Teaching a new literacy

Andrew Drozd nurtures student creativity by teaching students how to deconstruct images in the world around them, and reimagine those images using Adobe Photoshop. The graphic design teacher at the Academy of Urban Planning public school in the Brooklyn borough of New York City says the combination of technology and creativity is a powerful tool for helping at-risk students.

“Photoshop enables a new type of literacy that is essential in our digitally-driven world,” Drozd says. “It can definitely open doors for students, who might not otherwise have access to certain opportunities. For instance, I already have two former students in their second year at the prestigious Parsons The New School for Design in Manhattan.”
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Self-expression for social good

Drozd earned master’s degrees in education and special education, but he has always been interested in graphic design. Sharing his personal passion for Adobe Photoshop with students has been a gratifying experience for him. He started teaching graphic design classes in 2005 and continually refines the curriculum. He compares his current approach to that of a piano teacher.

“Typically, students learn to play the classics before they compose their own works,” Drozd says. “I’m beginning to recognize the importance of students analyzing and replicating professionally-created posters and other materials that incorporates some personalization and creativity. Once they master the underlying technology skills and build a solid understanding of quality composition, students can then begin creating their own masterpieces.”

Drozd currently teaches Adobe Photoshop to about thirty 10th-grade and forty 12th-grade students yearly. He starts with self-expression. For instance, students use Adobe Photoshop to create posters of themselves that highlight a special skill or interest.

Drozd also wants to use the great work being done by his students to promote the school and improve community outreach. That’s why he assigned a Photoshop picture book highlighting the school’s Living for the Young Family through Education (LYFE) program, which provides care for children of students. Next, Drozd wants to digitally promote the school’s neighborhood, Bushwick.

“Bushwick is often defined by its poverty. I see a lot of opportunity to promote local, family-owned businesses by using Adobe Photoshop to create print and digital media,” Drozd says. “There are many ways that we can establish an engaging online presence for the Bushwick community.”

For more information
www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html