bear last winter. Part of the unit included reading a 1960 comic book, *The True Story of Smokey Bear.* When the kindergarten teacher learned about my comics unit, she asked if my students could read aloud *The True Story of Smokey Bear* to her students. As a read aloud project was already part of my curriculum, I happily agreed to her idea. I prepared the 16-page comic book by Xeroxing its pages and stapling either two or three consecutive pages together to make

six excerpts, one excerpt for each student. Since Monday was a holiday and the read aloud was scheduled for Friday morning, the students had just three days to learn their pages and prepare for the read aloud.

Day 1: I prepared a Powerpoint slideshow with the words "read aloud," "comic," and "panel." I assembled all six students in the front of the classroom, and displayed the words. They all immediately signed the words READ, COMIC, and PANEL, and I asked them what they thought "read aloud" meant. None of them knew, so I signed READ ALOUD and they copied my signs. I explained to them that we would be doing a read aloud to the kindergarten class on Friday, and we reviewed who we remembered were in that class (being a small school, they were quite familiar with the kindergartners).

Then I displayed the cover of *The True Story of Smokey Bear* on the screen (using the document camera), and BB commented that he remembered reading that comic book before. I told them that this comic was what they would read aloud to the kindergartners, and that each student would have two or three pages to read aloud. Then I read aloud the entire comic book, using read aloud comprehension strategies such as asking questions, pausing for clarification, re-reading important panels, and asking for "help" from the students in reading aloud the next panel.

After the read aloud, I distributed the excerpts, one for each student, and told the students to not lose their excerpts. The students went off to work on literacy centers, with one center being guided reading of their excerpt with an adult. During literacy centers, JA and AL read aloud their excerpts to me. In particular, I was

surprised at how effortless it was for JA to read aloud his excerpt. He normally struggles with guided reading of more ordinary books, but he was able to sign out the visual imagery in the comic panels, which closely mirrored the text. He appeared to really enjoy this activity and asked to read aloud his excerpt two more times. At the end of class, I assigned everyone homework, which was to practice reading aloud their excerpt at home.

Days 2 and 3: We had literacy centers time again the next two days, and guided reading of the comic book excerpt remained one of the centers. I was able to read aloud one-on-one with each student. I felt the process of moving away from word-by-word read aloud to an ASL-centric read aloud was most evident in MM's progress. During our first guided reading session, MM focused on reading aloud the text word-by-word and ignored the images. I encouraged her to look at the images and think about how to express in ASL what she saw, instead of what she read. For example, there were three panels in her excerpt discussing how Smokey Bear's posters became widespread and could be seen on the street, in the forests, and in schools (see Figure 8.11).

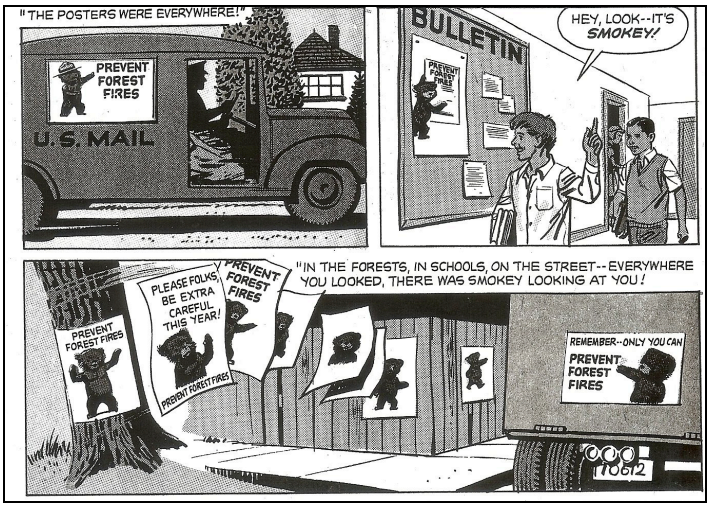


Figure 8.11: Part of MM's Smokey Bear Excerpt.

MM would read aloud the text at first, until I asked her to tell me what she saw in the panels. She signed POSTER+++++ which meant that an area was plastered with posters. I asked her if she could read aloud those panels again, but this time with more emphasis on how people in the comic could see posters everywhere. After a couple attempts, she was able to say in ASL, "People saw posters everywhere! In the streets, in the schools, in the forests." In this way, MM was able to move away from the text and more accurately express the narrative in her excerpt of the comic book.

JP was another interesting example. He had the honor of reading aloud the first excerpt, and was nervous about going first. While JP did not read word-by-word, his narrative was flat and lacked consistency. Because his excerpt has a lot of scenic descriptions (e.g. "Deer in the shade of the pines; the trout along the cool streambanks; the bears playing in the green meadow") we worked together to help him set up the setting and describe what he, as the narrator, could see in the pristine forest. Then later

in the excerpt, the weather grew hot; the forest dried out and the river ran low (see Figure 8.12).

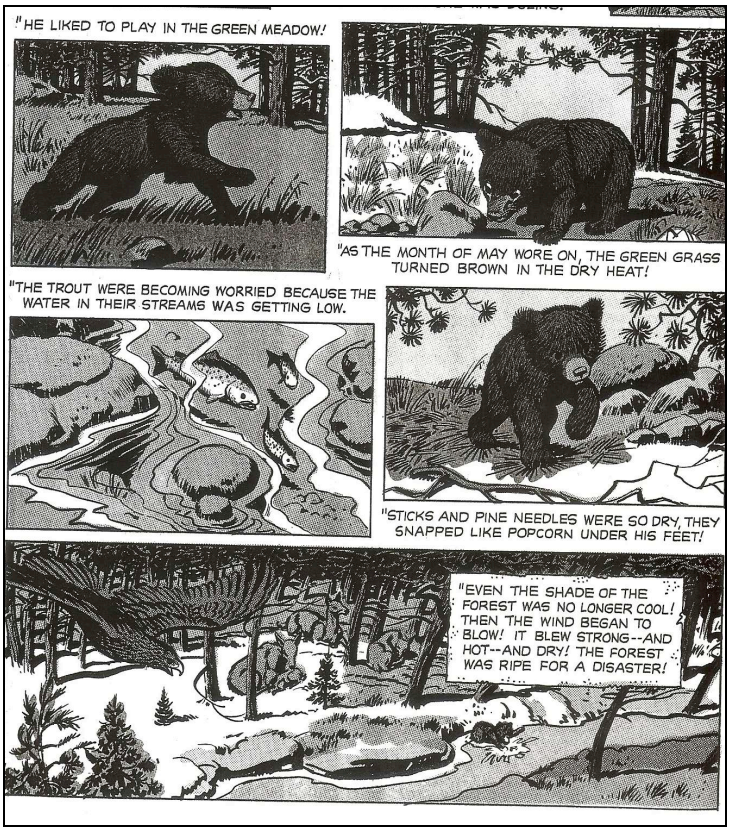


Figure 8.12: Part of JP's Smokey Bear Excerpt.

I encouraged JP to think of ways to describe the changes in the landscape using classifiers (e.g. a tree withering, a river running low, the grass turning brown). Across the two days, we worked on practicing an ASL-centric read aloud of JP's excerpt, setting the scene for the next two excerpts in where the wildfire would ravage the forest and firefighters would happen upon the bear cub that would later become Smokey Bear.

Day 4: After watching the morning news program, I held a morning meeting to discuss what would happen before, during, and after the read aloud. First, I asked them what kinds of behavior they expected to see from each other. They mentioned various appropriate behaviors such as lining up in the hallway before walking to the kindergarten classroom, paying attention during read aloud, not touching or chatting with other students, especially the kindergarteners, and being nice to each other. I then reminded them that during each student's read aloud, they had to make sure to face the audience and sign slowly. I stressed that it was okay to stop signing and look at the screen to figure out what to say next (I did not want any more spinning around like during the read aloud of the role-shifting comics!).

After resolving some serious behavior problems that arose during the morning meeting, we lined up and walked over to the kindergarten classroom, where the five kindergartners were waiting for us. All eleven students worked together to set up the seating arrangement, and then I came onto the "stage" and introduced myself to the kindergartners and asked for their names. Then I introduced *The True Story of Smokey Bear* and asked a few warm-up questions about what they knew about Smokey Bear.

Then we started the read alouds. Throughout the read alouds, the pages from the comic book were projected onto the smartboard for them to read off. JP was up first, and he blanked out for the first page or so. I fed him signs and he slowly warmed up to the point where he was able to read aloud the second and third pages on his own. The rest of the students did well, and the only other student whose read aloud I had to support by feeding signs was AL. The kindergarten teacher took videos of each

student doing the read aloud so that I could review them later for assessment. After the read alouds, my students took a bow on the stage and after meeting the kindergarten class pet (a southwestern lizard), we went back to our classroom. Before dismissing the students for P.E., we had a quick wrap-up discussion where I asked each student to say a few words about how they felt about their read aloud. Various words students threw out included good, fun, exciting, nervous, and funny. This was the last day of our comics unit, and also the last day of my student placement.

Project 9: Deaf Comics (May 12, 2010)

During the last week of my placement, I decided to have a one-day comics workshop on Wednesday to give them another opportunity to use Bitstrips for Schools. After the students had finished practicing their *Smokey Bear* excerpts, I assembled them in the front of the classroom for an activity about comics drawn by Deaf people and about the Deaf experience.

