Adobe Education Leader Kelly Kermode inspires students with new ideas and approaches, nurturing creativity and careers with Adobe creative software.

Calling Kelly Kermode a multitasker and an inspiration is an understatement. Kermode collaborates with educators around the globe and teaches high school English, Computer Information Systems, and Yearbook Journalism. In recent years, she has also trained web editors and site administrators and worked as a learning consultant in Michigan’s Forest Hills Public Schools District, serving more than 10,000 students over 68 square miles. She also leads a group of energetic young students in producing Forest Hills Eastern High School’s award-winning yearbook, the Talon.

Student achievement is Kermode’s foremost concern. She prides herself on how many of her former students have achieved career success after graduation, working as designers, photographers, filmmakers, web developers, and other professionals. One big secret to her students’ success: infusing digital literacy into the curriculum using a host of Adobe industry-standard creative software.

"Whenever possible, I stay in touch with students after they graduate," says Kermode. "It’s incredibly gratifying to see how they are applying what they learned in school to foster success later in life. For many of my students, Adobe creative software has been instrumental in shaping their careers. It’s proven to be essential."
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Digital creativity in the classroom

In creating the Talon as part of the yearbook class, students learn to edit photos and create graphics using Adobe Photoshop; sort, filter, and organize assets using Adobe Bridge; and create sophisticated layouts using Adobe InDesign. Covering every athletic team and student group requires tracking up to 20,000 photos for each yearbook, and that requires tremendous organization in Adobe Bridge through folders and contact sheets so that photos can easily be pulled into layouts.

Kermode continually advances the workflow for the yearbook, and, each day, weaves digital tools and creative software even more tightly into the classroom. She would like to eventually create a mobile, digital version of the yearbook. She also plans to digitize her curriculum and create video tutorials using Adobe Edge Animate to produce demos and motion graphics that would be a powerful way to “show versus tell” students about concepts.

“Every day, I see the firsthand benefits of incorporating design and creativity into learning,” says Kermode. “I deliberately took on more assignments this year in order to have a set of computers with Adobe creative software in every room, all day. I’m now helping my English students build creative projects using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop so they can learn to tell stories through text and visuals.”

Recently, Kermode had her English students embark on creating montages for the short story ”The Scarlet Ibis,” by James Hurst. Students were challenged to create an 11x17 graphic poster illustrating the symbolic nature of the story, as well as the connections between characters, weather, and history. With this project, students were learning the top levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy which promotes higher forms of thinking and analysis in education, versus rote learning. They had to decide how to compose the images to elucidate their personal thinking about the symbolism of the story.

Igniting careers

The skills and enthusiasm Kermode imparts to students are helping them find their passions. For example, Mariah Prowozink was initially wary of signing onto the yearbook staff after a friend asked her to join sophomore year. Though the first chore of selling yearbook ads was tough for an admittedly shy young woman, Prowozink soon was creating and designing pages that truly awakened her passion. Through a series of promotions and acquisition of new talents, she was head editor by her senior year. She’s now in college at Central Michigan University studying graphic design, art history, and advertising. Already, she has done freelance web design work on the side.

Kermode not only helped Prowozink develop valuable skills, but also incited a love of design in her. Prowozink is now working on the university’s newspaper, Central Michigan Life. On a personal level, for the 2012 to 2013 academic year, she was awarded first place and second place for front-page design, as well as first place for non-front page design, from the Michigan Press Association. She has also been an integral part of redesigning the paper’s website and is looking forward to producing a tablet version of the newspaper using the Alternative layout features in Adobe InDesign.
"I’m thrilled to have become a skilled college newspaper designer under Kelly’s guidance," says Prowozink, "I’m also using my skills to rebrand my father’s restaurant, including creating menus, posters, advertisements, and the business website. I would never have guessed that Kelly’s classroom would have taken me to where I am today."

**Talent in motion**

Other students have flourished as well, including Jeff Bloom who has gone on to a filmmaking career. Although he started on the yearbook staff, he was more interested in video and made DVD supplements that summarized the school events over the year. After graduating from Columbia University, he created a pilot of a sci-fi, post-apocalyptic mini series titled, The Wake, with his partner Noah Kloor.

Adobe software enabled Kloor and Bloom to produce an epic drama at a fraction of the cost that a normal production might require. And, in a matter of months, the two had created more than 300 visual effects shots using Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Adobe After Effects software almost exclusively.

"My knowledge of Adobe software has helped in every facet of my career," says Bloom. "While many people from my high school found making it in the ‘real world’ daunting, I felt incredibly prepared because I was already a technically proficient working professional. Kelly is skilled at making her students feel respected and in charge. I can say from experience that this makes you work even harder."

**Meaningful learning**

For Kermode, the passion for launching careers and helping students uncover and develop their creative skills is stronger than ever. She believes we live in a personalized society, and that a one size fits all approach to education is ineffective. By using design principles in class, students get to see, articulate, and decipher patterns and make their own personal connections—and, by all evidence, that is working well for Kermode and her students.

"By weaving creativity throughout the curriculum, students tap into their own skills and imagination and learn new levels of independence," says Kermode. "Every student is responsible for deciding what their final projects will look like and how it communicates what they learned. By encouraging creativity in the classroom through Adobe software, students come alive with their individual interests and pursuits. It puts more passion back into teaching and learning."