

Response to

In the Matter of)

)

Empowering Parents and Protecting Children)

MB Docket No. 09-194

in an Evolving Media Landscape)

February 1, 2010

To the Commission:

Thank you for opening a Notice of Inquiry on this issue. Mass media, the Internet and mobile media technologies pose challenging issues for parents, and today advocates around the nation and the globe are figuring out how to best protect children from online risks, while still encouraging their positive use.¹ The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) and the Media Education Lab at Temple University are interested in addressing this issue, not only to protect children, but to empower them to use mass media and digital media technologies for their greatest benefit.²

In Part I of this response to MB Docket NO. 09-194, we respond to questions asked about media literacy in the home. In Part II of this response, we offer a review of what is known about the benefits of media literacy education in the context of K-12 education. Research and practice in media literacy over the last 25+ years lies primarily in work with school and afterschool programs, where media literacy educators have been working to expand the quality of instructional practice in schools. In Part III, we propose recommendations for initiatives needed to make every citizen media literate and to help engage parents in their children’s use of new media technologies.

I. MEDIA LITERACY IN THE HOME

The majority of media consumption by youth occurs in the home, so parents and caregivers can support their children’s understanding of the value, use, and enjoyment of media. Media literacy educators advocate strategies that encourage critical thinking, “habits of mind,” and responsible communication through media, which we believe is the

¹ For discussion of the complexity of risks that children face online, see Staksrud, E., & Livingstone, S. (2009). *Children and the online risk: Powerless victims or resourceful participants? Information, Communication & Society*, 2:3, 364-387.

² National Association for Media Literacy Education, www.namle.net
Media Education Lab at Temple University, www.mediaeducationlab.com

most effective solution for media literacy education in the home. It is important to distinguish between media literacy and media management, however. Below, we share a review of research evidence on parental monitoring and provide a review of media literacy education initiatives for parents and families.

A. MEDIA LITERACY IS NOT THE SAME AS MEDIA MANAGEMENT.

The FCC's use of the term "media literacy" is not necessarily used in the same way that media literacy experts understand the concept. We distinguish between the terms *media literacy* and *media management*, which are two different practices.

1) Media Literacy: Focus on Critical Thinking and Communication Skills

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms³ that "requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create."⁴ Media literacy expands traditional conceptualizations of literacy to include reading and writing using mass media, popular culture and digital communication tools using an inquiry-based, process-oriented pedagogy.⁵ Media literacy includes both the ability to *critically analyze media* and the *ability to create media messages in many forms*. Traditionally, media literacy educators have emphasized exploration of news, advertising, entertainment and popular culture.⁶ Now educators are exploring how media literacy concepts and pedagogy apply to digital technologies and online social media. Sometimes the two concepts together are referred to as "digital and media literacy."

Few media literacy educators today would claim that media literacy education inoculates or protects children or young people from the negative influence of the media. Over the last ten years in countries where media education has been practiced for decades, there has been a slow movement away from such "protectionist" views. The protectionist approach creates a barrier between teachers and students and does not allow students to discuss the pleasure they experience from the media, the changing relationships of young people with the media (including the Internet), and the positive experiences and pleasures most Americans draw from media and digital technologies.⁷

Media literacy educators consider their work to be a form of "preparation--- preparing students to be reflexive participants in their media experiences (including iPods,

³ Aufderheide, P., Ed. (1993). *Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy*. Aspen, CO: Aspen Institute: p. xx.

⁴ National Association of Media Literacy Education. (2007). *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*. Core Principal #1. <http://namle.net/core-principles>

⁵ Thoman, E. and Jolls, T. (2004). Media literacy--A national priority for a changing world. *American Behavioral Scientist* 48: 18-29. p. 21

⁶ Hobbs, R. (2008). Debates and challenges facing new literacies in the 21st century. In S. Livingstone and K. Drotner (Eds.), *International Handbook of Children, Media, and Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: pp. 1-38. p. 434.

⁷ Tyner, K. R. (1998). *Literacy in a digital world: Teaching and learning in the age of information*. Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum.

streaming video, DVDs, video games and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook). Also, with the increased accessibility to modern technologies, creative media production takes on a greater role.”⁸

Digital and media literacy in the home includes supporting a set of “habits of mind,” strategies that parents use to encourage their children to 1) build awareness of the uses of media and technology; 2) critically analyze the construction, purpose, and meaning of media messages; and 3) create, communicate, and connect with media in ways that are beneficial and enriching. Historically, very little federal funding for research has been available to examine the practice of media literacy in the home among parents and families of different cultural backgrounds and life histories.

Examples of digital and media literacy in the home include:

- Considering habits and routines of media and technology use in the family to determine what function they serve
- Asking questions⁹ about the author, purpose, point of view, and meanings of media in everyday conversation, such as when co-surfing with child while watching television or when on the computer
- Helping children understand the difference between online advertisements and website content.
- Discussing the ethical treatment of one’s self and others online (privacy, sharing, interacting with others, etc.)
- Encouraging “creative time” with online media to produce content in positive, enriching ways that connect with a child’s interests and extends school learning

Parent media literacy education also addresses an awareness of media as it influences the development of children, including topics such as hyper-materialism; violence and aggressive behavior; norms of civility, politeness and respect for others; body image and identity; media’s impact on nutrition, food choices, exercise and health; and media stereotyping and its influence on attitudes about people and cultures. It is important to note that media literacy is not “media bashing” that offers a simplistic anti-media perspective since it acknowledges the fun and pleasurable aspects in using media and technology, such as how it can bring us closer together. The practice of media management does not generally emphasize this.¹⁰

⁸ Tobias, J.A. (2008). Culturally relevant media studies: A review of approaches and pedagogies. *SIMILE* 8(4), 1- 17. Retrieved January 15, 2010 from <http://utpjournals.metapress.com/content/p97gt543k516727m/> (p. 3).

⁹ Share, J., Jolls, T., & Thoman, E. (2007). *Five key questions that can change the world: Deconstruction*. Center for Media Literacy. Retrieved Jan 8, 2010, from http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article661.html

¹⁰ Buckingham, D. (1998). Media education in the UK: Moving beyond protectionism. *Journal of Communication*, 48, 33-43.

2) Media Management: Focus on Parental Monitoring and Control

The term media management refers to parental *monitoring and control* of access to media and technology and to some types of media content in order to ensure that media use supports healthy child development. The goals of media management are to protect children against risk, counteract negative media effects, and promote a healthy lifestyle through restriction, limiting, or monitoring media.¹¹ Some who promote media management may conceptualize media literacy as a *treatment* or *intervention* to counteract negative media effects, without acknowledging media literacy as an expanded conceptualization of literacy.¹² Some of the language used in the FCC NOI appears to conflate media literacy and media management.

To address parental fears about risks such as Internet predators, cyberbullying, pornography, privacy, and addiction, parent Internet education programs may heavily-handedly address these fears by recommending media management. Examples of media management include:

- Having rules about how long kids can be online;
- Having rules about what websites they can visit, how they can interact with others, and what they can do online;
- Using filtering/blocking/monitoring tools that restrict access to certain websites, applications, or content and/or tracks children's online behavior.

For some parents, media management may be a useful parenting strategy because it “emphasizes the importance of transforming passive, habitual media use into intentional, active and strategic use as a response to the negative dimensions of mass media and popular culture.”¹³ In other words, although the goal of media management is to limit and protect children from risk, it may also promote heightened awareness about choices and consequences of media and technology consumption and use.

