

Strengthening Media Education in the Twenty-first Century: Opportunities for the State of Pennsylvania

RENEE HOBBS

The concept of media education has not fully arrived for children and youth now being educated in public school classrooms in Pennsylvania. Some students get opportunities to use the tools of current and emerging communication technologies to create works for self-expression, but these are generally vocationally designed digital communication programs available to a tiny proportion of students who are sometimes placed in these programs because of their low academic ability. Most K–12 students in the state do not have regular, school-based opportunities to appreciate, analyze, and create works through photography, cinema, sound, digital arts, or interactive media. Although there are some programs that provide meaningful afterschool opportunities for youth media education, these are much less well developed and stable compared to states of similar size nationwide.

Moreover, in sharp contrast to elementary and secondary students in states such as Minnesota, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Texas, few students in Pennsylvania's public schools have structured educational opportunities to analyze critically media and popular culture, examining the ways in which visual and electronic messages are constructed and designed, how aes-

thetic and design techniques are used to express and communicate meanings, how they present and represent various cultural values, and how these messages shape attitudes and influence behaviors. Although children and young people in Pennsylvania spend an average of eight hours per day consuming media, they do not have opportunities to develop critical thinking skills useful in responding to these messages. Most do not have opportunities to create video or multimedia works to express themselves or convey their own ideas. The few students who do have opportunities to work with video production usually learn technical skills, working with technologies that enable them to create messages largely designed to serve community or adult needs, including videotaping school football games or school committee meetings, creating morning announcements, or designing school promotional messages.

Although it is beyond my scope here to examine the historical circumstances that have created this particular curricular pattern so common in Pennsylvania schools, this article defines media education and places it in the context of contemporary research on the arts, culture, and economic and social development. Second, this article reviews current instructional settings where media

analysis and media production activities are now occurring in K–12 education in Pennsylvania. This article then describes how other states have implemented and assessed media education within an arts education framework. Finally, this article makes specific recommendations on policies that could improve media education so that students can build skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration that are so central to life in an increasingly technology-rich and media-saturated society. In constructing this article, I reviewed documents from the Pennsylvania State Department of Education; national, state, and local arts and arts education associations; and data from the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Labor. I examined syllabi and curriculum materials from a number of high schools and colleges across Pennsylvania and nationwide. I conducted interviews with scholars, K–12 educators, media professionals, and artists involved in school-based residency or other outreach programs. Finally, I reviewed the scholarly and academic literature on media education and consulted with professional colleagues who are familiar with media education implementation and assessment in the states of Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. (See references for a com-

plete list of documents reviewed for background research and information regarding media education.)

Media Culture in the Lives of Children and Youth

One thing is certain, whether we like it or not: Media culture now stands firmly at the center of contemporary life, economically, politically, and socially. Nearly every field of inquiry (from politics to religion to the arts and sciences) and aspect of modern life (workplace, family, and community) are attuned to the ways in which television in particular and mass media more generally have exerted influence. The tsunami of images and information that wash over us daily is a component of an increasingly speeded-up, “fast” economy where consumer pleasures are embodied by a vivid commotion of illuminations, images, and sounds that shape a large and growing global entertainment and information economy (Gitlin 2001). Because mass media have the potential to distribute the same message to millions, media messages create the subjects that are grist for our everyday conversation mill. The ideas people find in print, on the radio, on TV, and on the Internet become a springboard for discussions and arguments. Advertising and entertainment programs continually shape people’s understanding of the elements that make up our society and act to transmit cultural patterns and activities (Turow 1997). Media are a major factor in socialization, as are family, church, community, school, and peers (Calvert 1998).

Television and video are a component of the home environment in Pennsylvania, with 99 percent living in a home with a TV set and 50 percent having three or more TVs. Sixty percent of children live in a house with Internet access, as compared with only 34 percent who receive a newspaper subscription. One-third of American children under age six have a TV in their bedroom (Kaiser Family Foundation 2003). According to their parents, children under six spend an average of two hours a day with screen media, and 65 percent live in a home where the TV is on at

least half the time, even if no one is watching. One-third of American children grow up in “heavy” TV households, meaning that the TV is on “always” or “most of the time.” Children and teens ages seven to seventeen watch TV about twenty hours per week and listen to recorded music about ten hours weekly. When videogames, Internet use, pleasure reading, and other online activities are included, children spend an average of six hours and forty-three minutes per day using media (Kaiser Family Foundation 1999). Over the course of a year, Pennsylvania’s children will spend far more time using media than they spend in school.

