

### Abstract

To address academic slumps (beginning as early as 3rd and 4th grade), and the lack of interest in reading and literacy, educators must explore avenues such as using a deeper integration of technology, social media, and popular culture to parallel and express traditional academic language. Many students are left disengaged by the direction in which their academic literacy journey heads once they reach the middle grades, or in many cases, before they leave elementary school. Though these students might become more disengaged from their academic literacy journey, they are not totally disengaged from literacy interactions altogether.

Twenty-five percent of teens are online “almost constantly” due to having a smartphone (Pew Research Center, 2015), and they spend a significant amount of time interacting on social media and communicating with their peers through texting and chatting. Having the outlets of online platforms has created a separate culture when it comes to literacy, language, and communication. Therefore, student engagement in literacy practices and skills need a change as it relates to classroom teaching and learning. There is often a disconnect when teaching literacy skills (in the "traditional" academic sense), and educators must learn to show students (from younger students, to those entering college) the significance and value of the language and communication skills that they set out to develop in the classroom.

The focus of this session includes engagement, relevance, and interactions in literacy learning. The presenter of this session will share a review of literature on best practices for teaching literacy skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, visual), and work collaboratively with the audience to challenge, explore, and engage in new conversations that can be used to transform the academic language that they use in their classroom as it relates to literacy. The

goal of this session will be to share ways to incorporate social media, technology, and popular culture into traditional literacy learning assignments. Participants will learn methods to connect academic language to students' social realm through technology and pop culture, learn to incorporate a more culturally aware environment into their classroom settings, and explore techniques to engage students who are disconnected from traditional literacy learning approaches.

It is the hope that after attending this session the conversations of “changing the language” will develop a network of educators dedicated to creating innovative teaching practices. Based off participant insight, further research will be conducted, and an online platform/application will be developed to address engagement and relevance in literacy learning.

*Keywords:* Literacy, Engagement, Motivation, Technology, Social Media, Popular Culture