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## Theme: Media Literacy and Student Empowerment

Like any school district in transition, the Anaheim Union High School District adopted the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills framework slowly and deliberately. The district began to open its curriculum to the framework, and used it to guide activities at district schools. Over the course of three years, the district moved in the direction of project-based learning and more rigorous career and technical education.

Students accelerated the process. In July 2013, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills organized a conference at California State University, Fullerton which attracted many Anaheim students. Sensing the energy in the room, representatives from the Partnership asked them, “Does education serve you, or do you serve education?” An overwhelming majority felt they were serving educational institutions. In a video interview recorded after the conference, Fabienne Muñoz, a student at Katella High School, was forceful in voicing her dissatisfaction with traditional schooling: “I feel that we are serving education, and that’s not the way it should be. Education should be serving us, and giving me the tools I need to succeed in life--to know how to get to college, to know how to pick a career, to know how to be a leader in this community--and I don’t see how providing multiple choice tests to students teaches them any sort of leadership or character or skills necessary for this essay type of work.”

Mike Matsuda, professional development coordinator for the district reflects, “A lot of the time it’s juniors and seniors who understand that something is terribly wrong when they haven’t found their passion even as they’re getting ready to leave school. They ask, what’s the purpose of education? Through looking at P21 at the conference, they decided, hey, there’s much more to what education can be. They got excited.”

Tom Tait, the mayor of Anaheim, made a brief speech at the Fullerton conference, and later engaged in conversation with students about internships in Anaheim UHSD. Though Tait was not altogether familiar with the P21 framework, he was nonetheless interested in finding ways that the city could support the district’s initiative. Students argued that local internship programs should be infused with the 4Cs of critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration.

Students translated advocacy into action by the beginning of the academic year. At Katella High, Muñoz created a petition calling on the city to partner with the district to offer internships with an explicit focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and gathered over 1,000 student signatures in support. Abelardo Diaz, an Anaheim High School student who attended the Fullerton conference, created a similar petition and gathered 2,000 signatures. The city council placed the matter on their agenda, and on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 200 students streamed into the council chambers as they presented petitions bearing nearly 5,000 signatures. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the council unanimously adopted a resolution to establish an internship program incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and convened a task force to ensure its progress. By popular demand of district students, Anaheim became the first P21 city in the United States.

<http://www.auhsd.us/District/News/48547-Anaheim-to-Become-P-21-City.html>

In this issue of *Connections*, we attempt to answer the question, what are the best practices that media production programs employ to enhance student empowerment? We interview Alan Michel, executive director of HOME, Inc., an organization which teaches video production and media literacy skills to students and educators alike. We offer a youth perspective in our interview with Kevin Escobar, a recent HOME, Inc. graduate who currently teaches in HOME afterschool and summer programs. And in the MediaLit Moment for this issue, we find a teachable moment in revelations that U.S. and international security agencies have been monitoring gameplay in *World of Warcraft* for possible terrorist activity—yet another teachable moment in the media used to report these developments.

## Research Highlights

### Interview with Alan Michel, HOME, Inc.

In the early 1970s, Alan Michel was beginning his artistic career as a sculptor when a brush with public access television heightened his awareness of the potential of youth media production for student engagement and empowerment. Michel would never be the same. In 1977, he founded HOME, Inc. (“Here-in Our Motives Evolve”), a non-profit organization in Boston which teaches video production and media analysis to educators and youth to “foster confident, creative individuals with the ability to think for themselves.” In 2002, HOME, Inc. became the lead agency in a three-year, federally-funded Media Literacy & Health Project which eventually expanded to four Boston Public Schools. The project integrated media literacy processes and a project-based learning approach to guide student exploration of critical youth issues, including violence, substance abuse and disrespect in the immediate school community and beyond. Michel is also a founding member of the Alliance for a Media Literate America.

CML: What led to youth media production as a focus of your life’s work?

AM: I was sharing a studio space with a friend in a housing project that had been an old shoe factory—this was in Jamaica Plains, one of the rougher neighborhoods in Boston. My friend was a filmmaker, and we decided to volunteer for the local public access TV station twice a week in the afternoon. We borrowed black and white video equipment, and found that, if you give a kid a camera, all of a sudden they become aware of the power that they have. There’s still the question, if you’re going to interview someone, will it be intimidating? Exciting? If you don’t have experience with it, it can become a point of discomfort and inadequacy. But if you have someone working with you, it gives you motivation and desire. It’s life-changing, really. The kids we worked with got to interview James Brown. They wouldn’t have gotten into the concert without that camera. I came to the realization that there’s a great power in using media as a mediator between people. It creates a new contract. Not many people thought of it that way, but most journalists understand it. If you want to interview the President as a person, it’s not going to happen. But if you have a respectable publication that you’re working on, there’s an implicit contract. The President has a chance to get his message out to a broad audience. You have an opportunity—if you ask reasonable questions—to make at least a pointed and meaningful experience out of it.

