



PREPARING FOR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY IN OUR DIGITAL AGE

A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATORS TO ENSURE MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION FOR EVERY STUDENT

Teachers
College
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



Teachers
College
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



This report was prepared for the DemocracyReady NY Coalition by Faith Rogow, Ph.D. Democracy Ready NY is a project of the Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University. The report was funded in part by a grant from the Einhorn Collaborative. We are also grateful for support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Views expressed in the report reflect those of the author and the Center for Educational Equity and not those of the funders or of Teachers College.

We are grateful to the members of the DemocracyReady NY media literacy committee and to Michelle Ciulla Lipkin and Megan Fromm of the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) for their feedback on earlier drafts of this report.

Educational, not-for-profit use of this document is encouraged.

Citation: Rogow, F. (2023). *Preparing for Civic Responsibility in Our Digital Age: A Framework for Educators to Ensure Media Literacy Education for Every Student*. New York: DemocracyReady NY and the Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University.

For other permissions, information, or media queries, contact:
Jessica R. Wolff, Director of Policy and Research
Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University
wolff@tc.columbia.edu

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
<i>To Understand This Framework.....</i>	4
THE PURPOSE OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION.....	5
<i>Pedagogy, Practice, and Core Assumptions.....</i>	6
MEDIA LITERACY ANCHOR SKILLS.....	11
<i>Developmental Benchmarks for Media Literacy.....</i>	14
CONCLUSION.....	26
REFERENCES.....	27
APPENDICES.....	28
<i>Appendix A. Media Literacy Competencies.....</i>	28
<i>Appendix B. Media Literacy Checklist.....</i>	33
<i>Appendix C. Media Literacy Questions.....</i>	35
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	36

INTRODUCTION

Media are so pervasive that, regardless of our individual personal choices, no facet of our lives is untouched by them. Consider that

- Our public spaces are infused with an unending cascade of media messages promoting an array of corporations, causes, candidates, events, and teams.
- Mundane tasks, including many school functions, require the use of branded or ad-supported digital interfaces.
- Vital facets of our culture – fashion, music, sports, politics, dating, jobs, and so much more – are shaped by the demands and limits of social media, even for those who never log on.
- Social media, streaming, gaming, and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing the types of stories we tell, the way we share them, and with whom.
- The rapid dissemination of news on social media platforms provides significant challenges and unprecedented opportunities for informed civic engagement.

This rapidly evolving media landscape presents schools and educators with enormous, though not insurmountable, challenges. The text-dominant mass communication of generations past has been replaced by forms that routinely merge images, and sometimes audio, with printed words. Literacy instruction is just now beginning to catch up.

Just as traditional literacy was never simply about using pencils or a blackboard, literacy in today's world is about more than knowing how to use digital tools. Powerful computers now fit in the palms of our hands, and the resulting access to information and audiences requires new thinking and reasoning skills, not just knowledge of how to use a device or app.

Widely available generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools further complicate the picture, enabling the easy creation of fake images, video and sound, as well as text without attributions, critical thinking, or creative effort. The use of such tools without a solid ethical foundation is dangerous.

In New York State, which constitutionally guarantees that schools will be able to prepare all students to participate effectively in the civic life of their communities, state, and nation, it is of particular note that the Internet has become the new public square. Much of essential political discourse, including news reports, discussion of public policy, and all manner of commentary on social issues now routinely, and in many cases exclusively, takes place online.

“Just as traditional literacy was never simply about using pencils or a blackboard, literacy in today’s world is about more than knowing how to use digital tools.”

As the 2022 [media literacy position statement](#) from the National Council for the Social Studies notes, the realities of living in a digital culture require changes from an education system that originated in an analog world:

Revolutionary changes in human communications necessitate a shift in our pedagogical orientation from a fixation on teaching and assessing facts to a focus on educating students to habitually analyze and evaluate information, including asking essential questions, weighing competing claims, assessing credibility, and reflecting on one’s own reasoning and values to determine who gains and who loses through the promotion of particular narratives.

The task of equipping students to navigate and thrive in the real world requires a new skill set. That's what media literacy offers. When we take seriously the notion that a central purpose of schooling is to prepare future generations to exercise their civic responsibilities, then, in a digital world, media literacy must be a high priority in all schools. We provide this media literacy education outcomes framework as a response to that need.

This publication builds on prior work initiated DemocracyReady NY, a nonpartisan, statewide, multigenerational coalition committed to preparing all students for civic participation. Our 2020 report, [*Developing Digital Citizens: Media Literacy Education for All Students*](#), argues that students' development of the skills necessary to consume, create, critique, and share media is a vital component of the civic preparation that is all New York students' right under the state constitution (Wolff, LoBue, & Rebell, 2020).

Developing Digital Citizens offers recommendations to guide school officials and policymakers who seek to make media literacy education available in every school. Among those recommendations are that schools must be adequately staffed with practitioners who are well-trained in teaching media literacy. There must be robust, up-to-date media literacy standards across all content areas with suitable curricula and course offerings to ensure sufficient media literacy instruction. Finally, schools must possess the appropriate infrastructure to support media literacy education, such as a well-equipped library media center with up-to-date technology and instructional materials.

Recommendations from *Developing Digital Citizens: Media Literacy for All Students*

1. Clear state standards for media literacy education.

Many key media literacy skills and competencies are already incorporated in existing state standards across the curriculum. We recommend compiling these into clear, inclusive, cross-referenced P-12 media literacy standards based on a comprehensive, current definition of media literacy.

2. Qualified personnel for teaching media literacy

The responsibility for media literacy education must be shared among educators, including classroom teachers and library media specialists. We recommend all teachers receive targeted professional development in teaching media literacy. At the same time, we recommend all schools be staffed with a library media specialist who can provide professional development and media literacy instruction for students at each grade level.

3. Suitable MLE curricula and course offerings

Media literacy can be taught through strategies applied across the curriculum and as specific content that can be taught as a stand-alone subject. We recommend a hybrid approach to ensure all students receive sufficient media literacy instruction.

4. Up-to-date facilities, instructional materials, and technology

Certain basic educational resources are essential for teaching media literacy. Each school must have a well-equipped, up-to-date library media center, which is a requirement under existing NY law. All schools should also be equipped with up-to-date learning technologies and other "instrumentalities of learning," another current legal requirement.

5. Transparent monitoring and reporting of MLE resources and results

Due to a lack of basic information about whether and how media literacy education is taking place statewide, outside of a few exemplary districts and schools, we recommend a statewide survey to establish a baseline from which progress can be measured. There should be transparent monitoring and reporting on both resources and results.

TO UNDERSTAND THIS FRAMEWORK

In this historical moment, media literacy education is a contested terrain with divergent ideas about its purposes and best practices. In part that is because media play so many different roles in our lives.

It is also because, in the absence of school, district, or statewide coordination, what has emerged is a dizzying array of practices and priorities. Some educators have met the challenge with energy and creativity, providing students with excellent opportunities to develop media literacy competencies. Others dismiss media literacy education as extraneous or view it as someone else’s job. Still others address media issues that are important to them, without considering the specific needs or experiences of the students they teach. The result is a hit-or-miss approach that creates unnecessary repetition for some students while others receive no media literacy instruction at all. The status quo is a recipe for reinforcing existing inequities.

In this context, it can seem as if media literacy is a free-for-all. So, the major purpose of this document is to bring the task before us into focus. The framework articulates the goals, objectives, and methods of media literacy education in actionable terms for educators in school settings. It is designed to be both flexible and clear, providing schools, districts, and the state with the guideposts they need to implement culturally and developmentally appropriate media literacy instruction for every New York State student.

The framework’s target audience is K-12 school librarians, teachers, school and district administrators, school board members, and the educators and policymakers involved in creating state education standards or teaching pre-service courses for education professionals. It looks at its subject from the vantage point of New York State educators, though it is likely that education professionals in other states and nations will find ideas and strategies that apply to their work.

To avoid becoming outdated as technologies change, the framework focuses on skills, habits, and knowledge that are “evergreen” (sometimes referred to as “durable skills”). Logic, reasoning, and the ability to process and communicate with words, images, and audio will be required no matter how technologies change.

The goals and objectives are organized as a framework rather than a set of comprehensive standards because, like traditional literacy, media literacy is (or should be) embedded in nearly every subject area. Thus, the format is intentionally designed to facilitate the creation of crosswalks with existing education standards.

Those who use this document to create crosswalks are likely to find some significant overlaps with a broad range of current standards. A quick glance at the member organizations of the [National Media Literacy Alliance](#) reveals common ground with nearly every aspect of preK-12 education.



However, no matter which set of standards they are looking at, they will also notice substantive gaps. That’s because media literacy education is a unique amalgam of many fields and subject areas.

