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Field-Based Teacher Education in Elementary Media Literacy as a Means to Promote Global Understanding

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Preservice teachers develop valuable knowledge and skills when they get opportunities to collaborate with classroom teachers in a field experience program designed to implement and assess a variety of instructional practices in media literacy education. This article describes a university–school partnership that supports the professional development of preservice teachers and elementary teachers. To promote global understanding while developing critical thinking skills about mass media and popular culture, this program used a range of specific instructional practices to help combat negative media stereotypes and increase knowledge, tolerance, and acceptance of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. Grade 3 and 4 children learned to identify inaccurate visual stereotypes of the Middle East and strengthened message analysis skills through asking critical questions about the representation of Arab people in popular culture, including advertising and animation. They gained knowledge about the many nations and cultures of the Middle East through the use of library resources and online databases. After creating simple videos to represent their own cultural heritage to others, they participated in an online collaborative forum sharing their work and responding to questions through a collaborative wiki with students from Kuwait, who shared their culture and family traditions. Students and teachers decreased their reliance on cultural stereotypes and increased their knowledge and appreciation of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East.

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In the United States and much of the world, elementary teachers are well aware of the influence of mass media and popular culture on children who come into their classrooms with Spongebob lunchboxes, Naruto T-shirts, and Disney princess sneakers. Many forms of children's spontaneous play often include the themes of mass media and popular culture, and educators recognize how celebrities, athletes, and fictional characters from movies and TV shows engage children's interest in watching television and movies, playing video games and using the Internet (Dyson, 1997). Today participation in contemporary culture requires not just consuming messages, but also having digital and media literacy competencies that involve analyzing and composing messages using language, graphic design, image, interactivity, and sound. These competencies can be developed in formal educational settings in K–12 and higher education as well as in informal settings like the home, afterschool and summer programs. The inclusion of digital and media literacy in elementary education can be a bridge across digital divides and cultural enclaves, a way to energize learners and make connections across the subject areas, and a means for providing more equal opportunities in digital environments (Hobbs, 2007; 2010).

In the United States and around the world, elementary educators generally receive little exposure to media literacy pedagogy as part of their preservice training (Davou & Nika, 2007; Share, 2010). And though “most of the rhetoric around media and children or youth is dominated by the word ‘technology,’” educators generally understand that technology, by itself, will change nothing when it comes to teaching and learning (Bazalgette, 2010, p. 15). However, at the present time, there are few curriculum materials and resources available for use in K–6 classrooms (Bazalgette, 2010; Marsh et al., 2005). As a result, elementary educators may not be familiar with the potential of digital and media literacy education to support the development of children's critical thinking and communication skills.

University–school partnerships can be a vital way to introduce digital and media literacy into elementary education. University–school partnerships have been shown to be an effective means to support teachers' professional development because they advance a concept of shared responsibility for teacher preparation, support the development of complex teaching skills, and ensure that teachers know how to work closely with colleagues, students, and the community (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). University–school partnerships provide a rich and substantive field experience (sometimes called clinical preparation) that has been identified as among the three aspects of teacher preparation that is likely to have the highest potential for effects on student outcomes, along with content knowledge and quality of teacher candidates (NCATE, 2010). Internationally, partnerships between schools and colleges have exploded in many countries so that today we witness widespread examples of teachers' professional development and students' enhanced learning experiences (Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001; Tsui, Edwards, & Lopez-Real, 2009).

The Media Education Lab at Temple University uses a university–school partnership model in improving the practice of media literacy education through scholarship and community service. With support from Temple University's Community Learning Network (CLN) that advances and supports civic engagement in learning and research, we have been able to offer undergraduate and graduate courses that are designed as field experience courses, with a special designation as “Community-Based Learning” courses that provide student leadership opportunities. Since 2003, the Media Education Lab has facilitated field experience programs, working in short- and long-term partnerships with K–12 schools and community-based youth-serving organizations in ways

that provide direct service to children and youth and staff development experiences for educators that support the growth and development of preservice teachers as well as currently employed educational practitioners already working in schools.

This article describes the work conducted during the Spring 2009, when a team of researchers, preservice teachers, elementary teachers, a gifted and talented specialist, and a school library/media specialist collaborated to integrate media literacy into a unit of instruction for students in Grades 3 and 4 to support the development of children's understanding of the peoples and culture of the Middle East. This project was supported by a small grant from the United States Alliance of Civilizations that has spearheaded media literacy initiatives that promote global cultural understanding.