To introduce the different Deaf comic artists and cartoonists, I used an online publication, the *Free Comic Book Day Deaf Cartoonists Showcase* (Clark, 2010). This publication has each two-page spread dedicated to a different Deaf cartoonist, with examples of his or her work; featured cartoonists included Maureen Klusza, Matt Daigle, Kendra Harness, Adrean Clark, and Dan McClintock. Several of the comics were not age-appropriate, so I read aloud only those that were accessible and interesting to my students.

The students were most interested in those comics where sign language was visible and part of the narrative; one comic by Klusza showed two girls signing “cat”

to each other and explaining how to ask for a kitten, while another comic by Harness talked about the tension between a hearing cat and a deaf signing dog. However, the students' favorite comic was a two-panel strip by Daigle titled, "That Deaf Guy," about a fast-food restaurant where, in the first panel, the cashier repeatedly yells out the order number. The second panel shows several people looking at a deaf person who is looking at his pager, while another restaurant worker says to the cashier, "Oh, that order belongs to that deaf guy!" (see Figure 8.13).



Figure 8.13: Daigle's "That Deaf Guy" Comic Strip.

That comic mirrored an experience I just had at Jiffy Lube a few days earlier, and I retold that story to the students in an effort to start a discussion about how that kind of experience is very common for deaf people. LH said she saw the same thing happen to her mother at Starbucks a few weeks ago. BB, JA, and AL loved my story so much that I ended up retelling my story three more times; all the students thought it was hilarious.

Then I asked them to make one-panel comics telling a story about what it is like to be Deaf. I asked that their comic must include the word "deaf," and that they needed to make and finish it today because there was no time to do it the next day due

to the *Smokey Bear* read aloud. At that time, JA and AL were pulled out for speech, so there were four students left.

All four students started working on their comics. MM immediately went back to the role-shifting comic she made last week and started making changes to it. I asked her to instead make an original comic, but she did not want to. I decided to let her do what she wanted, and see what happens. By the end of class, she was still working on her role-shifting comic and did not make a deaf-related comic. However, LH, BB, and JP all made deaf-related comics that were quite inventive. LH's comic depicted two men sitting at a table that was on fire, with a caption that read, "deaf not see fire!" because they were watching the television. JP's comic showed two hip-hop-looking men dancing to six large speakers, with the title, "Deaf Music" (see Figure 13.10). BB's comic was a reproduction of my story at Jiffy Lube and of Daigle's comic about the fast-food restaurant and the deaf customer. It showed a dozen people staring at a deaf person sitting and reading a book, with a few people wondering, "Are you deaf?" and "How did you become deaf?" (see Figure 13.11). We did not have any time to formally share our comics, but the students saw each other's progress throughout the activity and, using the Bitstrips for Schools sharing comics feature, could read each other's comics at a later time.

The quality of their work surprised me for two reasons: that they were able to make comics so relevant to the Deaf experience after such a brief discussion, and that they were able to use the Bitstrips for Schools program comfortably and effectively to accomplish what they had in mind. This activity felt like the first time that the students

were at ease with the comic-making software, and at that point, I realized that much of the frustrations of using the software the last four weeks were because the students were still learning their way around it. With this activity, the students finally displayed proficiency in creating comics and using Bitstrips for Schools as a creative tool.

IX. Report on the Results of My Evaluation.

The curriculum goals were:

1. Students will recognize and explore comics as a unique medium and identify visual and textual qualities that set comics apart from other media.

2. Students will further develop their skills in both ASL and English through the process of creating new comics, manipulating existing comics, and reading aloud both new and existing comics.

3. Students will use and become proficient at a technology-based medium to create, share, and publish comics.

Generally, a curriculum is effective when the data shows evidence of students achieving the curriculum's stated learning goals. The three evaluation methods used to gather data were field notes, student performance rubrics, and student-produced artifacts. Analyzing the data helped determine whether each of the three goals of this curriculum was met. In this section, each goal and the outcomes for that goal are discussed.

This curriculum's first goal was for *students to recognize and explore comics as a unique medium and identify visual and textual qualities that set comics apart from other media*. Using my field notes from Project 1: Meet the Comic, I can determine that all six students were able to identify whether a specific material was a comic. Moreover, they collaborated on creating a chart discussing the differences between comics and anything else that were not comics. They identified comics as having few or no words, panels, pictures and that the narratives could be either fiction

or non-fiction (see Figure 8.3). They also were able to identify characters within comics (as opposed to other visual elements) and create their own comic characters (see Figures 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3). Throughout the rest of the curriculum, I frequently checked their knowledge of comics by asking them to describe panels and having them work more extensively with the comic medium. Finally, anecdotal notes showed students talking about comics during other instructional times and expressing preferences for comics during silent reading time.

The curriculum's second goal was for *students to further develop their skills in both ASL and English through the process of creating new comics, manipulating existing comics, and reading aloud both new and existing comics*. In this case, all three data collection methods lend support to the conclusion that students achieved this goal. Students increased their ASL skills in the areas of role shifting, setting up the scene using classifiers, and learning appropriate presentation styles, as evidenced by field notes and student performance rubrics. For example, my rubrics showed that in Project 6: Role-Shifting, all six students were able to successfully demonstrate appropriate role-shifting when reading aloud their dialogue comics. Another example was Project 10: Comic Book Read Aloud when the students used classifiers and appropriate presentation styles to read aloud *The True Story of Smokey Bear*.

In addition, students increased their English skills in the areas of writing dialogue and summarizing parts of narratives. Student-produced artifacts from Project 4: Add-A-Panel showed that students were able to extend the comic narrative further and write sentences that summarized what was happening in the added panels

(see Figures 13.4, 13.5, and 13.6). Also, students created comics in Project 6: Role-Shifting that demonstrated their skill level in writing English-based dialogue between two people, based on their exposure to other dialogue-based comics such as *Calvin & Hobbes* and the children's book *Yo! Yes?* (see Figures 13.7, 13.8, 13.9).

Finally, the curriculum's last goal was for *students to use and become proficient at a technology-based medium to create, share, and publish comics*. This goal was only partially achieved. Based on field notes and student-produced artifacts, students continued to be challenged by the Bitstrips for Schools software and unfortunately, my curriculum implementation planning and time frame did not give them adequate time to become proficient in the software. However, as my field notes in Project 9: Deaf Comics reveal, many students were becoming comfortable with the software; given one or two more projects, they would have approached proficiency (see Figures 13.10 and 13.11). Also, there was not enough time to discuss the sharing and publishing features in Bitstrips for Schools; instead, we shared our comics in person and "published" them by printing them out and putting them on a bulletin board in the elementary school hallway. Nevertheless, students were able to learn and use specific features common to many technology platforms, such as copying and pasting, saving, logging in, using tabs and other navigational interfaces, and dragging and dropping.

The implementation of this curriculum was hampered by a short time frame and the overlapping of several school-wide academic events and personnel changes such as standardized testing, the ASL 6+1 project, and the novelty of our class, having

just been assembled together from two separate classes due to one teacher's departure. While I felt all the goals of the curriculum was achieved, I also feel that they were minimally achieved —there were more lessons planned that would have enabled a deeper level of involvement with comics, ASL, and English, if only there was enough time.

X. Conclusion.

This curriculum incorporated two years' worth of instruction in bilingual education and pedagogical theories, training in teaching methodology, and experience in classrooms. My evaluation showed that my curriculum's results were admirable. Students gained experience with reading and creating narratives using the comics framework I created for the curriculum, and demonstrated their new knowledge in both ASL and English.

In reflection, I feel both the students and my curriculum would have benefited from a parallel language arts track that focuses on the elements common to narratives: character, setting, and plot. Without this parallel track, I felt at times that the students were working with comics for the sake of working with comics. Regardless of my misgivings about my curriculum, the students showed enthusiasm for all the lessons I taught, and wished to continue using the Bitstrips for Schools software after my placement ended. Fortunately, I designed my curriculum to be flexible and easily modified by any teacher for different grade levels. Now that I have evaluated what successes and shortcomings the curriculum had, I plan to continue using this curriculum and the Bitstrips for Schools software, and modify the curriculum map to include more study of narrative elements. I am proud to work with a medium—comics—that generates such high interest from students and educators alike, and demonstrate its place and role in a Deaf bilingual classroom.

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Appendix A.

The following pages constitute the curriculum titled *Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics.*

KA-POW!

USING ASL AND ENGLISH TO EXPLORE NARRATIVES IN COMICS

A CURRICULUM

BY

ADAM STONE

Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics

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This curriculum is submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning: Bilingual Education (ASL-English).

University of California, San Diego

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Introduction

Congratulations! You and your students are about to embark on a very exciting journey through the world of comics. You will be using comics as a literary genre and a scaffolding device, with which students will develop narrative skills in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

One way to potentially enhance the outcomes of Deaf education is to re-examine literacy and consider what it means in the case of Deaf children. The term “literacy” traditionally represents the ability to read and write. However, sign language has no written form; what does it mean if someone is “literate” in sign language? Is sign language literacy even possible?

In keeping with Jim Cummins’ common underlying proficiency hypothesis—that fundamental skills, such as literacy, are acquired interdependently across languages rather than contained within languages—one could hypothesize that literacy development in one medium would transfer to other media and languages. Therefore, for Deaf children, who learn visually rather than aurally, a literacy development framework would include rich visual media such as ASL videotapes and comic strips.