It really becomes a motivator. It’s held true for all the work that I’ve done in the field. People learn because they want to learn, not because someone has the information. If you do an interview, you’ve decided that you want to learn something about that person, that subject. You become a learner. It’s a hugely different approach to education, compared to having someone say that you must learn this in this grade and class.

CML: Do you think that individual, interest-driven exploration of media tools can lead to critical

thinking about media?

AM: They can, but they often don't. All media is basically storytelling of some sort. There's an audience. Production takes investment. If you teach kids about media, and they don't understand that component of it, they won't understand what media represents. . . . They need to find a nugget, and make it meaningful. They need to focus on what they feel is important. In creating media, that step is often done for you. Students need to understand their audience, or find out what that audience is. They use their powers of reasoning to narrow the field, and focus on what they want to do. That can be a powerful experience. The other part that's exciting—and it's true of all project-based learning—is that you start with everything possible, and end up with just one thing. A video, a poster, a painting, a slide show, a multimedia presentation. It's one thing, usually. That whole process has its own momentum. . . . Students get a clearer vision of how everything will function, and they can get rid of a lot of useless choices. It's a natural progression, and people who experience it get very excited.

Unfortunately, most of our education around media has been more about, how do you create feature film, or Photoshop, how to use the technology. It often doesn't give students a whole lot of time to think about what they're doing, especially for younger students. A number of kids have a much harder time with that. . . . The whole idea of project-based learning is very plastic. We can manipulate it and use it in every subject area, and have a deeply personal experience about what we're learning, whether that's a documentary on social change, a dramatic piece about relationships, or a piece about how you can survive a horrific or complicated experience. It's a powerful opportunity for educators to give kids a chance to explore that. We just don't do enough of it. We're too busy worrying about the content of learning, rather than developing the confidence of kids to be learners, and to encourage them to explore.

CML: To what do you attribute the longevity of HOME?

AM: If you think about what I just said about people and relationships, everything that was true in the 1970s is true today. We were never married to three-quarters AV roll editing. There were places that were like that, like the Boston Video and Film Foundation. They were teaching the technology. We all know what happened to that. Today everybody can edit, and they can do that on MacBook much better than AV roll editing that sold for \$35,000.

This is actually one of the biggest selling points for media production classes in school. You ask them, where is it in your work and cost of operations, that next year your capital investment will be less, even as you're able to reach more people? Generally schools have a fixed cost for each kid they teach. If you're teaching science, you can use a lab, and at some point you'll need more stations. The cost goes up, not down. But if you get everyone on iPhone, it will cost less next year, and you'll have more data. You can pull research from around the world and share it, which you could never do before. Students can access it anytime, and teachers have flexibility in seeing the work. Once you start explaining that to administrators, they understand that there's something of value. But then they want to go back and do what they were doing.

One problem with all of this is that there are many administrators who are making decisions who are not focused on learning in the classroom. They're focused on metrics and data, and the direction they're supposed to be taking the school. It doesn't have a lot to do with an AHA! moment in the classroom. It might have something to do with the SAT. It often leads to, we need more tutoring, more time on task, kids need more in the subject--versus looking at a subject in a way that's more interesting, motivating and exciting. They understand the economics, but they don't understand that the very actions they're taking are mitigating against their investment. How do you get there? It takes wisdom. Give a young kid a computer and he or she will have fun and learn some stuff. But they don't necessarily get out of the classroom and have an impact.

CML: What maximizes youth empowerment in media production?

AM: The idea that young people can feel that they not only have the right but can be expected to interview somebody like the mayor. Or James Brown. Or the manager of the local store. Or someone who runs the production line at the circuit board division of a major company. Someone with an outside view of the world. When something is fascinating to students, media gives them an opportunity.

There are other components of empowerment—collaborating, having an opportunity for shared vision. If you're working on a project, everyone has some role, and some say in the direction. They're responsible, and that's empowering. Their work is needed and their opinions trusted.