By the time children enter elementary school, many already have some preconceived ideas and attitudes about other cultures that are influenced by their families, friends, and communities (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2002; Montgomery, 2000). Children learn about the people and cultures of the world through exposure to many forms of mass media and popular culture (Frau-Meigs, 2006; Silverblatt & Zlobin, 2004). Fortunately, an increasing number of educators are aware of the influence of the media and other experiences in the shaping of their students' perceptions and interpretations (Borg & Lauri, 2009; Cortes, 2005). Some educators try to intervene in this informal learning process through multicultural education, trying to address the negative stereotypes about Arab people that have long been found in popular culture (Shaheen, 2000) as well as some educational textbooks for American students (Barlow & Council, 1994). In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Arabs and Muslims have been targets of increasingly negative messages in the mass media and popular culture (Akram, 2002; Almaena, 2007). However, little work has been done with children to recognize and resist the stereotypical representations of people and cultures from the Middle East (Cortes, 2005; Montgomery, 2000; Wingfield & Karaman, 2006).

This case study of a university-school partnership shows how a partnership between preservice teachers and elementary educators may help combat stereotypes, support critical thinking about media and technology, develop composition and creative skills, and promote children's global understanding of the people and cultures of the Middle East.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The partner school was located in an affluent community in the metropolitan Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The community of about 21,000 residents has a median family income of \$119,000 and a largely White population. Many of the residents work in professional fields, including banking, health care, and pharmaceutical industries, and 32% of the population have a master's degree or higher. However, there is significant economic diversity in this community, with 35% of residents coming from families earning less than \$50,000 in household income annually. Less than 10% of the community consists of immigrant families, representing a smattering of Asian and South Asian immigrants.

The school district is deeply committed to integrating technology into the curriculum; computers and interactive white boards were in plentiful supply at this school. However, like many U.S. elementary educators, teachers were unfamiliar with the pedagogy and practice of media literacy education. Although some teachers had experience using video cameras for documenting

student performances and wikis as a tool for collaborative writing, they were not aware of the instructional pedagogy of media literacy, the key concepts of media literacy, or the use of film as a tool for exploring the constructed nature of media messages.

The partnership process was limited as a result of time pressures. Elementary educators generally spend the entire school day with their students, with very limited time available for planning and preparation. As a result, access to the school's teaching staff was extremely limited. During the year-long process, we conducted only three planning meetings with the school principal and members of the educational staff to develop the program. One meeting consisted of a 90-minute staff development program introducing the key concepts of media literacy and offering a viewing and discussion experience to demonstrate the process of critical media analysis. The first author modeled the process of using research, viewing and art activities to gain knowledge and active critical thinking and communication skills in learning about the people and cultures of the Middle East. Other planning work occurred as preservice teachers and classroom teachers collaborated on the design and implementation of student media-production activities.

To document the partnership process, researchers and preservice teachers conducted informal interviews with teachers, made classroom observations, interviewed children, and collected student work samples. Limitations of the schedule prevented regular daily access to the classroom, however. Elementary teachers engaged in some instructional practices related to this unit that we were not able to document carefully, so this article is limited to report on only those aspects of the program that we were able to document carefully.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

In collaborative work involving the authors and classroom teachers, we introduced the instructional principles and practices of media literacy education as a means to support the knowledge and skill development of children in critically analyzing mass media and popular culture (National Association for Media Literacy Education [NAMLE], 2007). A variety of learning activities were used in this project; these were led by preservice teachers who demonstrated some lessons and activities which were then further extended by elementary teachers. Some components of the instructional program are described below.

Activating Prior Knowledge

In beginning the program, preservice teachers wanted to determine what students already knew about the Middle East, so they asked children to write down their ideas. As shown on Table 1, the majority of the responses demonstrated very little knowledge about the region and cultures that live there. Nearly one half of these students had no knowledge of the Middle East, with 39% having some knowledge and about 13% knowing more details, including names of countries and languages spoken.