No single set of standards covers everything that being media literate requires. Tech-focused standards are generally strong on aspects of using digital tools, but they leave out media that are not digital. Some standards with strong recommendations for critical thinking don't ask students to apply analysis skills to media messages, or they include standards for analyzing print but no other media forms. Some that include media invite students to analyze, but not create media, or they ignore the role that users and audiences play in the interpretive process. The absence of certain skill sets doesn't make students' need for them any less pressing. Hence the impetus for a media literacy outcomes framework.

Educators who are relatively new to media literacy can use the framework to identify links between the core curriculum they already teach and the skills and knowledge that students need to thrive in a media-rich world. For educators who already effectively integrate media literacy, the suggestions in this document need not displace existing practices. Instead, the framework provides context so that educators can see how their work fits into a larger whole. That bigger picture will help experienced media literacy educators to expand and strengthen their current efforts.

THE PURPOSE OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

The specific strategies of media literacy education are designed to provide students with the skills, knowledge, habits, and dispositions necessary to become the lifelong learners, critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, and engaged, ethical community members and citizens needed to sustain a vibrant democracy in a digital world.

Since the invention of the printing press first made mass communication possible, the potential of literacy to unlock doors to power and success has been so clear that wary authorities have periodically restricted access to literacy skills as a way to avoid sharing wealth or control. Traditional literacy still holds the promise of opportunity, but, in the digital world, as the newspaper front pages in Figure 1 suggest, those who apply reading, writing, and analysis skills only to print no longer have full access to the benefits that have historically accompanied being literate. Media literacy education is the way we fill the gaps.

Media literacy education is a multidisciplinary expansion of traditional literacy instruction that teaches students to routinely apply critical inquiry, reading, and reflection skills to all forms of media that they encounter, use, and create.



1921



1980



2023

Figure 1. Albany Times Union front covers. What do you notice? If you only analyzed the printed words, what would you miss?

Pedagogy, Practice, and Core Assumptions

The goals of media literacy education are achieved primarily through student mastery of three anchor skills: analyze, reflect, and create. These are explored in detail in subsequent sections and are supplemented in Appendix A, which offers a more detailed description of media literacy competencies.

But the efficacy of media literacy education depends as much on the way it is taught as the content that is covered. So, before we can explore student outcomes, it is important to have a clear portrait of inquiry-based media literacy instruction.

Defining Media

Media literacy education defines media broadly to include all communication forms in which communicator and receiver are not in direct contact, that is, there is something mediating the interaction. Typically, this includes, but is not restricted to, digital communication and gaming technologies and platforms, and the content they disseminate, including content generated by AI.

Media literacy education expands its view of media beyond screen-based sources because people get ideas and information from all sorts of nondigital media: physical books and other printed matter (e.g., flyers, newsletters), posters, artwork, billboards, food and toy packaging, flags, signs, labels, bumper stickers, logos, jigsaw puzzles, board games, currency and postage stamps, mugs, t-shirts, hats, and the like.

Additionally, exclusive focus on digital media unnecessarily eliminates effective, developmentally appropriate opportunities for younger students or novices to practice the skills needed to negotiate digital spaces (because it is easier to introduce skills using still images than using media with motion or soundtracks).

Inquiry-Based Instruction

To model essential skills and dispositions, people who teach media literacy prioritize inquiry-based discourse. This means that most of what they do is ask open-ended questions and provide prompts that invite students to grapple with media texts or production decisions for themselves.

Educators who facilitate media literacy lessons do so in a spirit of discovery, bringing to the learning relationship their curiosity and creativity. Instead of issuing warnings or conveying their own anxieties and fears about media, they invite students into an exploration of ideas and away from a copy-and-paste approach to gathering information from media.

Some educators integrate aspects of media literacy education into their work but call it something else. DemocracyReady NY's Developing Digital Citizens: Media Literacy Education for All Students (pp.5-6) offers a summary from Media Literacy Now of some of the most common terms:

Digital literacy—being technically fluent and able “to make informed decisions about what we do and encounter online, recognize how networked technology affects our behavior and our perceptions, and create and effectively communicate with digital media tools.” (Media Smarts)

Information literacy—knowing “how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve a particular problem or make a decision.” (American Library Association)

News literacy—able to “discern verified information from spin, opinion and propaganda, and produce news accurately, fairly and responsibly.” (News Literacy Project)

Visual literacy—able to “find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media such as: photographs, videos, illustrations, drawings, maps, diagrams, and advertisements.” (American Library Association)

Digital citizenship—understanding and following the “norms of safe and responsible technology use.” (CyberwiseMedia)

As part of that partnership of discovery, media literacy educators exert their influence by providing background information as needed, often anticipating what students need to know to engage in evidence-based inquiry. They also decide how much instruction time to devote to particular topics, design lessons that connect media literacy skills and knowledge to core curriculum, carefully choose rich media examples for analysis, and offer meaningful media-making assignments that are appropriate for students' developmental and skill levels.

Successful media literacy educators create learning spaces in which:

- Questions and curiosity are welcome.
- There is often more than one “right” answer, and answers are linked to evidence.
- Everyone is expected to ask as well as answer questions.
- We ask questions of all media, including media we like (or agree with) and media we create.
- Everyone is open-minded, and it is common to adapt opinions (change our minds) to accommodate new information.
- Everyone appreciates that making judgments of media are more complex than simply declaring that something is “good” or “bad.”¹

In media literacy lessons, rather than offering predetermined interpretations, educators ask students what they notice and then help them to develop the skills and knowledge to notice more, that creates a space where everyone can think more deeply about what they notice.

“Media literacy students learn to *investigate* rather than *doubt* media sources.”

Media literacy students learn to *investigate* rather than *doubt* media sources. They go from being consumers to interrogators of news and information. This distinction is important because students who get the message that media can't be trusted become cynical rather than skeptical. They conclude that all media are equally deceptive, and, if that is true, it logically follows that inquiry is irrelevant. However, it is inquiry that enables students to develop confidence and trust in their media literacy skills without sowing doubt on media more broadly or designating a limited set of media sources that are always to be trusted.

This approach is also a reflection of a key assumption for media literacy education: students today are as curious, capable, and caring as any previous generation. When they miss things in media, it's because they aren't yet fully literate, not because they are naïve, shallow, or addicted to screens. What they lack is better remedied by media literacy education than by protection or judgmental assessments of their media choices. For a summary of this inquiry-based, student-centered approach written with lesson design in mind, see the Media Literacy Checklist in Appendix B.

Group Work

If you were to observe a media literacy lesson, you would be much more likely to see a hands-on activity or engaging discussion than a lecture or individual seat work. That's because group work provides unique opportunities to rehearse and deepen media literacy skills. And it provides students with the chance to learn from one another as well as from a text or a teacher.

Media analysis undertaken as a group gives students the opportunity to hear diverse, evidence-based views. Freed from the need to convince others that there is only one right answer (and it must be theirs), students learn to engage in dialogue for the purpose of learning rather than winning. In the process, they learn about the lesson's subject matter and about one another. Speaking things out loud can lead to surprising and powerful insights.

¹ Adapted from Rogow, 2022, p. 54

It can also build community and lay a strong foundation for civic engagement. That's because, rather than uniform agreement, media literacy uses the process of logic and evidence-based inquiry as the group's common ground. So, media literacy discussions provide excellent practice for living in a nation that values pluralism. It is not an accident that the National Association for Media Literacy Education wraps up its recently revised Core Principles of Media Literacy Education with Principle 10: "Media literacy education empowers individuals to be informed, reflective, engaged, and socially responsible participants in a democratic society" (see Figure 2). Group work is one of the ways media literacy educators make that happen.

The benefits of group work also extend to making media, which gives students a chance to practice collaborative skills and develop a deeper understanding of media as communication. As they justify production choices to teammates or explain decisions to teachers, students develop an intuitive feel for the key media literacy concept that all media are constructed; messages are always a product of human choices (even media generated by AI, which uses human-crafted algorithms to scrape content created by people).

Implementation

Media literacy, like traditional literacy, is a skill and knowledge set that we use to teach and learn nearly everything. It may be enhanced by specialty electives but cannot be relegated to something separate from the rest of school or reduced to single lessons or units.

Every educator who

- shares information via media (including textbooks),
- asks students to create media (including in writing) to demonstrate knowledge or express creativity,
- decorates bulletin boards, doors, or other displays,
- covers subject matter that applies to public policy,
- teaches any aspect of history or society in which media have played a role,
- finds themselves needing to correct misconceptions that students have learned from media, or
- asks students to conduct research,

is integrating media. To do so without introducing media literacy skills is shortchanging students in ways that leave them unprepared for life in our digital world.

Media literacy education covers a lot of territory. Imagine what students could encounter in a school that integrated media literacy:

Art

- Students make travel posters, learning about places as well as effective ways to use images to communicate a message.
- Classes analyze paintings for meaning and historical context as well as aesthetics.

English/Language Arts

- A lesson on adjectives shows their impact on writing with students discussing a transcription of an ad that deletes the modifiers.
- "Writing" assignments routinely reflect all the ways people tell stories in the digital world.