While awareness about media consumption is a component of media literacy, media literacy also includes components of analysis, reflection, communication and action. Therefore, although media management could be part of a parents' toolbox, it does not equate to media literacy and should not be endorsed as the only solution needed to help children become media literate.

¹¹ Hobbs, R. (2006) Multiple visions of multimedia literacy: Emerging areas of synthesis. In *Handbook of literacy and technology*, Volume II. International Reading Association. Michael McKenna, Linda Labbo, Ron Kieffer and David Reinking, Editors. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (pp. 15 -28).

¹² Hobbs, p. 436

¹³ Hobbs, p. 436

B. NEITHER PARENTAL RULES ABOUT TIME AND CONTENT NOR FILTERING TOOLS ARE AS EFFECTIVE AS ACTIVE CONVERSATIONAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

1) Family media and technology use is complex and varied.

Young people aged 8-18 report spending 2 ¼ hours per day just “hanging out” with family members, where TV watching is the most common form of media families share together, and where siblings are more often co-viewers than moms or dads.¹⁴ There are many factors that influence how media and technology are used in the family. Parent attitudes, education level, accessibility, privatization of media in bedrooms, social economic status, family communication style, and gender of the parent and child are all factors.¹⁵ Research evidence on this topic is inconsistent,¹⁶ partially due to the discrepancy between parents’ and children’s reports.

The most common form of family media use is simply watching television together, without any discussion about what’s being watched. This is the most basic definition of *co-viewing*.¹⁷ Although co-viewing is more desirable than children watching alone, researchers have found that it can have two different types of unintended effects. First, parents who co-view objectionable content (messages that contain graphic depictions of sex, violence, or drug use) with their adolescents are encouraging them to develop similar viewing habits. In addition, watching objectionable content with teens without talking about it actually serves as a “silent endorsement” of this content.¹⁸

2) Rules about time and content are generally not enforced by parents.

Some families have strict rules about media use, while other families pay little attention to what or how much media kids consume. The most comprehensive body of research on parent monitoring of media is the literature on parental mediation, which means “any strategy parents use to control, supervise, or interpret [media] content.”¹⁹ Nearly all of the research on parental mediation has examined television mediation.

¹⁴ Roberts, D. F., Foehr, U. G., Rideout, V. J., & Brodie, M. (1999). *Kids & media @ the new millennium: A comprehensive national analysis of children’s media use*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

¹⁵ For more information on parental mediation, see Mendoza, K. (2009). Surveying parental mediation: Connections, challenges, and questions for media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 1, 28-41.

¹⁶ Nathanson, A. I. (1999). Identifying and explaining the relationship between parental mediation and children’s aggression. *Communication Research* 26: 124-164.

¹⁷ Valkenburg, P. M., Krcmar, M., Peeters, A. L., and Marseille, N. M. 1999. Developing a scale to access three styles of television mediation: “instructive mediation,” restrictive mediation,” and “social coviewing.” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 43, 52-66.

¹⁸ Nathanson, A. (2001). Parent and child perspectives on the presence and meaning of parental television mediation. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 45, 201-220.

¹⁹ Warren, R. (2001). In words and deeds: Parental involvement and mediation of children’s television viewing. *Journal of Family Communication*, 1(4), 211-231. (p. 212)

Restrictive mediation is the term used to refer to parents' efforts to control media use through rules about *content* (what is watched) and *time* (for how long). However, evidence is inconsistent about the actual value of restrictive mediation. Fifty-three percent of youth report their families have no rules about TV watching, 46% say they do have rules, but only 20% say their rules are enforced regularly.²⁰ Parents who use restrictive mediation tend to have negative attitudes towards media and use restriction more with younger children and girls.²¹ Interviews with parents and children reveal restriction is difficult to implement and children find many ways to get around the rules.²²

If most parents have difficulty enforcing rules about television use, they have an even more difficult time when it comes to video games and the Internet. Here, the use of rules is particularly challenging for parents of teens. Among parents of 12-17 year olds, over half report having rules about the Internet, including rules about what websites their children can visit (68%), and how much time they can spend online (55%). As children move through adolescence, parental rules decrease.²³

Family communication style influences parents' Internet mediation strategies. Teens in families that have an open communication style that encourages dialogue and independence tend to engage in discussions about privacy-sharing practices, whereas teens in families that emphasize rules, obedience and conformity tend to have more rules about Internet use, and tend to have more parents that co-surf with their kids. Although rules alone do not increase teens' level of concern about privacy, the more interactive parent-child practices of co-surfing and discussion about privacy-sharing practices do increase their sense of concern.²⁴

3) Filtering Tools are of Limited Value to Parents.

Various approaches to empowering parents and protecting youth can be seen in the work of advocacy groups, government, and the media industry. Government solutions, however, have been criticized as ineffective. For instance, the V-chip has been accused of failure due to poor design and inadequate marketing. Parents' lack of knowledge and

²⁰ Kaiser Family Foundation. (2005) "Media Multi-tasking" Changing the Amount and Nature of Young People's Media Use. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia030905nr.cfm>

²¹ Nathanson, A. (2001). Mediation of children's television viewing: Working toward conceptual clarity and common understanding. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 25* (pp. 115-151). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pasquier, D. (2001). Media at home: Domestic interactions and regulation. In *Children and their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study*, ed., S. Livingstone and M. Bovill, 161-177. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.;

St. Peters, M, Fitch, M., Huston, A C., Wright, J. C., and Eakins, E. J. (1991). Television and families: What do young children watch with their parents? *Child Development* 62: 1409-1434.

²² Buckingham, D. (1993). *Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy*. Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.; Pasquier (2001)

²³ Roberts et al. (2005); Livingstone, S. & Helsper, E. J. (2008). Parental mediation of children's Internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52, 581-599.

²⁴ Youn, S. (2008). Parental influence and teens' attitude toward online privacy protection. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs* 42: 362-388.

confusion in how to use it and the TV ratings system also limits its usefulness.²⁵ Furthermore, rating systems are used most often by relatively small group of parents who already restrict access to undesirable content. They use ratings merely to confirm and validate rules that they have already established through direct communication with their children.²⁶

When it comes to online media, although filtering and blocking software is widely available (e.g. Web Nanny, Cyber Sitter) only about half of parents tell pollsters that they use these tools for their children ages 6-18.²⁷ These tools have many drawbacks that limit their value to parents. For example, Internet blocking software blocks many thousands of web pages inappropriately, often because the web pages are miscategorized.²⁸ Renee Hobbs found several schools in Philadelphia which used blocking software that made it impossible to access the website of the Media Education Lab at Temple University! There is little research on the value of these tools. It is not known whether parents are using tools to block content or restrict time without child interaction, or if they are using the blocking tools in a larger context where meaningful conversations about appropriate media and technology use are conducted with their children.²⁹ Self-reports by parents about monitoring or use of filtering tools may also be inaccurate, given the social desirability bias that exists among middle-class families regarding this issue.³⁰

Effective media literacy in the home is not simply a “tools and rules” issue, and the history of ratings and regulatory systems for parents reveal that these tools are not a “cure-all” for monitoring children’s media. Whether or not use of the V-chip improves, or another set of technology tools is made available, this cannot replace the social interaction and engagement that is at the heart of media literacy education. Similarly, there will never be such a thing as “riskless ICT”—young people need to be able to

²⁵ For example, survey research conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that among parents who have children ages 2-6, only three in 10 can name any of the ratings used for children’s shows, including TV-G, or G, which means “general audience.” Only 11% know that the rating FV indicates [fantasy] violence..., while 9% think it means “family viewing.” Only 2% know that D stands for suggestive dialogue. And only 11% know that the rating EI means educational or informational programming. Among parents with any child ages 2-18, 61% know that TV-14 means the show may be inappropriate for children under age 14 and just over half (54%) know that TV-MA means for mature audiences. Press Release, Kaiser Family Foundation, Parents Say They’re Getting Control of Their Children’s Exposure to Sex and Violence in the Media – Even Online But Concerns About Media Remain High, and Most Support Curbs on Television Content (June 19, 2007). Retrieved December 15, 2007 from <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia061907nr.cfm>. See also Hendershot, H. (2002). Great expectations: The rise and fall of the V-Chip. *Television Quarterly* 2-3: 70-75; Kunkel, D., Farinola, W. J. M., Farrar, K., Donnerstein, E., Bielby, E., and Swarun, L. (2002). Deciphering the V-chip: An examination of the television industry’s program rating judgments. *Journal of Communication* 52: 112-138.

