MEDIA LITERACY: A SYSTEM FOR LEARNING

ANY TIME, ANY WHERE …

PART 1:
TOOLS FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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Introduction
The major shift in how information is accessed and acquired has prompted the need for re-evaluation of our teaching practices as well as the physical spaces we call schools. This section offers a variety of tools to help manage the changes that will ultimately bring your school or district into the 21st Century. Some of the tools are designed for administrators and staff, and others for classroom use; all incorporate a philosophy of collaboration among the school community. Developing a strong community – with a high level of communication between educators, parents, and students – will facilitate change and promote participation by all involved.

Young people today spend many hours each day interacting with media technology. Children are exposed to limitless information options and need filters through which to negotiate meaning. Media literacy skills are fundamental to students’ success as digital citizens. These skills can be taught and acquired right along with the curriculum for language arts, science, math, history… and provide students with an internal framework for approaching their digital media world whether inside or outside the classroom.

The changing role of school personnel (and parents) has not kept pace with the changing lives of students in the last 20 years. With the advent of the internet, students born in the ‘90s-to-present-day were born into a media technology frenzy. They have always known the availability of instant information, and have likely never seen a phone with a cord! So emphasizing traditional learning techniques deemed successful in prior decades is completely at odds with their life experiences. The vast differences that exist today between how students live outside the classroom and how they are expected to learn within the classroom must change for the sake of these young people and the future of our country. It’s time to adopt a new way of learning and teaching. The tools included here are designed to assist you in identifying and managing the changes needed in your local school community to better prepare your students for success in a global media world.

Note: This ToolKit is part of a Trilogy of resources – Media Literacy: A System for Learning Any Time, Any Where -- developed and published by the Center for Media Literacy to give an on-ramp to media literacy practice in schools and community organizations. The Q/Tips Framework included throughout the CML Trilogy includes Key Questions and Core Concepts for Deconstruction and Construction. The Trilogy consists of:

Part I: Tools for Change Management
Part II: Tools for Deconstruction
Part III: Tools for Construction/Critical Production

All materials may be obtained through CML’s Store at www.medialit.com
### Media Deconstruction/Construction Framework

<table>
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<th>CML’s 5 Core Concepts</th>
<th>Construction: CML’s 5 Key Questions (Producer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td>All media messages are constructed.</td>
<td>What am I authoring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td>Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td>Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently?</td>
<td>Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td>Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?</td>
<td>Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td>Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Why is this message being sent?</td>
<td>Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.</td>
<td>Have I communicated my purpose effectively?</td>
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Tool 1: Local vs. Global

Audience: Administrators, Teachers

Due to the revolution that technology has engendered, our nation’s present education system reflects a system of values from the past. Access to content knowledge is being valued by our society as scarce when it is indeed plentiful. Process skills, along with content knowledge, have not been explicitly labeled and taught in schools through the years because in the local village, access to adult guides was plentiful. With access to caring adults scarce in the global village, children need internalized frameworks and process skills now more than ever, to navigate the global media world.

This is not to say that content knowledge is unimportant – quite the contrary – but process skills in the global village are needed as the central tools through which to acquire and apply content knowledge. This means that process skills must be valued, articulated and taught systematically. The goal of teaching children the problem solving skills they need in life must be grounded in a process of value-based inquiry. It is these values -- coupled with skills of analysis, expression and self-representation -- that will inform and guide their decisions throughout life.

Review the chart below while keeping in mind your own school or district. Consider the information on the following page then discuss how these changes have affected your school environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Village (past)</th>
<th>Global Village (present)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Guidance Plentiful</td>
<td>Adult Guidance Scarce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Representations</td>
<td>Global Branding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Access Scarce</td>
<td>Information Access Plentiful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Acquisition</td>
<td>Information Sorting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content Knowledge Transmitted</td>
<td>Process Skills Practiced and Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granular Content Knowledge</td>
<td>Research-based Framework Sorting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolated Content Silos</td>
<td>Integrated Problem Solving</td>
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<td>Production by Few</td>
<td>Production by Many</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Best Teachers Scarce</td>
<td>Access to Best Teachers Plentiful through Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Location of Schools</td>
<td>Virtual School Locations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T.Jolls 2009
Examining this table more closely, the present education system was born in an era when:

- children’s face-to-face contact with adults in the local village was intense on a daily basis, providing children with guidance and filters on the information and people with whom they came into contact. Now, in the global village, such contact with adults is scarce.
- businesses and organizations in the local village were known individually. Today, businesses and organizations are often branded globally for instant recognition.
- information and access to printed information was scarce. Now, information access is plentiful and can be overwhelming.
- content knowledge was passed down through individual teachers and printed information was often hard to obtain. Now, sorting through and validating information are the priorities, using research-based frameworks grounded in information process skills.
- content silos developed as ways to specialize and share scarce knowledge and scarce access; today, deep knowledge is readily documented and available while problem solving across disciplines, using specialized knowledge from various resources, is needed.
- production of media was controlled by a few; today, everyone is a media producer using digital tools.
- access to the best teachers was limited to physical proximity. Today, everyone can have access to the best teachers through the global village.
- students had to be physically present in school to progress; today, students are free from time, space and a lock-step pace.
- learning to play together, to work in teams cooperatively, was confined to physical interaction. Now, students can learn teamwork through online sports and games.
- students were more physically active because their world was more physical. Today, students are less physically active, creating poor environments for physical health and well-being.

**Action Step:** As the chart indicates, significant changes have taken place in the move from the local to global village. Distribute the worksheet and spend a few minutes reflecting on your current situation. Break into small groups and discuss the changes, both positive and negative, that have been identified. Complete the exercise by developing a list of top priorities and ideas for how they can be addressed. Come back together as a whole group. List all priorities and rank them in order of importance. Use these priorities to set goals for your school or district.
Worksheet: Local/Global

Reflect on the local/global ideas presented in the chart and how they affect your school community.

What do you see as the positive and negative aspects of these ‘global’ changes?

What impact do you see these changes having on your school in terms of instruction?

What impact do you see these changes having on your school in regard to physical space?

What impact do you see these changes having on school organization?

What changes would you make to your local school environment to become globally-minded?

What are your top priorities (for the school) for transitioning into the 21st Century?

Additional comments: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
## Plan of Action

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<th>Priorities</th>
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<th>Person(s) Responsible</th>
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Tool 2: The New Librarian (Same vs. Different)

Audience: Administrators, Librarians, Teachers

The Media Education Foundation’s film, “The Hollywood Librarian: A Look at Librarians Through Film” (www.mediaed.org), provides an entertaining view of the role of librarians throughout history as represented in film. The film intersperses interviews with real-life librarians and provides an intelligent look at the role of libraries and librarians as invaluable resources for information and learning in a democratic society.

The librarian’s role, as we know it, is changing rapidly as more and more research and communication is accomplished online with computers. As technology continues to advance, and even more books and periodicals move to digital format, our physical libraries, once viewed as temples of knowledge, are becoming hubs for search engines and internet use. Today, school librarians must serve as architects of information rather than purveyors of physical materials. He/she must know how to access, analyze and evaluate information from a variety of sources while also establishing guidelines for internet safety and age-appropriate use. It is often a librarian who introduces students to online research and the responsibilities that accompany it. This is no easy task, and a job that must be taken seriously by school administrators. Along with teachers, school librarians are key to teaching media literacy skills to students and guiding them through the unchartered waters of the web. This evolving role for librarians demands a unique set of skills for media and digital literacy, technology, research, and safety.

**Action Step:** Show a clip from the film *The Hollywood Librarian* by going to www.mediaed.org. Make the worksheet into a poster. As a group, create a list of *what is the same* and *what is different* within your school library environment. A general example is shown below, but generating a more specific list for your school’s particular needs is recommended. Agree on and list your school’s or district’s top priorities for change. Use these priorities to set goals.