Defining Media Education in Twenty-first Century America

Media education is a term used synonymously with *media literacy*. *Media literacy* is defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms” (Aufderheide and Firestone 1993, 6). Media literacy educators pay attention to both consumption (critically analyzing messages) and production (creating messages using media and technology tools). Many media literacy educators in the United States work in the K–12 subject areas of the fine and performing arts. They may use the term *media arts education* to refer to media literacy that emphasizes the media of photography, film, video, multimedia, or new media (Tyner 1998). In contrast to *communication arts educators*, who may emphasize knowledge about production processes and practices in media industries and the creation of commercial media genres (like talk shows, game shows, and news programs), media arts educators generally emphasize a focus on aesthetic techniques involving the creation of independent media, including narrative, animation, documentary, and experimental genres. In media arts education, the instructional focus centers on thematic and compositional elements of creative work. Although the acquisition of technological competence is a component of instruction, it is seen as a means, not an end in itself (Hobbs 1998a).

Media literacy educators encourage an exploration of mass market and popular culture texts as well as nonmarket, personal, artistic, or high culture texts, which use tools of visual and electronic representation. Media literacy educators emphasize that students deserve opportunities in instructional settings to analyze critically and evaluate mass media and popular culture texts from television, magazines, popular music, advertising, newspapers, videogames, and the Internet (Semali 2000). They also emphasize the centrality of providing students with opportunities to create their own forms of self-expression and communication using tools and technologies that allow students to explore relationships between image, language, music, and sound (Buckingham 2003; Brunner and Tally 1998; Masterman 1985; Tyner 1998). Table 1 outlines the key aspects of the analytic framework, presented as key concepts, which have been identified as central driving principles in the field (Film Working Group 2003; Buckingham 2003; Thoman 2001).

Media literacy’s increasing rise in K–12 and higher education has also provided noteworthy opportunities for reflection on changing conceptualizations of literacy. These views are currently emerging among scholars in English language arts, reading instruction, communications, and literary scholarship (Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood 1999; Flood, Heath, and Lapp 1997; Messaris 1994). Literacy is being redefined to recognize the changing nature of knowledge in contemporary society; it is coming to be understood not just as

TABLE 1. Key Concepts of Media Literacy

1. Messages are constructions.
2. Messages are interpreted by individuals differently based on prior knowledge and experience.
3. Messages have economic, political, and social purposes.
4. Messages have embedded values and points of view.
5. Messages use a variety of symbolic and expressive forms, codes, and conventions.

decoding and encoding using printed words, but as the more complex process involved in acquiring and expressing meaning in a range of symbolic forms (Boyer 1995; Eisner 2002). This view recognizes that the visual arts and oral communication, although distinct, share interrelated physical and symbolic processes with written language. For example, research has shown that music features a symbol system that shares fundamental characteristics with written language (Scripp 2002); dramatic activities in the classroom enhance students' reading comprehension and understanding of character development (Catterall 2002); and learning how to critically analyze media and popular culture messages strengthens reading comprehension and writing skills (Hobbs and Frost 2003). These developments are beginning to lend support to educators who recognize the limitations of "skill-and-drill" approaches to reading instruction. Some educators are attempting to reinvigorate education for the twenty-first century by giving students opportunities to analyze critically a rich array of texts in a variety of formats, genres, and symbol systems and to strengthen students' skills in designing, composing, and creating using a similarly wide variety of forms, tools, and media.

As a result of pioneering work in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom over the past twenty-five years, media literacy education has been recognized for its role in promoting the social and personal development of young people (Alvarado and Boyd-Barrett 1992; Goodman 2003). Most media education programs in public school settings rely on group production projects. As students are challenged to work collaboratively, they build a sense of responsibility for self and others, and strengthen the ability to persist at a task in the face of anxieties, fears, and other obstacles (Goldfarb 2002). This process necessarily creates an environment where students must listen to differing viewpoints, compromise, express their judgments to one another in honest language, and harness their collective skills in the service of an overall artistic vision. However, because few states include arts assessments in their

accountability programs, we have only limited evidence that documents the impact of arts education on aspects of students' social and personal development. Research in arts education must address this important question in the future.