Dismantling Visual Stereotypes

Preservice teachers wanted to demonstrate a lesson on using close visual analysis of images as a means to help children gain awareness of their own stereotyped understanding of the peoples

TABLE 1
Students' Prior Knowledge About the Middle East

<i>Percent</i>	<i>Level of Prior Knowledge Writing Samples</i>
48%	<p>No knowledge</p> <p>I think the Middle East is the middle of Washington, Montana, Portland, and California. The only thing I know about the Middle East is that sometimes I go there for wrestling and soccer. I think the Middle East is were the Indeins used to live I think the Middle East to us is New Jersey. It's were cowboys live I think the middle East is the middle east of the United States of America why I am thinking it is the Middle East because my aunt lives in Utah. I think the Middle East is a huge island</p>
39%	<p>Some knowledge</p> <p>Warm air comes to the Middle East . . . oil in the water there. It is very hot and it isn't usually cold. I think the Middle East is in Asia and is around rock and indo and is dry, hot, and away from the sea and is southwest from China. It is hot and it is kind of like the desert and people live there. I think it's open land with pyramids and also with maybe towers. I think the Middle East looks like a hot desert. I think there will be lots of camels and tents or shelter and peramids.</p>
13%	<p>More knowledge</p> <p>In the Middle East here are some of the contries in the Iran, Irack, Isreal, Turkey, Morraco, and Qatar. The Middle East is in Arab. They speak in Hebru and Islam and they go to tempils.</p>

N = 23

and cultures of the Middle East and as means to introduce media literacy pedagogy. We adapted the curriculum materials still images from “Media Construction of the Middle East” (Project Look Sharp at Ithaca College, 2007). These materials are designed to explore common visual stereotypes about clothing, weather, geographic features, and cultural aspects of daily life. We adapted the materials to be developmentally appropriate for young children, creating a simple worksheet for children to document their reasoning process. With each class, students worked with a partner or in a small group. Each group was given a worksheet with three images. The images were also displayed on an overhead projector. Working with their partner, children grappled with the images, expressing their expectations and persuading their partner of their ideas. Each team was asked to present their reasoning to the whole group. When students did not unanimously agree, they were encouraged to present to the whole group the range of arguments offered by team members. As they worked, students were reminded to ask questions about the image and use specific visual evidence to support their reasoning. For example, children were asked to point to elements in the image that were relevant in making their determination about image’s geographic location. For example, one child said, “This image shows mountains with snow. We don’t think it snows in the Middle East.” Another child said, “This shows women who are wearing long gowns. Women are covered up in the Middle East.” Such discourse revealed that students were actively engaged in a process of making meaning of the more familiar and less familiar images.

TABLE 2
Children's Stereotypical Ideas about the Middle East

It does not snow in the Middle East.
There are no malls.
There are many wars there.
There are not very many cars in the Middle East.
They ride camels.
People live in tents.
There is no water and no ocean in the Middle East.
They do not have big buildings.
Women do not wear makeup.
Women and girls do not wear fashionable clothes—they are all covered up.
They do not grow much food in this region.

After all groups of children presented their findings, the teachers informed students of the correct answers. Children responded with delighted pride when they discovered that some of their knowledge was accurate and offered responses of surprise when some of their inferences were inaccurate. Table 2 illustrates some of the stereotypical ideas that were activated by this lesson, showing children's limited understanding of certain aspects of the Middle East including geography, weather, gender, culture, and development.

Researching the Accuracy of Visual Stereotypes

The teacher of a group of gifted Grade 4 students used an activity to support children's use of the Internet as a research tool. Teams of children were asked to select a particular country from the Middle East. Using books, library resources, and online database tools, they checked to see if the stereotypes were accurate or inaccurate for their particular country. For example, a team of children who researched Qatar discovered that there are many skyscrapers and modern architecture in that nation. The group of children who researched Saudi Arabia confirmed that the country is primarily made up of deserts and sand dunes. Each team of children offered their informal presentations to a group of Grade 3 students in an example of near-peer sharing to an authentic audience. We observed this session and saw that Grade 3 students were respectful and responsive listeners. They were proud to describe what they had learned from the near-peer students in an informal writing activity. Some examples of children's talk shows this:

"I learned that the Middle East isn't poor, that they are a little bit richer."

"I learned that there is still war going on."

"In some countries it is against the law for women to shake hands with men."

"They speak Italian and French and not just Arabic."

"They wear different clothes."

By encouraging students to seek information independently and present their findings to their peers, children deepened their knowledge of the region and recognized common misconceptions. It was evident that children took a great deal of pride in the new knowledge they had gained and were able to share with peers. This teaching opportunity heightened the children's curiosity and their confidence in research and self-expression.

Children were also able to identify that popular mass media had contributed to the development of their stereotypes about the Middle East, as shown here in an informal classroom conversation between a preservice teacher and students:

Preservice Teacher: Many of things we thought were true about the Middle East are not true. So, where do these ideas come from?