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Librarians Traditional</th>
<th>School Media Librarians Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possessed basic computer skills</td>
<td>Possesses advanced computer skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources found locally</td>
<td>Resources available globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of authors, periodicals, etc.</td>
<td>Knowledge of web sites and search engines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills for print media</td>
<td>Critical thinking skills for media of all types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gatherer</td>
<td>Information architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer of physical materials</td>
<td>Organizer of virtual files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical space filled with books</td>
<td>Physical space filled with computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided hands-on research assistance</td>
<td>Provides guidance for computer searches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined material for age/level</td>
<td>Monitors guidelines and safety for us</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Worksheet: The New Librarian

After viewing the clip from The Hollywood Librarian, reflect on what is the same or different within your school community. Fill in the blanks below then share your responses with the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the Same</th>
<th>What’s Different</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

**Top Priorities for Change**

1
2
3
4
5

Comments: __________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
Tool 3: What Do Teachers Need?
Audience: Administrators, Teachers, Librarians

Just as important as identifying the changing role of librarians is identifying the changing relationship between teacher and librarian. Gone are the days when teachers and students saw the librarian only one hour per week for story time. With the growing availability of information via internet and digital resources, libraries and library usage have drastically changed. So, how is this relationship best managed from the teacher’s point of view? How do teachers work with librarians to make 21st Century skills a reality in their classrooms? And how can teachers and librarians work together to meet the changing needs of students? Our suggestion is to ask your teachers what assistance they need, and what they would like from their school librarian.

Action Step: A sample questionnaire is included here. Feel free to make modifications before distributing to the teaching staff. Review the responses and gain valuable information about wants and needs in regards to library support. Meet with the school librarians and identify areas of growth. Then, identify what resources will be provided to support this growth.
**Survey: What Do Teachers Need?**

*Please circle the answers or fill in the spaces to better help the librarian and administration determine your needs.*

What grade level do you teach?

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<td>K-1</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>10-12</td>
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Do you have regularly scheduled library time? daily weekly monthly

Who leads the lessons while you are visiting the library? Teacher Librarian Aide Other

Do you incorporate media literacy skills into your classroom teaching? Yes No

Does your librarian incorporate media literacy skills into his/her teaching? Yes No

Can you access media examples from the classroom? (i.e. internet connection) Yes No

Do your students have access to media-related information when they need it? Yes No

What types of information are you interested in using in your lessons?

- ___ video clips
- ___ print journals
- ___ newspapers
- ___ Podcasts
- ___ YouTube
- Other ________________________________

Does the librarian assist you in finding these materials? Yes No

Does the librarian assist you with issues related to Copyright and Fair Use guidelines? Yes No

Who teaches your students to conduct research online? I do librarian not taught

In your opinion, is there enough time spent educating students about online research? Yes No

In your opinion, is there enough time spent educating students about online safety? Yes No

Do you think a course dedicated to online research and safety would be helpful for students? Yes No

Who should teach the course? teacher librarian teacher/librarian team

Do you communicate your library needs to the librarian? Yes No
If yes, how are they communicated?

___ face to face
___ email
___ written request
___ via administration

If you are not communicating, why?

lack of time
lack of access
lack of support

In which areas do you most need help from the librarian?

___ preparing media lessons
___ teaching online skills
___ accessing media examples
___ finding current resources, digital and print
___ no help is needed

Do you have adequate technology resources to teach the lessons you want to teach?  Yes  No

Do you have a technical IT person at the school?  Yes  No

Are your technical needs supported?  Yes  No

Is the library a welcoming, vibrant place to visit and learn?  Yes  No

What is terrific about your school library?

__________________________________________________________________________________

What needs improvement?

__________________________________________________________________________________

Other Comments: ________________________________________________________________
# Plan of Action

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Tool 4: Defining Learning Communities

Audience: Administrators, Teachers, Students

In “Communities as Necessity in Information Literacy Development: Challenging the Standards,” (The Journal of Academic Librarianship, April 2008), Benjamin R. Harris stresses the importance of learning communities and denounces the belief that information literacy is a solitary process.

According to the author, learning communities are often “prefabricated constructions…comprised of people with like characteristics, such as “faculty learning community,” or “first-year student learning community,” but he also suggests that all communities – in or outside the school – offer opportunities to learn and generate information and knowledge. And that the exchange of information and the seeking of resources is a collaborative event, not a solitary one.

When you set out to define your learning communities – and most schools have multiple communities – consider both virtual and physical connections. In the past, community was often limited by geography: the county line, the school, the church or workplace, but the internet makes it possible to establish communities without concern for physical presence. Social networking sites and online courses are known examples.

By first defining the learning communities associated with your school, you can then determine the literacy information needs of those communities and further assess if you are meeting their needs.

Harris suggests beginning with the question “what are your communities?” Answers might include: staff, student body, parents, local government, sister schools, fundraising… For students, the answers might include: science project team, student government, Facebook friends…

An important distinction between groups, Harris points out, is whether membership is chosen (voluntary) or necessary (required). The answer to this question will likely affect how one interacts within that community.

The next question to ask is: “What kinds of information do these communities need and how should it be distributed?” The mode of distribution will vary for different community groups. For example, if parents at your school do not regularly use computers at home, then an online newsletter will not be effective. On the other hand, if parents are required to sign off on their child’s folder each week, an informative printed piece within that folder could be the right solution. It’s likely that the best solution is to offer both options and to encourage feedback to help gauge if you are reaching your targeted community.

Action Step: In a brainstorming session, with one or more your communities, create a list of the learning communities you participate with. Is there room for improvement when it comes to information literacy? How can information literacy be used to strengthen your learning communities? List steps community members will take to implement these changes.
## Plan of Action

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Tool 5: Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses as an Information Community

Audience: Administrators, Staff

The Knight Commission report (Appendix I: Taking Stock: Are You a Healthy Information Community? 2010) identified eight elements for a healthy information community. The report focuses on local communities which include government agencies, local media, social services, public information access, schools, and internet availability to citizens. Although, there is no precise measurement for this type of inquiry, we believe that the eight elements, when slightly modified, are a good starting point for administrators to ask Are we, as a school, a healthy information community?

Action Step: Assess your school’s information health by responding to the questions on the worksheet. Share your answers among your peers and create a to-do list for improving the health of your community.
Worksheet: Assessing the Health of Your Information Community

*Answer the questions below to determine areas of improvement for your community.*

1. Do you offer an accessible, easy to use web site for parents and students?

2. Is the school’s mission statement publicly available and posted for all to see, online and in the school office?

3. Do you provide quality updates and information about school and district events for parents, students, and the local community via newsletter and/or website?

4. Is there opportunity for parents, students, community members to voice their opinions about events or proposed changes within the school or district? Are there multiple channels for expression of ideas? (i.e. online, written, in person...)

5. Is the school library a vibrant place of learning with up-to-date information and digital resources?

6. Do you have high speed internet access? Do you have programs for students to create their own media?

7. Do you have curricula for digital and media literacy to support student learning about accessing, evaluating, and participating with the global media environment? Including safety?

8. Do all teachers and students have access to computers as needed?

What are your top priorities for change: ____________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

What steps will you take to implement changes?____________________________________
## Plan of Action

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Tool 6: Ideas for Creating Community

Audience: Administrators, Teachers

How does a school create community? Some communities are naturally occurring, such as the teaching staff, classes of students, and parents of students who attend the school, but improving existing communities and reaching out to form new ones can make a school a more vibrant place for learning. It takes work, but the effort is worthwhile.

Here is an example of community building that was initiated over concern about a survey stating that very few high school and college students were information literate. The story Climbing out of the “Ivory Tower”: Conversations between academic and school librarians and teachers, appeared in C&RL News, November 2009 (Vol. 70, No. 10):

Although dinner was included free of charge, the Belmont librarians wondered if anyone would be interested in attending such an event, especially on a weeknight after a long day at school. An invitation went out with the simple title “Preparing High School Students for Academic Research,” and within a few weeks 60 people had registered.

