The Art of Comic Scriptwriting in Science

Jay B. Gregorio

As a special education teacher working with students with autism, visual and verbal cues are key to understanding concepts being taught. Students with disabilities have difficulty expressing themselves verbally and therefore, manifest their strengths in various ways. Given this context, I find comic scriptwriting extremely helpful in concept development. This involves drawing characters and images then writing scripts to develop a simple story that targets a science concept.

Sketching and writing comic scripts create a whole brain approach in building up concepts using situations that are relevant to them. I observed that when I engage students in this type of activity, their level of motivation increases and frustration is reduced. This mode of learning concepts is very flexible and subjective. Students' voice and choice are given a priority and as a result, the quality of their output is relatively high. In one of our lessons in circulatory system for instance, students were able to come up with comic strips documenting the journey of blood cells through and out of the heart and blood vessels. Their interpretation varies but the content knowledge is the same. I feel that comic scriptwriting in science has high potential in improving learning and developing metacognition skills of students. There have been a lot of misconceptions in science that were addressed by comic scriptwriting because it gives an opportunity for the students to explain the content of the subject in a way that they are understood.

It is easy to find interdisciplinary applications for this art form. In scriptwriting, we can pay attention to sentence writing skill – grammar, spelling and content which is the focus of English Language Arts. We can also use the comic scripts in role-play by assigning characters to different students and asking them to read the scripts accordingly in order to develop skills in Reading. There is a huge opportunity for collaborative work where students contribute in development of characters. In order to make the stories more relevant, comic scripts can be written in the context of a particular community where places or landmarks are familiar to them. This is helpful in giving emphasis to social contexts that are important to them so that they will feel more connected and involved.