TAP, CLICK, READ

How to Promote
Creation and Authorship

Help children become creators using digital tools. Give students first-hand opportunities to write for specific audiences and make choices about messages.

Spotlight from the Classroom

It's a typical morning in Kevan Miller's first-grade classroom in a public school in Northern Virginia. The bell has rung, the children are settling into the classroom, and Miller starts the day the way she always has: singing what she calls "the weather song." The lyrics ask children to describe the weather outside their windows. "What's the weather? What's the weather?" she sings. "What's the weather, everyone? Is it partly cloudy? Is it cloudy? Is there rain? Or is there sun?"

Today, though, something disrupts the routine. A child asks, "what about other kinds of weather?" Miller pauses. She has never really thought about the fact that the words do not reflect the full spectrum of what her students experience. Here they are in the mid-Atlantic, where the four seasons can cause dramatic changes in temperature and big thunderstorms roll through regularly.

At that moment, Miller's teaching changes. She asks her students to brainstorm other kinds of weather that should be mentioned in the song. The kids come alive. "Snowy!" "Foggy!" On a board, Miller writes these words and more: *lightning*, *tornado*, *flood*. Soon the children are dictating and rehearsing a new version of the song. They ask for access to the TV broadcast room in the school, where administrators and students create morning announcements. They videotape a segment that starts with the original song, explains why it was inadequate, and then shows the whole class singing the new version. It airs on the morning announcements later that week.

4 Other Ideas to Try

1 Use the video feature on an iPad or other tablet in shared reading activities. Pairs of students can record one another reading a book and then watch it together to reinforce the meaning of the book and improve their fluency.
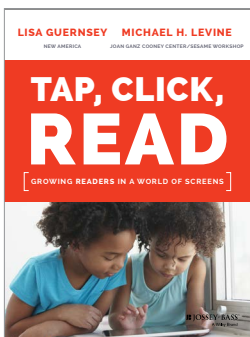
2 After students read a book, have them create an audio or visual book review to share. Use a QR code generator (these can be found online) to create a QR code for the review. Print out the QR code and place it on the back of the book's cover so that future readers can scan it with their QR readers and listen to their peers' reviews.
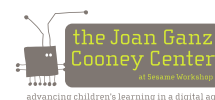
3 Encourage students to take photos for a particular audience (their siblings, the president, etc.), choose their favorites, and explain their choices. Print one photo per student and ask children to write or dictate captions. Bind with yarn for a class book.

4 Help children create their own stories, books, and comic strips. In pre-K through 5th grade, try Book Creator by Red Jumper, which consultant Gail Lovely has called "the simplest way to create digital books, even for not-yet-readers and writers." ToonTastic and Strip Designer give students the chance to create comic books using their own pictures. Common Sense Media has curated storytelling apps for children ages 5 and older.