Attendees included librarians from different grade levels, and a variety of teachers. Many new ideas grew from the gathering and separate task forces and teams were assembled in response to concerns raised during the evening meeting.

Granted, bringing these people together required coordination within the school community – invitation, dinner, technical support– but the results far exceeded expectations and new learning communities emerged.

Action Step:

1) Brainstorm ideas for areas of concern that extend beyond the school walls and lend themselves to community involvement.

   Two examples: online safety is relevant to librarians, teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. Consider bringing people together for an informative session on staying safe online.

   Media literacy curriculum often culminates with student projects that might include short videos, student newspapers, or photography. Showcasing student media creations is a fun way to involve parents and encourage support of media literacy education.

2) Appoint an ‘event team’ of willing teachers/staff/parents/students to organize and publicize events. Set a budget early in the process – and consider asking for donations of food, drink, publicity, etc. These gatherings need not be expensive, and don’t forget that building community can also occur online.
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tool 7: Understanding the Media Relationship**

**Audience:** Administrators, Teachers, Students

Before teaching (or learning) media literacy skills, one must become aware of his/her own relationship to media. The Media Triangle illustrates the central relationship between the audience, the text and the production process. It is essential to understand our role(s) in the process and to see how we fulfill our roles and exercise our personal power. Understanding this relationship is fundamental to becoming media literate and should be studied by administrators, teachers, and students, alike.

The Media triangle has three equal sides representing audience, text, and production which illustrate the interdependency of the three systems supporting every media message. Defining these relationships and comprehending their connectedness is at the heart of understanding how media works in our society. The Media Triangle is a static image that represents a very dynamic and interdependent interaction in regards to our relationship with media. For example, Producers must provide a Text but without an Audience, there is no interaction or experience. Each member of this relationship needs each other to exist. And the power dynamics in the relationship can change, depending upon the interplay between the Text, the Audience and Production. For example, if a producer has $5 million to spend on marketing and distribution, that producer is more likely to reach an audience than a producer who only has $5. However, with the internet, the Audience may find an appealing social message and “virally” spread the message, upsetting the traditional power of the purse in gaining audience participation.

Often, the point is made that the commercial advertising world (Production) has millions of dollars to spend while Audiences have little power to resist. Ultimately, however, it is the Audience who has the power because it is the audience that chooses whether to engage with a media Text or not. The U.S. education system spends billions of dollars every year; if media literacy education was taught to prepare students for engaging with the media world, they would be well-equipped to exercise their power as the Audience (and in Production as well!). This is why understanding the Media Triangle is so fundamental to a democratic system and to seeing the role that media literacy education plays!

*The audience* represents the people who engage with the message.

*The text* is the actual message that is sent to the audience. This is the content or story that the audience engages with as they watch or listen to the message. This can be a 30-second commercial, a website, a two hour movie, a blog, a print ad, video game or any other type of media message. The five senses are how one experiences the Text, since the Text may be visual, aural, sensual, or an odor or taste.

*Production* represents both the producer of the message and the communications systems involved creating, marketing and distributing the media product. In the case of advertising a children’s toy, the producers decide where to place the ads to best reach the intended audience, i.e. during Saturday morning cartoons or by the check-out stand in a grocery store.
The power of media literacy lies in seeing how we actively contribute to making meaning and in accepting or rejecting messages or calls to action that we either receive or produce through media. The three sides of the triangle illustrate the three aspects of media systems and how we participate in the process. When teaching media literacy skills, one must first understand the construction process behind the messages. Once this relationship is known, young people are better equipped to understand and question their roles as consumers and producers of media, and to engage actively with texts.

**Action Steps:**

1. Explain the vocabulary used in the Media Triangle. Post the Media Triangle in the front of the class. Discuss what each side represents.

2. Write the Sentence Scramble on the board. Ask students to rework the words of the sentence to more accurately represent the media relationship (with television in mind)

   **Sentence Scramble:** This program is brought to you by the sponsor.
   Answer: YOU are brought to the sponsor by this program.

   Why is this more accurate? Because it is your eyeballs that are being bought and sold. It is YOUR EYEBALLS that are at stake in the relationship. The program is just a lure. What happens if a program doesn’t draw a big enough audience? It gets cancelled. Why? Because the sponsor isn’t getting a chance to sell enough products or services to an audience big enough to pay for the commercials and the program. So it is YOU who really matters.

   Who has the power in the relationship? YOU DO. You are the person with the choices. You are the person who tunes in or out.

3. Once they have rewritten the sentence, ask them as a group to re-label the media triangle using the words from the sentence scramble. Text = Program, Audience = You, Production = Sponsor. Post the second triangle using this new language.

4. For deeper inquiry, ask your students how this relationship applies to Facebook and other forms of social networking. Do your students understand that they contribute to the cycle by providing their data? It’s not only their eyeballs going to the sponsor but their personal data as well, and the content they provide on their “personal pages” (names, birthdates, location, etc.).
The meaning of a media text or product is determined by the relationship between the Audience, the Text and the Production.

Model developed by Eddie Dick, Media Education Officer for the Scottish Film Council.
MEDIA TRIANGLE WORD SCRAMBLE

YOU are brought to the sponsor by this program.

SPONSOR

M

E

D

I

A

PROGRAM
(data, user-generated content)

YOU
Tool 8: **Q/TIPS**

**Audience:** Administrators, Teachers, Students

**Objective:** To provide teachers/students with an ‘at a glance’ guide to the key elements of inquiry-based media literacy education for both deconstruction and construction of media messages; to encourage deeper inquiry by providing the foundational questions for application to all media messages; to apply a “metaframe” for 21st century skills that is easy to build upon.

**Description:** A single page chart included in *Literacy for the 21st Century* (second edition) depicting CML’s Five Core Concepts, Five Key Questions for deconstruction and construction, and Key Words that form the framework for media literacy education. The Key Questions are presented from the point of view of either the Consumer (deconstruction) or the Producer (construction) of media messages. This point of view or "voice" is passive from the standpoint of the Consumer who is deconstructing a media message (although the critical thinking process is very active); the Producer's point of view or "voice" is active, since the Producer is constructing the message. Regardless, the critical thinking process necessary for participating in today's media culture is represented in the use of these Key Questions, which "kick off" the inquiry from a strong basis rooted in media studies. Other questions will undoubtedly spring from these basic Key Questions as the process of inquiry deepens. CML provides “Guiding Questions” to explore more deeply in its book, *Literacy for the 21st Century*, second edition ([www.medialit.com](http://www.medialit.com)). CML provides more age-appropriate questions for children under age seven, through the Key Questions for Young Children for Deconstruction in the following pages, and questions for more sophisticated users through its Expanded Questions which can be found in *Literacy for the 21st Century*. The goal is to take the process as deeply as necessary for informed decision-making.

**How to Use:** Learn this chart! This may be the most valuable tool in your ToolKit for teaching media literacy for both deconstruction (consumer) and construction (producer) of media messages. The Q/TIPS framework is applicable to all subject matter. By asking the questions presented here, you encourage deeper inquiry and a better understanding of the individual responsibilities that come with producing and consuming media messages.

