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## Theme: U.S. Department of Education

### **The Consortium for Media Literacy Goes to Washington!**

In March 2008, the US Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology convened an information session on media literacy that was open to all department employees. Kimberly Brodie, Special Assistant in the Office of Educational Technology, led the discussion. Tessa Jolls of the Consortium was an invited speaker, as well as Doug Levin of Cable in the Classroom, the U.S. cable industry's education foundation.

Over the last several years, the Office of Educational Technology has sought to capitalize on the opportunities that new technologies provide for instructional improvement. For example, the Office supports the development of distance mentoring programs to help working teachers fulfill their professional development requirements.

This conference is a first-time acknowledgment by the Department that media literacy -- education that focuses on new technologies as a subject for study -- should be considered for inclusion in the Department's agenda.

Both Jolls and Levin directly addressed that need during the conference. In speaking about the technological divide between many parents and their children, Levin remarked, "They know the buttons to push, but we do have adult guidance to give about how to make good choices, how to be critical thinkers, how to identify bias and point of view, and these are skills that we need to impart to our children. . . .If you look at the formal educational system, many district and state policies have yet to strike the right balance with technology and media use. Those policies take advantage of all the wonderful opportunities new technologies have to provide, but they also need to address the challenges those technologies bring." Later in the presentation, Jolls responded, "The most common feedback that we get from teachers, as Doug said, is that students have technology skills, and the teachers recognize that, but what they often don't have is the critical thinking skills, the process skills for analyzing, accessing, evaluating, and creating media, and for participating in a media culture."

Jolls also introduced Department employees to the new CML framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts called Questions/Tips (Q/TIPS™).

At the end of the conference, both Jolls and Levin fielded a number of questions about the risks children face when they use new technologies. One asked them to respond to the problem of children routinely using unreliable sources of online information such as Wikipedia. One asked about the steps that the cable television industry has taken to limit children's exposure to potentially harmful content. After reviewing what the industry had done, Levin reminded the audience that no safeguard or control could ever be a substitute for education. Jolls added that there is no substitute for professional development of teachers in the educational process, and that many teachers need a year of training and professional development before they can effectively implement a media literacy curriculum in the classroom. "But once they start using a methodology like media literacy, they can't get the kids to stop talking! They're really engaged, they really want to contribute to the classroom experience."

## Research Highlights

### **Partners in Innovation: Achieve, Inc.**

Of all the educational organizations devoted to curricular reform, Achieve, Inc. stands out as a leader in the field. Its detailed articulation of national English & Communications and Mathematics benchmarks has served as a model for many states as they attempt to re-draw their own standards for instruction.

Achieve emerged from a conversation joined by many different partners. In recent years, the nation's governors have gathered five times with business and education leaders to discuss critical actions necessary to improve America's system of public education. At the Summit convened in 1996, the nation's governors and business leaders pledged to work together, state by state, to raise standards and achievement in public schools. The '96 Summit also led to the creation of Achieve, Inc., which was designed to help states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability. Achieve then hosted Summits in 1999, 2001 and 2005.

One of the most common criticisms voiced at these summits was that most state high school standards are not anchored in the skills and knowledge employers and colleges demand. Students can graduate from high school and believe they've done well, but still find themselves unprepared for work and learning. As Microsoft's Bill Gates remarked at the 2005 summit, "Even when high schools are working as designed, they can not teach all our students what they need to know today." Through one of its latest initiatives, the American Diploma Project, Achieve has been working to help states align their standards with these real-world skills. In 2004, Achieve, in partnership with The Education Trust and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, released its report *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts*, which included a series of English and mathematics benchmarks. Achieve has been using these benchmarks to enlist state education departments in a single Network of ADP states. Thirty-three states have joined the Network to date.

For the last several years, CML has promoted the development of national standards for instruction because a new set of standards could include benchmarks for media literacy. And national standards could help define critical thinking skills--especially as they are used in media education activities--for districts as they plan their course offerings, and for teachers as they plan lessons whose learning objectives include these skills. Since the publication of *Ready or Not*, Achieve has refined its benchmarks to help make them increasingly accessible to districts and teachers. In doing so, Achieve has essentially outlined the purpose and methods of media literacy instruction for educators across the United States. Its English and Communications benchmarks include two "strands" for "viewing" and "producing digital media," each of which includes a sequence of required tasks from grades 4 through 12. Each strand also delineates the critical thinking skills which students gain as they complete the tasks described. In addition, Achieve has published a variety of college assignments and "workplace tasks" along with its benchmarks which clearly demonstrate how benchmark skills are used on an everyday basis outside of the high school classroom. For example, a scenario is given in which a loan officer evaluates a loan application from an aircraft company, and links are given to the relevant sections in the English and mathematics

benchmarks for the skills the officer used in evaluating the loan.

In pledging his state's commitment to American Diploma Projects goals, Ohio Governor Bob Taft remarked that joining the ADP Network was "the biggest step a state can take to ensure that more of their students are truly prepared for college, work and citizenship."