Because media education includes a substantial focus on contemporary mass market culture, it stands in contrast to an important tradition in arts education that focuses more exclusively on classic, well-established genres and art works that have been identified as worthy of study through the canonical processes of artistic criticism. Teachers' attitudes about mass media/popular culture therefore become a relevant dimension of instruction in education. In an important article, Tyner (1994) points out that teachers' responses to popular culture have had a deep influence on how (and whether) media education is incorporated into the K-12 arts curriculum. When teachers criticize popular culture texts in the classroom, they may alienate and insult the very cultural forms that their students value. When teachers embrace media and popular culture, however, they "risk looking like ridiculous fuddy-duddies who are trying to appear up-to-date" (Tyner 1994, 20). Some teachers who are inclined to explore popular culture texts with students aim to guide their students to more sophisticated, investigative, cultural pursuits. Others are genuinely fascinated with contemporary mass culture, with the diversity of new hybrid forms (available online, on TV, in bookstores, and other places) that shamelessly blend mass market commodification with visual, theatrical, musical, and other artistic forms. In any case, teachers inevitably bring their own biases, preconceptions, and beliefs about mass media, technology, and popular culture into the classroom, and these perspectives shape classroom practices, instructional goals, and student learning outcomes (Hobbs 2004, 1998b; Ingram 2001).

Media Education Competencies in the Workplace and Community

Educators are responding to the changing economic and cultural scene,

recognizing that basic, skills-based, equipment-focused vocational training has become too narrow a focus to meet students' needs. In an information and service-based economy, high-level communication and critical thinking skills are required to navigate a complex and fast-changing information environment in both the workplace and the community. Ann Galligan (2001) points out that an education rich in the arts and humanities develops skills that are increasingly central to maintaining America's competitive edge in an international economy in which creativity, innovation, and cultural acumen are decisive advantages. The "creative workforce" includes not only traditional artist categories (authors, painters, actors, musicians, photographers) but those individuals employed in advertising, fashion design, film, video, broadcasting, music, publishing, public relations, and software development—fields which are growing at a rate more than double that for the rest of the nation's workforce, representing an annual market size of \$960 billion in 1999 (Howkins 2001, as cited in Florida 2002, 47).

A review of U.S. employment data reveals that the largest proportion of jobs related to media industries involves high levels of communication, critical thinking, and creativity (these jobs include advertising managers, marketing managers, promotions specialists, multimedia designers, producers and directors, announcers, news analysts and reporters, public relations specialists, sales managers, editors, authors, and technical writers. Only a small number of jobs involve primarily technical skills (these jobs include audio and video equipment technicians, camera operators, and film and video editors), and these are among the lowest paid positions (U.S. Department of Labor 2004). Of the approximately twenty-four thousand jobs in media, advertising, public relations, and publishing in the Philadelphia market, for example, fewer than one thousand are technicians. There is keen competition for the jobs in media, publishing, advertising, marketing and promotion, public relations, and sales, and these jobs

demand people who can access, analyze, and evaluate information to make decisions, with strong communication skills and high levels of creativity, persistence, and flexibility. In 2003, the median starting salary offered to advertising majors graduating from college averaged \$29,495. Communication-related jobs are expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2012, spurred by intense domestic and global competition in products and services offered to consumers (U.S. Department of Labor 2004).

But educational leaders recognize that K–12 education must be designed to prepare students not only for the workplace, but also for life in a complex society, including our important roles as parents and citizens. In this regard, media education may contribute to improving the quality of parenting, as it promotes reflection and critical thinking skills about the ways in which media consumption shapes family communication patterns and leisure activity (Calvert 1998). Media literacy is recognized as an essential skill required for citizenship. University of Pennsylvania communication scholar Elihu Katz (1993, 37) reminds us of the organic connection between communication, education and democracy when he writes, “Democracy is meaningless without multiple voices. . . . It is simply impossible to talk about citizenship training in modern society without reference to mass communication.”