**Teaching Tip:** Enlarge and post this chart in the classroom for easy access. Over time, students will begin to develop a common language around media literacy and will make connections throughout the day. The Key Words make easy reference points, as do the numbers associated with the questions (but the questions do no need to be asked sequentially; instead, the numbers are just handy references).
# Media Deconstruction/Construction Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Key Words</th>
<th>Deconstruction: CML’s 5 Key Questions (Consumer)</th>
<th>CML’s 5 Core Concepts</th>
<th>Construction: CML’s 5 Key Questions (Producer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Authorship</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td>All media messages are constructed.</td>
<td>What am I authoring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td>Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td>Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently?</td>
<td>Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td>Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?</td>
<td>Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td>Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Why is this message being sent?</td>
<td>Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.</td>
<td>Have I communicated my purpose effectively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Concepts</td>
<td>Key Questions</td>
<td>Questions to Guide Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 All media messages are constructed.</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td>What is this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How is this put together?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td>What do I see or hear?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Smell?  Touch or taste?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What do I like or dislike about this?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently?</td>
<td>What do I think and feel about this?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What might other people think and feel about this?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td>What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from,</td>
<td>What does this tell me about how other people live and believe?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>this message?</td>
<td>Is anything or anyone left out?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.</td>
<td>Why is this message being sent?</td>
<td>Is this trying to <em>tell</em> me something?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is this trying to <em>sell</em> me something?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CML’s Questions to Guide Young Children:  
**Construction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Concepts</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Questions to Guide Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 All media messages are constructed.</td>
<td>Who created this message?</td>
<td>What am I making? How do I put it together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td>What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td>What does it look, sound, smell, taste like? What do I like or dislike about this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td>How might different people understand this message differently?</td>
<td>Who do I want to get this? What might other people think and feel about this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td>What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?</td>
<td>What am I sharing about how people live and believe? Have I left anything or anyone out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.</td>
<td>Why is this message being sent?</td>
<td>What am I telling? What am I selling?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tool 9: **Key Questions, Key Words, Core Concepts**

**Audience:** Administrators, Teachers, Students

As you can see on the chart on the previous page, there are Five Key Questions and Core Concepts that lend themselves to a process of inquiry for media literacy comprehension. These concepts are referenced throughout this section of tools, as they are foundational to achieving media literacy skills and understanding. Reinforce these concepts and key words on a daily basis, and soon they will become second-nature for students as they interact with media messages throughout their lives.

The concepts are best understood through keywords that identify the universal characteristics of all media, as described by the Center for Media Literacy:

**Authorship/Constructedness.** All media are created by an individual or group: there is an author involved who has made decisions about the media construction at hand.

**Format.** Media are comprised of various formats using techniques (rhetorical techniques, visual techniques, aural or musical techniques) that are used to attract attention and to reach the user (whether it’s through radio or the internet).

**Audience.** Media are constructed for audiences, to communicate, and audiences understand messages differently from each other.

**Content.** Media offers up content in many forms, framed in many ways, portraying or omitting various lifestyles, values and points of view.

**Purpose.** All media are created for purpose, with profit and/or power (meaning influence) as primary purposes.

**Action Step:** The Key Words enable students to quickly deconstruct a media message from the standpoint of a consumer. This requires practice and repetition before it becomes second nature. Using magazines is a convenient and easy way to practice. Bring several magazines to class. Choose magazines that are familiar and age-appropriate for your students. Review the Key Words for media literacy and explain the Concept each word represents. In small groups, ask the students to choose one magazine advertisement for their group to analyze; use the corresponding worksheet for their answers. Ask each group to identify the author, format, audience, content and purpose of the particular print ad.

For example, if using an ad for an upcoming horror film, students might note the dark clouds, or bold type, or catchy text “what’s lurking in the swamp?” The purpose of the advertisement might be to “sell” the movie to the magazine’s audience.

*The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2010, Center for Media Literacy, [http://www.medialit.com](http://www.medialit.com)*
Worksheet: Key Questions/Key Words/Core Concepts

Choose an advertisement to analyze. Identify the aspects of the ad that correspond to the Key Questions for media literacy.

Background Information: Which magazine are you using? ________________________________

What is the product in the advertisement you are analyzing? ________________________________

1. KQ#1 Who created this message? (AUTHOR)
   Core Concept #1 All media messages are constructed.

2. KQ#2 What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? (FORMAT)
   Core Concept #2 Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

3. KQ#3 How might different people understand this message differently? (AUDIENCE)
   Core Concept #3 Different people experience the same media message differently.

4. KQ#4 What lifestyles or points of view are represented in or omitted from this message? (CONTENT)
   Core Concept #4 Media have embedded values and points of view.

5. KQ#5 Why is this message being sent? (PURPOSE)
   Core Concept #5 Most media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power.
**Tool 10: Assessment Surveys**

**Audience:** Administrators, Teachers

Self-Assessment

Teaching media literacy skills is most successful when a school or district adopts an agreed upon philosophy and understanding of media literacy for teaching throughout the grade levels. This ensures that the media literacy concepts are seamlessly passed along and reinforced from one year to the next. Before incorporating media literacy into your school's curriculum, we suggest distributing this survey among the staff. The results will enable you to identify areas in need of further explanation or education, and will bring obstacles to the forefront prior to the implementation process.

21st Century Skills Assessment

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is a national organization that advocates for 21st century readiness for every student. P21 offers a comprehensive website explaining its framework for 21st century skills and also includes tools for assessment. In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, the skills identified by P21 as necessary for success in a global economy include: critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation. Media literacy incorporates all of these skills and is identified in the framework as necessary for 21st century readiness.

Since assessment is an important part of every new implementation, The MILE Guide Self-Assessment tool can be helpful. The tool allows districts to see where they are today, and where they want to be in the future in regard to 21st century skills for learning. The assessment is quite detailed with various stages and levels.

The P21 website is a valuable resource for planning and assessing programs. Explore the site to find:

- The MILE Guide Self-Assessment Tool
  A visual mapping and self-assessment tool that allows districts to plot where they are today and set a course for future integration of 21st century skills into systems of learning.

- Implementation Guiding Recommendations
  A set of district-relevant recommendations and promising practices to help local districts move from assessment of 21st century skills integration to concrete action.

- P21 Framework Definitions
  The most up-to-date P21 Framework definitions that spell out expectations for 21st century student outcomes and the necessary support systems at the state and local levels.


**Action Step:** Complete both surveys. Compile the results and regroup to discuss areas of agreement and disagreement among the staff. Using the sample as a guide, create an Action Plan for developing media literacy in your school. State the top priorities, resources needed, person(s) responsible, and completion date.
SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR MEDIA LITERACY

1. Do you believe your school uses technology effectively? (rate on scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being MOST effective) 1 2 3 4 5

2. Do you believe your school uses multi-media effectively? (rate on a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being MOST effective) 1 2 3 4 5

3. As I understand it, media literacy education is most suitable for: (check all that apply)

_____ preschool
_____ K-5
_____ 6-8
_____ 9-12
_____ afterschool

4. As I understand it, media literacy education would best be integrated into the following academic disciplines: (check all that apply)

_____ Language Arts
_____ Social Studies
_____ Math
_____ Science
_____ Arts
_____ Health

5. By the time they leave your school, how would you rank your students’ abilities to use each of the following process skills: (rate on scale of 1-5, with 5 being BEST)

Accessing multi-media information 1 2 3 4 5
Analyzing multi-media information 1 2 3 4 5
Evaluating multi-media information 1 2 3 4 5
Creating multi-media information 1 2 3 4 5
Participating in multi-media culture 1 2 3 4 5
6. Do you feel that: (check one)

____ your school is already providing media literacy education
____ your school is likely to offer media literacy education
____ your school is not likely to offer media literacy education

7. In your school, who might you expect to promote or oppose a media literacy program? (check all that apply)

**PROMOTE**

_____ Administrators
_____ Teachers
_____ Parents
_____ Board/Trustees
_____ Students

**OPPOSE**

_____ Administrators
_____ Teachers
_____ Parents
_____ Board/Trustees
_____ Students

8. What are the most important ingredients you believe necessary for a media literacy program to work in your school now? (choose five)

_____ Support from teachers
_____ Buy-in on statement of philosophy
_____ Trained and experienced teachers
_____ Relating media literacy to state standards
_____ Budget
_____ Policies that support media-oriented education
_____ Curriculum and educational resources
_____ Other: ________________________________________________________________