²⁶ Warren, R. (2010, Jan 14). Adult mediation strategies. *Encyclopedia of Children, Adolescents, and the Media*. Sage Publications. Accessed from www.sage-reference.com

²⁷ Cable in the Classroom & Common Sense Media. (2007). Parenting moves online: Parents’ Internet actions and attitudes, 2007. Available <http://www.ciconline.org/poll2007>

²⁸ See Kranich, N. (2004). Why filters won’t protect children. *Library Administration & Management*, 18, 14-18.

²⁹ Warren (2010)

³⁰ Buckingham (1993)

develop active ways to deal with both the benefits and the negative aspects of digital life.³¹

4) Active conversational engagement between family members about media and technology messages builds media literacy competencies among children and teens.

Active mediation is the term sometimes used to describe discussion between parents and children about media and technology. As a form of in-home media literacy, active mediation encourages parents to share their values and ask questions about media in order to help children think critically about the messages they receive.³²

A number of research studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of active conversational engagement between parents and children when it comes to media and technology. Children whose parents use active mediation learn more from educational TV and increase pro-social behavior,³³ have more skepticism towards television news,³⁴ are more engaged in political socialization,³⁵ experience decreased aggression,³⁶ and experience a decrease in the negative effects of violent and sexual content.³⁷

For these reasons, active mediation (or media literacy in the home) is recommended as more effective than parent-imposed rules for time or content.³⁸ The effectiveness of active mediation may depend on the nature of the content viewed and how parents communicate, so future research needs to examine the actual content of parents' mediation to gather best practices that can be useful in parent education and outreach.³⁹

Research is emerging on parental mediation of the Internet, but it is unclear whether co-viewing, restriction, and active mediation can be used in the same way or has the same outcomes. Of children aged 8-18, 86% have a computer in the home, and of this group, 17% use the computer with mothers, 8% with fathers, and 27% with siblings.⁴⁰ Only a few studies have explored parent Internet mediation, with the following key findings:

³¹ Heslper, E. (2008). Digital natives and ostrich tactics? The possible implications of labeling young people as digital experts. *Beyond Current Horizons: Technology, Children, Schools and Families*. <http://bit.ly/8CjAx8>

³² Fujioka, Y., and Austin, E. W. (2003). The implications of vantage point in parental mediation of television and child's attitudes toward drinking alcohol. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47: 418-434.

³³ Nathanson (2002)

³⁴ Austin, E. W. (1993). Exploring the effects of active parental mediation content of television content. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 37: 147-158.

³⁵ Austin, E. W., and Pinkelton, B. E. (2001). The role of parental mediation in the political socialization process. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 45: 221-240.

³⁶ Nathanson (1999)

³⁷ Strasburger, V.C., and Wilson, B. J. (2002). *Children, adolescents, & the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

³⁸ Nathanson (1999); Pasquier (2001); Fujioka & Austin (2003);

Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young people and new media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

³⁹ Nathanson & Botta (2003), p. 325

⁴⁰ Roberts, D., Foehr, U., and Rideout, V. (2005). *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8-18 year olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

- Four types of Internet mediation styles were identified for parents of teens: active co-use, interaction restrictions, technical restrictions, and monitoring. Two-thirds of parents use active co-use, talking to their children about Internet use. Parents favored active co-use rather than interaction restrictions, technical restrictions, and monitoring.⁴¹
- One of the major differences in Internet mediation versus television mediation is critically evaluating online content, such as discussing how it can be created, manipulated, and forced on the user.⁴²
- Parents who are more engaged with their children's use of the Internet have stronger beliefs that the Internet helps their children to connect to others who have similar interests, express creatively, access current events and news, learn about different cultures, and learn skills needed to succeed in school.⁴³
- Even though most parents are interested in the educational potential of the Internet, they lack knowledge about which sites to recommend to kids or how to use them. Parents who buy educational online tools for children rarely spend time using these tools with them.⁴⁴
- Parents who use the Internet more and who have a higher skill level are more likely to mediate their children's Internet use.⁴⁵
- Increased mediation does not decrease risks. Researchers explain, "The simple assumption that introducing forms of parental mediation will reduce the risks young people encounter online, especially while protecting their opportunities, is misguided."⁴⁶
- Parental guidance needs to be more specific on how to cope with risk in different contexts, rather than blanket bans such as "avoid chat rooms," "never give out personal information," and "no-email" that parents are currently advised to use. Parents need to become more involved in their children's online lives—both to protect them from risks and to empower them to reap the positive benefits of the Internet and to think more deeply about their attitudes, actions, and possible consequences.⁴⁷

As media literacy advocates, educators and scholars, NAMLE and the Media Education Lab support educational programs that help parents make time for active discussion in the home as a means to promote media literacy skills. Neither parental rules about time and content nor filtering tools are as effective as active conversational engagement between parents and children.

⁴¹ Livingstone & Helsper (2008)

⁴² Eastin, M. S., Greenberg, B. S., & Hofschire, L. (2006). Parenting the Internet. *Journal of Communication*, 56, 486-504.

⁴³ Cable in the Classroom & Common Sense Media. (2007). *Parenting Moves Online: Parents' Internet Actions and Attitudes*. Poll conducted by Harris Interactive. <http://www.ciconline.org/poll2007>

⁴⁴ Buckingham, D. (2007). *Beyond technology: Children's learning in the age of digital culture*. Malden, MA: Polity.

⁴⁵ Livingstone & Helsper (2008)

⁴⁶ Livingstone & Helsper (2008), p. 597

⁴⁷ Livingstone & Helsper (2008)

C. PROGRAMS THAT INTRODUCE MEDIA LITERACY TO PARENTS CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE.

Professional organizations and media organizations have developed productive collaborations that bring media literacy education into communities. For example, Cable in the Classroom, Common Sense Media, and the American Academy of Pediatrics have created programs and materials for parents to help guide their children’s media use. In the 1990s, in response to increased pressure from the federal government, the cable industry developed “The Family and Community Critical Viewing Project,” which involved representatives from local members of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and local cable operators offering workshops in hundreds of communities around the country.⁴⁸ However, there has been little research that demonstrates the effectiveness of these parent media education programs in creating attitudinal or behavioral change—in either parents or children.

Today, dozens of Internet safety programs are available for parents, such as NetSmartz, WiredSafety, and IKeepSafe.⁴⁹ However, many of these initiatives use fear-based “protectionist” approaches that generally do not empower parents with strategies to engage in meaningful conversations with children and teens about media and technology. Little research has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of these programs.

