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## Theme: Criteria for Media Literacy Instruction

The digital media sphere has been exploding over the last several years, and one result of that explosion is the increasing presence of digital media being used by children of all ages. In turn, schools themselves are trying to keep pace with their students by incorporating digital, non-print media into their instruction. This is an exciting time for media literacy advocates since the scramble to keep up with technology is driving the need for media literacy education like no other time since television. “Today, seven year-olds can edit films on i-Movie or any other program, and in our research, they are doing that. There is a danger of confusing media education with technology,” David Buckingham, Professor of Media and Communications in the School of Social Sciences at Loughborough University stated. “This is a very dangerous moment for us. How do we insist on critical dimensions of media literacy being important at a point when everybody seems to be rushing to get kids doing very functional things with technology, as though by wiring them up we are somehow going to solve the world’s problems?” (quote from [Voices of Media Literacy](#), David Buckingham interview). The advent of “new” media does not necessarily mandate a “new” approach to teaching media literacy.

CML’s Q/TIPS Framework with Five Key Questions and Core Concepts for consumers *and* producers is easily applied to all media messages regardless of modality or device (chart appears on page 3). CML’s approach to media literacy education is founded on the premise that one’s relationship to media is not defined by the latest technological advancement but rather by the ability to think critically about all media messages regardless of the messenger. Indeed, new types of media and new technology will continue to bring new ideas to the field and new ideas spur advancement, but a strong foundation in the critical “reading” and “writing” of media texts must not be overlooked in our search for something “new.”

As CML President Tessa Jolls states in her paper submitted to the UNESCO International Conference in Moscow, June 2012, “What makes one media literate is understanding media as a system of representation, and being able to both deconstruct and construct media. It is the critical thinking APPLIED to production in a SYSTEMATIC way that makes a person media literate. In teaching, it is teaching ABOUT media rather than just teaching WITH media that distinguishes a media literacy pedagogy. This explains why having a credible framework for media literacy is essential.”

This issue of *Connections* begins with an article outlining criteria for assessing media education, and we review the substantive workshops and cutting-edge presentations recently offered at Gateway Media Literacy Partners’ Media Literacy Week in Saint Louis. In addition, we report on the successful rollout of one Georgia school district’s “Bring Your Own Technology” initiative. And in the MediaLit Moment for this issue, news stories originating from the chaos of Superstorm Sandy give your students an opportunity to grapple with the challenges of establishing the validity of a news report in a time of crisis.

**Media Deconstruction/Construction Framework**

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

## Research Highlights

### Criteria for Assessing the Use of Media in Instruction

From the publication of the Key Questions and Core Concepts of Media Literacy to the publication of the Media Literacy Trilogy to the paper submitted for the recent Conference on Media and Information Literacy in Moscow, CML has advanced a consistent set of principles for media literacy instruction. These also form the basis for evaluating educational programs which utilize media in instruction. Exemplary programs should fulfill the following requirements:

- Teach *about* the media, and not just *with* media
- Help students understand media as a system of representation for oneself and others
- Engage students in critical “reading” and “writing” of media texts
- Foster habits of critical thinking which can motivate students to engage in sustained inquiry with media texts
- Provide opportunities for practice with key media literacy questions and core media literacy concepts through an accessible framework easily applied
- Encourage students to examine media from multiple perspectives, including differing audience viewpoints
- Encourage students to engage personally--not just intellectually--in making meaning from the media they consume and produce

This list, of course, delivers the criteria in condensed form. We expand on the implications of each here:

#### Teaching about, rather than with media, and Teaching media as a system of representation

The most common misconception about media literacy education is that it revolves around the use of media to engage students. In other words, media are used as an instructional aid. But using media in this way misses important and exciting opportunities for students to turn the lens of inquiry on the makers of media themselves. Someone actually created the media product, and intended it to have an effect on an audience. Who made it? What are their interests? Do they have a particular point of view? Questions like these lead directly to the principle that all media are constructed, and to the principle that all media generally function as a system of representation. In the early 1980s, Len Masterman argued that “media are actively involved in processes of *constructing* or *representing* ‘reality’ rather than transmitting or reflecting it” (*Teaching the Media*, 20, emphasis in original).

#### Engage students in critical reading and writing of media texts

In our current era of digital media, general consumers and educational technology professionals alike tend to miss the fact that human attitudes and points of view are actually built into the devices they use to access the media. As we discussed in a recent issue of *Connections*, the mechanics of a video game actually reflect the game designers’ values and habits of thought. Are those game mechanics literally a text? Maybe not, but if players are to understand the influences which the game might have on their own thinking, it’s highly useful

to approach the game as a text as well. Educators who use media in the classroom should be prepared to help students evaluate any media product as a persuasive text, and to provide structured opportunities for them to engage in close readings of those texts. Moreover, instruction in close reading provides students with the groundwork for reflective, creative production of their own media texts.