_____ Support from administration
_____ Consistent media literacy framework
_____ Support from board/trustees
_____ Effective assessment methodology
_____ Support from parents
_____ Access to technology
_____ Commitment to long-term change
_____ Plan for implementation

9. What obstacles do you believe your school may have in implementing a media literacy program now? (choose five)

_____ Need for professional development
_____ Philosophical differences
_____ Negative perceptions about media usage in class
_____ State education standards
_____ Lack of curriculum/resources
_____ Seems too intimidating for teachers
_____ Other

_____ Too much change needed
_____ Time constraints
_____ Budget
_____ No media literacy framework
_____ Need for assessment methods
_____ Not a priority now
10. Your particular grade level focus is: (check all that apply)

_____ Pre-K
_____ Lower
_____ Middle
_____ Upper

Optional: __________________________________________  _________________________________________

Name                                                                Position

Survey developed by CENTER FOR MEDIA LITERACY
### Worksheet: Media Literacy Plan of Action *Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Resources Required</th>
<th>Person(s) Responsible</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft School Philosophy for Media Literacy</td>
<td>2 hours time</td>
<td>Jane S.</td>
<td>November 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade library computers</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Alex T.</td>
<td>January 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate Training Workshop for teachers</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>Peter J.</td>
<td>January 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tool 11: Student Assessment**

**Audience:** Teachers, Students

Through Tool 8, students had an opportunity to analyze advertisements and to practice applying media literacy principles. Each time that students have an opportunity to practice such analysis – regardless of the type of media that they are analyzing – their skills are presumably strengthened. But it is still important to assess whether students have gained an understanding of media literacy concepts as well as acquired the content knowledge that is being addressed in the curriculum, whether the curriculum covers language arts, history, science or health.

Although assessment of media literacy is in a somewhat primitive state, utilizing student pre and post tests can offer some traditional measures of learning. The purpose of a pre-test is to assess student knowledge of media literacy prior to instruction, and to provide a baseline for the future.

The post-test determines whether students improved their understanding of the fundamental concepts of media literacy and if they are able to apply those concepts to the particular messages in the particular content area that they’ve been assigned to study. Assuming that students have practiced media literacy skills during the course of their studies and internalized the process of inquiry, it is likely that they can apply this methodology to any message in any content area.

The pre-post test consists of multiple choice questions with a mix designed to assess a student’s knowledge of media literacy within the content area being taught (i.e. nutrition, social studies, violence, science, body image). The mix of questions should address:

1. Student knowledge of media and how it is constructed. Sample question: Do photographs always show people and things the way they are in real life? (Construction)

2. Student understanding of the content knowledge (i.e. nutrition, violence, body image...). Sample question: What are calories and why are they important? (Nutrition Facts)

3. Student ability to apply media literacy concepts to content knowledge. Sample question: Who is the target audience in the candy commercial? (Audience and Nutrition)

4. Student understanding of the systems by which media messages are constructed and delivered. Sample question: Television programs seem free but who ultimately pays for them? (Purpose)

5. Student understanding of his/her own relationship with media and how it influences his/her life. Sample question: How important is it to wear whatever my friends like? (Relationship/Power)

Including this mix of questions insures that both content knowledge and process skills are being measured to assess whether students have gained knowledge and skills alike. A sample test (with answer key) that addresses content knowledge in a basic nutrition curriculum is included here, but while
questions designed to assess media literacy skills may remain constant, you will want to tailor the 
pre/post test to the content being addressed in your particular curriculum subject.

Pretest results will enable you to determine the level of understanding within your classroom prior to 
instruction. Save the tests for comparison purposes. Give the same test again at the end of the media 
instruction to assess student progress in understanding both media literacy and content knowledge.
Sample Pre-Post Test  (Nutrition)

This test is to assess your knowledge of nutrition and media literacy.

Circle the best answer for each question.

1. The main goal of an advertisement or commercial is to....
   a. Entertain
   b. Sell
   c. Teach
   d. Make you laugh

2. To keep my body healthy, eating in a healthy way is important and so is...
   a. Watching TV
   b. Reading cookbooks
   c. Physical activity
   d. Taking a shower every day

3. Photographs always show people and things just the way they are in real life:
   a. True
   b. False

4. How many servings of fruits and vegetables should you eat each day to be healthy?
   a. 0
   b. 1-2
   c. 3-4
   d. 5 or more

5. The newspaper, TV and radio news tell us...
   a. Only the truth
   b. Only lies
   c. Only some of the information
   d. Everything we need to know

6. “Good eating habits” means...
   a. Eating everything I can
   b. Eating anything I want
   c. Eating a balance of different foods
   d. Eating everything on my plate

7. Food ads look fun, with bright colors and music, because...
   a. The food is fun to eat
   b. Parents like the ads
   c. Fun ads get my attention
   d. Watching food ads will make you a fun person

8. It is important to ask questions about what advertising tells us because...
   a. Advertising makes us do things
   b. Advertising is bad
c. Asking questions helps us make better choices
d. The teacher told me

9. Which is the best question to ask after seeing a commercial message that advertises candy or snack food?
   a. Where can I buy this candy as soon as possible?
   b. When will I be able to eat this candy?
   c. Why was this message sent?

10. The Nutrition Facts label on a package tells me:
   a. How much I should eat
   b. Why I should buy that food
   c. The amount of calories in a serving
   d. Nothing that young people need to know

11. Everyone my age likes the same candy ads that I like:
   a. True
   b. False

12. How important is it to eat whatever my friends eat?
   a. Not important
   b. A little important
   c. Very important
   d. The most important thing

13. I feel that I can help my friends live healthier lives:
   a. True
   b. False

14. What item is considered a “serving” of fruit?
   a. Fruit snacks, like fruit-flavored candy
   b. An apple
   c. Fruit-flavored drinks
   d. All of the above

15. Television programs might seem to be free but who ultimately pays for them?
   a. Consumers
   b. TV networks
   c. Advertisers

16. It is important to consider who created the advertising message in order to:
   a. Know who to blame
   b. Find the bias that always exists
   c. Find out who created the music on the commercial
Sample Nutrition Pre-Post Test Answer Key

1. B  Sell (KQ#5, key word: purpose)
2. C  Physical Activity
3. B  False (KQ#2, key word: format)
4. D  5 or more
5. C  Only some of the information (KQ#4, key word: content)
6. C  Eating a balance of different foods
7. C  Fun ads get my attention (KQ#2, key word: format)
8. C  Asking questions helps us make better choices (Process of Inquiry)
9. C  Why was this message sent (KQ#5, key word: purpose)
10. C  The amount of calories in a serving
11. B  False (KQ#3, key word: audience)
12. A  Not important (Self-Direction/Responsibility)
13. A  True (Social Responsibility)
14. B  An apple
15. A  Consumers (media relationship)
16. B  Find the bias that always exists (KQ#1 and 4, key words: author/content)
Tool 12: The Non-Media Media Assignment

Audience: Students (Teachers, too)

In response to studies indicating that high school and college students are “addicted” to media, a few teachers throughout the country have challenged their students to go an entire day without plugging in – no cell phone, computer, TV, radio, movies, iPod, etc... This highly unpopular exercise is perhaps the most revealing way for students to recognize their own dependence on media. We encourage teachers to try it, too.

Action Step: Ask your students to take a day off from their media devices and include a creative activity to help them think more critically about their level of “addiction.” Encourage students to share their thoughts or artwork at the end of the 24 hours. Ideas include:

1. Have students write in a journal each time they are tempted to use media devices. Ask them to identify when, where, why they are feeling the urge to connect.
2. Ask students to create a piece of artwork or cartoon (drawing or painting – not computer generated) that represents their feelings about the 24 hour period without media.
3. Ask students to write an essay comparing and contrasting their lives with and without media access.