In the United States, many informal media literacy programs develop as a result of an independent or collaborative initiative by parents and community leaders.⁵⁰ These are generally sponsored by a parent or school leader in the community who is an enthusiast for this issue and who is self-taught through personal research or professional interest (local educators or pediatricians, for example).

A challenge in providing media literacy education in the home is that media literacy programs for parents generally attract parents already engaged in media literacy. This can create a “preaching to the choir” phenomenon that can encourage an “us” versus “them” mentality and discourage further outreach to families who are not actively involved in media literacy in the home. Another challenge is parents’ own comfort level with media use and technology, which can interfere with promoting media literacy, especially regarding mobile phones, online social media and the Internet. It is important to move away from fear-based protectionist approaches that do not help parents to increase their own comfort level with digital media and technologies.

Despite these challenges, researchers have examined parent education programs in media literacy, showing its effectiveness in protecting and empowering children and teens. Just a few studies have explored media education in the home, with the following key findings:

⁴⁸ Family and Community Critical Viewing Project

⁴⁹ <http://www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx>, <http://www.wiredsafety.org/>, <http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>

⁵⁰ Mind Over Media: Helping Kids Get the Message. VHS. The National Education Association and Cable in the Classroom in collaboration with Court TV, 2001.

- Media literacy education can increase literacy skills of young children and promote parent-child conversations about media.⁵¹
- Media literacy education can reduce anxiety about the depiction of terrorism on television news with 7-13 year olds.⁵²
- Media literacy education can improve parent-child relationships regarding food purchases.⁵³
- Media literacy education using a “media box” for parents to take home and use with their children was found to connect literacy practices between home and school for nursery school students.⁵⁴
- In minority families, low levels of parental involvement in media literacy are found even among parents of academically gifted children, yet children report a desire for parents to become more involved with their media use.⁵⁵

Media literacy in the home can be effective when it makes the issue of media guidance relevant to family life, addresses issues that engage parents in values clarification, respects the variety of approaches to using media and technology in the context of family life, respects cultural variations in parenting and family communication styles, and responds to the rapid changes in the uses of digital and mobile technologies at home, work, school and community.

Smart, thoughtful, reflective and engaged parents and children (as both media consumers and producers) are good for society and good for the media industry. The goal of media literacy in the home is to increase our understanding and critical thinking about the most significant forms of communication in our lives. Therefore, instead of focusing only on parental control and monitoring, digital and media literacy education is the preferred approach to empowering parents.

⁵¹ Desmond, R. (1996). Media Literacy in the home: Acquisition and deficit models. In R. Kubey (Ed.), *Media literacy in the information Age: Current Perspectives, Information and Behavior* 6, (pp. 323-342). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.;

Marsh, J., & Thompson, P. (2001). Parental involvement in literacy development: using media texts. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 24 (3): 266-278.

⁵² Comer, J. S., Furr, J. M., Beidas, R. S., Weiner, C. L., & Kendall, P. C. (2008). Children and terrorism-related news: Training parents in copying and media literacy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76, 568-578.

⁵³ Hindin, T. J., Contento, I. R., & Gussow, J. D. (2004). A media literacy nutrition education curriculum for head start parents about the effects of television advertising on their children’s food requests. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 104, 192-198.

⁵⁴ British Film Institute Primary Education Working Group. (2003). *Look Again! A Teaching Guide to using Film and Television with Three- to Eleven-Year Olds*. British Film Institute.

⁵⁵ RobbGrieco, M and Renee Hobbs. (2009, March). Media Use & Academic Achievement among African-American Elementary Children. Philadelphia: Temple University. Available at: <http://bit.ly/SJ1CfD>

II. MEDIA LITERACY IN SCHOOL

Media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms, and *media literacy education* is the set of instructional methods and practices that promote media literacy.

A. MEDIA LITERACY IS AN ESSENTIAL DIMENSION OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNING AND CIVIC LIFE.

Media literacy is important for all Americans for the following reasons:

- With available access to the widest array of information resources in the history of the world, people today need sophisticated skills and competencies involving the ability to *find information, comprehend it, and use it to solve problems*. The growth of the knowledge economy is dependent upon workers who have these skills.⁵⁶
- Media literacy supports the development of life skills including leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, self-direction, and social responsibility. These competencies are associated with the *ethical use of information and communications technology*.⁵⁷
- With more types of popular culture and entertainment media available at their fingertips, people need the ability to *make responsible leisure-time choices that meet their needs and reflect their values*. This is especially important since some media experiences may be offensive and degrading to the human spirit, in direct opposition to values of the family, church and community.⁵⁸
- The ability to identify message purpose, target audience, point of view, and other features of visual, print, sound and digital ‘texts’ enables people to *critically analyze and evaluate the quality* of both information and entertainment in their cultural environment.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Kinzer, C. & Leander, K. M. (2003). Reconsidering the technology/language arts divide: Electronic and print-based environments. In D. Flood, D. Lapp, J. R. Squire, & J. M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 546-565). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

⁵⁷ Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education: Literacy, learning, and contemporary culture*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity; Distributed in the USA by Blackwell

⁵⁸ Behrman, E. H. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49, 490-499.

⁵⁹ Livingstone, S. (2008). Converging traditions of research on media and information literacies: Disciplinary, critical, and methodological issues. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, and D. Leu (Eds.) *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 103-132). New York: Taylor & Francis.

- To fully participate in contemporary society, people need to be able to *create and produce their own messages*, using print, visual, digital, sound and online social media. Participating actively in self-governance is a vital part of citizenship in a democracy.

1) As media systems and technologies change, media literacy also changes.

During the 1970s, media literacy developed as a way to understand and examine the influence of the newly dominant media systems of film and television.⁶⁰ Today, media literacy educators are responding to the opportunities and challenges of online social media, for example, where skills of participation and the ability to work collaboratively are important.⁶¹

Unlike those educators who trumpet the extraordinary and amazing transformations that result from using digital media, media literacy educators are skeptical of both utopian and dystopian visions of what digital media and technologies may offer to America’s children and young people. Because video games, the Internet and online social media are relatively new, educators are just beginning to explore how to build the critical thinking and communication skills of young people in relation to these new forms. It will take time, the creative imagination of educators, and practice in the classroom to discover what kinds of learning activities best support the new competencies needed for the rapidly changing digital environment that children are experiencing in their lives today.

Despite publicity about the term “digital native,” the reality is that students in Grades 6 – 12 still spend far more time watching television than using the Internet. Actually, teens watch more TV than ever, up 6% over five years. Teens spend about 1/3 less time online as compared with adults, using the Internet about 11 hours a month as compared with adults, who spend 29 hours monthly online. A Nielsen study in June 2009 shows that only about 3% of the 100 hours per month that teens spend using television is done online.⁶²

As of 2009, more than 50% of American classrooms do not have Internet access available in the classroom, which makes it impossible for teachers to use the Internet as a tool for whole classroom learning. Most schools restrict access to video streaming websites like YouTube, limiting the value of social media as tools for learning.⁶³

⁶⁰ Hobbs, R. & Jensen, A. (2009). The past, present and future of media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 1(1), 1 -11.

⁶¹ Jenkins, H. 2006. Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Retrieved January 11, 2009 from http://digitalllearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS_WHITE_P2006.

