

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES *on* LITERACY

*Mastering*  
**GLOBAL  
LITERACY**

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# Introduction

*By Heidi Hayes Jacobs*

To many of us, the label *21st century* conjures up visions of futuristic scenes from Isaac Asimov's writings. Indeed, labelling global, media and digital literacies as *21st century skills* is a misnomer. In reality, these are *right now* proficiencies – *new literacies*. Even though the future has caught up with us and the 21st century is right now, we continue to serve students in school systems that operate on a 19th century timetable and deliver a 20th century curriculum. To reference another futuristic author, our education system functions like H. G. Wells' time machine, forcing our students to be time travellers between the present and the past.

Nostalgia for the good old days is pervasive in pockets of society, but it is hard to make a convincing case for going backward in the field of education. In my work with schools, I rarely encounter questions about whether or not we should modernise our education system; the pertinent questions are about *how* we should modernise our education system. Grappling with these questions invariably leads to discussion of three new literacies that exponentially empower us to communicate and create with immediacy: global literacy, media literacy and digital literacy. The *Contemporary Perspectives on Literacy* four-book series is a place to cultivate the discussion of these new literacies.

There are five primary purposes of the series:

1. To clarify each new literacy to provide a basis for curriculum and instructional decision making
2. To find the relationship between traditional print and visual literacy and the three new literacies

3. To provide steps and resources to support the cultivation of each literacy in classrooms and virtual learning environments
4. To identify steps and examples of how to lead the transition from older paradigms to the integration of the three literacies in professional development
5. To inform decision makers on the far-reaching effects of policy and organisational structures on the effective modernisation of learning environments

A range of perspectives is essential when examining each literacy and how it interacts with others. To that end, the series includes a cohort of writers from a variety of organisations and disciplines – a classroom teacher, a regional public school information technology director, a leadership team from an international school, researchers, university professors, the director of a not-for-profit organisation devoted to journalism, the founder of an education network, a media critic, a regional service centre professional developer, consultants, the leader of a film- and media-making centre, and the director of an international society supporting global learning. This team of authors has come together to share views and experiences with the central goal of expanding and contributing to the practice of educators. The commitment of each author to this work is commendable, and I am grateful for their patience and productivity. Working with them has been a remarkable journey.

In this book series, we consider the distinctive characteristics of each new literacy and how schools can integrate them. The new literacies provide exciting possibilities for classrooms, schools, organisations and social networks. In this book, *Mastering Global Literacy*, we explore how educators seek to cultivate globally literate learners. In the 21st century, the portals of the classroom are wide open as educators both let the world in and seek out new experiences with their learners. However, what does global competency look like? How do we employ new digital tools to connect effectively with other classrooms? How can we localise and personalise the global? What is it like to grow up in a global classroom? What global issues are learners grappling with?

In this book, we begin with the thoughtful and inspired work of Veronica Boix Mansilla and Anthony W. Jackson. In chapter 1, “Educating for Global Competence: Redefining Learning for an Interconnected World”, you will learn about the work of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that produced four teachable and accessible global competencies and how you can integrate these competencies in classrooms.

Chapter 2, “The Globally Connected Educator: Talking to the World – Not Just About the World”, is packed with specific programs, methods and ideas

to help any teacher at any level build a bridge between their classroom and the world. Born in Germany, raised in Argentina, a teacher in Florida, and en route to a new position in Brazil, Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano is the epitome of the global teacher, but it is not only her personal bio that makes her so. She knows how to connect her learners.

William Kist brings his fascinating work with teachers and how they globalise their classrooms to the foreground in chapter 3, “Taking the Global and Making It Local: A Qualitative Study”.

Born in Iran, Homa Sabet Tavangar has a strong commitment to helping teachers make the adjustment from a closed to a global learning environment. She lays out the elements for creating a global classroom and inspires our children to make friends with others in the world in chapter 4, “Growing Up in a Global Classroom”.

Curriculum writers are concerned with basic questions about what content, topics, and materials are pertinent to support globally literate learners. The book closes with my chapter, “Interdisciplinary Global Issues: A Curriculum for the 21st Century Learner”. I make the case that all problems and issues facing our contemporary learners are inherently interdisciplinary and that we need to make adjustments in our school curriculum to identify and address these issues. This chapter includes criteria for making these choices and a sample set of possible units.