Health

- Classes analyze food commercials and packages to evaluate health claims and examine the ways that media influence body image.
- Students create PSAs featuring public health strategies like hand washing or getting enough sleep.

Media literacy education:

NAMLE

- 1 Expands** the concept of literacy to include all forms of media and integrates multiple literacies in developing mindful media consumers and creators.
- 2 Envisions** all individuals as capable learners who use their background, knowledge, skills, and beliefs to create meaning from media experiences.
- 3 Promotes** teaching practices that prioritize curious, open-minded, and self-reflective inquiry while emphasizing reason, logic, and evidence.
- 4 Encourages** learners to practice active inquiry, reflection, and critical thinking about the messages they experience, create, and share across the ever-evolving media landscape.
- 5 Necessitates** ongoing skill-building opportunities for learners that are integrated, cross-curricular, interactive, and appropriate for age and developmental stage.
- 6 Supports** the development of a participatory media culture in which individuals navigate myriad ethical responsibilities as they create and share media.
- 7 Recognizes** that media institutions are cultural and commercial entities that function as agents of socialization, commerce, and change.
- 8 Affirms** that a healthy media landscape for the public good is a shared responsibility among media and technology companies, governments, and citizens.
- 9 Emphasizes** critical inquiry about media industries' roles in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability.
- 10 Empowers** individuals to be informed, reflective, engaged, and socially responsible participants in a democratic society.

Figure 2. Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (2023)

<https://name.net/resources/core-principles/>. Used under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Library / Research

- During read-alouds, students learn how to analyze book covers and link conclusions to document-based evidence.
- Student research projects start with sessions on how to find, evaluate, and cite sources that are credible.

Math

- Students learn to collect data and present it in charts and graphs, and in the process learn how graphic design can distort data or make trends clearer.
- Students assess the validity of claims in public policy debates or news reports, but with a focus on statistics, looking at both the statistical method and the ways the statistic is reported.

Music

- Classes analyze music videos and learn what musicians earn for downloads from music sharing platforms or views from video sharing platforms.
- Students experiment with moving to different styles of music and notice how different types of music make them feel.

Social Studies

- Regular discussions of news stories include comparisons from various sources, with analysis tools that reach deeper than identifying true/false or a left/right political perspective.
- Students learn key components of propaganda and then identify historical and current examples to analyze target audience and impact.
- Students apply the principles of media literacy to take civic action.

Technology

- Students learning to code discuss the biases built into the algorithms that serve as engines for AI or social media platforms.
- Access to equipment and guidance allows students to make video documentaries as capstone projects to summarize key things they learned during the year or to make welcoming videos that will be shown to new students at the start of the next school year.

“Ultimately, media literacy education is the job of everyone in a school.”

These are just quick examples. The possibilities are limited only by a school or district’s willingness, adequate training and resources for educators, and everyone’s imaginations.

As the people in school buildings with the most training in a broad set of information access and evaluation skills, experience in collaboration, and connections

to all curricular areas and often all students, librarians are the logical leaders of media literacy education efforts. But they cannot succeed if they are working in isolation. Ultimately, media literacy education is the job of everyone in a school. Every person who teaches or who supports instruction needs to know and understand the Media Literacy Anchor Skills and how to help students internalize them.

MEDIA LITERACY ANCHOR SKILLS

Media literacy anchor skills are the foundational, essential skills needed to navigate life in a digital world and participate effectively as a citizen in a healthy democracy. They are not the only skills, just the starting point. Those seeking a more detailed portrait that extends beyond the basics can refer to the more comprehensive media literacy competencies described in Appendix A or the listings in Additional Resources.

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 1. Analyze

Uses relevant, probative questions and careful observation to examine and make meaning from media messages and to evaluate their purpose, efficacy, value, credibility, and potential impact.

- Routinely asks media literacy questions (see Figure 3 and Appendix C) to examine and interpret media messages.
- Gives specific evidence to explain or justify interpretations of media messages, including (but not limited to) document-based evidence.
- Demonstrates an understanding that all media are constructed, that is, media messages are always the product of human choices, and demonstrates an understanding of how and why those choices are made.

CATEGORIES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR MEDIA DECODING

DEVELOPING HABITS OF INQUIRY AND REFLECTION

The chart is organized into two columns of categories, each with a list of sample questions. The categories are: AUTHORSHIP & PURPOSES, ECONOMICS, CONTENT, TECHNIQUES, CONTEXT, CREDIBILITY, EFFECTS, INTERPRETATIONS, RESPONSES, and FOLLOW UP WITH... Each category is represented by a colored box with a list of questions.

- AUTHORSHIP & PURPOSES**
 - Who made this and for what purposes?
 - What do they want me to do, think or feel?
 - Who is the target audience?
- ECONOMICS**
 - Who paid for this?
 - Who might make money from this and how?
- CONTENT**
 - What are the messages about _____?
 - What values, ideas and biases are overt or implied?
 - What is left out that might be important to know?
 - Whose voices are included and whose are left out?
 - How does this compare to other messages on this topic?
- TECHNIQUES**
 - What techniques are used to communicate the messages?
 - Why might they have chosen to use those techniques?
 - Was this crafted to trigger emotions, if so, how and why?
- CONTEXT**
 - When was this created and how was it shared?
 - What aspects of historical or cultural context are relevant to consider?
 - How does this reinforce or counter cultural norms?
 - How does the technology or media form (social media, print, TV, etc.) impact the message?
- CREDIBILITY**
 - Is this fact, opinion, or something else (fiction, satire, etc.)?
 - What are the sources of the ideas or assertions?
 - How do I know this is believable or accurate?
 - Is this a trustworthy source about this particular topic?
 - How might I confirm this information using reliable sources?
- EFFECTS**
 - How does this make me feel and why?
 - What impact might this have on others or on society?
 - Who might this message benefit? Who might it harm?
- INTERPRETATIONS**
 - How and why might different people interpret this differently?
 - How do my experiences and identity shape my interpretation?
 - Do I have an open mind on this? Why or why not?
 - What do I learn about myself from my interpretation or react?
- RESPONSES**
 - What questions do I have about this?
 - What knowledge do I need to fully understand this? How do I find that information?
 - Will I share this? If so, how and with whom? If not, why not?
 - What kinds of actions might I take in response to this?
- FOLLOW UP WITH...**
 - What is my evidence?
 - Why do I think that?
 - How could I find that out?
 - Why might this matter?

ProjectLookSharp.org & InSightersEducation.com

Figure 3. Categories and Sample Questions for Media Decoding

² This chart is available as a downloadable handout from Project Look Sharp. The website also offers versions in other languages as well as versions for creating media and for working with young children.

- d) Spots media making techniques commonly used for persuasion, attention, deception, and identity reinforcement.
- e) Explains how media or platform ownership, design, structures, and commercial imperatives influence content and messages.
- f) Looks for patterns in media content to spot the ways that repetition and omission shapes people’s ideas.
- g) Finds, evaluates, and uses sources that are likely to provide credible (accurate, current, fair, complete) answers to their questions.
- h) Describes what constitutes “expertise” in various disciplines and knows that a credible source for one topic is not necessarily a credible source for all topics.
- i) Demonstrates an understanding of the capabilities and limits of technologies designed to assist in information searches and how methods employed by different tools influence search results.
- j) Participates effectively in respectful group discussions analyzing media messages.

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 2. Reflect

Considers how media or media messages affect themselves or others, both physically and emotionally, and knowing the potential effects, considers the ethics of media choices and structures.

- a) Identifies and questions their own ideas or beliefs and the sources of those ideas and beliefs to understand their influence on interpretation of media messages and choices when creating media.
- b) Demonstrates an understanding of different perspectives and how and why those differences may lead others to interpret evidence in ways that diverge from their own interpretations – not an “all interpretations are equally valid” approach, but rather, a recognition that it is possible for reasonable people who are using valid evidence to reach different conclusions about meaning (but not about facts).
- c) Takes seriously the responsibilities of making and sharing media and can explain the potential benefits and harms to themselves and others that result from making ethical or unethical choices.
- d) Pays attention to the physical effects of media use on their bodies, and how these effects relate to interpretation, mood, and health. Also notices and names their emotional responses to media messages and identifies the cause(s) of those responses, including relevant personal history and preferences, beliefs and values, and techniques used by the media maker(s).
- e) Considers possible actions, both individual and as part of a community, that they could take as appropriate responses to what they know about media and media messages.

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 3. Create

Makes media that communicates effectively for informational, social, and creative purposes, and for specific audiences, using audio, moving images, still images, and graphics, as well as written text.