And there's always the area of personal expertise. We all have that, things we're better at than others. It's not the only thing that drives a project. But when we're in an environment where we have something that we can do well, people can count on us. Our ability to shine in a particular area gets to be seen, welcomed, utilized--versus, oh, that's him, he's not worth much. That person hasn't done well for so long. It happens in a lot of schools, where some students are forever thought of as not able to do well. In a more open, collaborative environment, where students are sharing visions and exploring different topics, some kids might not have much to offer, but later they might have insights. Some kids might not be good at writing, perhaps because they're impatient. But they have very insightful ways of looking at the work. They're good at working with a camera, or interacting with a team. They have a vision of the project, or they have leadership skills. It creates a rich environment for them to learn something. Then they begin to recognize the need for writing things down, how to represent them in written form. They begin to see its purpose in achieving their goals.

When it comes to documenting the work, we have the exact same problem with teachers. Most are used to working with kids directly. They don't see the need for kids to post anything on the internet and to comment on it online. It's counterintuitive to them. They can sit and talk to a student, and say in two seconds what's wrong with the video. Why should students look at others' work and comment on it? It's inconvenient for teachers. They're not used to doing it that way. But if you get teachers doing that for a while, they'll never go back. Students share

information, the work becomes much more contextualized, and the input of the teacher becomes more insightful. Students can go back and see teacher comments. They say, oh, I better change that. It's not casual, but specific. . . . It's done all the time in the production world. You post the work to the client, and the client writes comments. They want to be convinced to do something that differs from their original concept. It's all documented. It's the way the world works, but not in schools. It's the process of creating something for an audience, an audience that's going to pay for it because it has value.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the federal Department of Labor came up with the SCANS report [Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills] it covered what we now call 21<sup>st</sup> century skills--what employers need and want from employees coming into the workplace. Employers want employees to come with a desire to learn, and the readiness to learn how to learn things. They want them to be able to collaborate and synthesize, to be creative and respectful. If you have those skills, you can learn anything. In 1992 the state of Massachusetts said, that's a good idea, and they created a Workplace Learning Plan under the Massachusetts Department of Labor. It's been in place with job readiness skill sets ever since. A statewide database was created to help use the plan as an assessment. Employees are asked a set of questions at beginning and end of each program. What skills did they want to learn? What goals were they setting for themselves? Where do they want to be at the end of the program? At the end they're asked where they were, and how they got there.

In our after school programs, we were required to administer the self-assessment with students. We decided that the Massachusetts assessment didn't tell kids anything. The kids said, "I did a good job!" Or "I needed to do something else." We decided to create what we call a "verified resume." It's not a grade, but a conversation. Kids come up with their own assessment, and we verify it. Is there a discrepancy? We look at it together. It puts the responsibility for learning on the kid. They want to learn, instead of being told to learn. We've done this for four to five years now, pretty consistently with both our afterschool and summer programs. It's been very effective with our kids. Kids like to be able to reflect on what they've done. They like having tools to think with when they're having difficulties. It's served to increase the bonds they have with the people they work with. Adults understand what they're trying to do, and respect that. It leads to surprising turns in what kids do with their lives. They might choose something other than media. In any case, they have a greater sense of control over what they're going to do next. They realize at some level that they need to think about their careers, and that reflecting on it will have value.

CML: What do you think have been some of your most youth-empowering projects, and why?

AM: Community PlanIt is a good example. Community PlanIt was developed by Eric Gordon at Emerson College. He used it initially in Chinatown as a community organizing tool. He also had a small contract to adapt the game for a planning process at English High School. The question was, how should the Boston Public Schools restructure schools in terms of busing? Which schools should be closed? The question goes all the way back to the time of

desegregation in Boston. This particular project has its core in decisions made back then. Now the School Department had to close schools. That had partly to do with budget. Eric wanted to make sure that kids' voices were represented in the game, to ensure that it was authentic. He actually hired students for the new venture. Some of our kids got involved, and we paid them.

CML: What were the components of the game itself?

AM: The game included little vignettes for different challenges that Eric and his team had identified. Eric wrote scripts with our kids. He filmed them, edited them. The game was played for six weeks in the fall, two years ago. Our kids led discussions online, and did their own video interviews around the challenges covered. And they fed those opinions into the game. At the end of project, there was a large meeting at English High School. People came from around the entire district to talk about what would happen in the fall. Kids led discussions around those challenges. They did a wonderful job. The whole process had been so contentious for years, but they had done so much work before the meeting. They would see things online, comment, have discussions back and forth. They began to really wrestle with what would be the best solutions with the schools. The district-level meetings were not contentious or ugly. Not everyone was agreeing, but instead there were thoughtful, meaningful interactions which really resonated with a lot of people. So people could actually work together. The School Department invited our kids to present their findings to the whole executive committee of Boston Public Schools. They laid out what they believed to be the important, key issues. This brings us 360 degrees back to our discussion of what turns kids on about media. People will take you seriously if you are creating media.