For more information and ideas, go to:

Study Reveals Serious Internet Addiction Among College Students. University of Maryland.

http://inventorspot.com/articles/study_reveals_serious_internet_addiction_among_college_students_40780

The Longest Day. American University

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/01/AR2007080101720.html

Encouraging the Text Generation to Rediscover its Voice. Riverdale Day School.

**Tool 13: Close Analysis: Description vs. Interpretation**

**Audience:** Teachers, Students

Conducting a close analysis of a media text is a fundamental media skill. It requires a solid foundation in media literacy concepts and a clear understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. To successfully analyze a media message, one must understand how a media message is put together and the many interpretations that can derive from it. To teach students to analyze and to know the difference between describing an event with evidence and facts, and interpreting an event using opinions and judgments, the following exercises are useful.

**Knowing the difference between fact and opinion is a fundamental, yet often neglected, aspect of media literacy.** If your students understand fact vs. opinion, skip to Conducting a Close Analysis. If you doubt their understanding, begin with the following explanations and use worksheet #1 provided.

A **fact** is something known with certainty, that can be objectively verified. A journalist covering a news story is sent out to gather facts – who, what, where, when, why. The journalist is not meant to add her own meaning to the facts but rather to write down or broadcast everything she sees in great detail. Facts are descriptive in nature and can be supported by evidence. For example -- *The man is 6 feet tall wearing a dark blue suit and carrying a leather brief case. He walked west on Main Street before disappearing into the crowd. There are bursts of thunder and lightning, and there are cars honking in the background, and there was a scream just as the man disappeared.*

Emotion is often confused as fact (she is angry, he is unhappy, the dog is lonely, etc.), yet in relating to a media construction, we only infer what the emotion might be, based on the evidence we see or hear. For example, we see clenched fists, darting eyes, furrowed eyebrows, and we hear a shouting voice, but we can only infer that the person depicted is angry because we have no way of verifying the person’s feelings first-hand; we can only observe physical manifestations that we associate with an emotion due to our own experience of that feeling. Ask your students “how do you know this?” when they make claims related to emotions to encourage them to describe the physical evidence they are observing rather than the inference they are making about a particular emotion.

An **opinion** is a belief or conclusion held with confidence but not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. This is where the person relaying the story guesses or speculates about what happened by interjecting his or her own interpretations or judgments. For example -- *The man, who is probably from out of town since he is wearing a dark suit on a hot, humid day in August, won’t be able to hide among the locals. The music was tense and there were frightening blasts of thunder and lightning in the background.*

**Action Step OPTIONAL:** Have students complete the Fact vs. Opinion worksheet to determine their level of understanding. If more discussion is needed, address their confusion prior to Conducting a Close Analysis.
**Conducting a Close Analysis**

**Action Step:** Select a media message for the activity. Any media message can be used for a close analysis but television commercials are often good choices because they are short and tightly packed with powerful words and images, music and sounds.

The first part of the exercise focuses on description and evidence of events: “What is happening?” The second part encourages a deeper analysis that includes interpretation and opinion: “What might it mean?” or “How do I experience this?”

Choose a television or multi-media commercial that seems to have a lot of layers—interesting visuals and sound track, memorable words or taglines, multiple messages that call out for exploration. You will replay the selection several times as you go through a close analysis of a media text with your students. Use the attached worksheets.

**Step 1 Visuals.** Students will write down everything they remember about the visuals—lighting, camera angles, how the pictures are edited together. Descriptions of people—what do they look like? what are they doing? wearing? The focus is only on what is actually seen on the screen, not an interpretation of what is on the screen.

**Step 2 Sounds.** Turn the picture off. Ask students to listen only to the sound track and describe what they are hearing. What are the words? Who says them? What kind of music is used? Does it change in the course of the commercial? How? Are there other sounds? Who is being spoken to—directly or indirectly? (That is, who is the audience addressed by the commercial? Is there evidence for this?)

**Step 3 Counting.** Many multi-media messages or stories contain repeated visual or aural “themes” or “ploys” that lend themselves to counting, so that students see how the particular technique is used to keep the audience interested. Students enjoy observing and counting and their observations often reveal another perspective on techniques being used.

So, for example, if you want students to notice violent actions—known as “jolts” per minute—ask how many jolts of violence are there (loud noises, crashes, explosions)? Have students tally the number of jolts or acts of violence in the media message to better understand how messages are constructed using “attention grabbing” techniques.

**Step 4 Apply Key Questions** (Part 2). Unlike factual information analysis, using the Five Key Questions of media literacy provides contextual analysis that is critical for a deeper understanding of media messages/constructions. In this Step, you begin to apply the Five Key Questions and the Guiding Questions that lead to them. Identify the author(s) and how the specific “construction” techniques identified in steps 1 and 2 influence what the commercial is “saying”—values expressed and unexpressed; lifestyles endorsed or rejected; points of view proposed or assumed. Explore what's left out of the message and how different people might react differently to it. What is the message “selling”? Is it the same as the product being advertised? Show the text at least five more times so that
students gain experience in experiencing the text through the “lens” of each of the Five Key Questions (for each showing, examine the text from the perspective of one Key Question); it’s like peeling back the layers of an onion. Deconstructing media messages is the first step to becoming media literate and it requires practice!

The Five Key Questions*:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

**Step 5 Summarize.** Summarize how the text is constructed and how various elements of the construction trigger our own unique response-- which may be very different than how others interpret the text. Try this exercise with other kinds of messages-- a story from a newscast, a key scene from a movie, a print advertisement, a website. Are different questions important for different kinds of messages?

After the first showing, start the group exercise with the simple question: “What did you notice?” Different people will remember different things so accept all answers and keep asking, “What else did you notice?”

If the group is having a hard time, show the clip again and invite them to look for something that stands out for them. Continue the brainstorming until you have at least 15 or 20 answers to the question: “What did you notice?” Challenge any attempt to assign interpretation too early. Keep the group focused on identifying only what was actually on screen or heard on the soundtrack.

The key to success with this exercise is for the teacher/leader to keep asking questions. Refrain from contributing too many answers yourself – concentrate on explaining the differences between description and interpretation, fact and opinion. Conducting a Close Analysis may be difficult and slow at first, but repeated use of this lesson will enable students to practice their skills and to, over time, quickly analyze a media message in their everyday experiences. As students gain experience, they can very quickly perform a close analysis and apply this skill to any media message, anytime, anywhere.

*The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2010, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com
Worksheet: Fact vs. Opinion (Optional)

For purposes of this exercise, consider the given information to be verifiable fact. Based on the information given, determine what is fact or opinion.

Circle only the FACTS.

1. The boy held his mother's hand as he crossed the street.
   A) The boy is a scaredy-cat because he held his mother’s hand to cross the street.
   B) The boy was with his mother.
   C) He is an obedient son.

2. The movie star received an Oscar for her portrayal as the first female President.
   A) The movie star could be president if she wanted.
   B) Audiences of all ages enjoyed the film.
   C) The actress won an award.

3. The internet is one way for people to access news stories.
   A) It is better to get news from the internet than the TV.
   B) It is more fun to read on a computer screen than to read newspapers.
   C) The internet provides news.

4. A crowd gathered to watch the clown ride a unicycle.
   A) The kids were excited to see a clown.
   B) The clown rode a unicycle.
   C) Clowns are always happy.

