



Kean University Writing Project

By Suburban News
on October 20, 2014

The light bulb has long been a metaphor for learning. Inside the Kean University Writing Project (KUWP), an innovative space for writers and makers, such 'aha' moments are sometimes accompanied by literal flashes of light. At Kean University writing is at the center of pedagogy and practiced every day. Under the guidance of the Kean University Writing Project's Director, Dr. Mia Zamora, Kean's student educators utilize paper circuitry as a new way of engaging with language, illuminating written pages with conductive tape, LEDs and small batteries.

Recently, the National Writing Project and the Educator Innovator network helped launch "Hack Your Notebook Day," which featured a special writing-engineering "maker" challenge. Working with circuit stickers developed by Jie Qi, a doctoral candidate at the MIT Media Lab, Kean University Writing Project's student educators illuminated their writing with copper wire, circuits, LEDs, and more.

As Director of the Kean University Writing Project, Zamora teaches fellow educators to think about Connected Learning. "My students are peers," said Zamora. "I'm still the professor, but the students aren't university students; they're teachers thinking about their own pedagogical approach."

"There were several audible gasps and exaltations from our group when the circuits started to light up," said Zamora. These exclamations accompanied a meaningful exploration of composition as craft. "A poet considers the power of each word when composing," Zamora observed. Circuitry adds another layer of meaning as the writer tinkers choose which aspects of the text to illuminate.

"We considered why we chose certain aspects of our composition to illuminate, and what kind of thought went into selecting certain words and images to highlight with illumination. The particular care and craft of writing was brought to the foreground," Zamora said.

Far more than a mere pedagogical gimmick, Zamora sees paper circuitry as adding another dimension of meaning to writing. "Engaging at the composition, making, and production levels

enables learners to see how nuanced the production of meaning can be," observed Zamora. Seeing writing as making, Zamora believes, opens pathways for writers to engage in the writing process in a freer sense than formulaic exercises.

Communities, both digital and physical have further enhanced Zamora's pedagogy. "I can identify different communities where I have an interest and a voice. One is literary studies. Another is connected learning and education. Other communities include digital humanities, electronic literature, and making. Those communities don't necessarily overlap, but people's work within those communities are meaningful to each other, and my own position at the intersections enables me to see those connections," said Zamora.

For a Twitter enthusiast like Zamora, the internet provides a forum for networking and scholarly debate, a space where Zamora and her students can connect with thought leaders. "Networks empowered me, but I also think that as an active participant in them, I empower others." Via social media, paper circuitry and communities both physical and digital, Dr. Mia Zamora is providing her students and student-educators with meaningful connected learning experiences, a hands-on understanding of how making, creating and producing are powerful pathways to learning.

Link:

http://www.nj.com/suburbannews/index.ssf/2014/10/kean_university_writing_projec.html