- a) Effectively uses media tools to create and communicate in a variety of mediums.
- b) When making media, makes thoughtful and ethical choices about what to include and exclude, understanding that a media maker's choices influence how audiences will interpret their work.
- c) Obtains all necessary permissions before using or disseminating others' private information or images, or material protected by copyright. Also knows how to protect one's own intellectual property and how to properly cite material generated by others (including AI).
- d) Identifies the ways that judgments about aesthetics and content are influenced by personal experience, cultural context, and economic imperatives.
- e) Rejects making media to intentionally cause harm, for example, to bully, mislead, or incite hate (e.g., posting an embarrassing photo to shame a classmate, using AI to create deep-fakes in order to misrepresent what a person actually said or did, using slurs or other forms of hate speech).
- f) Uses media platforms effectively and ethically to connect with others for multiple purposes: for example: social, education, civic engagement, employment, commerce.
- g) Knows the conventions (common techniques) of communication on various platforms and for varied purposes (for example, the differences between a book review and a research paper, texting a friend and sending an email for work, a meme and an infographic, a chart and a graph, a documentary film and an action movie, posting on Tik Tok compared with Instagram). Chooses the medium of expression that matches their purpose and audience.
- h) Explains the meaning and implications of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech, including the rights and responsibilities it confers on journalists and other media makers, and how it applies to what one can share and where one can share it.

DEVELOPMENTAL BENCHMARKS FOR MEDIA LITERACY

This section provides a basic portrait of how the anchor skills manifest in students at different grade levels. Rather than comprehensive descriptions of everything that is possible or needed (which is what one might expect if this were a set of standards), the benchmarks at each grade level are indications of reasonable expectations. Their primary purpose is to demonstrate a developmental progression, with each level assuming mastery of the previous level. **Each of the main anchor skill descriptions also serves as the default high school benchmark.**

Primary (K-2)

Elementary (3-5)

Middle school (6-8)

High school (9-12)

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 1. Analyze

Uses relevant, probative questions and careful observation to examine and make meaning from media messages and to evaluate their purpose, efficacy, value, credibility, and potential impact.

a) Routinely asks media literacy questions (see Figure 3 and Appendix C) to examine and interpret media messages.

(K-2) When prompted, I can ask media literacy questions that have concrete answers (for example, “Who made this and what do they want me to do?”).

(3-5) Sometimes with prompting and sometimes on my own, I can ask basic questions in every media literacy category to think about the messages conveyed by media in my environment. I understand that media include things I access via digital screens (like videos and games) and media in nondigital forms (like books, posters, clothing, and product packages).

(6-8) I can ask media literacy questions in every category and begin to link questions from multiple categories (e.g., combining questions about purpose and economics, or authorship and credibility) in order to evaluate and interpret all sorts of media.

(9-12) Without prompting, I routinely ask media literacy questions in every category to evaluate and interpret media messages.

b) Gives specific evidence to explain or justify interpretations of media messages, including (but not limited to) document-based evidence.

(K-2) I can give simple answers to media literacy questions in a few categories, and I can give at least one reason for my answer.

(3-5) I can answer many types of media literacy questions, cite the evidence I used to form my response or opinion, and use basic logic to link my evidence and answers.

(6-8) I can answer media literacy questions by pointing to evidence in the document, from my own experience and/or another credible source, and I can clearly explain why my evidence proves what I say it does.

(9-12) I can answer media literacy questions in every category to evaluate and interpret media messages. I base my interpretations on evidence, logic, and reasoning, and can distinguish this type of evidence from responses based on personal emotions or beliefs. As a critical thinker, I also remain open-minded to changing my interpretation if new evidence warrants it.

c) Demonstrates an understanding that all media are constructed, that is, media messages are always the product of human choices and demonstrates an understanding of how and why those choices are made.

(K-2) I know that media are made by people who make choices about what to include and exclude.

(3-5) I can spot choices that media makers have made about content and style (the ways things that are included are presented) and know that these choices influence what people think about the messages.

(6-8) I can describe ways that media makers' choices about what to include and exclude and how things are depicted can have effects beyond just my own personal reaction (for example, repetition of negative stereotypes can lead to discrimination or misinformation can result in communities making bad decisions about how to address problems).

(9-12) I know that because all media are the product of human choices, there is no such thing as "objective" or "neutral" media. That means I don't ask if there is a bias, but instead ask how the bias is expressed, how it influences the message(s), and whether it is relevant.

I know that AI generates images and text based on algorithms and data sets designed and created by people, so the media it creates are the product of human choices and reflect human perspectives as much as any other media.

d) Spots media making techniques commonly used for persuasion, attention, deception, and identity reinforcement.

(K-2) I can use clues (like color, music, sound effects, or special words) to figure out what some media are trying to say to me.

(3-5) I can spot techniques that media makers use to get and keep my attention, like in-game rewards, fast-paced editing or music, or featuring celebrities or popular characters.

I can tell the difference between fantasy and nonfiction media.

(6-8) I know that language choices matter and that people on the opposite sides of controversial issues or who want to signal that they belong to a certain community or culture use vocabulary that reveals their perspective or identity. I pay extra attention to such words as clues that can help me determine authorship, target audience, purposes, context, and the like.

I can consistently distinguish between fact and opinion.

I look for patterns and notice repetition of stereotypes, persuasion techniques, and attempts to radicalize (drawing people to extreme religious or political beliefs), by using half-truths.

(9-12) I can spot media making techniques used to evoke or manipulate emotional responses, including techniques commonly used in propaganda.

I notice agenda-setting and understand its implications (that media may not be directly telling me what to think, but their decisions about what to include and exclude influence what I think about).

e) Explains how media or platform ownership, design, structures, and commercial imperatives influence content and messages.

(K-2) I know that things like product packages and book covers are ads. I can identify clues that tell me what's inside and that make people like me want what's inside.

(3-5) I know that a lot of media makers earn money by convincing me to buy things, including things I don't really need, and sometimes things that aren't good for me. I use that knowledge to help me judge whether a source is trustworthy. and media in nondigital forms (like books, posters, clothing, and product packages).

(6-8) I can explain how media makers earn money by selling my attention to advertisers and I know that their profit motive influences their decisions about content and design. I see this structure at work when I see clickbait or media that uses the innate human desire to belong to get me to think that buying particular brands or believing certain ideas are essential parts of my identity.

I understand that game features like "loot boxes" are like gambling, using the hope of a possible payoff to spend money and keep me playing.

(9-12) I read beyond headlines because I know that headlines are often written by a marketer chasing clicks instead of the journalist who reported the story, so they may not be an accurate reflection of what the story says.

I know that certain types of stories or people are rarely covered or shown in commercial media because they don't serve the interests of the people or entities that make media profitable. I can explain how omission can disadvantage the groups whose perspectives or lives are left out, and how being included enhances a group's power.

f) Looks for patterns in media content to spot the ways that repetition and omission shapes people's ideas.

(K-2) I notice things that repeat over and over in the media I watch, read, listen to, or play, including certain characters, commercials, and messages about how to behave (like how to be a good friend, honest, or strong).

(3-5) I notice media messages that are repeated, and I also notice who or what is missing from the media I typically encounter. I know that omitting things or people, or including them only rarely, can make them seem unimportant or unusual.

(6-8) I understand that repetition can make something seem normal even if it isn't true, or that omission can make something seem impossible, even if it's not.

(9-12) I pay special attention to repetition of falsehoods and to instances when repetition or omission in contemporary and historical sources reinforces or ameliorates societal inequities based on race, socioeconomic status, caste, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, religion, etc.

I notice patterns in political and commercial speech, especially words and phrases that are deceptive without being illegal or false (e.g., "up to 50% off" or overgeneralizations like "people believe").

I can explain the consequences of media repetition of disturbing images (like graphic violence), including desensitization which can lead people to stop caring about others or result in them dehumanizing perpetrators and victims.

g) Finds, evaluates, and uses sources that are likely to provide credible (accurate, current, fair, complete) answers to their questions.

(K-2) I can spot and name media in my environment and I can usually tell the difference between media that are made just for fun and media that are made for information. When I want facts, I go to the media made for information.

(3-5) With adult guidance, I can do a simple online search for information and sort through the results to find what I need.

(6-8) I can do simple research and explain which sources I relied on and why I think the messages they present are credible.

When I see news or social media posts, I know how to do some basic verification techniques, such as a reverse image search.

(9-12) I can identify the hallmarks of credible, ethical journalism (for example, clearly separating news from editorials and advertising, using fact-checkers, naming sources). And I can use what I know to differentiate between news reporting that adheres to professional journalism standards and reports that are labelled “news” but do not follow basic journalism protocols or ethics.

I use lateral reading techniques to determine whether a news story or social media post is worth my time and attention.

I seek out multiple, diverse sources of information about issues that are important to me and my community, and I compare and contrast them get a more complex picture of the issue, how it’s framed by different sources, who is framing the discussion, and which sources are most accurate.

I check charts and graphs in media reports to make sure that the message conveyed by the image matches the data.

I understand that AI generated responses to research queries do not cite sources and are often not reliable sources of facts.

h) Describes what constitutes “expertise” in various disciplines and knows that a credible source for one topic is not necessarily a credible source for all topics.