⁶² Nielsen (2009, June). How Teens Use Media: A Nielsen Report on the Myths and Realities of Teen Media Trends. Retrieved January 3, 2010 from http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/reports/nielsen_howteensusemedia_june09.pdf

⁶³ Electronic Freedom Frontier (2003). Internet blocking in public schools. Report. Retrieved January 11, 2010 from: http://w2.eff.org/Censorship/Censorware/net_block_report/

For all these reasons, if American children and young people are going to develop digital and media literacy competencies, educators are wise to rely on the emerging practice literature that explores the development of students' media literacy in relation to newspapers, magazines, television, film, news and current events, advertising and the Internet, as well as newer forms of digital technologies, video games, and social media tools.⁶⁴

2. Digital technology has made access to film and video resources and materials more difficult for educators.

Ironically, the shift to digital technology has made it *more difficult* for educators to use mass media and popular culture materials in the classroom, even while there is a proliferation of materials available. During the 1980s, VHS technology made it easy for educators to freely tape off-air educational programs provided by cable programmers and use those resources in the classroom. Today, cable companies make fewer educational materials freely available. VHS machines are obsolete; DVS and DVD systems make it difficult for educators to make copies of current local and national news programming. Film DVDs often are designed so that commercial movie trailers must be viewed *before* the user can access the main menu to cue up a particular scene.

Few teachers can tape programs off the air with their home DVD players. Now educators must buy licenses and pay for access to video materials that were formerly available to them free of charge. The leading provider, Discovery United Streaming, charges upwards of \$3,000 annually for a site license plus \$10,000 in network costs,⁶⁵ fees that makes it unaffordable for many schools in low-income communities.

Until very recently, misplaced concerns about copyright also limited availability of materials.⁶⁶ Media literacy educators rely on the use of copyrighted material as teaching tools and have the legal right to use copyrighted works for teaching and learning under the doctrine of fair use. They developed a *Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education* to guide students' and teachers' legal and ethical use of copyrighted materials for teaching and learning.⁶⁷

Most forms of social media (including video streaming websites) are not available for use in public schools, due to filtering software. Unfortunately, the time-honored and appropriate use of the fair use doctrine by educators has been seriously eroded through the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) which makes it illegal to bypass

⁶⁴ Hobbs, R. (1998). The seven great debates in the media literacy movement. *Journal of Communication* 44 (2), 16-32

⁶⁵ How Discovery Education Streaming Works. Retrieved January 11, 2010 from <http://people.howstuffworks.com/discovery-education-streaming.htm/printable>

⁶⁶ Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York: Penguin Press.

⁶⁷ Center for Social Media, Washington College and Law (American University) and the Media Education Lab (Temple University) (2009). *Code of Best Practices for Fair Use in Media Literacy Education*. American University Center for Social Media. Retrieved Jan 29, 2010, from <http://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/mediaeducationlab.com/files/CodeofBestPracticesinFairUse.pdf>

encryption to make film clip compilations or film excerpts of contemporary movies as a means to stimulate classroom discussion that builds critical thinking and communication skills.⁶⁸ However, in May 2009, media literacy educators asked the U.S. Copyright Office for an exemption that would enable them to use excerpts of DVD clips for media literacy learning activities that build students' critical thinking and communication skills.⁶⁹ We anticipate that in 2010 educators and students will receive an exemption that enables them to legally decrypt copy-protected DVDs for legitimate educational uses.

B. THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES ASSOCIATED WITH MEDIA LITERACY ARE THOSE REQUIRED FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS IN LIFE.

Media literacy is not a body of passive knowledge to be learned. A media literate individual possesses specific *habits of mind*. A media literate individual is attentive to the cultural environment; asks questions to gather information; makes leisure-time choices that reflect one's needs and values; appreciates that messages have a purpose and point of view; respects the artistry involved in creating messages; synthesizes knowledge to make connections between ideas; analyzes and evaluates messages to identify their quality and value; is open-minded and receptive to new ideas, even those that challenge or contradict one's existing world view.⁷⁰

A media-literate individual is aware of the historical, cultural, economic, political and social contexts in which messages circulate and have meaning. A media literate individual is aware of how media technologies, industries, tools and messages contribute to the shaping of knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and the democratic process. A media-literate individual can use the power of digital media and technology to compose and create messages in a wide variety of forms, for various purposes, including to inform, to entertain, and to persuade. A media-literate individual feels personally compelled to be well-informed on issues of public importance and participates in the process of self-governance at the local, state and federal levels. A media-literate individual makes choices as both a media consumer and media producer that are legal, socially responsible and reflect ethical values.⁷¹

These competencies are more essential than ever before. Using digital media challenges students to make judgments about the reputability and validity of the information they see. Most students don't learn to do this on their own—they need guidance and practice. For example, researchers who directed several hundred college students to three bogus Web sites about fictitious nutritional supplements found that half of the students lacked the skills to identify the trustworthiness of the information, yet most thought they had

⁶⁸ Hobbs, R., Jaszi, P. and Aufderheide, P. (2009). How media literacy educators reclaimed copyright and fair use. *International Journal of Learning and Media* 1(3): 33 – 48.

⁶⁹ Hobbs, R. (2008). Petition before the U.S. Copyright Office, RM 2008-8. Anti-circumvention Rulemaking. Available at: <http://www.copyright.gov/1201/2008/comments/hobbs-renee.pdf>

⁷⁰ Hobbs, R. (1998). Integrating the use of film and television into management education. *Journal of Management Development*, 17(4), 259-272.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 270.

strong research skills.⁷² Clearly, media literacy is a broad and inclusive set of life skills that are vital for participation in the 21st century. We believe that American educators need to prepare students to be media literate beginning in the elementary grades and moving throughout the educational system and across the lifespan.

1) There is an established pedagogy for media literacy education that consists of core concepts and key principles.

Engaged cross-generational dialogue in the classroom, supported by an educator who has a deep understanding of media literacy, is key to the development of media literacy competencies.⁷³ Such practices rely on the use of contemporary source materials from mass media, current events, popular culture and digital media. *Core concepts* are used to guide instructional pedagogy and to support teacher education practices. They include the following ideas: All media messages are “constructed.” Each medium has different characteristics, strengths, and a unique “language” of construction. Media messages are produced for particular purposes. All media messages contain embedded values and points of view. People use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages. Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and the democratic process.⁷⁴

Key principles are used to support the development of student-centered instructional practices and ensure the delivery of quality programs in media literacy education. They include the following ideas: Media literacy education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create. It expands the concept of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media. It builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice, developing informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society. Media literacy education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization. Media literacy education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.⁷⁵

Core concepts and key principles are the ‘big ideas’ that underlie instructional practices in media literacy education. They emerged as a result of a growing consensus among thousands of North American media literacy educators over a period of 20 years and reflect the “lessons learned” from bringing media literacy education into classrooms all

⁷² Ivanitskaya, L., O'Boyle, I., & Casey, A. M. (2006). Health information literacy and competencies of information age students: Results from the Interactive Online Research Readiness Self-Assessment (RRSA). *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 8(2), e6.

⁷³ Hagood, M.C., Stevens, L.P. and Reinking, D. (2004). What do they have to teach us? Talkin' 'cross generations! In D.E. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents and literacies in a digital world* (pp. 68-83), p. 70. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

⁷⁴ National Association for Media Literacy Education. (2007). *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States*. Available at: <http://www.aamlainfo.org/uploads/r4/cE/r4cEZukacxNYaFFxIMONdQ/NAMLE-CPMLE-w-questions.pdf>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

over the United States. Media literacy programs can be evaluated by the extent to which they embody these ideas.⁷⁶

2) Best practices in media literacy education are more well-developed for middle-school and secondary levels than for children in primary grades, where there has been less research and instructional practice.