Student 1: In the beginning we had a talk [with the classroom teacher]. We found that movies have the most [stereotypes] like Iron Man and Indiana Jones, especially at the beginning of *Iron Man*.

Asked to explain stereotypes at the beginning of *Iron Man*:

Student 2: A really barren dessert, and then when they come to the camp everyone is poor, wearing really ragged clothes . . .

Student 3: . . . and killing each other.

Student 4: . . . carrying guns all over the place.

Here is another exchange during that same conversation:

Student 4: In Iron Man [the main character] was captured by people in Afghanistan. So that would give us a very . . .

Student 5: Bad impression.

Student 6: Bad influence.

Student 3: Yeah, exactly. That would give us a bad impression on Afghanistan because if we're seeing a movie where Afghanistan is terrorists, than we would think that everyone in Afghanistan is a terrorist. Also we were talking and we thought that they would have a lot—just as many stereotypes about us. And I don't think many people we would be very surprised if they were doing the same project about us.

Children had clearly grasped the idea that popular culture and mass media messages can distort our understanding of the people and cultures of the Middle East.

Developing Critical Analysis Skills

Children explored how to apply the critical questions of media literacy to various types of familiar and unfamiliar texts, including popular culture and mass media texts. Preservice teachers wanted to model the process of critical media analysis with children in ways that would encourage their teachers to observe the level of abstract thinking that was possible through the use of media literacy questions. Table 3 displays the critical questions used in this curriculum. Interviews revealed

TABLE 3
Critical Questions of Media Literacy Education

Who is the author and what is the purpose of this message?
What values and points of view are shown?
What techniques are used to attract your attention?
How might different people interpret the message differently?
What is left out?

that classroom teachers had thought these questions to be too abstract for children. However, children responded quite well to these questions, offering solid reasoning and use of visual evidence to support their ideas.

For example, in the first activity using the critical questions, students in small groups were assigned one of the five media literacy questions to focus on as they watched a McDonald's commercial from Egypt that was selected for classroom use by preservice teachers. The commercial (available on YouTube) presents a situation in which a man wants to demonstrate his love for his girlfriend. With the pop soundtrack, "I Would do Anything for Love" playing in the background, we see him jumping into water to retrieve a lost flower, buying expensive clothing, and pushing the girl's out-of-gas car off the highway. But when the girlfriend attempts to take some of his French fries, he fights for them and they break up. He sits and eats the French fries contentedly in the concluding moments of the ad.

This activity was an effective way to introduce critical questions because it was very brief, quickly engaged students, and had a range of complex layers of meaning for students to tackle. After viewing the commercial twice from beginning to end without pause, children shared their responses to the critical questions. Children were fascinated to see how McDonald's is marketed in Egypt, and they were able to identify the target audience, cultural stereotypes around gender, cultural norms about relationships, and attitudes about fast food. Children recognized how humor can be interpreted differently depending on one's cultural background. In analyzing the ad's stereotypes about gender and relationships, children also challenged each other about what is acceptable, normal, and funny—offering ideas that showed their interest in applying critical analysis skills to their own personal experience as media consumers.

As students gained familiarity with applying the key questions of media literacy to analyze a media text, they were excited to repeat the activity using a 13-minute excerpt from the Disney film *Aladdin*, also selected by preservice teachers for classroom use. After viewing the *Aladdin* clip, children divided into small groups and were assigned a collaborative writing activity. Their assignment: answer one media literacy question based on evidence provided in the film. Because children had already practiced using these questions, this task was somewhat familiar and they were eager to report their findings back to the entire group. After the lesson, one elementary teacher described his surprise at seeing his students engage in this activity, telling a researcher, "I didn't know my students could do this—they are taking apart a movie like they take apart a book."

Using Film to Develop Emotional Connectedness to the "Other"

Film has long been recognized as a powerful tool to promote cultural understanding (Bueno, 2009; Nadaner, 1981). We wanted to use film to support children's emotional identification with the people and cultures of the Middle East. Raouf Zaki's (2008) short independent film titled *Santa Claus in Baghdad*, based on a story of the same name by Elsa Marston, tells the story of a family whose lives are disrupted by the U.S. embargo in 1980. In this story, a young boy believes that Santa Claus is coming to Baghdad when his teacher reads a book about the mythical character and his family awaits a visit from Uncle Omar from the United States. Students watched the film and discussed the moral lessons embedded in the film that focus on the values of family love; appreciation of teachers, books, and learning; and the blessings of a generous spirit. Some classroom teachers read aloud with their students the short story that the film is based on to

explore basic concepts in literary adaptation. Teachers also used the film to stimulate writing activities and art projects related to students' feelings and thoughts about the film.