(K-2) I can name a variety of professions and match expertise with particular jobs (for example, farmers know about growing food and paleontologists know about dinosaurs).

(3-5) I know that just because someone is good at one thing doesn’t mean they are good at everything. For example, it would be okay to assume that a pro athlete is an expert in their sport and maybe even on how to be a good teammate, but that doesn’t mean they are automatically also an expert on science or social studies topics.

(6-8) I know that just because a source is credible on some topics doesn’t automatically make it credible on everything, so I investigate a source’s expertise and verify things that I choose to share before I share them.

(9-12) I can describe what constitutes “expertise” in various disciplines and seek news and information that rely on sources with expertise in the topic under scrutiny (e.g., doesn’t rely on a theoretical physicist over an epidemiologist for a report on vaccine efficacy, even though both are scientists).

I know how to use the library and online tools (like curated databases) to find and identify sources that are likely to provide credible answers to my questions.

i) Demonstrates an understanding of the capabilities and limits of technologies designed to assist in information searches and how methods employed by different tools influence search results.

(K-2) I know that a computer can help answer questions, and that the computer gives a list of responses, and we choose what to click on. The things that come up first may be the most popular, or someone may have paid to put them there.

I know that I can ask questions of a voice assistant, but only if it recognizes my voice and only if grown-ups have given it permission to answer me.

(3-5) I know how to look at a list of results from a search engine and use clues (like looking carefully at the url or reading sidebar descriptions to find information about the source) to determine which one(s) are most likely to have what I am looking for. I know that domain names can sometimes provide important information but that they are not reliable for judging credibility. And I look carefully at domain and subdomain names to avoid deceptive sites that try to look like real sites by changing a letter or adding a short word.

(6-8) I can use a search engine to find answers and resources. I know that most search engines collect data on users and that the data influence the search results, so my results might be different than someone else's even if we ask the same question.

I know that databases provided by a librarian have been created and curated by people with expertise in their field. That's what makes them different than just doing a general online search, so the sources they list are typically more reliable than what I might find on social media or by web surfing.

I know how to use online fact-checking sites like Snopes.com or FactCheck.org.

(9-12) When I use search engines, I know how to select the most useful items from the list of results.

I know that AI searches do not always provide accurate answers, so if I'm asking about something important, I always double check the answer using other tools.

I am aware of the benefits and drawbacks of crowd-sourced searches, which may include information from sources whose identities or credentials cannot be verified.

j) Participates effectively in respectful group discussions analyzing media messages.

(K-2) I talk with friends, family, and classmates about the media I use and what I learn from them and the media they use and what they learn from them. In these conversations, I know how to take turns.

(3-5) I can participate in short group discussions about media in which I share my evidence-based opinions and also listen to what others think.

(6-8) I can effectively participate in small and large group discussions, and respect others' right to speak even when I disagree with their interpretation.

(9-12) I seek out substantive group discussions of media during which I share my own perspective and expect diverse views. I appreciate hearing others' perspectives because that helps me learn more about media, about them, and about myself.

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 2. Reflect

Considers how media or media messages affect themselves or others, both physically and emotionally, and knowing the potential effects, considers the ethics of media choices and structures.

a) Identifies and questions their own ideas or beliefs and the sources of those ideas and beliefs to understand their influence on interpretation of media messages and choices when creating media.

(K-2) I can often accurately answer the questions “Who told you that?” or “Where did you learn that?”

(3-5) I routinely ask, “How do I know that?” I pay attention to which of my ideas about the world come from media sources and consider whether those sources are credible or reliable.

(6-8) I understand that repetition or absence of certain messages or ideas influence the way I think about things like body image, success, gender roles, stereotypes, health, and what’s true or important.

I notice when repetition of value messages about things like who or what is “good,” “successful,” or “popular” are connected to product purchases and know that my authentic identity won’t be changed by what I do or do not buy.

(9-12) I can identify and question the sources of my ideas and beliefs, and identify psychological processes such as “confirmation bias,” to understand how these influence my interpretation of media messages and also the choices I make when I create media.

b) Demonstrates an understanding of different perspectives and how and why those differences may lead others to interpret evidence in ways that diverge from their own interpretations – not an “all interpretations are equally valid” approach, but rather, a recognition that it is possible for reasonable people who are using valid evidence to reach different conclusions about meaning, but not about facts.

(K-2) I notice the things I have in common with the people around me and also the things that make us different and unique. Sometimes what we think about media messages is the same and sometimes it is different. I know that it’s not my job to try to be just like them and it isn’t their job to be just like me.

(3-5) I learn about others by actively listening to how they interpret media. I know that the meaning I make isn’t always the same as what others think and I try to figure out why.

(6-8) I know that the more different I am from someone else, the more likely it is that we’ll interpret the same media differently, but no particular difference guarantees that I will disagree with someone or that I know what their interpretation will be.

(9-12) I can anticipate how media might affect different people differently (e.g., different generations interpreting the meaning of particular words or clothing styles differently) and understand that someone close to an event or who personally knows the people involved might interpret it differently than someone looking with critical distance.

I can explain why differences in identities (e.g., gender, race, or nationality) might lead people to divergent interpretations of media.

c) Takes seriously the responsibilities of making and sharing media and can explain the potential benefits and harms to themselves and others that result from making ethical or unethical choices.

(K-2) When I take or draw a picture of someone or put them in one of my stories, I always ask for their permission before I share it with others, because if they don't like it and I share it anyway, it will hurt their feelings (they will feel sad, mad, embarrassed, or upset).

(3-5) When I make media, I pause to think about how the people who will see, hear, or read it will be affected, and I don't include things that I know will hurt people.

(6-8) I know that aspects of conversations that take place in digital form (social media posts, text messages, videos) – both my own and from others – are media, so I think about the potential effects of what I post before I share.

(9-12) When I make or share media, I can explain the potential benefits and harms to myself and others that result from making ethical or unethical choices.

I never share media that might put someone else in danger.

I notice the use of stereotypes and understand the damage that media repetition of them can do.

d) Pays attention to the physical effects of media use on their bodies, and how these effects relate to interpretation, mood, and health. Also notices and names their emotional responses to media messages and identifies the cause(s) of those responses, including relevant personal history, personal preferences, beliefs and values, and techniques used by the media maker(s).

(K-2) When I'm using media, I take a break every now and then to check on how I am feeling. If my body needs to stretch, I take a wiggle break or stop for a while and do something else. If what I'm watching, playing, listening to, or reading makes me feel upset, I choose different media and/or talk to a trusted adult about what's making me upset.

(3-5) I cooperate with adults who help me balance media time with other things my body and mind need, like sleep and physical activities.

I notice that different types of media (including different styles of music) make me feel different ways, and I can name the emotions I feel after listening, watching, reading, or playing. I avoid media that make me feel anxious or violent.

(6-8) I pay attention to how the content of the media I'm using makes my body feel (e.g., whether my muscles clench or relax).

(9-12) I take responsibility for balancing media use with other activities that my body and mind need to stay healthy.

e) Considers possible actions, both individual and as part of a community, that they could take as appropriate responses to what they know about media and media messages.

(K-2) When I notice something in media that I think is wrong or unfair, I ask a grown-up to help me tell the media makers what I think.

(3-5) If I see something in the media that I think is wrong or unfair, I work with others to try to change it.

(6-8) I take actions to protect my privacy and safety, such as using privacy settings and blocking people on social media who are abusive to me or others.

(9-12) I join with others to protest unjust media (for example, a film or song that promotes prejudice, the use of facial recognition systems that disadvantage people with dark skin, or a news channel that repeats without commentary a legislator's misleading talking points).

Media Literacy Anchor Skill 3. Create

Makes media that communicates effectively for informational, social, and creative purposes, and for specific audiences, using audio, moving images, still images, and graphics, as well as written text.

a) Effectively uses media tools to create and communicate in a variety of mediums.

(K-2) I can use a camera or camera app to take and save photos. I know not to point the camera at the light and how to frame the picture so it doesn't cut off things I want to include or include things I want to leave out.

I can invent my own stories and create short reports about real things using words and images.

I can express my ideas in drawings, paintings, or other types of artwork.

(3-5) I can tell stories or report on facts using printed or spoken words and images, and using some digital tools, like simple storytelling, editing, photography, art, or sound recording apps on a tablet. I can create media by myself or as part of a group.

(6-8) I can use a variety of digital tools to create media that effectively and ethically convey my message(s) to specific target audiences.

I can add graphic layout features (e.g., headings, subheadings, call out boxes, columns, captions, illustrations) to my written reports in ways that help communicate my message more effectively.

I can work as part of a team to make complex media that requires multiple steps over time (like making a documentary).

(9-12) I know enough about the basic languages of film, video, and photography to integrate standard techniques into my own work.

b) When making media, makes thoughtful and ethical choices about what to include and exclude, understanding that a media maker's choices influence how audiences will interpret their work.