The Case for Including Comics in the Classroom

Indeed, comic strips, in creating narrative, hybridize two forms of media: text and visual imagery. They are also a form of popular media, which can be used for extending literacy development in the classroom (Ranker, 2007). Just like how print by itself requires comprehension by the reader, "comics require the reader to blend the print and the graphics to comprehend" the narrative, providing a redundancy of information in more than one form (McVicker, 2007; Wright & Sherman, 1999). Therefore, McVicker (2007) adds, comic strips are an excellent approach to teaching children reading strategies. When considering how Deaf students learn visually, the idea of teaching of literacy with comic strips becomes especially appealing to educators (Smetana, et al., 2009).

Comics appear to have a number of positive effects for students learning English as a second language (a population that includes Deaf students who use ASL). The juxtaposition of image and text fosters the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies in developing readers (McVicker, 2007). Liu (2004) reported that low-reading-level students scored higher in reading comprehension tests when text was paired with comics than without. The illustrations provide contextual support and clues to the written text, helping readers decode the text and increase comprehension (Cary, 2004). Kerr and Culhane (2000) compared children who read comic books extensively and children who did not, and found that heavy comic book readers seemed to have better vocabulary and understanding of verb tenses. This finding may not be surprising, since:

> …the average comic book introduces children to twice as many words as the average children's book and five times as many words as they were likely to be exposed to in the average child-adult conversation. Thus for Deaf students, who have not experienced many child-adult conversations in English, this genre provides a scaffolded resource for vocabulary and syntax. (Smetana, et al., 2009, p. 231).

Lavin (1998) suggests that reading graphic novels—an extended version of comic strips—may require more complex cognitive skills than the reading of text alone (cited in Schwarz, 2002). On the other end, most comic strips have low readability levels with lower numbers of words and sentences, making them "linguistically ideal for elementary and middle school age readers" (Wright & Sherman, 1999).

Krashen (1993) reported that light reading—which includes comics—positively correlates with reading achievement. Fortunately, comics are highly engaging reading materials; librarians have found that comics attract kids and motivate them to read (Smetana, et al., 2009). They are humorous, visual, and limited in text, which can "alleviate the negative viewing of reading for some children" (McVicker, 2007, p. 86). Smetana, et al. (2009) suggest that graphic novels may even be viewed as somewhat "subversive" to the school environment, enhancing their appeal with students. Finally, comics can act as a bridge for disengaged readers to link their literary interests to more conventional text structures (McVicker, 2007).

Clearly, comic strips and books have a place in the elementary classroom, and a role to play in fostering the emergent literacy of Deaf children. One way to do this is to use this curriculum, *Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives Using Comics*.

Curriculum Sequencing

The curriculum is composed of 11 projects. They are called “projects” instead of “lessons,” to emphasize that students *will create* artifacts such as comic strips, ASL videos, and group charts. Your role as a teacher is to guide the students through the creation process, and make tangible links between comics in particular and narratives in general.

The curriculum begins with an introduction to comics and characters (Projects 1 and 2). Building on this new understanding of comics as a genre, students proceed to study how panels are the building blocks of comics and embody the narratives within (Projects 3, 4, and 5). Starting with Project 6, students begin to practice reading aloud comics and creating comic versions of existing ASL and English literature. In Project 9, students create comics drawing from their experiences either as Deaf beings or being part of the Deaf community. The culminating project (Project 11) has students creating original narratives in two mediums: comic strips and ASL.

However, this sequencing is not fixed. While Projects 1 and 2 generally should come first, Projects 3-11 could be done in any order, depending on your assessment of your students’ knowledge and skills.

Curriculum Details

Goals:

1. Students will recognize and explore comics as a unique medium and identify visual and textual qualities that set comics apart from other media.

2. Students will further develop their skills in both ASL and English through the process of creating new comics, manipulating existing comics, and reading aloud both new and existing comics.

3. Students will use and become proficient at a technology-based medium to create, share, and publish comics.

Sharing: With the exception of Projects 1 and 10, students will be creating comic-based artifacts. Therefore, this curriculum places a strong emphasis on sharing work via presentations. Most projects conclude with time for sharing student work, but you can mix it up according to your daily schedule. Students can share a week's worth of work on Fridays, or share work from two consecutive projects at a time.

Publishing: Like sharing, this curriculum also emphasizes publishing as an integral part of the creative process. You are encouraged to reserve space on a bulletin board and post student work. This bulletin board should preferably be in a public area such as a hallway, so that other students can read what your students have produced. This curriculum refers to the bulletin board as the "comics bulletin board."

Comics Box: It is only natural that when teaching a comics-based curriculum, that you provide students with comics to read during their free time. You can assemble a collection of comic books from different resources such as your school library, the public library, local comic book stores, and your friends and colleagues. You can either reserve a shelf in your reading area for comics, or place them in a plastic storage box to be kept in the reading area. This curriculum refers to a "comics box" but you are free to decide how and where your students may access comics for free reading.

Standards: Each project is tied to kindergarten, first grade, or second grade English language arts standards for both California and New Mexico. However, each project can be easily adapted for higher grades or modified to fit specific content area standards such as math or science.

Bitstrips For Schools: This curriculum relies on Bitstrips for Schools, an online, Flash-based comic creation program which comes with classroom management features. The author of this curriculum was generously given a free license of Bitstrips for Schools (www.bitstripsforschools.com) with which to field-test the projects. However, Bitstrips for Schools is not the only comic creation program out there. Alternatives include the original Bitstrips (www.bitstrips.com), Toon Books (www.toon-books.com), MakeBeliefsComix.com (www.makebeliefscomix.com), ToonDoo (www.toondoo.com), and Pixton (www.pixton.com). One caveat: you may want to limit the number of panels students can use when creating their comic strips. Eight-panel strips can be difficult to complete; start off with one or three-panel strips.

Rubrics: Most projects have student performance rubrics with which you can assess the quality of your students' work. Please review them before proceeding with the project. You can easily create alternative rubrics by using RubiStar (http://rubistar.4teachers.org/).

Resources: This curriculum was created in part by consulting two excellent resources on using comics in the classroom. I strongly recommend getting both books; they provide pedagogical and theoretical background, additional resources on finding comics, and a wealth of lesson and project ideas. If limited to one, I recommend Cary (2004).

Cary, S. (2004). *Going graphic: Comics at work in the multilingual classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frey, N. & Fisher, D. (2008). *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills.* Thousand Oaks, Ca: Corwin Press.

In addition, the ASL 6+1 Traits Rubric in Project 11 was developed at New Mexico School for the Deaf as part of their ASL curriculum development. It is adapted from the 6+1 Trait® Writing framework. At press time, it was still in development; if you are interested in the latest version, please contact Jennifer Herbold, Coordinator of Language Planning & Curriculum, at New Mexico School for the Deaf.

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Wright, G. & Sherman, R. Let's create a comic strip. *Reading improvement, 36*(2), 66-72.

Project 1 Meet the Comic

Standards



G1 Reading 3.1: Identify and describe the elements of plot, setting, and character(s) in a story, as well as the story's beginning, middle, and ending.



Benchmark III-B K-1: Demonstrate familiarity with the types of books and selections

In Brief

Students will learn about the comic strip/graphic novel genre. They will have hands-on experiences with different text and visual artifacts and explore the distinctions between comics and other genres.

You will guide the students as they explore the genre and co-create a t-chart listing elements unique to comics.

Materials

- ☐ Assorted comic books
- ☐ Assorted graphic novels
- ☐ Assorted picture books
- ☐ Assorted chapter books
- ☐ Assorted magazines
- ☐ Assorted newspaper funny pages and editorial cartoon pages
- ☐ Assorted news photographs
- ☐ Assorted newspaper articles
- ☐ Comic/Not Comic t-chart
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ Document Camera (optional)

Prep

- Slice up the newspaper funny pages so there are about 2-3 comic strips per slice. You can also include newspaper games (e.g. Sudoku).
- Create a t-chart on butcher paper with two columns: "Comics" and "Not Comics"

- Using masking tape, make two squares on the floor. Students will sort materials into one pile per square – one for comics and one for everything else.

Project 1 Plan

Introduction

1. Write the word “comic” on the board. Point to it and sign FUNNY/COMIC. Also sign COMIC BOOK and COMIC STRIP.
2. Ask students to raise hands if they don’t know what the ASL sign or English word means. Then ask students who do know to raise their hands. If possible, initiate partner talk where students who know and students who don’t know discuss what they think the meaning of the word is.
3. Display a comic strip and explain that this is a comic. Ask what students notice about this comic. Write down responses on the board.
4. Display a chapter book. Ask if this is also a comic. Discuss students’ answers.
5. Display a graphic novel. Ask if this is also a comic. Discuss students’ answers.

Procedure

6. Distribute the assorted materials. If appropriate, have students partner up. Explain that we will now sort all the materials into two squares marked by masking tape on the floor. One square will hold everything that we think is a comic. The other square will hold everything else that we think are not comics.
7. Let students sort the materials. **Note: to maintain order, you may want to distribute a few items at a time to each student or pair and have them return to you when they are out of materials to sort.**
8. When students have finished sorting the materials, assemble the students in a circle around the box. Facilitate a discussion of what we see in each box. Ask if we agree with how the materials have been sorted and if there is anything we would change. Rearrange materials as needed. Point out interesting problems such as picture books—are they comics? What about newspaper photographs?