Little is known about the developmental trajectory that is most appropriate for media literacy education. Only a handful of programs have addressed the needs of elementary school children, especially in urban schools.⁷⁷ However, at the heart of media literacy is the practice of critical inquiry. Best practices for students in Grades 6 – 12 include:

Building Awareness. Instructional techniques that increase students' personal awareness of the scope and magnitude of media and technology use in everyday life, such as tracking media and technology uses through a diary or journal. This instructional practice helps students reflect on the role of technology in daily life, acknowledge the pleasures and satisfactions of digital media use, and gain personal control over media habits and routines.

Using Media and Technology as Tools for Learning. This instructional practice promotes active learning, including search and evaluation activities involving the use of the Internet, video, film, visual artifacts and other media technologies. Online resource materials, like the *New York Times* Learning Network, help teachers find and use resources that support the development of access, analysis and evaluation competencies.⁷⁸

Critical Analysis. This involves active viewing, de-construction, and discussion activities related to mass media and popular culture, with the goal of promoting analysis skills, apply concepts including author, purpose, point of view, target audience, and representation. When students apply these concepts to mass media and popular culture messages that are personally relevant, they discover their own power as active interpreters of messages. This instructional practice promotes transfer of these skills from school to home.⁷⁹ However, when in-school viewing of violent mass media texts is paired with persuasive messages (i.e., describing the negative effects of media violence) with no use of media literacy core concepts, some children will experience psychological arousal that is associated with aggressive behavior, creating a "boomerang" effect.⁸⁰ Such approaches to instruction are inconsistent with the key principles of media literacy education.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Media Education Lab (2009). Powerful Voices for Kids. Retrieved January 1, 2010 from: <http://mediaeducationlab.com/powerful-voices-kids>

⁷⁸ Hobbs, R. (2005). What's News? *Educational Leadership*, 63(2), 58-61.

⁷⁹ Hobbs, R. (2007). *Reading the media: Media literacy in high school English*. New York: Teachers College Press.

⁸⁰ Byrne, S. , Linz, D. and Potter, W. (2008, May 22). "Investigating the Boomerang Effect in Anti-Aggression Media Literacy Interventions." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, TBA, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Media/Technology in Social and Political Context. Students explore issues regarding media and technology as they influence culture, values and society. Topics may include the relationship between humans and the machines they create; hyper-materialism and the quest for the good life; body image, identity and beauty ideals; media's impact on health; media stereotyping and attitudes about people and cultures around the world; heroes, anti-heroes, justice, revenge, and the use aggression as a means to resolve conflict; and privacy, social monitoring, control, regulation and safety issues regarding mass media, online social media and consumer marketing. This instructional practice helps students understand the complex relationship between individual behavior, media and technology as institutional systems, and social practices and cultural norms.⁸¹

Student-Centered Media Production. Media composition activities involve small groups of students in creating media messages for different purposes and for authentic audiences. Educators place high value on student participation, promoting students as active learners who can solve problems and generate their own conclusions, often creating messages that are responsive to the perceived needs in their community.⁸² Students engage in research, role-play, debate, discussion, oral presentation, and varied forms of informal and formal written, visual, and digital composition. These types of instructional practices deepen students' appreciation for the constructed nature of media messages and strengthen creativity and collaboration skills.

Exploration of Ethical Issues. This involves discussion of the ethical challenges of living life online and includes issues related to identity, privacy, the digital footprint, personal and social responsibility, and safety. This instructional practice provides an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the complex levels of decision-making required for full participation in a networked society.

Despite differences among practitioners and scholars in terms of disciplinary backgrounds, core concepts and key principles help provide a shared set of expectations that help unify the field and support the development and implementation of high-quality programs for K-12 students in school and after-school programs.

C. MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN A UNEVEN AND DECENTRALIZED WAY IN THE UNITED STATES.

Media literacy is included in most state standards (in the areas of English language arts, social studies, technology, health and life skills education) but is unevenly implemented in most communities in the United States.

⁸¹ Kubey, Robert (2004). Media literacy and the teaching of civics and social studies at the dawn of the 21st century. *American Behavioral Scientist* 48(1): 69 – 77.

⁸² Goodman, S. (2003). *Teaching youth media*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Many adults (including teachers) have a complicated mix of active and passive approaches to media and technology use and themselves may not apply media literacy competencies to daily life.⁸³ For example, in accessing and analyzing information, many adults find it difficult to choose appropriate search engines, follow relevant links, and judge the validity of information. More than half the adults surveyed in Great Britain were not able to use search engines or databases at a basic level.⁸⁴ In the United States, only about one-third of search engine users are aware of the difference between paid or sponsored results and the unpaid or “organic” results.⁸⁵

However, American school leaders are generally aware of media literacy, information literacy and Internet safety as part of their responsibility. All 50 states include at least some components of media literacy in their education standards for public instruction. Twenty-one states report that the media literacy standards are embedded within various content areas, whereas, nine states report that the standards are stand alone. Thirteen states report that creating media literacy standards will be addressed in the future, while only six states report that they are not planning to create media literacy standards. For states planning to create media literacy standards, most states report that they are in the early stages of review and do not have specific timeframes for completing these standards. Seven states report that they assess media literacy standards: New Hampshire, South Dakota, West Virginia, Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Hawaii.⁸⁶

Research has shown that skills that are not tested may be neglected in classrooms.⁸⁷ Survey data from educators suggests that despite being located in state standards, media literacy was not being sufficiently addressed by current educational practice in classrooms across the United States.⁸⁸ New assessment methodologies have been developed to measure students’ media literacy competencies (i.e., I-Critical Thinking, developed by ETS) but these tests have not been widely adopted in K-12 education.

⁸³ Adams, W. (2000). How people watch television as investigated by focus group techniques. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 44(1), 78- 93.

⁸⁴ Buckingham, D. (2007). *Beyond technology: Children's learning in the age of digital culture*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

⁸⁵ Fallows, D. (2005). Search engine users. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Available: www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Searchengine_users.pdf

⁸⁶ State Educational Technology Directors Association (2007). Media Literacy: State Report. Retrieved Januar 16, 2010 from <http://www.setda.org/web/guest/stateliteracyreport>

⁸⁷ Sunderman, G. L., Kim, J. S., & Orfield, G. (2005). *NCLB meets school realities: Lessons from the field*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

⁸⁸ Cable in the Classroom (2006, November). CIC survey shows media literacy a vital and underserved need in schools. Retrieved on November 11, 2009 from <http://i.ciconline.org/docs/CICmedialitreport11-2006.pdf>. See also Stein, L. and Prewett, Anita. (2009, Winter). Media literacy education in the social studies: Teacher perceptions and curricular challenges. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 35(1), 131-148.

1) There is a low level of awareness of media literacy among educators.

Educators are largely unaware of the scope and extent of students' media and technology use.⁸⁹ Although many believe that children and young people are exposed to much inappropriate content on the radio, TV, movies, videogames, and online, there is some resistance within the education community to the idea of educators taking responsibility for addressing children's media and technology uses or the social issues related to media and digital technology in society.

Educators themselves may use video in non-educational ways, as a babysitter to amuse and distract students, as a reward, or as a break from learning.⁹⁰ This practice is common in a wide variety of K-12 settings, and as a result, school administrators in many school districts have developed policies that mandate that teachers receive administrative approval before using film and video in the classroom.⁹¹ This suggests that, in some communities, teachers may lack fundamental media literacy competencies themselves.