### *Foster habits of critical thinking*

Students should be able to evaluate and appreciate media texts on their own, not least because these are skills they will need to make sense of the relationship they will have with media for the rest of their lives. For their part, teachers need to help students ask productive questions about the media they encounter and that they make. Asking productive questions involves critical thinking skills which most curricula in the disciplines rarely address--yet these are essential *learning* skills.

### *Provide opportunities for practice with key questions and core concepts*

Many different media education organizations, including CML, publish a set of key questions or principles which can help students engage in critical inquiry with media texts. Guided practice with the Five Key Questions and Core Concepts helps students internalize the process by which they can effectively investigate media and produce media.

In addition, the CML Framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts functions as a curricular template, and can ensure that a media education program which succeeded in one classroom will succeed in another. Media education programs which are *consistent, measurable, replicable, and scalable* meet the highest benchmarks of quality, and educators and administrators alike can practice with the Framework to build such programs.

### *Examine media from multiple perspectives*

With the advent of cultural studies scholarship in the 1980s, it became clear that the meaning of media texts did not simply reflect the intentions of the producers, but were determined at least in part by the way in which audiences responded to them. In other words, we all read different “versions” of the same media text. By implication, teachers and programs which steer students towards a preferred reading and writing of media texts unreasonably limit the scope of their inquiry. Exploration of media texts should be student-driven, not teacher-centered.

### *Encourage students to personally engage in making meaning from media*

Just because students like to watch certain programs or play certain games doesn't mean that they'll always be interested in conducting close reading of those texts. They need to feel like they have something at stake in the act of reading and writing media. Why does it matter? What difference will it make? Students who feel like they have a stake in the answers are likely to be interested in exploring the questions together as well. The CML Empowerment Spiral of Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action is intended to provide a loose framework for encouraging personal and social engagement with media.

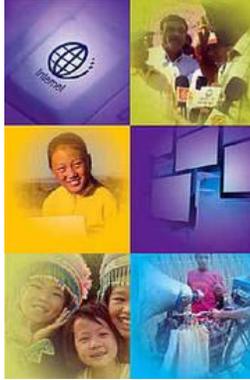
## Gateway Media Literacy Partners Hosts Sixth Annual Media Literacy Week

Gateway Media Literacy Partners, a non-profit organization devoted to media literacy awareness and practice across the Saint Louis region, convened its sixth annual Media Literacy Week from October 28<sup>th</sup> to November 4<sup>th</sup>. The theme for the event was International Media Literacy: A Basic Human Right? Alton Grizzle, co-manager of UNESCO's global actions on media and information literacy, delivered the keynote address.

Each year, a network of educational institutions, including the Co-Operating School Districts of Greater Saint Louis, Webster University, Lindenwood University, Saint Louis Community College-Meramec, host the 'staple' events for each Media Literacy Week. This year these included a seminar at CSD with Cable in the Classroom Executive Director Frank Gallagher on the intersections between the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Framework and media literacy education; a sixth annual best practices conference for K-12 educators; a panel on strategies for implementing media literacy across the curriculum; an academic symposium, and an international media literacy seminar featuring a panel of students and instructors from Soliya Connect, a cross-cultural "Exchange 2.0" program affiliated with the UN Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.

Media Literacy Week included a diverse array of special events, from presentations on media literacy and career choice, augmented reality technologies as a vehicle for media literacy learning, and a tour of an urban design exhibit at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum curated by a resident media literacy educator. With the Presidential election just around the corner, Media Literacy Week offerings included two panels of journalists on media messaging in the 2012 campaign, and a screening of a film on the controversial Koch Brothers followed by a Q&A with director Robert Greenwald of Brave New Films.

For more on Gateway Media Literacy Partners, you may access their website, blog and twitter feed at: [www.gmlpstl.org](http://www.gmlpstl.org) You may also wish to visit the *Connections* archive at the Consortium for Media Literacy website. Our July 2011 issue on *Media Literacy in the Community* includes a story on Gateway Media Literacy Partners and features excerpts of interviews with Art Greenblatt and GMLP President Jessica Z. Brown.



Click image for more information about the UNESCO International Conference

### UNESCO International Conference Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Societies

CML President Tessa Jolls was invited to present a paper for the conference held in Moscow by the Russian Federation in June 2012.

Jolls' paper titled *Media Literacy: The Foundation for Anywhere, Anytime Learning* stresses that the process skills of media literacy must be taught, applied and internalized by new generations of avid media consumers.