Answers: B, C, C, B. All other choices include information that does not exist in the given statement and, therefore, cannot be verified.
**CLOSE ANALYSIS: PART 1 (Description and Evidence)**

Video Title: ____________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewings:</th>
<th>Descriptions, Observations, Examples, Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Viewing #1 (General)</td>
<td>What is happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Viewing #2 (No Sounds)</td>
<td>What did you notice about lighting, camera angles, and editing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Viewing #3 (ONLY Sound, no picture)</td>
<td>What did you notice about dialogue, music, and sound effects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Viewing #4 (Counting Number of _____Events)</td>
<td>How many _____ events did you observe? Please count.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CLOSE ANALYSIS: PART 2 (Interpretation Supported by Evidence)**

Apply Key Questions and Core Concepts to **analyze** a video excerpt:

Video Title: ________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>5 Key Questions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Observations, Examples, Ideas</strong></th>
<th><strong>5 Core Concepts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Observations, Examples, Ideas</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Who created this message?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. All media messages are ‘constructed.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How might different people understand this message differently?</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Different people experience the same media message differently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Media have embedded values and points of view.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Why is this message being sent?</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Most media messages are constructed to gain profit and/or power.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Tool 14: Risk Assessment Activity**

**Audience:** Students

Media literacy training helps consumers of all ages make reasoned, reflective decisions of all kinds in a society where media frequently supply our sources of information. Media literacy instruction helps us understand how media can affect us emotionally, how they can color our perceptions, and how they can shape our choices.

Media literacy instruction also teaches us how to question information that comes to us through the media. A current voiceover ad by Norton Anti-Virus says “Will you allow online hackers to do with your hard drive what heavy metal bands did to hotel rooms in the ‘80s?” The voice of authority conveyed in this ad and others like it teach us to imagine that distant hackers are lurking in cyberspace, just waiting for the perfect opportunity to destroy our livelihoods and snatch our identities. Yet, according to Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, authors of *Super-Freakonomics* (William Morrow, 2009), nearly half of identity-theft victims are targeted by someone they know, and 90% of those thefts take place offline. Media literacy training helps us ask whether the information offered in advertisements is useful or whether it has been distorted to sell a product.

Even when delivered as objective news, media can adversely affect our decision-making skills. As coverage of the recent Toyota recall makes apparent, the emotional impact of images, anecdotes and personal testimony can make risks appear larger than they are. According to federal data, about 22,000 people were killed in vehicles made by Toyota or Lexus during the decade ending in 2008. Accelerator problems may have played a role in an additional 19 deaths during the same period. And yet the media spotlight trained on these incidents has led many consumers to question the safety of any Toyota vehicle, if not the safety of any vehicle undergoing a recall (Hamilton, “Most Accidents Caused by Drivers, Not Defects,” NPR, February 12, 2010).

In showing us how media construct a whole world of risk for audiences, media literacy education demonstrates that a wider range of choices is available to us. And yet the world we live in is not without risk. Armed with media literacy skills, we dare to make decisions based on the best information we have. *Media literacy education makes wise choices possible.*

**Action Step:** This MediaLit Moment activity provides an opportunity for your students to practice applying their media literacy skills to actual media messages. Students will learn the key questions for media literacy, and will be challenged to use their critical thinking skills in regards to decision-making about potential risks. Use this activity to engage students in a fun exercise where they must think about the content and purpose of the media messages. The public service announcements provided are related to public health, but the skills acquired here can be applied to any message in any content area. For additional MediaLit Moments activities go to: [www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org/newsletter](http://www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org/newsletter)
Public Health PSAs: Prepare for Pandemic or Pass the Kleenex?

In 1976, an epidemic of swine flu was expected in the United States, and the federal government took bold action, releasing public service announcements over television airwaves and vaccinating 45 million Americans, an unprecedented number at that time. The epidemic never came, but three elderly Pittsburgh residents died soon after receiving their vaccinations at the same clinic. Though scientists believe the deaths were coincidental, some news reports suggested the vaccine had killed them. “Press frenzy was so intense it drew a televised rebuke from Walter Cronkite for sensationalizing coincidental happenings,” writes Dr. David J. Sencer, then-director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (McNeil, “Don’t Blame Flu Shots for All Ills, Officials Say,” New York Times, September 28, 2009). In 1976, the CDC did not hold news conferences, and it took five days to respond to the deaths in Pennsylvania.

Fast forward to the spring of 2009: A global pandemic of H1N1 swine flu takes off suddenly. Though the initial fatality rate is low, the rate could easily climb depending on the ways in which the virus mutates over time. The US government orders 250 million doses of H1N1 vaccine. A small but influential movement of anti-vaccine activists has raised concerns about infant and child vaccinations. To stave off rumors which could circulate easily on the Internet and on 24-hour television news outlets, the CDC creates a “flu.gov” website, posts updates on Facebook and Twitter, and assembles a media “war room” in its Atlanta headquarters. News conferences are held there almost daily, all of which are posted to the CDC website (McNeil, op. cit).

In 2010, the communications of health agencies deserve study because those agencies must make creative decisions about how to frame messages about health risks in a media environment which can encourage panic as well as complacency and even denial. In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to compare two health-related PSAs to understand the purposes for which they were created, and to recognize the differing points of view they present with regard to comparable risks.

Have students compare two public service announcements to demonstrate their understanding of purpose and point of view.

AHA!: Different strategies for talking about health risks can really change the end product!

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent? (Purpose)

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Key Question #4: What values and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message? (Content)

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Grade Level: 8-10
Materials: computer with broadband access and data projector to display YouTube videos at the following URLs:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASibLqwVbsk

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT9fxhrjoQc

The first link is for two 1976 PSAs produced by the CDC in anticipation of a swine flu epidemic. The second PSA, which shows the spread of the virus from person to person, is generally the best for comparison. The second link is for a PSA produced by the UK Department of Health at the height of the H1N1 epidemic. This is a humorous PSA which shows how easily any germ can be spread in public spaces.

Activity: As always, show videos more than once. As students give you their reactions, make sure to ask them “What?” questions to compare the content and techniques of the two ads. What happened? For example, the CDC message shows one infected person travelling to a variety of destinations, while the UK Department of Health ad shows one infected person in an enclosed space (an elevator). Also ask, What made the first ad scary? What made the second ad funny?

Questions about purpose come next. Why did the two agencies produce these ads? What were these agencies hoping that people would do in response to them? And ask why the ads were presented in such different ways. Why did the CDC produce a scary ad, and why did the British government decide to make their ad funny? What messages were they trying to send about the risks involved in spreading swine flu virus?

Next, divide the class into pairs or small groups, and explain that they’ll be adding something to their ads or changing them slightly to show what they know about the purpose behind them. Work to ensure that a roughly equal number of groups choose each PSA. Give your students the choice to write a title for their ad, or to write a different ending or “tag” line for the announcer. Their lines can be goofy or even make fun of the ad itself, but they still have to demonstrate the purpose of the ad. When students have finished their work, share and discuss the alternative versions of the ads as time allows.

Extended Activity: Key Question #3 for Producers: Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?

Ask students to come up with their own concepts for an influenza PSA, and ask students to consider the following as they prepare their PSA concepts:

Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota said that criticizing the government for its aggressive response to the threat of the H1N1 virus is like criticizing officials for building dikes in New Orleans to withstand a Category 5 hurricane when only a Category 3 storm comes ashore (Stobbe, “Is the Swine Flu Epidemic Over?”, AP, February 5, 2010).
Ask students if they were health officials who were uncertain of the threat of mortality posed by the virus, but knew that it could be devastating, what kind of PSA would they produce?

And ask students to consider this information as they decide on strategies for getting the attention of their audience:

In late September 2009, swine flu cases rapidly increased across the country. The H1N1 vaccine became available in mid-October, and people waited in lines—sometimes for hours—at clinics offering the vaccine. By mid-December, the epidemic seemed to be waning. By the end of January 2010, only a fifth of Americans had received the vaccine, according to data released by the CDC. A poll taken in late January by the Harvard School of Public Health also found that most Americans had assumed the pandemic was over and thought the threat was overblown (McNeil, “Most American Think Swine Flu Pandemic Is Over, a Harvard Poll Finds,” New York Times, February 6, 2010). When this newsletter was published, some health experts still expected a “third wave” of H1N1 in fall of 2010.