(K-2) I know that media are made by people who make choices about what to include and leave out. When I make media, I can explain what I included and why.

(3-5) I know that media can have power to influence others, so I think carefully about how the media I make could affect the audience. I never intentionally make media to hurt people.

(6-8) When I make media, I can explain my reasons for what I chose to include and also things I thought about including but decided to leave out.

I understand that how I represent groups of people matters, especially groups that have been targets of discrimination, so I strive to be as accurate and fair as possible in my portrayals of individuals and groups.

(9-12) I recognize stereotypes and understand that some are harmless or even useful while repetition of others reinforces damage, so I carefully consider the potential impact before including them in my work.

My news reports or descriptions of people and events are fair, accurate, complete, and inclusive of all relevant perspectives.

c) Obtains all necessary permissions before using or disseminating others' private information or images, or material protected by copyright. Also knows how to protect one's own intellectual property and how to properly cite material generated by others (including AI).

(K-2) If I want to share a photograph I have taken, I always ask for permission from the person/people in the photos.

If I'm sharing a device with others, I know how to label my work so that people know it's mine.

(3-5) To acknowledge everyone who helped, including people who gave money, equipment, or guidance, as well as people who appeared or worked behind the scenes, I include credits at the end of videos, books, games, and other media projects.

(6-8) When I co-create media, I include every contributor's name in the byline or credits.

Except for purposes of commentary, I don't use copyrighted material, including music, in my media unless I have obtained the rights to do so. I don't use copyrighted logos or names in ways that imply endorsement (by a team, company, organization, or person) unless I actually have their endorsement.

(9-12) When I include or reference others' work in my own, I always include proper attributions or citations, including clearly identifying any text or images that are AI.

When I use AI for research, I always ask it to reveal the sources of its information and double check that those sources are real and, where extensively quoted or substantively copied (like art or music generated in a particular artist's style), used with permission.

For media that I intend to share with the general public, I know how to obtain a Creative Commons license or other legal copyright protections.

d) Identifies the ways that judgments about aesthetics and content are influenced by personal experience, cultural context, and economic imperatives.

(K-2) When I make media that I intend to share (e.g., a book cover or a story) I ask friends what they think I am saying, and if they don't get it right, I edit my work to make it clearer so I can be sure that people will understand what I mean.

(3-5) I know that colors can mean different things in different cultures and places, so when I make media, I think about how my target audience will interpret my color choices (for example, in North Carolina, light blue and dark blue indicate affinity for different universities).

(6-8) I am aware that ideas about what is "attractive" or "stylish" are not universal or permanent and that the ways I choose to convey those concepts are influenced by the media I have seen, my family and peers, and also by people in the fashion industry who earn more money if people feel pressure to replace their wardrobe every few years.

(9-12) When I make media, I am mindful that "in jokes" might be misunderstood. I consider the ways that audiences might reasonably interpret the symbols, metaphors, or cultural references I choose to include, even if their interpretation doesn't match my intention.

e) Rejects making media to intentionally cause harm, for example, to bully, mislead, or incite hate (e.g., posting an embarrassing photo to shame a classmate, using AI to create deepfakes to intentionally misrepresent what a person actually said or did, using slurs or other forms of hate speech).

(K-2) I try to make media that is fun and makes people feel good. I don't use media to make fun of people.

(3-5) I can list slurs and explain their meaning and why they are off limits. I don't include them in the media I make.

(6-8) I don't hide behind anonymous identities to say things to people that I wouldn't say to them in person. And if I am being bullied online or see others being bullied, I know strategies to respond that don't make the conflict worse.

(9-12) I challenge friends, companies, or organizations that use media to mislead, misinform, or spread hate.

f) Uses media platforms effectively, ethically, and safely to connect with others for multiple purposes: for example: social, education, civic engagement, employment, commerce.

(K-2) I can go online with adult supervision to find information or entertainment.

(3-5) I know basic etiquette and how to keep myself safe when I'm online, like not sharing personal information or telling a trusted adult if I see something that upsets me or that just doesn't feel right.

(6-8) I understand that strangers online aren't always who or what they seem to be, so I view everything they say with skepticism, especially if they ask me for money or suggest that I do things that would not make the people I love proud of me.

(9-12) I check the track record of the social media, streaming, and gaming platforms before choosing to use them and avoid using platforms that don't follow basic business ethics (for example, selling users' personal data even when they promised not to) or that do not enforce rules to protect people from harassment, fraud, or other forms of serious harm.

g) Knows the conventions (common techniques) of communication on various platforms and for varied purposes (for example, the differences between: a book review and a research paper, texting a friend and sending an email for work, a meme and an infographic, a chart and a graph, a documentary film and an action movie, posting on Tik Tok compared with Instagram). Chooses the medium of expression that matches their purpose and audience.

(K-2) I know that there are different ways to tell stories. For example, some people write books, others compose songs or make movies, videos, games, or paintings.

(3-5) I can communicate ideas or stories using words or images or music or a combination of different forms.

(6-8) I know how to create charts and graphs and how to decide which will best represent the data and the messages I want to communicate.

When I encounter a new app or communication software program, I use what I already know about how similar apps or programs work to figure out how to use the new one.

(9-12) I recognize the differences in styles and word choices between formal communication (like an application cover letter or an email to a teacher) and information communication (like a text to a friend).

When I use AI, I always ask it to reveal the sources of its information and double check that those sources are real and, where extensively quoted or substantively copied (like art or music generated in a particular artist's style), used with permission.

For media that I intend to share with the general public, I know how to obtain a Creative Commons license or other legal copyright protections.

h) Explains the meaning and implications of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech, including the rights and responsibilities it confers on journalists and other media makers, and how it applies to what one can share and where one can share it.

(K-2) I know there are certain things I'm allowed to say and certain words that aren't allowed.

(3-5) I understand that I have the right to say things that people may not like, but I can never threaten to hurt people or spread lies about them.

(6-8) I know that First Amendment rights mean that the government can't prevent me from expressing my ideas, but that doesn't mean others can't. Private groups and companies, including media companies, can set rules controlling what users can and can't say. So, I make sure I know the rules of the media platforms I use.

I know that having the right to say something isn't the same thing as it being a good idea to say that thing. And having the right to say something does not mean that there are no consequences for saying it. For example, a person has the right to say something racist, but an employer who thinks having a racist person on staff might hurt business could fire them for it.

I know that the phrase "You can't yell fire in a crowded theater" means that people aren't permitted to say things that put others in danger. That includes inciting violence.

(9-12) I know the history of the case made by our nation's founders that news reporting is essential because informed citizens are essential for democracy.

I can explain the role of journalism in our political system of checks and balances and why that role allows journalists to protect the anonymity of their sources.

I can explain the different sides of debates about whether the First Amendment should, or should not, protect hate speech.

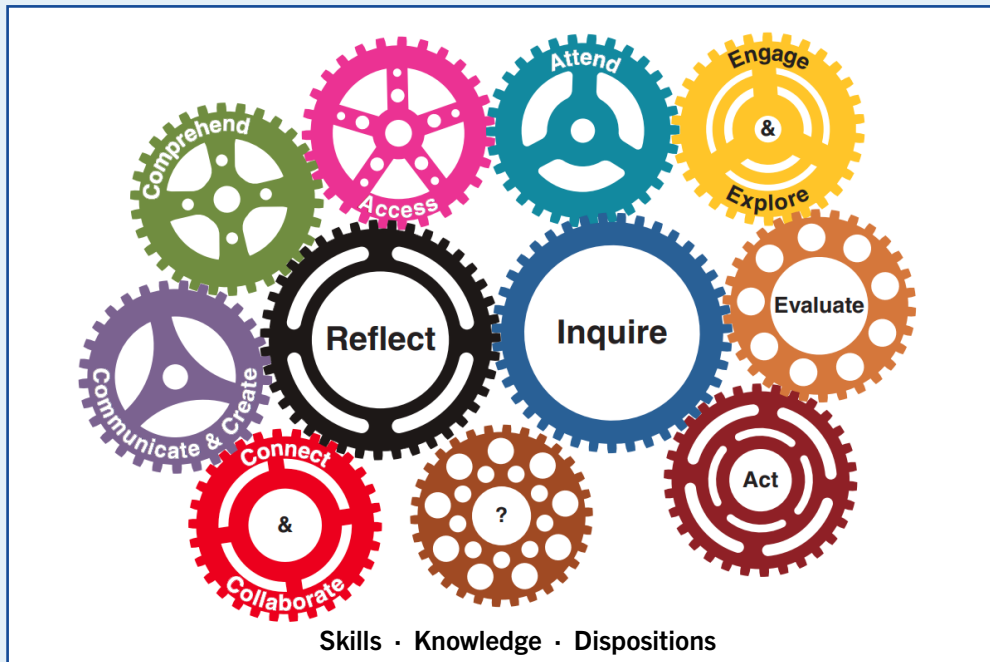
CONCLUSION

To fulfill New York's constitutional guarantee that all students be prepared for civic participation, media literacy education should be included in the core curriculum of every school district. As an extension of traditional literacies, media literacy should be taught across content areas and in ways that are developmentally appropriate across grade levels. We hope this framework will provide scaffolding to help practitioners and policymakers alike take on the vital work of ensuring our state provides media literacy education for all students. With an increase in armed conflict around the world, legislative gridlock, and a presidential election cycle upon us, empowering the next generation through media literacy education has become more critical than ever.