CML: What motivates your students to pursue production of media with media literacy principles as a guide? What do you do to support those motivations?

AM: Media literacy has historically been a point of contention. People were intent on separating good media from bad media. It's really misguided because we really need to teach kids how to make good decisions about media, to parse it and think about it. Kids need to know how to think about media, to understand if it's bogus. To be able to test it. When you're using media, you need to figure out whether something is honest, worthwhile and meaningful to you, and not meant to fool you. You need to be careful about that. You need a sense of ethics and responsibility in your own media. It comes from the work that I describe. Using media to do real things requires responsibility. It's not just about entertainment, and it does impact people.

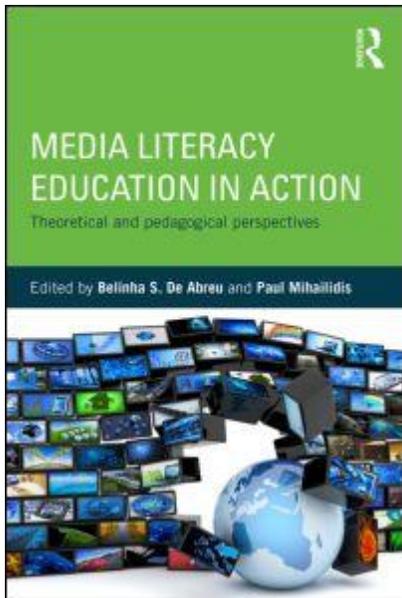
In our summer programs, we have students create advertisements. If they're trying to sell a product, they have to realize that the ad can be a spoof. We have discussions on advertising, what makes a good or bad ad. We ask, what are the roles that advertisers play? Last summer our students produced a news segment on an art program in a museum in Lexington that featured different artists interpreting the environment. In talking about the environmental story,

we also asked, how did the environment get the way it is? What products were sold? What do we know about it? What is the responsibility of the company? We get back to the point of, is media being used responsibly? Are you being fooled? Is that the intention?



### 2013 Jessie McCanse Award

The National Telemedia Council celebrated its 60th anniversary in November. Frank Baker, Barrie McMahon and Tessa Jolls were awarded the 2013 Jessie McCanse Award for their significant contributions to the field of media literacy. Marieli Rowe, NTC Executive Director, and Karen Ambrosh, NTC President, presented the awards. Celebrations were held in Madison, WI and Los Angeles, CA.



### New book edited by CML Fellow Belinha De Abreu.

Published December 2013. See press release below.

Media Literacy Education in Action

Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives

**Edited by Belinha S. De Abreu, Paul Mihailidis**

*Media Literacy Education in Action* brings together the field's leading scholars and advocates to present a snapshot of the theoretical and conceptual development of media literacy education—what has influenced it, current trends, and ideas about its future. Featuring a mix of perspectives, it explores the divergent ways in which media literacy is connected to educational communities and academic areas in both local and global contexts. The volume is structured around seven themes: Media Literacy: Past and Present, Digital Media and Learning, Global Perspectives, Public Spaces, Civic Activism, Policy and Digital Citizenship, Future Connections.

**CONSORTIUM**  
for **MEDIA LITERACY**

*Uniting for Development*

[consortiumformedia literacy.org](http://consortiumformedia literacy.org)

### About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents. The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

## Resources for Media Literacy

### Interview with Kevin Escobar, HOME, Inc.

Kevin Escobar, a graduate of HOME, Inc. programs, currently serves as a media lab coordinator and part-time producer at HOME, and studies media and communications at Emerson College.

CML: How did you first get involved with HOME, Inc.?

KE: I got hold of them in the summer before my junior year of high school. That was the summer I was involved in Teen TV [a HOME, Inc. program]. My high school video production teacher recommended the program to me. Once the summer program started, I gained a lot more experience in the field. I think it was my first time doing a summer job, and something clicked in my head—video production might be something I want to do in the future.

CML: How would you describe the relationship you had with adults at HOME?

KE: At first the summer program was kind of weird for me. I had a video production teacher in high school, and now I had this new teacher and was learning new things. A lot more people know something about this, and they can help me out. I grabbed as much information as I could. I got a lot of great advice, which I was able to use as I was going into the next year of high school.