9. Transition to the t-chart you have prepared earlier. Explain that we will be studying comics for the next several weeks and that we will even make our own comics. Also explain that to help us remember what comics are made of and what they are not made of, we can use this chart as a reference tool.
10. Ask students to suggest words or concepts that remind them of comics or help them describe comics. Examples are word balloons, drawing, cartoon, superhero, etc. Ask if there are words or concepts that help us decide that something is NOT a comic? Examples are photographs, a page of text, and illustrations without word balloons or panels.

Closure

11. Review the t-chart and if appropriate, ask students if there's a specific place we could keep it visible for the next several weeks. Also remind students that, as we learn more about comics, we can add more words to the chart.
12. Place all the comic materials in a box or on a shelf, and designate it as the comics box or shelf. Clean up the rest of the materials.

Wrap-Up

- Type up field notes and reflections following the lesson, making sure to detail each student's involvement in the sorting activity and noting any misconceptions. Address any misconceptions in the next lesson.

Project 2

Making Comic Characters

Standards



G1 Writing 2.1: Write brief narratives (e.g. fictional, autobiographical) describing an experience.



Benchmark II-C 2.5: Produce a variety of types of composition using media and technology to enhance the narrative for an audience for a specific purpose.

In Brief

Students will learn how to use Bitstrips by creating a comic character and will be prepared to present using the smartboard.

You will model how to create a character using Bitstrips, and support the students as they create theirs.

Materials

- ☐ Bitstrips software and computers
- ☐ Smartboard
- ☐ Teacher's character
- ☐ Poster or Powerpoint of common comic characters
- ☐ A comic strip (e.g. *Peanuts, Calvin & Hobbes*)
- ☐ Mirror
- ☐ Flow chart (optional)

Prep

- Make your character in Bitstrips. It should look like you. In the lesson, you'll show the students your character, then walk them through the process of creating that same character. From your modeling, the students will get an idea of how to create their own characters.
- To introduce students to comic characters, prepare a poster or Powerpoint showing images of several comic characters.
- Choose a comic strip (e.g. *Peanuts*) to use as an example in differentiating characters from other visual elements in strips.
- Create a flow chart indicating the steps you take to create the character. (optional)

Modifications

- This lesson may take more than one day depending on the students' skill with technology.
- This lesson is also written such that you model first on the smartboard, then the students create on their computers. You can change it so that the students duplicate your steps on their computers while you're modeling, or create their own characters step-by-step as you model creating yours.

Project 2 Plan

Introduction

1. Review the comic sorting activity. Revisit any misconceptions noticed during Project 1.
2. Explain that we will now learn how to use Bitstrips. It is a software program that lets us create our own comics.
3. We will learn how to use Bitstrips by creating characters that represent ourselves. This is useful because we can save our characters and reuse them in future comics.
4. On either a poster or a Powerpoint, show the word "comic character" and discuss with students the meaning and the ASL sign for these words. Show images of common comic characters.
5. Review the meaning of "character" by using an example comic strip and pointing out different elements in it (e.g. speech balloon, character, tree, object) and asking if that element is a character or not.

Procedure

6. Show the teacher's character. Ask them to study it for a while, and then in pairs, discuss: (1) whether they like it or not; (2) whether it looks like the teacher or not, and why.
7. Ask students to reveal and discuss their answers.
8. Go through the process of creating the character in Bitstrips. Explain each step. Let students watch how you do it. Use the mirror to demonstrate how you can study your own appearance while creating the character.
9. Ask if there are any questions before students create their own character in Bitstrips.

10. Have the students go to their computers and create their characters using Bitstrips. Anything can happen during this part! Your task is to support the students, keep them on-track, and help them resolve any technical or procedural problems.

Closure

11. It's time for presentations. Assemble students in the front of the classroom again. Pull up each character on the smartboard and ask students who they think the character belongs to. When the character is identified, ask the student to describe it a little. If the student has intentionally created a character that looks very different (e.g. blue-skinned), have the student discuss why the character looks different.
12. After every student has had their turn with their character, discuss how they felt about the activity. Was Bitstrips easy or hard to use? Do we think we can make more comics using the software?
13. Print out the characters and post them up on the comics bulletin board. They can become 'headings' under which you can display students' future comic projects

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 2 for assessing each student's comic character and the quality of his or her presentation.

Rubric 2	Making Comic Characters

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Character	You finished the character and it is interesting.	You are still making small changes to your character.	You are not finished with your character.
Presentation	You described your character very clearly and answered questions well.	Your description was good, but not clear enough. You answered some questions.	You did not describe your character. You could not answer questions.

Project 3 What's The Order?

Standards



G2 Reading 2.6: Recognize cause-and-effect relationships in a text.



Benchmark III-B 1-2: Demonstrate understanding (e.g., act out, draw, write, talk) of sequence and characterization in a story.

In Brief

This is a sequencing activity. Students will rearrange individual panels derived from a wordless comic to create a narrative.

You will model and support the students as they contemplate the possible sequences, and elicit their reasoning for choosing a particular narrative.

Activity adapted from Versaci (in Frey & Fisher, 2009, p. 99-100).

Materials

- ☐ Pages from assorted wordless comics
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Document camera

Prep

- Make a copy of a selected comic page and cut the page into individual panels. Fasten each batch of individual panels and put them in envelopes with the comic title. Make a copy of the original comic page to show students after discussion.
- Use a variety of comic pages from which to derive individual panels. Some can have obviously predictable sequencing, while others could be plausibly re-arranged in many different ways.

Modifications

- Students may add word balloons to their comic sequence.
- Students could all work with the same comic strip and then discuss how they have created different sequences.

- Students will work in pairs. You may wish to change it to an individual project, or a group project.

Project 3 Plan

Introduction

1. Explain that today we will be looking at individual panels and thinking about ways they could be re-ordered.
2. Take a batch of panels from a single comic page and spread them out under the document camera.
3. Make your thinking visible as you explain how you are figuring out the sequence with the panels you have. Feel free to elicit ideas from the students; engage them in a classroom discussion about sequencing.
4. When you have decided on your sequence, glue the panels to a blank paper. Write a sentence or two below that summarizes the story you have created.

Procedure

5. Students will work in pairs. Distribute batches of comic panels.
6. Assist the students as they "read" their panels and discuss the sequencing. Continue assisting them as they finalize their sequencing and glue the panels to the white paper.
7. Students will need to write a summary of the sequence. They are meant to discuss and do this in pairs, so assist them as needed.
8. When students have completed the project, it is time to share what they have done. Model how to share your comic strip by using the one you created during the lesson introduction. Read aloud the strip and then explain the sequencing.
9. Have students share their work using the document camera.

Closure

10. Publish their work by adding them to the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Take field notes and record observations and reflections following the lesson. Detail each student's involvement and performance.

Project 4 Add A Panel

Standards



G2 Reading 3.2: Generate alternative endings to plots and identify the reason or reasons for, and the impact of, the alternatives.



Benchmark I-C 1-2: Predict and explain what will happen next in a story.

In Brief

Students will choose a comic strip and then add a panel to the end of it to "extend" the story.

You will support the students as they predict, brainstorm, draw, and write new endings to their selected comic strips.

Activity adapted from "Add-A-Panel" (Cary, 2004, p. 74).

Materials

- ☐ Assorted comic strips from the funnies and excerpts from graphic novels
- ☐ Document camera
- ☐ Ruler

Prep

- Be careful when choosing comic strips; can they be reasonably extended? Have copies of each in case some students want to use the same strips or extend more than one strip.
- When you have chosen your comic strips, enlarge them on 11x17 paper, but leave plenty of room for students to draw between one to three panels at the end.
- Depending on time, you may want to create your extended panels prior. However, it's more useful to create it during the lesson so you can model your thinking process.

Modifications

- Students may extend a comic strip beyond one panel; motivated students will likely do this. Ensure they write sentences for each panel, or a paragraph that summarizes the new ending.

- Students could all extend the same comic strip and then discuss how they have created different endings.
- Support students who are anxious about creating art by working more one-on-one and helping them accept drawing errors. Alternatively, have them work in pairs.
- If successful, this activity can be repeated as a class strip where students, in turn, extend a comic strip over several days.

Project 4 Plan

Introduction

11. Write the words “comic strips” on the board. Ask students what the equivalent ASL sign is.
12. Explain that today we will be looking at comic strips and then we’ll be able to change the ending.
13. Take an example comic strip and display it on the document camera. Read it aloud.
14. Make your thinking visible as you explain how you are coming up with a new panel to come after the comic strip. Feel free to elicit ideas from the students.
15. Demonstrate how to use the ruler to draw a new panel. Then create the new ending and then write a sentence or two below the new panel describing what is happening.

Procedure

16. Distribute the assorted comic strips and allow students to choose the comic strip they’d like to expand on.
17. Assist the students as they understand their comic strips and brainstorm a new ending. Help them draw their panels using rulers. Continue assisting them as they draw and write their new endings.
18. When students have completed the project, it is time to share what they have done. Model how to share your extended strip by using the one you used in the introduction. Read aloud the original strip and then explain the new ending.
19. Have students share their work using the document camera.

Closure

20. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 4 to assess students' work.

Rubric 4	Add A Panel

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Panel	You added panels and your drawing is neat and clear.	You added panels, but your drawing is not very neat.	You did not add a panel, or your drawing is messy.
Writing	You wrote a full summary of what you drew in your panels.	You tried but did not finish a full summary.	You did not write a summary.
Presentation	You read aloud the comic strip very clearly and we could understand you.	You did an okay job reading aloud the comic strip, but we could understand you.	We could not understand your read aloud of your comic strip.