REFERENCES

- Alper, M., & Herr-Stephenson, R. (2013). Transmedia play: Literacy across media. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 5 (2), 366-369.
- Costa, A.L., & Kallick, B. (2014). *Dispositions: Reframing teaching and learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- National Association for Media Literacy Education. (2023). *Core principles of media literacy education*. <https://namle.net/resources/core-principles/>
- National Council for the Social Studies. (2022). *A position statement of National Council for the Social Studies*. <https://www.socialstudies.org/position-statements/media-literacy>
- Project Look Sharp & Insighters Education. (January 2022). *Categories and sample questions for media decoding: Developing habits of inquiry and reflection*. <https://projectlooksharp.org/Resources%202/Key-Questions-for-Decoding%20Dec-21.pdf>
- Rogow, F. (2022). *Media literacy for young children: Teaching beyond the screen time debates*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Wolff, J.R., LoBue, A., & Rebell, M.A. (2020). *Developing digital citizens: Media literacy education for all students*. New York: DemocracyReady NY and Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University.

APPENDIX A. MEDIA LITERACY CORE COMPETENCIES



Media literate people can do these things well and are motivated to do them:

- **C1. Access:** facilitate equitable availability and effective use of media.
- **C2. Act:** take meaningful individual and community-minded steps based on what one knows about media and media messages.
- **C3. Attend:** notice media, media structures, and media messages.
- **C4. Communicate & Create:** express oneself using multiple types of media.
- **C5. Comprehend:** accurately identify types of media and understand basic media messages.
- **C6. Connect & Collaborate:** use media to work and communicate with others.
- **C7. Engage & Explore:** use media actively for purpose and enjoyment.
- **C8. Evaluate:** ask if this media is right for me or my task.
- **C9. Inquire:** use relevant, probative questions to analyze media messages and find credible answers.
- **C10. Reflect:** ask how media or media messages affect me or others.

C1. Access: facilitate equitable availability and effective use of media

People who excel at Access are eager to learn and able to

- a) take advantage of the full range of tools offered by common communication technologies.
- b) understand enough of the “grammar” and functions shared by digital tools to easily figure out how to use new or unfamiliar devices, apps, or platforms.
- c) understand the features of online sites and digital tools well enough to keep themselves safe and make informed decisions about use.
- d) follow the rules and etiquette of media activities that make the experience more productive and rewarding.
- e) understand and abide by the ethical issues at play in the media they use.
- f) make media that address injustice or otherwise improve community life.

C2. Act: take meaningful individual and community-minded steps based on what one knows about media and media messages

People who excel at the *Act* competency care about being part of a community, want to make the world a better place, and believe that they can make a difference. They:

- a) connect what they learn about media to what they do.
- b) use action as a counterbalance to frustration or cynicism.
- c) see beyond the individual and work to make systemic improvements.
- d) work to ensure that media serve (or at least avoid undermining) the public interest.
- e) see the connections between various types of injustice (intersectionality) and understand the role that media play in perpetuating or ending those injustices.
- f) have a sense of which actions are possible and make sound judgements about which would be most effective.
- g) choose to act without anyone telling them or forcing them to do so.

C3. Attend: notice media, media structures, and media messages

People who have fully grasped the *Attend* competency are aware of obvious media via screens and speakers, and media in the form of branded clothing, maps, product packaging, bumper stickers, store displays, surveillance cameras, and the like. They recognize that their social network profiles, pages, posts, and platforms are media. They also recognize that

- a) paying attention is more than noticing; it is what a scientist might call “observation.” It’s not just “Oh, look, there’s some media!” It’s “There’s some media. It’s time for my brain to kick in and use all those great analysis and reflection skills I have learned!”
- b) paying attention is important because we can’t think analytically about media (or facets of media) that we don’t notice.
- c) messages are included in extraneous features and feature design, not just the “main” thing (e.g., when they use YouTube, they pay attention to the video and also to all of the things on screen around the video and whether or not “Autoplay” is on or off).
- d) “free” apps or platforms may not require cash, but instead require trades, like giving up privacy or personal data, or taking time to view ads.
- e) apps and platforms use subtle and sometimes deceptive design (dark patterns) to influence behavior (e.g., making purchasing buttons big, bright, and hard to avoid, or requiring opt out of rather than opt into automatic subscription renewals).
- f) recommendations, ads, or search results on social media and search engines are based on what the platform’s owner already knows about you.
- g) comments don’t always reflect the opinions of actual people, but rather are sometimes bots or paid endorsements.

- h) “convenience” technologies like video doorbells, voice assistants, “smart” appliances (the Internet of Things), and also interactive toys may be collecting and reporting data back to the company that made or sold the device, which may then share the data with others, including law enforcement or other government agencies.

C4. Communicate & Create: express oneself using media

People who are proficient media *Creators* in a converged world

- a) can effectively use print, image, and audio to convey ideas for specific target audiences and purposes (e.g., persuasion, explanation, storytelling, art, collaboration, instruction).
- b) can create and effectively use basic graphics (e.g., infographics, headers, sketch notes, charts & graphs, GIFs, memes, graphic art).
- c) know how to use online tools to share their work.
- d) use media as an outlet for their creativity.
- e) understand that the power of media creators comes with a responsibility to act ethically, so they don’t weaponize their media skills by trolling, spreading misinformation, or promoting hate-based ideologies.
- f) understand the role of repetition in perpetuating or disrupting stereotypes.
- g) understand that their personal media (like a social media page, texts, tweets, posts, etc.) is media (so it makes them media makers).

C5. Comprehend: accurately identify types of media and understand basic media messages

Media literate people who *Comprehend* value thinking skills and

- a) have the requisite knowledge to understand the sum of what they’re looking at or hearing, not just individual parts.
- b) understand the surface level messages of a story, video, song, infographic, etc.
- c) differentiate between types of media, especially when the differences influence our understanding of the core message (e.g., a fictional story versus a documentary, or a sponsorship banner featuring a pet food company compared with a PSA for the local animal shelter).
- d) distinguish between things that are real or fantasy.

C6. Connect & Collaborate: use media to work and communicate with others

People who excel at *Connecting & Collaborating* practice what education veterans Art Costa and Bena Kallick (2014) have called “thinking interdependently,” i.e., they are able to work productively with others, aware of their own unique abilities to contribute, and welcoming of diverse points of views. They

- a) are effective, ethical users of social media.
- b) use media for individual and social play (e.g., playing video or online games).

- c) are comfortable using common online collaboration tools (e.g., document sharing, learning management systems, conferencing tools).
- d) understand the capacities of media technologies and use what they know to make sound judgments about whether particular tasks are well-suited for online Collaboration.
- e) readily share their knowledge to help others learn things that make Connecting, group work, or play more effective, like game strategy or tips on effective use of software.
- f) are mindful of the possibility that they may be engaging with people who don't share their cultural "filter," and have the cultural competence to act accordingly.

C7. Engage & Explore: use media actively for purpose and enjoyment

People who are proficient *Engagers* and *Explorers* are open to learning from media and from other people. They

- a) view, play, or listen to media actively and with purpose, often engaging in follow-up conversations and activities based on what they've seen, heard, or done.
- b) use media in open-ended exploration that feeds their curiosity.
- c) incorporate favorite media characters into their play or art in ways that do more than merely repeat what they've seen on screen.
- d) create play experiences and stories that extend across multiple media – also sometimes referred to as "transmedia play" (Alper & Herr-Stephenson, 2013).
- e) notice and appreciate the aesthetic aspects of media.
- f) are willing to experiment (i.e., engage in a pattern of planning, failing, and trying again) and embrace taking reasonable risks while using media.
- g) can identify existing risks and weigh them against possible rewards.
- h) use media as inspiration.

C8. Evaluate: ask if this media is right for me or my task

People who are highly skilled at *Evaluation* value the process of reasoning and

- a) are familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of major media tools.
- b) are clear about their communication goals and choose the tool(s) best suited for each task (e.g., understanding that the abbreviations that work well in a tweet aren't appropriate for a grant application cover letter, or that viewing a video might be a better way to learn to play the banjo than following written instructions).
- c) find and select media that are age-appropriate, free of demands for information they shouldn't be sharing, and supportive of their values.
- d) can discern the credibility of information sources.
- e) can curate appropriate resources for particular audiences (e.g., a librarian basing purchasing decisions on the needs of local families).