*Media and information literacy is directly linked to UNESCO's mandate and strategic objectives oriented to build inclusive knowledge societies.*  
UNESCO web site November 2012

Read [\*Media Literacy: The Foundation for Anywhere, Anytime Learning\*](#)

## CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

*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.

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

## Resources for Media Literacy

**Teaching Tip:** Reinforce the Key Words for media literacy by using them in your classroom on a daily basis: Authorship, Format, Audience, Content, and Purpose.

### Georgia School District Launches “Bring Your Own Technology” Initiative

In the spring of this year, the Forsyth County School District in Georgia pioneered a “Bring Your Own Technology” policy in its schools. Though participation by teachers is entirely voluntary, BYOT classrooms are available in all schools in the county.

According to district technology coordinator Tim Clark, the introduction of the policy has fostered an atmosphere of trust and respect. In an interview with Anne Collier of Net Family News, Clark remarks, “Just having every student bring his or her own device – cellphone, tablet, gameplayer, laptop, etc. – communicates respect for individuality and individual interests, and you build from there.” Clark reflects, “It happens to all of us – we need to find commonalities, talk about things we feel safe about, before we have good discussions about parts of speech or social studies.”

In the district’s FAQ on the bring-your-own-technology initiative, the answer to the question “What hurdles have you faced since implementation?” is somewhat surprising. Those hurdles are neither technical nor behavioral, but pedagogical: “Many secondary teachers are used to direct instruction, yet differentiation, collaboration and inquiry results from the implementation of project-based learning with BYOT. . . Furthermore, many high school students are not used to learning from their device – they have used them for personal uses, and they need to have teachers facilitate use by asking the right questions. . . For example, the teacher often has to know how to give suggestions for different activities and projects. . [and] has to ask students how they think they can learn with their devices.”

Discipline problems have actually decreased since the implementation of the initiative. According to the FAQ: “It is surprising in some ways how normal it seems with the devices in school.”

Though the BYOT initiative allows room for spontaneity, flexibility and customized learning, preparation and planning for the initiative has been extensive. District board members have engaged in personal learning with iPads and other devices. The district upgraded security features on its network, and upgraded both internet and wireless connections. Professional development training was provided for 40 teachers in 7 district schools, and the district now provides each school with an instructional technology specialist and a media specialist with expertise in facilitating learning experiences in BYOT and project-based learning design.

To learn more about the BYOT initiative, visit these sites:

Forsyth Technology and Information Services <http://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/page/824>

Net Family News <http://www.netfamilynews.org/all-kinds-of-learning-all-at-once-with-byot>

## Med!aLit Moments

### Looking for Truth When the Lights Are Out

Accessing timely, reliable information is of paramount importance during a severe weather event, and yet, in an era of multiplying media platforms, consumers are reaching for a variety of media, including social media, as sources of breaking news during such events. Dissemination of false news reports may increase substantially, if not exponentially at such times. In this MediaLit Moment, a false news item generated during Hurricane Sandy provides a real-world scenario for exploring principles of information credibility and grappling with questions of journalistic ethics.

#### **Ask students to examine the trail of sources associated with a false news report**

**AHA!:** Establishing the validity of a news report isn't always easy!

Key Question #1: Who created this message?

Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed

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

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

**Grade Level:** 9+

**Materials:** Handout of news story from Poynter Institute; or computer with internet connection, LCD projector and classroom screen

**Activity:** Hook students by asking them what they know about the Internet as a source for false news reports. Did they see any false reports for Hurricane Sandy?

Display or distribute the following story on the false report of flooding at the New York Stock Exchange from Poynter Institute, a national organization devoted to teaching the writing and critical reading of news:

<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/193564/cnn-weather-channel-inaccurately-report-that-new-york-stock-exchange-is-under-3-feet-of-water/>

When students have finished reading the story, ask whether they believe it had been appropriate for Piers Morgan and other CNN commentators to rely on the information they had at their disposal and pass on the story that the NYSE had been flooded. Why or why not? Why does it matter? During the discussion, make sure to ask which sources of information mentioned in the story they believe to be the most credible and why. Direct their attention to Key Question #1.

**Extended Activity:** On the same night that the National Weather Service confirmed that this was a false report, reporters from BuzzFeed, a news and social media site, identified a single Twitter post from a user with the handle @snuglycomfortable as the source. They also claimed to identify the user. And indeed, the next day, Shashank Tripathi, a Wall Street hedge fund analyst, tweeted an apology for this and other deliberately misleading posts he made during the storm, and resigned from his position as a manager for a local Congressional campaign. Ask students, what did Tripathi do wrong? Should he also have to pay a legal penalty? Also ask students to consider the medium of Twitter. Is it reasonable for audiences to trust news from this source, or is it entirely suspect? Direct students' attention to Key Questions #1 and #2.

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, © 2002-2012, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>