Understanding the Constructed Nature of Film

Preservice teachers encouraged teachers to view the film more than once, to engage in careful examination of the narrative structure, character development, and editing. Critical analysis of film was a new concept to educators in this school. As part of the staff development program for teachers, we modeled a process of analyzing the visual representation of character, using the "Character Wheel" Activity (Hobbs, 1998), inviting learners to examine how the filmmaker constructs characters through strategic use of action, dialogue, appearance, setting, thoughts, and the reactions of others. We encouraged teachers to screen the "making of" video that accompanied the feature film, where they learned about the process of recreating the Baghdad book market, which was filmed in a warehouse in Framingham, Massachusetts.

This portion of the project culminated in a visit from the filmmaker, Raouf Zaki, who participated in question-and-answer session with students. We observed high levels of engagement from students during this activity. Children asked a range of thoughtful questions, offering questions like:

"Why did you make the film?"

"What was it like working with child actors?"

"How long did it take to make the film?"

"How did you decide who would play the different characters?"

Many children excitedly came up to the filmmaker after the session and asked for his autograph. Interview data from teachers revealed that they noticed a connection between the children's ability to recognize stereotypes, their careful viewing of the film, and their new knowledge of Middle Eastern culture.

Strengthening Civic Dialogue Through Creative Expression

As a final component of the program, children had the opportunity to interact with people from the Middle East through a pen-pal type exchange with students at Kuwaiti University, coordinated by Professor Rawia Al-Humaidan. About 12 university students from a lower-division educational technology class participated in this project. To manage the interaction of the elementary school children with older students, a wiki space was used to make this a small group-sharing experience for students. Each Kuwaiti student was paired with three to five elementary children. This opportunity allowed students from both cultures to use media technology to forge a connection intended to deepen their understanding of each other's culture and thereby challenge misconceptions and stereotypes.

Due to timing, technology, and miscommunication, this component of the project was challenging. When elementary schoolteachers were ready to initiate a cross-cultural interaction, Kuwaiti students were on semester break. The use of online software was a novelty for all participants. We learned that a simple list of steps in the process (of how to contribute to a wiki) was not adequate instruction for either teachers or students. Only after hands-on demonstration were students able to effectively contribute to the Website. Culturally, some Kuwaiti students were

hesitant to contribute to the wiki due to feelings of intruding into an unfamiliar space—that of a school-created webpage from a foreign country.

However, once they became familiar with the Website, Kuwaiti students uploaded photos and contributed writing in ways that the elementary children found fascinating. The elementary schoolchildren also contributed with informal videos, made with a simple Flip video camera, that shared their ideas about aspects of daily life at school and at home. Some of these videos included role-playing of a family meal, for example. A review of the wiki shows that there was some meaningful interaction between elementary children and Kuwaiti students. Because Kuwaiti students were writing in their second language (English), the level of communication was perhaps more effective than if the project had worked with younger students, who would likely not have been as skillful in expressing themselves in English.

Interviews with participants indicated that it was an enriching experience. Young Kuwaiti students were well aware of the negative stereotypes of Middle Eastern people that are common in Hollywood films and on the news. They were eager to offer a meaningful counterpoint to these negative stereotypes. Representing themselves as normal teenagers with interests in family, friends, music, and popular culture—something these students already do on their own social networking websites—was now positioned as a kind of social activism, part of a process to help correct cultural misunderstandings. According to Professor Al-Humaidan, for the first time these Kuwaiti students felt like they were making a social impact far away, even while sitting in their classroom. Up until this time, these young Kuwaiti students had not seen themselves as agents for social change.

DISCUSSION

On June 4, 2009, when President Barack Obama offered an address at Cairo University in his first official trip to the Middle East, he acknowledged the great tension between the United States and the Arab world and the need to end the cycle of suspicion and discord. After describing his personal life history in Asia, North America, and Africa, he explained that “partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn’t. I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear” (Obama, 2009).