We hope that these five chapters will bring different perspectives to the dialogue regarding how to support the shift to new types of learning environments that can integrate digital, media and global literacy into organisations, teaching practice, administrative styles and, ultimately, into the lives of learners.

We encourage you to connect *Mastering Global Literacy* with the other three companion books in the series for a more complete and detailed examination of the new literacies.



Visit [go.hbe.com.au](http://go.hbe.com.au) to find direct links to the many tools and resources cited in this book.

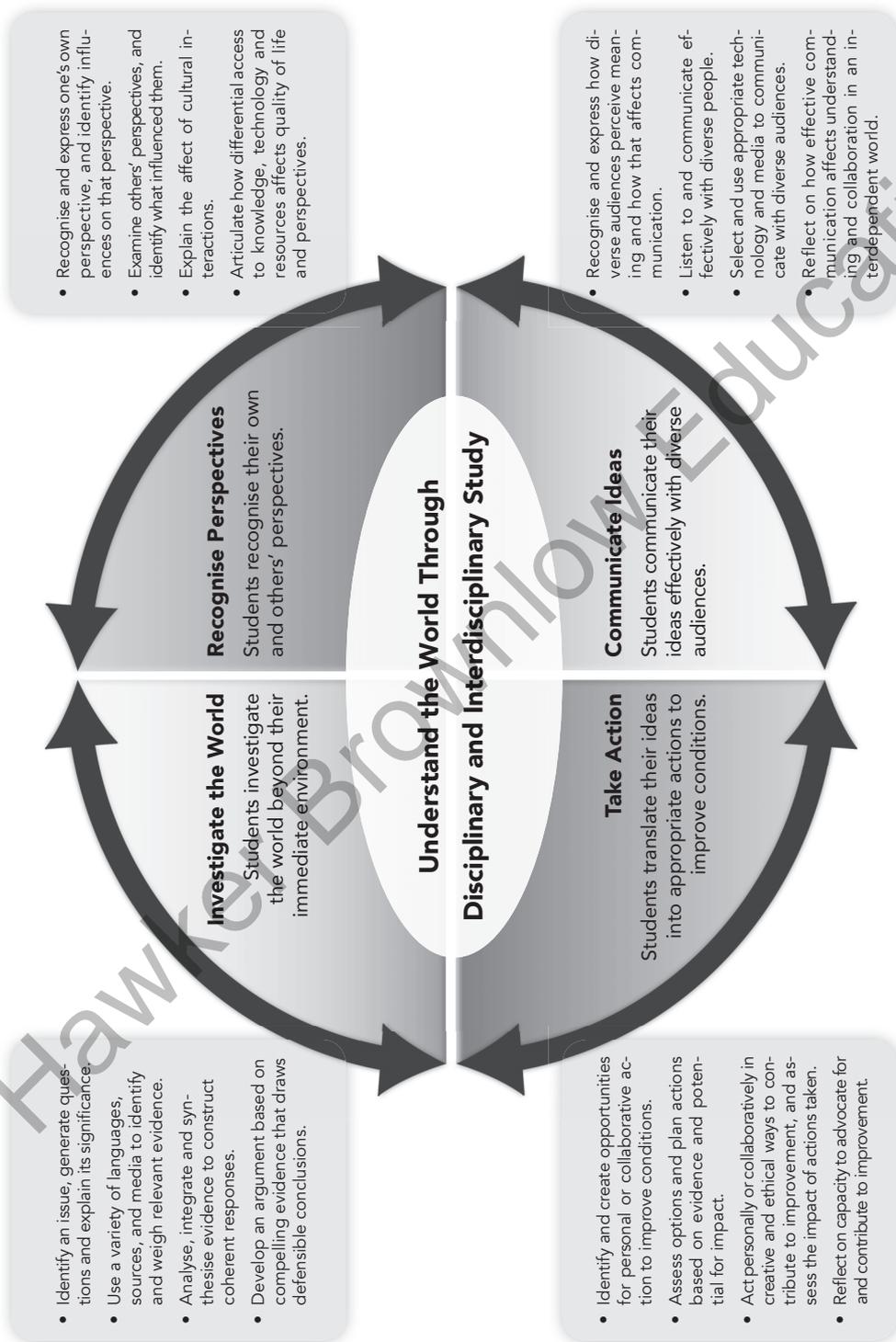


Figure 1.1: Framework for global competence.

Source: Reprinted with permission from Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011.