**NAMLE: New Name, Same Great Organization. . .and a New Marketplace**

Earlier this year, board members of the Alliance for a Media Literate America voted to change its name to the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). As always, the organization remains committed to bringing together a broad-based coalition of media literacy practitioners and advocates from diverse fields and perspectives, and to bringing high quality media literacy education to all students in the United States.

In 2003 AMLA received a grant from the US Department of Education to design, deliver and evaluate a model media-arts education curriculum. In 2007 the National Media Education Conference in St. Louis featured over one hundred presentations and drew over three hundred participants. And the organization is continuing to grow--often in directions that the original members of the Partnership for Media Education could hardly have imagined when they began work on founding a national membership organization just over ten years ago.

In May 2008, NAMLE opened the Marketplace store on its website. The Marketplace incorporates and expands the Center for Media Literacy's former Resource Catalog, whose books, DVDs and other materials chronicled the evolution of media literacy pedagogy and practice from 1990 to 2005. The current NAMLE Marketplace features over 200 titles which have been tested and treasured by media educators across the United States. The catalog can be searched by a variety of terms, including keywords, and NAMLE members receive a 5% discount on all titles, along with free shipping. Elizabeth Thoman, founder of the Center for Media Literacy, is the coordinator for the site, and she looks forward to hearing your feedback or suggestions for additional products, especially new titles that the Marketplace might help to launch.

# Med!aLit moments

## Introducing MediaLit Moments!

We are pleased to introduce a series of MediaLit Moments – short clips and/or activities that provide teachable ‘AHA’ moments to illustrate one of the *Five Key Questions* for media literacy.

Designed for ease of use in the classroom, lessons require limited preparation and are easily downloadable.

Take a look at this month’s MediaLit Moment: *Going for Gold: Ads from the Olympic Games* (see page 7)

## CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

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*Uniting for Development*

## 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.

## Media Literacy Resources

**Tip of the month:** Develop a common vocabulary around media literacy within your classroom and learning community. Once there is a common understanding of the *Five Core Concepts* and *Five Key Questions*, progress in applying media literacy is rapid.

### Featured sites in this issue:

Achieve, Inc. [www.Achieve.org](http://www.Achieve.org)

Cable in the Classroom [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org)

U.S. Department of Education [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

National Association for Media Literacy Education [www.namele.net](http://www.namele.net)

Consortium for Media Literacy [www.consortiumformedia literacy.org](http://www.consortiumformedia literacy.org)

### Express Yourself!

We invite you to write your Congressional representative to express the need for media literacy education in our schools [www.house.gov/writerep](http://www.house.gov/writerep)

## Med!aLit Moments

### Going for Gold: Ads from the Olympic Games

Advertisers often create different ads to sell the same product to different (niche) audiences. They spend large amounts of research time and money to determine what appeals to certain audiences. Television advertisers for the Beijing Summer Olympics used a number of strategies to market their brands, and creating a sense of heightened emotional participation in the lives of athletes was one of the most common--and popular--approaches advertisers used. With this Media Lit Moment, you can help students identify some of the responses advertisers hoped to elicit from viewers of the summer games.

Have students investigate their responses to an advertisement about a famous Olympic defeat (Visa).

**AHA!** This advertiser knows I'm a fan of the Olympic Games and has targeted this ad to me to stir my emotions. They want me to like their brand because I like the Olympics!

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

**Core Concept #3:** Different people experience the same media message differently.

**Grade Level:** middle school +

**Materials:** Still frame from or entire advertisement by Visa for Beijing Olympics which narrates the injury and defeat of Derek Redmond in a 1992 summer games track event. Computer with internet access and projection screen; OR overhead projector and transparency for still shot.

**Resources:** Article on Olympic advertisements from August 18th Wall Street Journal online, which includes a free video link to the advertisement.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121901681793648157.html> And/or sample still shot from:

[http://www.astropix.com/SPORTSPIX/OLYMPICS/1992/92\\_11.HTM](http://www.astropix.com/SPORTSPIX/OLYMPICS/1992/92_11.HTM)

**Activity:** The camera and the narration for this ad devote significant attention to the athlete's pained expressions and Redmond's father helping him walk to the finish line. Have the students talk about the image(s) and the emotions they evoke. What is their response to the close-ups of Redmond in his moment of defeat? What do they think/feel about the presence of Redmond's father in the scene? What does this ad make them think or feel about the Olympic Games in general? What kind of response do they think the advertiser hoped they would have? Why would Visa create this ad? (Visa is not only promoting its product, but its sponsorship of the 2008 summer games).

**Encourage Further Discussion:** Use the Wall Street Journal article to discuss television advertisements for the Olympics in a broader context. The article discusses the pricing of ads, Nielsen rankings for most popular ads, and the different types of ads which tended to be the most popular. The online article also includes free links to about fifteen of the most popular ads, including a few ads for Chinese audiences.

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, © 2002-2008, Center for Media Literacy, [www.medialit.com](http://www.medialit.com)