CML: And—now that you're a media lab coordinator—what about your experience with other adults at HOME, including service year students?

KE: It's been very positive. It's been interesting for me because a lot of the service year adults are fresh out of college. I'm still in college, so they're able to connect with my college-level experience, give advice on how to handle exams, school and other things. And I'm able to connect with students who are in HOME programs because a lot of them come from English High School, and I went to English High. In turn I've been able to give them advice on how to handle life in high school.

CML: How did you make your voice heard through media production, and how did you make it heard in different programs and projects?

KE: Prior to doing the HOME, Inc. summer program, or even being introduced to video production classes, I was a very, very shy person who had a hard time expressing opinions on things. I remember not being too talkative in class, and so once I got selected to be part of the HOME, Inc. summer program and with all the things I learned there—I don't know, I just gained some sort of confidence in myself that I never knew I actually had. Being able to be a reporter and ask random people questions and to be able to talk in front of a camera—wow, I

didn't know I had this in me. . . I remember the first time that I saw Teen TV on the local public access channel. I thought, wow, this is amazing. As a young kid I never thought I would see myself on TV speaking my mind or reporting or anything like that. I'll always remember that day. The things that I learned at HOME, Inc. helped me going forward through my high school and college career. It helped me out tremendously. I was amazed that I could do all that and be on TV and let my voice be heard.

CML: What about the kids you're working with now?

KE: Video and media are a great avenue especially for young adults to get their voices heard. From what I've seen, a lot of these kids have always been told what to do and how to do things. In our programs, we have many opportunities to ask, what do you want to talk about? What are your opinions? They have such great ideas to do positive things for their communities, or to give advice for other teens who may be too scared to share their thoughts. So I think it's something very special.

CML: How have you experienced empowerment in HOME programs?

KE: I think for me--now—it's just great to see young people doing positive things. A lot of these kids come up from tough neighborhoods. My neighborhood wasn't bad, but certainly nothing to match the suburbs. It's been great for me to help these kids try to stay positive and stay away from all the negative things happening in the neighborhoods they're coming from. There are so many great things you can do with media. I know kids—all of them males—who want to be rappers, and music artists. I tell them you can do that if you work hard, stay in school and apply the knowledge we're giving you to other things. You can pretty much do what you want. It's all about sacrifice and hard work, and keeping a positive attitude.

CML: How have HOME, Inc. programs prepared you for college and career?

KE: When I did the summer program before my junior year of high school that was the starting point, realizing that I might have an interest in this. After graduating from high school I decided on video and media production because I was good at it and had experience with it. I got into the Suffolk University communication program, and did pretty well with it given all the experience I had in HOME, Inc programs. Right now I'm a part-time student at Emerson College, and I'm working part-time at HOME producing videos for other non-profits or clients who want to do something with media. Also, at HOME, Inc. I'm a Teen TV media lab coordinator. I teach teens about video production together with the service year adults.

CML: How did media production at HOME inform the rest of your school experience?

KE: When I first got to HOME, I had no idea what I wanted to do. Coming into my junior year, I didn't know what I was good at, what I liked. With the help of the program and the teachers, I realized that I really liked it. I don't know what I would be doing if I hadn't gone through

HOME. I know that I would have pursued college—I know that much. I probably would have gone to a liberal arts college. Because I found out about HOME, Inc., I knew what I wanted to do. Basically the college process was much easier because I was only interested in schools with media and communications programs. Otherwise, the process would have been so much more hectic.

CML: And in the high school environment itself?

KE: After doing the HOME, Inc. summer program, I took every video production elective available. It was great for me because--with everything I had learned--I was able to help out other kids. In my high school we had our own newscast called ETV. It was my video production teacher who took a chance on me and decided for me to be one of the anchors for the sports desk for the show. Now I was not only able to do things behind the scenes, but could be in front of the camera reporting and expressing myself.

CML: What interests or subjects have you explored through media production?

KE: One of my projects now is a book review show. I'm not the biggest fan of reading, but just doing the show helped me explore other genres of books that interest me now, like books about media, film and production. . . .As a lab coordinator for the summer program, we've interviewed a lot of great people, and done amazing stories. I helped kids do interviews, and the people that we've interviewed have been great. One of the stories we did was on Karmaloop, an online fashion site. That sticks out because the founder and owner of the site was raised in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, where I'm from. It's also where English High is. All of us were able to interview him. His whole thing was about entrepreneurship. The fact that we were able to interview him and go to his office was exciting. He started out in his parents' basement and now he's near the downtown area, and has this great business. It's a perfect example of what I mentioned before. You start with the small things you have, and if you work hard, you'll be able to achieve so much—perhaps more than you can imagine now.