Lack of teacher preparation limits the quality of media literacy education. Few schools of education devote more than one class period to media literacy education and most programs provide no teacher preparation related to the role of media and technology in the life of children and youth. Fortunately, young teachers are "cognizant of the pervasiveness of the media in young people's lives and that helping their students become media literate is part of their responsibility as educators. Perceiving media literacy as a way of 'doing life' rather than an object of study enables teachers to view it as an integral part of the curriculum."⁹²

Sadly, many technology integration programs designed to help teachers use digital media and technology do not include a focus on developing critical thinking skills in responding to mass media or popular culture.⁹³ Even when they recognize the value of media literacy, teachers feel under pressure to "cover content" or drill-and-practice to prepare for high-stakes tests. They do not perceive that media literacy education supports students' performance on state tests. A survey of Denver teachers showed that although teachers value media and technology as a teaching tool, they generally use it as a means to convey information, not as an object of analysis.⁹⁴ The scope of this review

⁸⁹ Xu, S. H. (2002). Teacher's full knowledge of students' popular culture and the integration of aspects of that culture into the literacy instruction. *Education* 122, 721-730.

⁹⁰ Hobbs, R. (2006). Non-optimal uses of video in the classroom. *Learning, Media and Technology* 31(1), 45 - 50.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 49.

⁹² Alvermann, D. (2006). Joe Millionaire Meets Ulysses. *Threshold* (Cable in the Classroom), Winter, p. 32.

⁹³ Swenson, J., Rozema, R., Young, C. A., McGrail, E., & Whitin, P. (2005). Beliefs about technology and the preparation of English teachers: Beginning the conversation. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 5(3/4), 210-236.

⁹⁴ Collier, S., Weinburgh, M., & Rivera, M. (2004). Infusing technology skills into a teacher education program: Change in student knowledge about use of technology. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* 12(3), 447 - 468.

demonstrates that, for all 75 million Americans students to gain media literacy competencies, it will be necessary for major changes be made to teacher education programs in the United States.

2. Implementation of media literacy education programs often relies on a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches that involve media industry or community-based partnerships.

Implementation efforts in the United States have involved policymakers, school leaders, classroom teachers, instructional specialists, leaders of media and technology companies, and partners from the community. University-school partnerships have been vital to the success of media literacy education in the United States, and university partners have included Ithaca College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Temple University, Webster University (Missouri), Appalachian State University, New York University and many others. Major initiatives have been developed as a result of partnerships between state departments of education and cable companies, as in the case of states like Texas and Maryland. Such programs tend to develop when industries are in transition or face the threat of government sanctions or federal regulation.

For example, in 1998, after the massacre at Columbine High School, the Discovery Channel initiated a major media literacy program, *Assignment: Media Literacy*, which was developed by Renee Hobbs in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education, reached thousands of educators and even more students across the state. The program, which included curriculum development and teacher training, was extended to the State of Texas with support from the Texas Education Agency in 2002. These programs were the largest and most ambitious media literacy programs ever developed in the United States, with measurable evidence of program effectiveness.⁹⁵ But after the Discovery Channel ended its support of the program, it is not clear whether teacher practices in media literacy education were sustained.⁹⁶

3. Media literacy has been shown to impact attitudes, knowledge and behaviors, including those associated with academic achievement, life skills and health behaviors.

Media literacy education supports student motivation and engagement and is associated with higher levels of enrollment and active participation in learning. For students in urban schools who are at risk of failure, media literacy education reduces absenteeism.⁹⁷ This is a meaningful outcome of media literacy education for America's most vulnerable and needy students. A 2006 national survey of high school dropouts revealed that nearly half of all high school students who dropped did so because, in their view, the classes

⁹⁵ Kubey, R. & Marcello-Serafin, G. (2001). Evaluation of assignment media literacy: a report to the discovery channel. Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED479068)

⁹⁶ Hobbs, R. (2004). A review of school-based initiatives in media literacy. *American Behavioral Scientist* 48(1), 48-59.

⁹⁷ Goodman, S. (2003). *Teaching youth media*. New York: Teachers College Press.

were not interesting. Youth voice in youth media has the capacity to provide a way for students to make connections between the classroom and contemporary culture. When students engage in critical analysis of popular media or media production through writing, audio, video, online or live performance—it instills a sense of pride in one’s work.⁹⁸

Media literacy is associated with critical thinking. Students ages 10–12 were studied in six primary schools. Findings revealed that as pupils increased their experience with their media literacy program, they showed greater gains proportionally in media analysis and critical thinking skills.⁹⁹ Research with college students supports the association between high levels of media literacy with scores on a standardized test of critical thinking, particularly the process of detecting arguments and analyzing arguments into their component parts.¹⁰⁰

Media literacy education in high school supports the development of academic achievement, including reading comprehension and writing skills. Adolescent literacy experts argue that educators have not paid enough attention to the connections between students’ reading and writing achievement and the personally meaningful aspects of their use of popular culture as well as digital and mass media. When educators bring media texts, tools and technologies into the curriculum, demonstrable results are found. For example, researchers investigated a media literacy course that was integrated into a yearlong high school English curriculum. Seven 11th grade English language arts teachers, three of whom attended a weeklong institute on teaching media awareness, selected texts to use in common and developed assignments that included analysis of television shows, news, and political speeches along with classic and contemporary literature. Although based on offline rather than online media literacy, the study found that explicit media literacy instruction increased both traditional literacy skills, such as reading comprehension and writing, and more specific media-related skills, including identification of techniques various media use to influence audiences.¹⁰¹

Among urban minority children, media literacy is associated with academic achievement. Gifted and talented African-American children ages 9 -11 in Philadelphia were more likely to use active reasoning in describing their favorite television shows, videogames and popular music than a group of regular students not identified as gifted and talented.¹⁰² *Active reasoning* is defined as the ability to provide reasons for liking a particular media

⁹⁸ Early, B. (2009). Developing voice in New Orleans: The city with the highest incarceration rate in the U.S. *Youth Media Reporter*, December 14.

http://www.youthmediareporter.org/2009/12/developing_voice_in_new_orlean.html

⁹⁹ Feuerstein, M. (1999). Media literacy in support of critical thinking. *Journal of Educational Media* 24(1), 43-55.

¹⁰⁰ Arke ET & Primack BA. (2009). Quantifying media literacy: Development, reliability, and validity of a new measure. *Educational Media International* 46(1), 53-65.

¹⁰¹ Hobbs, R., & Frost, R. (2003). Measuring the acquisition of media-literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 38(3), 330–355. Available: www.reading.org/publications/journals/rrq/v38/i3/abstracts/RRQ-38-3-Hobbs.html

¹⁰² Michael RobbGrieco and Renee Hobbs. (2009, March). Media Use & Academic Achievement among African-American Elementary Children. Philadelphia: Temple University. <http://bit.ly/5J1CfD>

message based on specific descriptive qualities of the message, and is conceptualized as a precursor to media literacy.