In *The Public and Its Problems*, written in 1927, John Dewey explained that through education, the average citizen can learn to become civically competent and engage in the process of addressing the challenges present in our neighborhoods, our cities, our country, and the world. The ability to participate as listener and speaker in public debate, literally and figuratively, is an essential component of citizenship. In this project, a university–school partnership was used to support the development of fundamental citizenship skills by enhancing the knowledge and competencies of preservice and elementary educators and their students. We wanted to support children’s critical thinking and communication skills while deepening their understanding of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. By disrupting stereotypes, children were encouraged to recognize and resist the common stereotypes of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. Children’s learning was activated through the power of narrative, using fictional film to stimulate children’s emotional engagement, imagination and curiosity. The techniques of close analysis,

combined with a filmmaker visit, supported the process of children's understanding of the constructed nature of film, as children were able to "go behind the scenes." We capitalized on the educational benefits of using online social media to promote feelings of empowerment by connecting U.S. children with participants from a Kuwait university. Evidence from student work samples and teacher interviews show that the program was effective in meeting its goals.

However, four important challenges and limitations were discovered in the process of this field experience, including teacher resistance to the use of current events news about the Middle East, maintaining a focus on student-centered technology use, ambivalence about the use of mass media and popular culture in the elementary classroom, and an appreciation for the emotional and moral potency of narrative film.

First, it was noteworthy that we found some initial discomfort on the part of classroom teachers who were not used to classroom talk that activated children's exposure to mass media and popular culture and featured topics related to war, terrorism, and violence. Some classroom teachers were clearly not comfortable when their students used examples from contemporary film and television, especially if they lacked knowledge about the specific references that children were making. It's possible that teachers' sensitivity to "appropriate content" reflects their naturally protective attitudes toward young children. For example, although most children were eager to discuss the film *Iron Man* and it was discussed informally during the program with preservice teachers in the classroom, the film's PG-13 rating meant that the even the film trailer could not be screened as a means to stimulate discussion of Middle East stereotypes. On no occasion did classroom teachers make active use of popular culture and mass media texts without direct support from preservice teachers—instead, they used more traditional texts, including children's literature, informational Websites, and other school-appropriate materials.

Second, because classroom teachers themselves tended to focus on technology use for technology's sake, they sometimes devalued the role of student engagement in discussion and media production activities. Due to time constraints, some media production activities that should have been student centered sometimes became teacher centered. In one case, a teacher prepared PowerPoint slides for students' oral presentations, including the making the selection of photographs to accompany their ideas. For this classroom teacher, this form of support was seen as natural; by contrast, preservice teachers believed that the project would be more educationally meaningful if children had been permitted to make the image selections themselves.

In addition, it may be important to raise teachers' expectations about what kinds of film and media texts children may be able to use and understand. Media texts enable children to access "concepts they may not be able to access through written texts" (Bazalgette, 2010, p. 21). In this case study, classroom teachers' use of film tended to focus on its value in moral education; at the same time, preservice teachers were concerned that a focus on the moral of the story of the film might be essentially reproducing a form of reverse propaganda and indoctrination through capitalizing on the film's emotional appeal. We observed that, because of their limited exposure to media literacy education, some classroom teachers did not engage in close analysis of *Santa Claus in Baghdad* (Zaki, 2008) as fully as preservice teachers had expected, preferring to focus on the film's characters, setting, plot, and theme. Preservice teachers had hoped that classroom teachers would more deeply explore issues related to media literacy concepts including authorship, purpose, point of view, audience, message, meanings, representation, and reality.

Finally, the importance of film as a tool for moral education in the elementary grades should not be discounted. Given the strong focus of the film on family values, love of books and learning,

and the unexpected joys associated with generous giving, the film deepened children's emotional engagement with the people of the Middle East. Educators need to be careful in ensuring that, with all their focus on critical analysis skills and appreciation of the constructed nature of film, they do not lose touch with the strong emotional learning that comes from film's inherent potential to reach learners' hearts and minds.

Some parents, teachers, and scholars believe that media literacy competencies in young children develop with or without instruction (Buckingham, 2003). Perhaps because early childhood educators have complex and sometimes ambivalent views about the role of media and new technologies, there are few case studies of media literacy education in the context of K–6 education. Given the general lack of professional development materials or curriculum resources available to teachers, this is to be expected. Case studies of effective use of mass media, popular culture, media, and digital technologies in the context of K–6 education can help develop this field. Active reasoning about mass media and popular culture may support children's learning about the diverse peoples and cultures of the world, enhancing the potential of media literacy education to promote global understanding.

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