CML: What was the process of production, critique and revision like for you?

KE: My first project for Teen TV was this story about a group called Tenacity, a non-profit teaching young kids how to play tennis, and how to read books. I remember it was one of my first stories, and I was so excited to do it. I went down there, interviewed people, got great shots of kids, and the cameraman got a great shot of me playing with the kids. When I edited it, I thought, this is such a great story. Finally, when they decided to screen projects to show off what had been done, one of the lab coordinators started critiquing my piece, saying maybe this shot would have been better there. I was thinking, No! What are you guys talking about! This project is perfect, it's great! Looking back, I realized that the coordinators could have just said that it was great, but they were looking at the little things to make the overall project better. As media lab coordinators they wanted to make sure that kids put the best product out there. I didn't understand that as a student. They were also making sure that our pieces tied

in with other stories, and fit with the themes of the show. I finally got the idea—critiquing is not about the bad things that you do, but what you can do better next time, with the next project.

CML: In our interview with Alan Michel, he talked about the verified resume as an assessment tool. What has been your experience with the verified resume?

KE: This past summer was the first time I used it with kids. I just basically sat down with the kids, and said we're going to do this thing -- it's basically a self-assessment tool. We want to know how you will assess yourself from beginning to end. If you want to get another job, or get into college, it's great to put this in with all the other things in your portfolio. We had 16 kids and four lab coordinators, so we sat with each kid one by one and started the process of asking them a series of questions, and asked them to rate themselves. One of the things that kids gave themselves a low rating for had to do with how well they expressed themselves when given a critique. A lot of kids gave themselves a 4—"I would just keep quiet." By the end of the program, we saw that average go up. Some scored themselves an 8: "I can handle critique. I can take criticism and apply it." It's interesting to see how, in the beginning, they weren't too sure of themselves, but, by the end of the program, they felt, I can do it now.

## Med!aLit Moments

### World of Spycraft

Most players of massively multiplayer online role-playing games are familiar with “trolls”—players who hide behind the anonymity of their avatars to harass other players. But, as a recent *New York Times* story reveals, these are not the only users who exploit multiplayer online games for purposes not intended by producers. International government agencies have infiltrated Blizzard Entertainment’s *World of Warcraft*, “trolling” for intelligence on potential terrorist plots carried out online. In this MediaLit Moment, your middle school students will work with the media triangle (of text, producer and user/audience) to consider the different kinds of players who inhabit online game spaces.

*Ask students to compare differing uses of online game spaces*

**AHA!** I thought it’s just the ‘sys-ads’ who look at what I do in online games, but the government might be doing that, too!

**Grade Level:** 6-8

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

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

**Materials:** computer with high speed internet access; LCD projector and screen

Story from digital edition of *New York Times*, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/10/world/spies-drag-net-reaches-a-playing-field-of-elves-and-trolls.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/10/world/spies-drag-net-reaches-a-playing-field-of-elves-and-trolls.html?_r=0)

Reference: Mazzetti, Mark, and Justin Elliot. “Spies Infiltrate a Fantasy Realm of Online Games.” *New York Times* online 9 December 2013.

#### **Activity:**

Ask students what they know about massively multiplayer games. Not everyone in your class will be familiar with them, so enlist the help of students experienced with such games, if needed. Do they know that the makers of the games are able to view their in-game activity? Why do they think Blizzard Entertainment does that? As it turns out, the great bulk of monitoring is done to enforce its end user license agreement—to enforce penalties for players who “grief” other players, cheat the game, or use game content or system files in a way that violates Blizzard’s copyright.

Play the video that accompanies the print story. Display excerpts from the print story as needed, or simply present key facts during discussion. Some background should be given on Edward Snowden’s leaking of documents revealing the scope of NSA domestic surveillance programs.

Use a media triangle diagram to highlight the novelty of the relationships involved. How do they feel about being 'shoulder to shoulder' with secret government agents as users of the same game space? Direct students' attention to KQ/CC#5, and ask them to consider the differing purposes of game producers and government agencies for monitoring games.

If time permits, stick with KQ/CC#5, and ask students why they think a print-oriented publication like NYT created a video which includes so many scenes of *World of Warcraft* gameplay.

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