Media literacy education increases advertising analysis skills. Grade 8 students who participated in a media education curriculum in New Jersey were more mindful of their advertising consumption and more knowledgeable about advertising than a matched control group who received no media literacy instruction. Additionally, students had more positive attitudes toward advertising, language arts class, and working as a member of a team.¹⁰³

Media literacy is associated with positive health outcomes among adolescents, including body image and smoking. Media literacy can alter adolescents' perceptions of the beauty ideal. An 8-week experimental design explored how a media literacy program with Grade 9 students affected body attitudes. Results showed that participants had lower levels of internationalization of the thin ideal compared to a control group, suggesting the value of including media literacy as a primary prevention effort in high schools.¹⁰⁴

*Media literacy is associated with reduced smoking among adolescents.*¹⁰⁵ Evaluation of the "Blowing Smoke" media literacy curriculum in eight Arizona middle schools from urban and rural settings showed that, compared to a control group, students had increased knowledge of tobacco product placement in film; increased awareness of the portrayal of tobacco use in film; and increased negative attitudes toward the use of tobacco in film.¹⁰⁶

Media literacy instruction increases students' ability to recognize and resist racial and ethnic stereotypes in media. A study conducted in an Oklahoma high school used pre-post data to discover that media literacy instruction changed the way the students perceived racial stereotypes on television. Students' responses to television clips with racial stereotypes were more complex after media literacy instruction, with students more aware of and emotionally invested in the depictions of racial stereotypes in media.¹⁰⁷ A study with middle-school students showed that when media literacy instruction is implemented, students demonstrate more self-efficacious behavior in terms of recognizing and analyzing bias and stereotyping in the media.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Serafin, G. (2006). Media mindfulness. In D. Macedo, & S. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Media Literacy*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

¹⁰⁴ Dysart, M. (2007). The Effectiveness of Media Literacy and Eating Disorder Prevention in Schools: A Controlled Evaluation with 9th Grade Girls. Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁰⁵ Primack, B., Gold, M., Land, S. and Fine, M. (2006). Association of cigarette smoking and media literacy about smoking among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 39(4), 465-472.

¹⁰⁶ Bergsma, L.J., and M. Ingram (January 2001). Blowing Smoke: Project Evaluation and Final Report. Phoenix, AZ: Arizona Department of Health Services Tobacco Education and Prevention Program.

¹⁰⁷ Dunlop, J. (2007). Effects of media literacy instruction: Recognizing and analyzing racial stereotypes. Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University.

¹⁰⁸ Orr, A. (2008). "I don't want to learn this stuff": A study of middle school students in a media literacy curriculum. Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno.

4. Media literacy programs must be responsive to and reflective of the particular capacities of educators and the needs of particular communities.

Media literacy programs are generally sponsored by a parent or school leader in the community who is an enthusiast for this issue and self-taught through personal research or professional interest (local educators or pediatricians, for example).

A “single source” for media literacy resources would not be desirable for teacher education since there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. Media literacy is effective when it addresses issues that reflect the cultural diversity in the United States.¹⁰⁹ For example, in affluent, well-educated communities, educators may be concerned about issues related to media addiction, identity play and development, and creative use of online technologies; in low-income communities, teachers may respond to issues of heroes and anti-heroes and the role of celebrity culture in shaping young people’s ideas about success and achievement. Media literacy education should reflect the particular needs of the learners in a community.

Any group or committee charged with creating a “white list” of resources would inevitably privilege approaches to media literacy that reflected their particular value system. If such an approach were used to create such a list, careful attention would need to be paid to ensure the committee members reflected the full diversity of “flavors” or approaches used within the media literacy community.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the responses provided to the NOI about media literacy, parents, and the role of schools, we recommend the following action items for the FCC.

Encourage media industries to support high visibility community symposiums to raise awareness about the importance of media literacy and digital learning.

Invitational symposia that bring together members of the general public, state and federal officials, local community and educational leaders to explore the field and its relevance to teacher education would build visibility for media literacy education.

Encourage partnerships between media industries and educational institutions to build capacity among school leaders to develop and sustain media literacy education programs in the context of K-12 education.

Partnerships between school leaders, university faculty, public health leaders, and media companies within communities are the key to effective implementation of media literacy and digital learning programs.

Encourage inter-agency collaboration to support the development of media literacy education programs for early childhood and in elementary school and after-school programs.

Evidence that documents “best practices” for media literacy education for

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

young children would improve the quality of instruction and promote community implementation. Research evidence is needed to develop a better understanding of the constellation of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that are associated with the development of media literacy in young children. During the 1990s, several federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the Office on Women’s Health, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention actively supported media literacy initiatives. Spirited leadership from the FCC could inspire renewed efforts.

Support research on alternative assessments for media literacy is needed to better understand how specific components of education programs may affect the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors. The development of alternative assessments to measure media literacy would improve the quality of educational programs for children and adolescents. The FCC should work with Department of Education and the National Science Foundation (NSF) to open up research funding dedicated to developing alternative assessment methodologies to measure student learning progression in media and digital literacy.

Encourage the production of resources that *visually model* the kind of active discussion practices between children, parents and teachers that promote critical thinking about media and technology. For parents, episodes of the successful cable program, “Super Nanny” could focus on strategies for managing media and technology use in the home. Well-produced video documentaries or reality programs could show what media literacy “looks like” when using and creating media in the context of English language arts, history, science or health education. Celebrity parents could model and create awareness for media literacy through PSAs and programming. The FTC should encourage broadcasters, cablecasters, MSOs and ISPs to support the development of materials that show media literacy in action in both homes and schools, particularly with people from diverse socio-economic contexts.

Implement a mass media visibility campaign that explains the value of active engagement between parents and children about media and digital technologies. The FCC could collaborate with national media literacy membership organizations such as NAMLE and other independent groups such as Common Sense Media, the National Parent Teacher Association, or the Department of Education to highlight a need for parents to engage in media literacy practices with their children.

Campaigns led primarily by the cable industry and partners, including “Control Your TV” and “TV Boss” emphasize *control* (V-chip and TV ratings system), *choice* (choosing suitable programs for kids), and *education* (teaching media literacy to kids).¹¹⁰ Known for its catchy PSAs with parents pointing the remote at risqué television characters saying, “I’m going to have to block you,” this campaign emphasized *media management* as the way parents should guide their children’s television use—not media literacy.

¹¹⁰ These programs are available at: www.controlyourtv.org and www.thetvboss.org

Unfortunately, the media literacy strategies in this campaign were not the focal point of the PSAs, and the small amount of media literacy information provided was muddled, inconsistent, and hard to find on websites. And although “Control your TV” is a clear message to parents, it does not promote media literacy. We also note that these two campaigns focused on television and did not address the Internet, social media, or mobile devices. Therefore, we believe a media literacy visibility campaign targeting parents must: 1) provide a direct, consistent message¹¹¹ and 2) highlight critical inquiry and active mediation; and 3) include an assessment component to evaluate its effectiveness.

To conclude, we believe that the FCC can play a vital role in helping protect and empower children, young people and their parents in the 21st century. The FCC’s advocacy on behalf of media literacy can help raise awareness within the media industry of their social responsibility to support the educational needs of children, youth and parents, enabling them to build critical thinking and communication skills, make wise choices of entertainment and information in all its many forms, and participate fully as citizens in a democracy.

Submitted on behalf of U.S. media literacy educators nationwide,

Renee Hobbs, EdD
Professor and Founder, Media Education Lab
Temple University School of Communications and Theater
Philadelphia, PA
Email: renee.hobbs@temple.edu

Sherri Hope Culver
Assistant Professor and Director, Media Education Lab
Temple University School of Communications and Theater
Philadelphia, PA
President, National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)
Email: shculver@temple.edu

Kelly Mendoza
Doctoral Candidate, Mass Media and Communication
Temple University School of Communications and Theater
Philadelphia, PA
Board of Directors, National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)
Email: kmendoza@temple.edu

¹¹¹ See NAMLE’s Core Principles of Media Literacy <http://namle.net/core-principles>, and the Five Key Questions of Media Literacy http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article661.html