In 1976, vaccines were enthusiastically welcomed. Many parents or grandparents still remembered children dead of smallpox, measles and polio. Today, anti-vaccine activists reach a wide audience on the Internet, and many concerned parents believe that vaccines may cause health problems in children. Among parents surveyed in the Harvard poll, many cited fear of side effects as a reason why their families did not receive the vaccinations.

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**Tool 15: Online Research: What’s Credible and What’s Not?**

**Audience:** Students

Teaching students to judge the validity of the many resources available to them online is an important and relatively new job for educators, especially when students today do much of their research on personal computers away from school. And because the internet is available to anyone who wants to post an opinion or press release under the guise of research, students must be taught to sift through the abundance of information and, ultimately, determine what is valid and credible. In many ways, the internet has made conducting research faster and easier, yet it has also added more room for error and confusion.

Like most forms of communication, the criteria needed to determine the quality and credibility of online information are **accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage** (Barbara Ray, *Creating Skeptics: Helping Students to Judge the Credibility of Online Content, Spotlight MacArthur Foundation, 2009*). Offering a checklist for students to use when judging validity is helpful, states Ray, but a more fool-proof way to ensure success is “to also teach students to develop a personal suite of automatic decision-making strategies. Sometimes they will use these strategies more rigorously when the situation calls for it, and other times, they will use a less-involved set of steps.” This brings us back to media literacy and the critical thinking skills that create a media literate individual. For this reason, students must learn the key words and develop critical thinking skills that can be applied to any message at any time.

**Action Step:** Distribute the checklists to your students. Post key words in front of the class for easy reference. Without taking too much time, access a few web sites online as a class. Include sites that you know are propaganda or highly commercial and be sure to include sites that accept advertising and are frequented by your students, for example Wikipedia, WebMD, Google and Yahoo.

Start with the media literacy worksheet, ask the group to fill in the blanks and provide them with general guidelines for thinking critically about what they find online. Explain to your students that the key words for media literacy can be applied to all media messages regardless of subject matter or mode of delivery (i.e. internet, radio, newspapers...). Knowing and understanding the key words for media literacy will prepare students for the second worksheet. Use the second worksheet to focus specifically on online research. Solidify student knowledge of the key words for media literacy and information credibility by using these worksheets repeatedly throughout the year when assigning projects that involve the use of online materials.
Checklist 1: Key Words for Determining Quality and Credibility of Information:

✓ **Accuracy.** Is the material correct and truthful? How do you know this?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

✓ **Authority.** What is the level of knowledge, expertise and reputation of the author(s) and publisher? ___________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

✓ **Objectivity.** Is the subject approached in an unbiased manner?

If not, how is it biased? ___________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

✓ **Currency.** Is the information relevant and timely?

When was the material published? Is this the most recent version? ______________

✓ **Coverage.** How does this research compare to other research in the same field?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Key words for judging credibility from Barbara Ray, *Creating Skeptics: Helping Students to Judge the Credibility of Online Content, Spotlight MacArthur Foundation, 2009*
Checklist on Website Quality
Based on CML’s Key Questions for Media Literacy

Key Question # 1: Who created this message?

- I can identify a group or individual responsible for the content on this site.
- I have verified that the site’s authorship is consistent with its .com, .org, .net, .edu, .gov domain extension.
- This site is maintained by a person or organization that I know is credible outside of the internet.
- This site has been updated in the past 3 to 6 months.
- This site has a phone number or mailing address that I could use for contacting the person or organization for more information.

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

- This site contains many misspellings and/or broken links.
- This site has no external links.
- This site contains clear graphics and explanations.
- This site has a well-organized navigation system and makes things easy to find.

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?

- This site contains external links to other credible websites.
- I have verified the information on this site using reliable online or offline resources.
- This website is relevant to my questions and interests.

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?

- This site is clearly biased toward a specific opinion or point of view.
- This website is branded.
- This website uses copyright ethically.
- This website is socially responsible.

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

- This website is trying to sell me a product or service – or not.
- The main purpose of this site is to provide facts (not opinions).

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Tool 16: Online Citizenship

Audience: Teachers, Students

Providing children with the skills they need to become informed citizens who can responsibly participate in society is top priority for educators. As technology continues to expand, and the local village moves to a global stage, the skills required for citizenship are changing. Use of the internet creates opportunities for students to reach beyond geographic lines to express their views and participate in conversations far from home. But, it also creates a need for a new understanding of citizenship and online behavior. To be a responsible online citizen, one must continually pay attention to the ever-changing rules of cyber space.

The organization IKeepSafe.org has outlined the 3Cs for safe participation in a global online environment: cyber-security, cyber-safety, and cyber-ethics.

Per their website:

Based on the C3 Framework created by education and technology expert Davina Pruitt-Mentle, the iKeepSafe Digital Citizenship C3 Matrix takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to preparing students for 21st century digital communication. The Matrix outlines competency levels for C3 concepts divided into three levels: basic, intermediate, and proficient.

Cyber-security covers physical protection (both hardware and software) of personal information and technology resources from unauthorized access gained via technological means. Cyber-security is defined by HR 4246, Cyber Security Information Act (2000) as “the vulnerability of any computing system, software program, or critical infrastructure to, or their ability to resist, intentional interference, compromise, or incapacitation through the misuse of, or by unauthorized means of, the Internet, public or private telecommunications systems, or other similar conduct that violates federal, state, or international law, that harms interstate commerce of the US, or that threatens public health or safety.”

Most of the issues covered in Cyber-safety are steps that one can take to avoid revealing information by “social” means. Cyber-safety addresses the ability to act in a safe and responsible manner on the Internet and other connected environments. These behaviors protect personal information and reputation, include safe practices to minimize danger from behavioral-based rather than hardware/software-based problems.

Cyber-ethics is the discipline of using appropriate and ethical behaviors and acknowledging moral duties and obligations pertaining to online environments and digital media.

Action Step: Teaching children the 3Cs will help them to reap the benefits of online access and make them less vulnerable to online hazards. This information, when taught along with the core concepts for media literacy, enables students to make wise decisions while fully participating as global citizens.

Ask students to complete the worksheet of cyber scenarios. Upon completion, discuss the answers as a group and reinforce the need for the 3Cs. Consider inviting the school librarian to participate and/or lead the discussion.
Worksheet: Cyber Scenarios
What would you do? Circle the correct answer(s).

Cyber-security: Amber just opened her e-mail box and found a message that says “you have won a prize” in the subject line but it is not from one of her regular contacts. When she opens the message, she is asked to send her name, address, and telephone number so someone can deliver her prize. The message offers no information about the contest or how she was selected to win. And she still doesn’t know who sent it.

What should Amber do?

A) Reply to the message with all of the information so she can get her prize  
B) Don’t open the message. Label it JUNK and Delete it  
C) Ask a parent to help her set stricter junk mail settings on her computer

Cyber-safety: Johnny went to the mall with his friends. While they were eating lunch, a man at the next table struck up a conversation. He seemed a little odd but said he could sell them new bikes for a really cheap price. Johnny was interested since he really wanted a new bike and he hadn’t been able to save enough money. The man said he could just email him his parent’s credit card number and he would meet him back at the mall with the bike by the end of the week. He wrote his email address on a piece of paper and gave it to Johnny.

What should Johnny do?

A) Go home and convince his mom to give him the credit card number so he can send it to the man then meet him for the bike  
B) Email the man to ask a few more questions before sending the credit card number  
C) Tear up the piece of paper since he knows he shouldn’t email strangers

Cyber-ethics: Ellen and Tim were dating for a short time then Tim ended the relationship. Ellen’s feelings were hurt so she wrote mean, awful statements about Tim on her Facebook page. Most of the kids at school read her postings. Ellen’s friends have started to ridicule Tim and some of the boys are pushing him around in the halls.

What should Tim do?

A) Report the problem of cyber-bullying to his school counselor and his parents  
B) Write mean things about Ellen on his Facebook page  
C) Ask Ellen to please take down the posts and stop going ‘public’ with their personal issues