C9. Inquire: use relevant, probative questions to analyze media messages and find credible answers

People who excel at *Inquiry* are intellectually curious, open-minded, and logical. They

- a) know how to ask analytical questions about the media they encounter and have the disposition to do so.
- b) connect their conclusions to specific evidence.
- c) are interested in epistemology – exploring how they know what they know or think what they think.
- d) employ a full “toolbox” of strategies to judge the credibility of information, including routinely verifying what multiple sources say about the source of a claim (lateral reading), as well as about the claim, itself.
- e) understand that a source which is credible on one topic might not be credible on all topics.
- f) understand that thinking critically and being critical aren’t the same thing.
- g) routinely interrogate media deeply enough to uncover multilayered messages, embedded power dynamics, and strengths and weaknesses of claims or techniques.
- h) recognize the actual or potential impact of media messages, media structures (like ownership or platform design), and form or genre.

C10. Reflect: ask how media or media messages affect me or others

Media literate people who practice *Reflection* are thoughtful and self-aware. They do three major things:

- a) When they make media, they pause to ask how their message(s) might affect others. They do so from an ethical foundation, knowing that media makers have power and that the power comes with a responsibility to consider the well-being of audiences and our planet.
- b) When they consume media, they pay attention to their emotions and what they learn about themselves from their reactions. Metacognitive awareness of their interpretive lens helps them understand why particular media messages or experiences evoke particular emotions and why other people may not share their feelings.
- c) When they use media, they regularly pause to assess their physical reactions. They are aware of why and how media can trigger physical responses, like muscles tensing while watching a suspense-filled movie or suddenly craving chocolate after seeing an ad for brownies (sorry for the trigger here – tell your body to ignore your brain’s signal that you want a brownie now). They also maintain an awareness of time on device and respond when their body sends signals that they need to take a break.

Excerpted from Rogow, F. *Media Literacy for Young Children: Teaching Beyond the Screen Time Debates* (NAEYC 2022) pp. 38-49. Used with permission of the author.

APPENDIX B. MEDIA LITERACY CHECKLIST ³

Identifying media literacy lessons can be confusing. Some educators teach media literacy, but they don't use that label. Others use the label any time they use digital media, but they don't include activities that actually help students become more media literate. Here's a checklist to help educators minimize the confusion and plan with clarity.

A lesson, activity, project, curriculum, or initiative is likely to meet the goals of media literacy education if it

- goes beyond merely using media to teach; media are used to help students acquire new or improved critical thinking skills.
- teaches students to ask their own questions about media messages rather than just responding to questions that the teacher asks.
- teaches students to ask questions of *all* media (not just the things that they find suspicious or objectionable, and not just screen or digital media but also printed media like books or posters).
- includes media representing diverse points of view (e.g., does not reduce complex debates to only two sides and/or actively seeks alternative media sources).
- encourages students to seek multiple sources of information and helps them learn to determine which sources are most appropriate or reliable for any given task.
- requires students to justify opinions or interpretations with specific, document-based evidence.
- seeks rich readings of texts, rather than asking people to arrive at a predetermined “true” or “correct” meaning.
- does not *replace* the investigative process with declarations about what a teacher or a cultural critic believes to be true.
- incorporates into analysis (including semiotic or aesthetic analysis) an examination of how media structures (e.g., ownership, sponsorship, or distribution) influence how people make meaning of media messages.
- teaches students to ask questions when they are *making* (not just analyzing) media, helping them to notice and evaluate their choices, and also to understand that their social media posts are media.

³ Revised December 2021. Original ©2012 Faith Rogow, Ph.D., Creative Commons Attribution - No Derivative Works 3.0. Publication for non-profit education use permitted - author notification required. Used with author's permission.

- encourages students to see themselves as media makers by putting communication tools in their hands and inviting them to consider applicable ethics before sharing their works publicly.
- encourages students to use multiple means of expression (image, sound, and word) and helps them determine which ones will best achieve their goal(s).
- respects that people interpret media through the lens of their own experiences, so different people might interpret a media document or message in different ways (e.g., a student might disagree with a teacher without being wrong).
- focuses on a media document's significance (including who benefits and who is disadvantaged) or what people might learn from it rather than trying to determine whether a particular piece of media is "good" or "bad" or whether a student likes it.
- helps students move through anger and cynicism to skepticism, reflection, and action.
- encourages students to act on what they've learned without determining for them what actions they should take.
- provides for assessment of media literacy skills.

APPENDIX C. MEDIA LITERACY QUESTIONS

The first point of the Media Literacy Anchor Skill 1 (Analyze) (MS AS1) says “asks media literacy questions.” Media literacy questions spark deeper thinking about media messages by prompting exploration of important facets of media. To provide maximum flexibility and opportunities to connect media literacy inquiry to other core curriculum areas at all grade levels, we divide these questions into categories explained below.

The media literacy questions educators opt to use are determined by learning goals, the specific media documents being analyzed, and student needs. Categories need not be addressed in any particular order, nor will every category apply to every media literacy lesson, but, at some point, students must be introduced to asking questions in all of the categories. Note that the ultimate goal is for students to ask the questions, not just for educators to ask and students to provide answers.

MS AS1.a.1. Authorship & Purposes

Students ask and answer questions that allow them to determine who created the media they are examining, what the media makers want them to do or think, and what motivated the media maker(s) to create and share this particular media in this particular way.

MS AS1.a.2 Economics

Students ask and answer questions about who benefits financially from the media they are examining, and how the financial imperatives or incentives influence content and structure.

MS AS1.a.3 Content

Students ask and answer questions that verify comprehension and help them to identify connections with core curriculum topics.

MS AS1.a.4 Techniques

Students ask and answer questions that demonstrate awareness of specific media-making techniques, the ways that media makers use those techniques to convey messages, attract and hold attention.

MS AS1.a.5 Context

Students ask and answer questions about when or where something was created or shared, what patterns they notice, and how messages connect to what they already know.

MS AS1.a.6 Credibility

Students ask and answer questions to identify why they find a media claim believable or not.

MS AS1.a.7 Effects

Students ask and answer questions to consider the consequences of media and media makers’ choices, paying special attention to who might benefit or be disadvantaged by media messages.

MS AS1.a.8 Interpretations

Students ask and answer questions to understand and explain the meaning they make from media, their part in the process of meaning making, and how and why others might think differently.

MS AS1.a.9 Responses

Students ask and answer questions that help them identify what they feel and what they want to do in response to media messages.

MS AS1.a.10 Follow-Ups

Students ask and answer probative questions based on their initial analysis. These questions lead them to connect their conclusions to evidence, explore the implications of their analysis, and see their answers as the beginning rather than the end of inquiry.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Empire State Information Fluency Continuum](#)

A 2019 update of Barbara Stripling’s original K-12 continuum of information literacy and inquiry skills that are essential for all students. The new version includes increased or new attention to prekindergarten, multiple literacies, digital citizenship and civic responsibility, multiple perspectives, personalization of learning, design thinking, student voice and agency, and social and emotional growth.

[Illinois Media Literacy Crosswalk of Academic Standards](#)

A response from the Illinois Media Literacy Coalition to the 2021 Illinois law mandating teaching media literacy at the high school level, with a focus on source trustworthiness, social responsibility, and civics.

[Media Education Lab](#)

An unparalleled set of resources for media literacy lessons about propaganda, including clear definitions and a collection of more than 3,000 examples of contemporary propaganda, each with an explanation of why it qualifies as propaganda.

[Media Literacy in Finland](#)

This 2019 report from Finland’s Ministry of Education and Culture outlines their highly acclaimed approaches, successes, and challenges to implementing media literacy across the entire school curriculum.

[NCSS Media Literacy Position Statement](#)

This eloquent 2022 position statement from the National Council for the Social Studies acknowledges media literacy as a cornerstone of democracy and urges educators to adopt inquiry-based teaching methods.

[NCTE Position Statement: Media Education in English Language Arts](#)

This 2022 statement describes how media literacy is situated within English Language Arts.

[News Literacy Project](#)

A rich array of practical resources – including a newsletter, professional peer network, website for students, and library of lesson plans and assessment tools, will be of value to any educator addressing current events with middle or high school students. Materials support students to develop specific fact-checking skills for online content (like how to do a reverse-image search) and to differentiate between fact-based journalism and media that masquerades as professional journalism.

[Ontario 1-8 Literacy Curriculum](#)

This standards document from the Ontario, Canada Ministry of Education provides an example of media literacy integration, explicitly including media literacy as one of four essential strands (Oral Communication, Reading, Writing and Media Literacy) that organize the province’s language and literacy curriculum. Additional curriculum areas can be found here: [Curriculum and Resources \(gov.on.ca\)](#). Search for “media” within curriculum documents.

[Project Look Sharp](#)

Among the resources available from this leading media literacy education initiative is a searchable database of curriculum-driven lesson plans, many created by librarians.