Project 5 The Missing Panel

Standards



G2 Writing 2.1a: Write brief narratives that move through a logical sequence of events.



Benchmark I-C 1-2: Predict and explain what will happen next in a story.

In Brief

Students will choose a comic strip that has a middle panel missing, and fill it in to complete the story.

You will support the students as they predict, brainstorm, draw, and write the missing panel to complete their selected comic strips.

Materials

- ☐ Photocopies of assorted comic strips with middle panels deleted
- ☐ Document camera

Prep

- Select several comic strips. Photocopy them, enlarging them and blocking out the middle panels. Replace the missing panels with a one or more blank panels.

Modifications

- Students may fill in using more than one panel.
- Students could all use the same comic strip and then discuss their approaches to filling in.
- Bitstrips software could be used, but students can become frustrated if they try to replicate existing comic strip art using Bitstrips's gallery. A pencil can be more versatile.

Project 5 Plan

Introduction

1. Write the words "comic strips" on the board. Ask students what the equivalent ASL sign is.

2. Explain that today we will be looking at comic strips today.
3. Take an example comic strip (with a missing panel) and display it on the document camera. Ask what students notice is wrong with this comic.
4. Read aloud the beginning and the end of the comic (or invite a student to read aloud for to the class).
5. Make your thinking visible as you explain how you are coming up with ideas for the missing panel. Feel free to elicit ideas from the students.
6. Draw what you (or the class) think should go into the missing panel.
7. Do another read-aloud (or invite a student to do the read-aloud). Discuss whether the story makes sense now.

Procedure

8. Distribute the assorted comic strips and allow students to choose the comic strip they'd like to work on.
9. Assist the students as they understand their comic strips and brainstorm what will go into the missing panel. Continue assisting them as they draw and write their panels.
10. When students have completed the project, it is time to share what they have done. Model how to share your strip by using the one you used in the introduction. Read aloud the strip and then explain why you thought your missing panel fit the story.
11. Have students share their work using the document camera.

Closure

12. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Take field notes and record observations and reflections following the lesson. Detail each student's involvement and performance.

Project 6 Role-Shifting

Standards



K Speaking 2.3: Relate an experience or creative story in a logical sequence.



Benchmark II-A K-3d: Use speaking skills to connect experiences by: taking turns.

In Brief

Students will learn how role-shifting is used to indicate dialogue between people in a story as told in ASL. Then they will create their own comic illustrating a dialogue and retell it in ASL using appropriate role-shifting.

You will model how to role-shift when retelling the *Yo! Yes?* story, and also support the students as they create their own variations in comic form and retell these variations using appropriate role-shifting.

Materials

- ☐ *Yo! Yes?* by Chris Raschka
- ☐ Bitstrips
- ☐ Document camera
- ☐ Smartboard
- ☐ Rubric 6

Prep

- Create a comic that is focused on dialogue between two people and is modeled off *Yo! Yes?*
- Bitstrips will be used for this lesson. Reserve computers if needed.

Modifications

- If the students haven't had experience working with Bitstrips yet, you can use sheets with blank comic panels instead.
- You may want to explicitly designate the number of panels for students to use in creating their role-shifting comics. Bitstrips has three default comic strip styles: 1-panel, 3-panel, and 8-panel.

Project 6 Plan

Introduction

1. Show students the *Yo! Yes?* story. Ask them who the author and illustrator of the story is, as well as any predictions they can make from looking at the cover.
2. Explain that you will read aloud the story twice. Ask the students to watch carefully how you tell the story and look for any differences between the first and second read aloud.
3. Read aloud *Yo! Yes?* Do not role-shift. Instead, simply read aloud the dialogue as if it was plain prose.
4. Do a quick check-in: did the students enjoy the story? Tell them we will now hear it for a second time. Remind students that they now need to look for anything different with the second read aloud.
5. Read aloud *Yo! Yes?* This time, however, use role-shifting to indicate dialogue.
6. Facilitate a discussion. Ask the students what they thought was different in the second read aloud. If needed, steer them towards the idea of role-shifting. Do a third read aloud (either with role-shifting or without, depending on the discussion).
7. Explain that this ASL feature is called role-shifting. Show the ASL sign for it, as well as the English word.
8. At this point, the students will probably be eager to read aloud the story themselves. Let students practice role-shifting by reading aloud *Yo! Yes?* to each other.

Procedure

9. Now inform the students that we'll get to practice role-shifting and make our own comics at the same time.
10. Show your comic that you have already created prior to the lesson. Read aloud, emphasizing the role-shifting feature in ASL. Show Rubric 6 and discuss how your comic meets the expectations outlined in the rubric.
11. After the read aloud, explain that students will work independently to create their own comic showing a dialogue between two characters. Ask them to close their eyes and think about what kind of story they want to create. Suggest that it can be about something that happened at home or in class.

12. Have students discuss in pairs their story ideas.
13. Students will begin working in Bitstrips to create a story. Support them in using the software as well as creating their narratives.
14. When students are finished, gather them in the front of the classroom again. Now we'll be able to share our stories. Review rules: only one person can sign at a time. Questions and comments need to wait until after the person is finished reading aloud.
15. Students take turns reading aloud their comic displayed on the smartboard. Monitor their emphasis on role-shifting. Let the audience offer feedback first, and then offer your own feedback.

Closure

16. Discuss the activity. What did we learn today? How do we feel now? Can we use role-shifting with other comics that we read?
17. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics builletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 6 to assess students' work.

Rubric 6	Role-Shifting

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Dialogue	There is dialogue by both characters in each comic panel. The dialogue makes sense.	There is some dialogue, and the dialogue makes sense.	There is little or no dialogue, and the story does not make sense.
Story	The story makes sense and it is interesting.	Some parts of the story make sense but other parts do not make sense.	The story does not make sense, and it is not interesting.
Characters	There are two characters in the comic, and both characters are part of the story.	There are one or three characters in the comic.	There are no characters, or too many characters.
Read Aloud	You read aloud using good ASL role-shifting and your presentation was clear.	Your presentation was not clear, and you did not use good role-shifting.	You forgot to use role-shifting, and I could not understand your signing.

Project 7 Retelling a Book in Comic Form

Standards



G1 Reading 3.3: Recollect, talk, and write about books read during the school year.



Benchmark I-A 1-1: Listen to and retell short stories.

In Brief

After a read aloud of a standard picture book, students will recreate the story in comic form.

You will support the students as they recall the story and convert it into comic form.

Materials

- ☐ A children's book
- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Bitstrips
- ☐ Document camera
- ☐ Smartboard

Prep

- Xerox enlarged copies of the characters' faces as well as important setting and plot elements to use while discussing the story.
- Bitstrips will be used for this lesson. Reserve computers if needed.

Modifications

- If the students haven't had experience working with Bitstrips yet, you can use sheets with blank comic panels instead.
- You may want to explicitly designate the number of panels for students to use in creating their role-shifting comics. Bitstrips has three default comic strip styles: 1-panel, 3-panel, and 8-panel.

Project 7 Plan

Introduction

1. Show students the story. Ask them what the author and illustrator of the story is, as well as any predictions they can make from looking at the cover.
2. Explain that you will read aloud the story. After the read aloud, we will discuss the characters and the plot. Then we will all create a new version of the story using Bitstrips.
3. Read aloud the story.
4. Do a quick check-in: did the students enjoy the story? What are their immediate reactions?
5. Using the butcher paper, list the characters' names, the setting, and other relevant information (plot, etc.). Use tape to glue the Xeroxed characters' faces to the paper.
6. Explain that we will now create a comic version of the story.
7. Using Bitstrips and the smartboard so everybody can watch, model how you will make the first panel in your comic version. Make visible your thought process. Answer these questions as you plan out the panel: which characters go into the panel? What should the background be? What will they say?

Procedure

8. Students will begin working in Bitstrips to create the comic version. Support them in using the software as well as creating their comic versions.
9. When students are finished, gather them in the front of the classroom again. Now we'll be able to share our stories. Review rules: only one person can sign at a time. Questions and comments need to wait until after the person is finished reading aloud.
10. Students take turns reading aloud their comic displayed on the smartboard. Let the audience offer feedback first, and then offer your own feedback.

Closure

11. Discuss the activity. What did we learn today? How do we feel now? Could we do this with other stories that we read? How are our comic versions different than the original book itself?

12. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics bulletin board, along with copies of images from the book itself.

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 7 to assess students' work.

Rubric 7	Retelling a Book in Comic Form

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Comic Story	The comic story matches the book and it is well-done.	Some parts of the comic story matches the book, and it looks good.	The comic story does not match the book at all.
Characters	The characters match the book.	The characters sort of match the book.	The characters do not match the book.
Presentation	You read aloud the comic strip very clearly and we could understand you.	You did an okay job reading aloud the comic strip, but we could understand you.	We could not understand your read aloud of your comic strip.

Project 8 Retelling an ASL Story in Comic Form

Standards



G1 Reading 3.3: Recollect, talk, and write about books read during the school year.



Benchmark I-A 1-1: Listen to and retell short stories.

In Brief

After a read aloud of a short ASL story, students will recreate the story in comic form.

You will support the students as they recall the story and convert it into comic form.

Materials

- ☐ An folk story to retell in ASL
- ☐ Butcher paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Bitstrips
- ☐ Document camera
- ☐ Smartboard

Prep

- Bitstrips will be used for this lesson. Reserve computers if needed.

Modifications

- If the students haven't had experience working with Bitstrips yet, you can use sheets with blank comic panels instead.
- You may want to explicitly designate the number of panels for students to use in creating their role-shifting comics. Bitstrips has three default comic strip styles: 1-panel, 3-panel, and 8-panel.

Project 8 Plan

Introduction

1. Prepare students for an ASL storytelling. Arrange the classroom and assemble the students accordingly.

2. Explain that you will read aloud an ASL story and explain that it is important to pay attention. After the read aloud, we will discuss the characters and the plot. Then we will all create a new version of the story using Bitstrips.
3. Read aloud the story.
4. Do a quick check-in: did the students enjoy the story? What are their immediate reactions?
5. Using the butcher paper, list the characters' names, the setting, and any other relevant information (plot, etc.). What do we think the characters and setting look like on paper?
6. Explain that we will now create a comic version of the story.
7. Using Bitstrips and the smartboard so everybody can watch, model how you will make the first panel in your comic version. Make visible your thought process. Answer these questions as you plan out the panel: which characters go into the panel? What should the background be? What will they say?

Procedure

8. Students will begin working in Bitstrips to create the comic version. Support them in using the software as well as creating their comic versions.
9. When students are finished, gather them in the front of the classroom again. Now we'll be able to share our stories. Review rules for sharing stories.
10. Students take turns reading aloud their comic displayed on the smartboard. Let the audience offer feedback first, and then offer your own feedback.

Closure

11. Discuss the activity. What did we learn today? How do we feel now? Could we do this with other stories that we read or watch in ASL? How are our comic versions different than the original ASL story itself?
12. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 8 to assess students' work.

Rubric 8	Retelling an ASL Story in Comic Form

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Comic Story	The comic story matches the ASL story and it is well-done.	Some parts of the comic story matches the ASL story, and it looks good.	The comic story does not match the ASL story at all.
Characters	The characters match the ASL story.	The characters sort of match the ASL story.	The characters do not match the ASL story.
Presentation	You read aloud the comic strip very clearly and we could understand you.	You did an okay job reading aloud the comic strip, but we could understand you.	We could not understand your read aloud of your comic strip.

Project 9 Deaf-Centered Comics

Standards



K Speaking 2.3: Relate an experience or creative story in a logical sequence.



Benchmark I-A K1: Retell, reenact, or dramatize stories or parts of stories, including personal events.

In Brief

Students will learn how the Deaf experience can be expressed through the comic medium, and they will create their own Deaf-centered comics retelling an aspect of their existence as Deaf people.

You will introduce them to Deaf comic artists and their work, and guide them in brainstorming and creating their own Deaf-centered comics.

Materials

- ☐ Assorted Deaf comics by well-known Deaf comic artists including Adrean Clark, Matt Daigle, Kendra Harness, Maureen Klusza, and Dan McClintock
- ☐ Bitstrips
- ☐ Document camera
- ☐ Smartboard

Prep

- Assemble a collection of comics. Good resources include:
  - *Free Comic Book Day: Deaf Cartoonists Showcase:* http://www.adreanaline.com/blog/archive/free-comic-book-day/
  - About.com: http://deafness.about.com/od/entertainment/a/deaf_comics.htm
- Bitstrips will be used for this lesson. Reserve computers if needed.

Modifications

- If the students haven't had experience working with Bitstrips yet, you can use sheets with blank comic panels instead.

Project 9 Plan

Introduction

1. Introduce students to the collection of Deaf comics you have gathered. Display and read aloud each comic; lead a dialogue on how each comic represents the Deaf experience (e.g. sign language is represented; the characters are Deaf; the plot is a common Deaf experience).
2. You may want to add your own Deaf experiences to the discussion and ask students if they have had similar experiences.

Procedure

3. Now inform the students that they will have the opportunity to create their own Deaf-centered comics. They can use their own Deaf experiences, or interpret others' Deaf experiences.
4. Have students discuss in pairs their story ideas and then share with the whole class.
5. Students will begin working in Bitstrips to create a story. Support them in using the software as well as creating their narratives.
6. When students are finished, gather them in the front of the classroom again. Now we'll be able to share our stories. Review rules: only one person can sign at a time. Questions and comments need to wait until after the person is finished reading aloud.
7. Students take turns reading aloud their comic displayed on the smartboard. Monitor their emphasis on how the comic is Deaf-centered. Let the audience offer feedback first, and then offer your own feedback.

Closure

8. Discuss the activity. What did we learn today? How do we feel now? Could we make more Deaf-centered comics? How about an English story about the Deaf experience?
9. Publish their work by posting them up on the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Use Rubric 9 to assess students' work.

Rubric 9	Deaf-Centered Comics

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Story	The story makes sense and it is interesting.	Some parts of the story make sense but other parts do not make sense.	The story does not make sense, and it is not interesting.
Deaf-Centered	The story is about the Deaf experience.	Some parts of the story is about the Deaf experience.	The story has nothing to do with the Deaf experience.
Presentation	You read aloud the comic strip very clearly and we could understand you.	You did an okay job reading aloud the comic strip, but we could understand you.	We could not understand your read aloud of your comic strip.

Project 10 Comic Book Read Aloud

Standards



G2 Reading 1.6: Read aloud fluently and accurately and with appropriate intonation and expression.



Benchmark II-A 1-1: Read aloud grade-level text with fluency and comprehension.

In Brief

Students will read aloud excerpts from a single comic book to another class.

You will model the read aloud and then work one-on-one and in small groups with students in guided reading sessions to prepare them for the read aloud.

Materials

- ☐ Comic book
- ☐ Smartboard
- ☐ Camera or camcorder to record video
- ☐ ASL 6+1 Rubric (optional; see Project 11)

Prep

- Choose an audience for the students to read aloud to. A younger classroom works best.
- Choose a comic book. Consult with the audience's teacher on content ideas; maybe there is a comic book that aligns with the topic the audience class is learning about at the moment.
- Xerox the entirety of the comic book and divide up the pages into excerpts of equal length, one excerpt per student.

Modifications

- Adjust length of excerpts based on each student's ability. Also modify expectations of ASL fluency and the degree to which the student is able to successfully create an ASL version of the comic book excerpt, as opposed to a word-for-word read aloud.

Project 10 Plan

Introduction

1. Explain that the students will get to read aloud a comic book to another class. Ask students if they know who are in the other class to help endear them to the idea of reading aloud to the other class.
2. Introduce the comic book the students will read aloud. Review the cover and ask the students to make predictions on what the comic book is about.
3. Read aloud the comic book. Treat this as a traditional read aloud experience; ask questions and pause for understanding throughout.
4. Explain that the students will now read aloud the comic book to the other class. Distribute the excerpts and have them read it aloud privately. This is their copy to keep; they cannot lose it.

Procedure

5. In the next several days, have students practice reading aloud their excerpts to you, other adults, and their classmates. This can be homework, as well.
6. You may also use the comic book excerpt as guided reading material. Focus on having students understand the English text and then making appropriate ASL versions of each panel. Combine several similar panels into one ASL “paragraph” if necessary.
7. Either on the day of the read aloud, or one day prior, do a practice read aloud with all students so they can get some experience reading aloud from the smartboard and document camera and become comfortable with the order of read alouds.
8. On the day of the read aloud, assemble the students and bring them to the audience’s classroom. Introduce yourself and have the students introduce themselves. Introduce the comic book and ask for predictions and elicit prior knowledge.
9. Select another adult to record the read aloud on video.
10. Do the read aloud. Sit in a visible place and be prepared to cue lines if the student freezes up during read aloud.

11. After the read aloud, have all students stand up and take a bow. Lead a quick discussion with the audience students; did they enjoy the story? What did they learn?

Closure

12. Bring the students back to their classroom.

13. Discuss the activity. How do we feel now? Could we read aloud other comics? How about an English story?

Wrap-Up

- Using the videos of the students' read aloud performances, take anecdotal notes on how they presented. Note any strengths and weaknesses. You may want to use the ASL 6+1 rubric in Project 11 as a way to more formally assess their presentation skills.

Project 11 Creating Narratives in Both ASL and Comic Forms

Standards



G1 Writing 2.1: Write brief narratives (e.g. fictional, autobiographical) describing an experience.



Benchmark II-C 2.5: Produce a variety of types of composition using media and technology to enhance the narrative for an audience for a specific purpose.

In Brief

Students will create a fictional narrative using both ASL and Bitstrips for Schools, concurrently. This is a multi-day writing process.

You will model how to first compose and then edit an ASL story according to the ASL 6+1 framework. You will also model how to create a comic story with the same narrative. Finally, you will also support the students as they create both the ASL and comic versions of their fictional narrative.

Materials

- ☐ Bitstrips software and computers
- ☐ Computers with webcams
- ☐ ASL 6+1 Rubric
- ☐ Rubric 11
- ☐ Scratch paper for brainstorming

Prep

- To guide students in "improving" their ASL story, make two versions of your ASL story—one that would score poorly on the ASL 6+1 rubric and another that would score well. The students can compare the two versions to see how an ASL story can be improved. Likewise for comics.
- This lesson assumes students already are aware of the ASL 6+1 framework. If not, create an alternate, simpler rubric.
- Create a comic strip mirroring the ASL story as a model for students.
- Collect a list of story ideas in the weeks preceding this lesson.

Modifications

- The pacing of this lesson is up to you; you can model both the final ASL story and comic strip, or work on your own narrative and show your work one day ahead of the students.

Project 11 Plan

Introduction

1. Review previous lessons about comics. How comfortable are we with comics now? Review the comics bulletin board displaying student work created throughout the curriculum.
2. Explain that we will now write our own stories. The kicker is that these stories are in both ASL and comic form. Refer to a past lesson where students had to read aloud a comic, or write a comic version of an ASL story, or similar scenarios. Discuss these experiences.
3. As an example, show your narrative in both ASL and comic forms. Lead a discussion of how these two forms tell the same story. Identify characters and settings. Focus on the similarities and differences between the two forms.

Procedure

4. **Brainstorming:** Have students work in pairs and provide them with scratch paper. Ask students to wonder and brainstorm with each other. Assess how far each student is in their brainstorming by asking what their characters and plots are, and to retell you their story ideas.
5. **Drafting:** Once students have decided on their story ideas, have them go to the computers and sign out their story. Remind them that it is just a first draft and the idea is to get their ideas on video so they don't forget the next day. Save all videos on an USB stick for backup purposes.
6. **Drafting:** Now students should start drafting their comics. You may want to decide on three-panel or eight-panel strip formats ahead of time for the students to use. Again, remind them that this is not the final draft; just get their thoughts on the comic form. Make sure their ASL video can be easily accessed from the same computer, so they can refer to the ASL video when making the comic strip.

7. **Editing:** If you have created two ASL stories (one that would score poorly and one that would score well), show both stories and lead a discussion on how the story improved from one version to the next. Use the ASL 6+1 rubric to guide the discussion if appropriate.
8. **Editing:** Depending on timing (this step can be on the second day of editing), show the two versions of the comic strip (one good and one not so good) and lead the same discussion as in Step 7. Use Rubric 11 to support this discussion.
9. **Editing:** Have students watch their own ASL videos and then re-film themselves signing an edited, improved version.
10. **Editing:** Finally, have students work on their comics, editing and improving them.
11. **Finalizing:** In small groups, have students view each other's ASL videos and comics and provide feedback. Prior to doing so, you may want to do a role-playing lesson on how to provide constructive feedback and avoid needless criticism.
12. **Finalizing:** Once students have received their feedback, have students revise their ASL videos and their comics for a final time.

Closure

13. It's time for presentations. Assemble students in the front of the classroom. Review rules for sharing and presenting, and then have students present their ASL videos and their comics.
14. After every student has had their turn, discuss how they felt about the activity. Which did they think they were stronger at: making an ASL story or creating a comic strip? Did it help to sign out the story in ASL first?
15. E-mail all videos to the students' families, and post comics on the comics bulletin board.

Wrap-Up

- Use ASL 6+1 Rubric and Rubric 11 for assessment.

Rubric 11	Creating Narratives in Both ASL and Comic Forms

Student Name: _____

Category	☺ 3	😐 2	☹ 1
Dialogue	There is dialogue by both characters in most of the comic panels. The dialogue makes sense.	There is some dialogue, and the dialogue makes sense.	There is little or no dialogue, and the story does not make sense.
Story	The story makes sense and it is interesting.	Some parts of the story make sense but other parts do not make sense.	The story does not make sense, and it is not interesting.
Comic Strip	The comic strip is well-done and visually interesting.	The comic strip is good, but could be better.	The comic strip is too plain and not very interesting.
Read Aloud	You read aloud using good ASL role-shifting and your presentation was clear. We could understand you.	Your presentation was not clear, and you did not use good role-shifting. We could still understand you.	You forgot to use role-shifting, and we could not understand your presentation.

Student Signing Rubric

6 + 1 ASL Traits

Signer_____ Evaluator_____

 IDEAS	 ORGANIZATION	 SIGN CHOICE
5 - Focused, clear, specific. It keeps the audience's attention.	5- Clear and compelling. The order works well and make the audience wants to find out what comes next.	5- Extremely clear, visual, and accurate. Signer picked the right signs for the right places.
3- Some really good parts, some not there yet!	3- Some really smooth parts, others need work. The order makes sense most of the time.	3- Correct but not striking. The signs get the message across, but don't capture the audience's attention.
1- Just beginning to figure out what I want to say.	1- Not shaped yet. The order of the story is jumbled and confused.	1-Confusing. The audience is often asking "What did they mean by this?"

 SIGN FLUENCY	 AFFECT	 CONVENTIONS
5- Varied and natural. The phrases in the story are close and delightful to view.	5- Really individual and powerful. The story has personality and affects different from the way anyone else expresses.	5- Mostly correct. There are very few errors in the story.
3- Routine and functional. Some phrases are choppy and awkward, but most are clear.	3- Individually fades in and out. What signer truly thinks and feel only shows up sometimes.	3- About halfway there. A number of bothersome mistakes need cleaning up.
1- Story needs work because there isn't enough phrase sense yet.	1- Signer is not being him/her yet. Signer is not comfortable or don't know what he/she truly think or feel yet.	1- Editing not under control yet. It would take a first viewing to decode and second viewing to get the message.

Appendix B.

The following pages contain individual student work collected during implementation of the curriculum titled *Ka-Pow! Using ASL and English to Explore Narratives in Comics.*

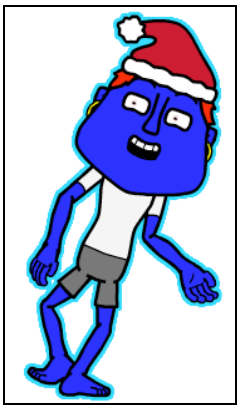


Figure 13.1: LH's Comic Character.

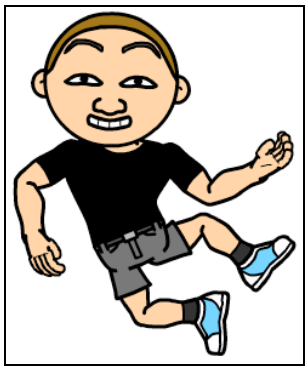


Figure 13.2: JA's Comic Character.

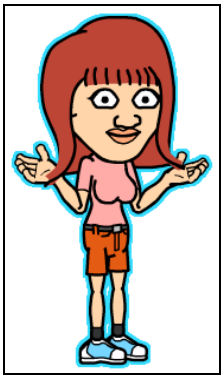


Figure 13.3: AL's Comic Character.

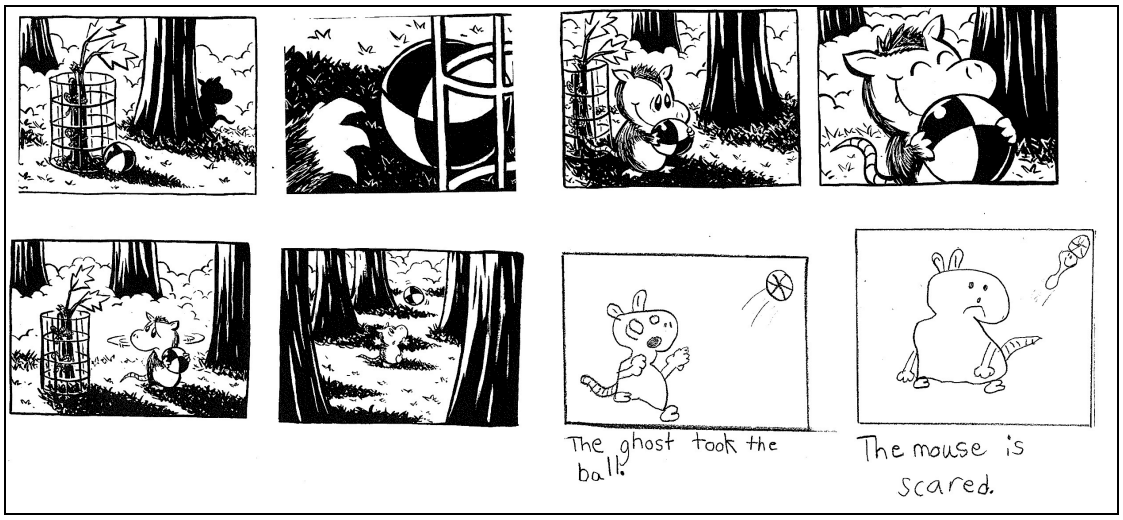


Figure 13.4: JP's Add a Panel Comic.

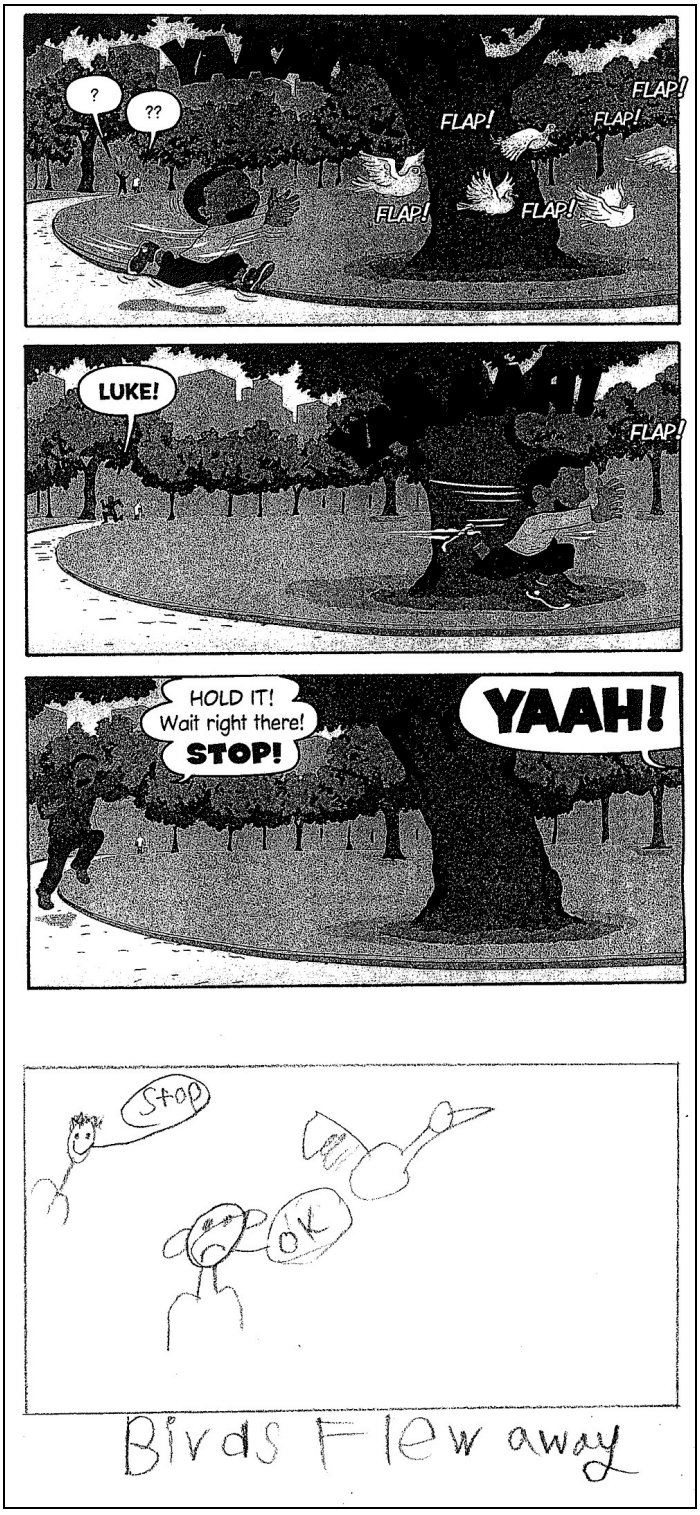


Figure 13.5: JA's Add a Panel Comic.

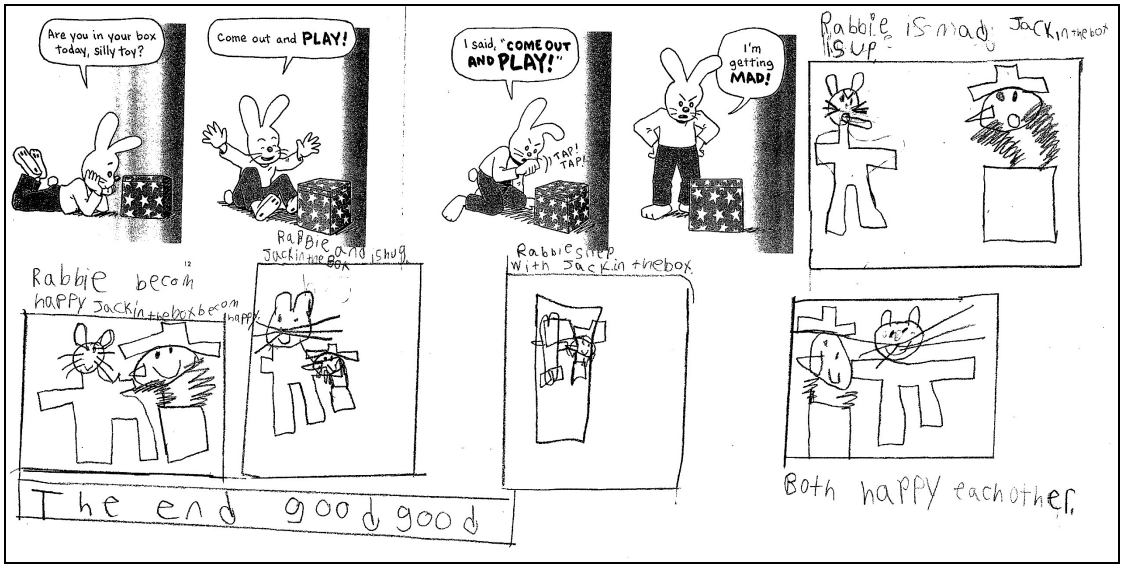


Figure 13.6: LH's Add a Panel Comic.

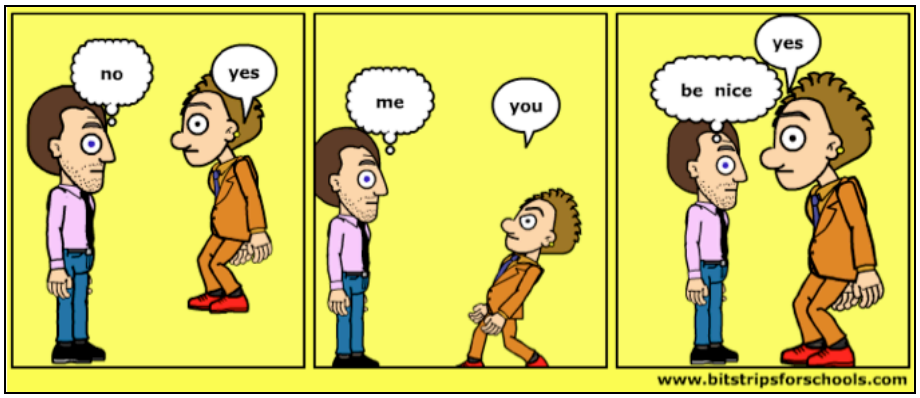


Figure 13.7: JP's Role-Shifting Comic "Imagination".

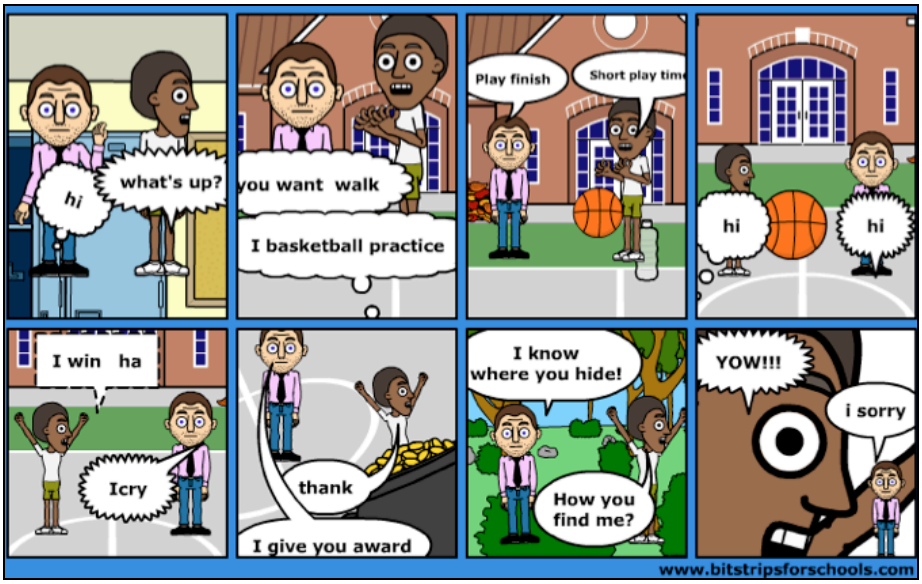


Figure 13.8: BB's Role-Shifting Comic "Basketball Real Game".

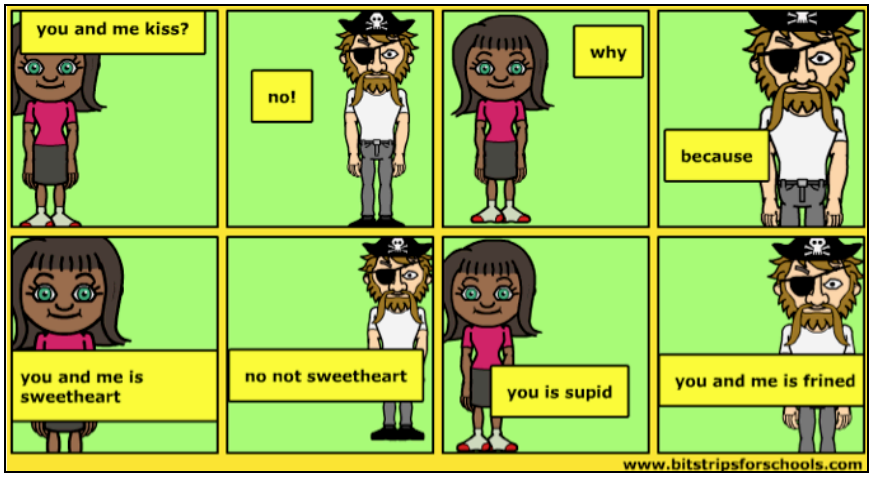


Figure 13.9: LH's Role-Shifting Comic "Sweethearts".



Figure 13.10: JP's Deaf-Centered Comic "Deaf Music".



Figure 13.11: BB's Deaf-Centered Comic "Adam is Embarrassed".