There are three major ways in which media literacy can contribute to strengthening the future of American democracy through outreach to the sixty-five million students in our nation’s schools. First, media literacy practices help strengthen students’ information access and analysis and communication skills, and build an appreciation for why monitoring the world is important. Media literacy helps students recognize why it matters that citizens gain information and exposure to diverse opinions and why people need to participate in policy making at the community, state, and federal levels. Second, media literacy can support and foster educational environments in which students can practice the skills of

leadership, free and responsible self-expression, conflict resolution, and consensus building. Without these skills, young people will not be able to effectively engage with others in the challenges of cooperative problem solving that participation in a democratic society demands. Third, media literacy skills can inspire young people to become more interested in increasing their access to diverse sources of information. It is for these reasons that educators urge that media literacy not be localized in only one subject area (like the fine and performing arts or English language arts), but that it be incorporated across the curriculum not only in arts education, but also in subjects including history, social studies, and health education (O’Brien 2002).

Current Approaches to Media Education in Pennsylvania

The author is not aware of previous research that has identified how media education is implemented into the K–12 education system in Pennsylvania. The following components, now present in the state, suggest there may be fertile ground for the development and enrichment of this curriculum area within the context of arts education:

State standards for arts education. The academic standards for the arts and humanities, as developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), have only limited references to mass media and media education in their identification of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Dance, music, theater, visual arts, and humanities are identified as artistic forms, but media is not. Oddly, multimedia production is included within the definition of theater arts. The writers of the state curriculum standards do acknowledge the value of arts education as both contributing to “the knowledge and the analytical skills necessary to evaluate and critique a media-saturated culture” and the development of “productive citizens who have gained creative and technological knowledge necessary for employment in the twenty-first century” (PDE 2002, 2). These academic standards particularly encourage the application of critical

analysis and evaluation processes, and some examples are included in the standards that suggest that media analysis and media production are valued components of arts education. For example, the terms “communication” and “multimedia” are embedded within some components of the visual arts, as students are expected to analyze contemporary technologies used to produce, perform, and exhibit art (for example, virtual reality design, instrument enhancements, photographic tools, broadcast equipment, film cameras, and so forth). A focus on analyzing and evaluating art forms includes an emphasis on experimenting with and examining contemporary technologies and tools (particularly those used by visual artists and musicians). Here are some examples where the Pennsylvania academic standards for arts education refer to mass media or multimedia:

1. Critical and Aesthetic Response:

Grade 5. Identify uses of expressive symbols that show philosophical meanings in works in the arts and humanities (for example, American TV ads versus Asian TV ads).

Grade 5. Explain choices made regarding media technique, form, subject matter, and themes that communicate the artist’s philosophy within a work in the arts and humanities (for example, selection of stage lighting in Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story* to communicate mood).

Grade 12. Describe and analyze the effects that works in the arts have on groups, individuals, and the culture (for example, Orson Welles’s 1938 radio broadcast, *War of the Worlds*).

2. Creation and Production:

Grade 5. Experiment with contemporary technologies (for example, color fills on computers, animation techniques, video conferencing, fonts/point systems, multimedia techniques).

Grade 12. Delineate a unifying theme through the production of a work of art that reflects skills in media processes and techniques.

The clear delineation of critical and aesthetic response from creation and

production parallels the structure used by media literacy educators, who emphasize “critical reading” of media texts and “writing” or composition of media messages. The examples listed above suggest that, in the view of the writers of the document, media and popular culture texts can be used to illustrate some ideas about how artists make art; however, these standards do not exemplify an appreciation that media education has a unique, core set of values, ideas, and perspectives, as is systematically embedded in the academic standards of other states.

Career and technical education. Skill-based vocational communication arts are the predominant way that Pennsylvania’s youth gain opportunities to develop experiences exploring media, both in school and after school. About eleven hundred secondary students in Pennsylvania are enrolled in career and technical education programs in audio-visual communication arts and technology, with 65 percent of enrollees located in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. The Pennsylvania Department of Education localizes media education within Career and Technical Education, with two program areas: (a) digital communication and media/multimedia, offering an instructional program that focuses on the “development, use and regulation of electronic communication technologies using computer applications . . . including the design and development of communications”; and (b) cinematography and film/video production, an instructional program that prepares individuals to “communicate dramatic information, ideas, moods, and feelings through the making and producing of videos” (PDE 2004). The coordinator of these programs for Philadelphia noted that, although during the 1990s these programs received equipment funding and support, there has been little support for curriculum development or staff development for over ten years.

The weaknesses inherent in a vocational/career orientation to media education are inescapable. Over six hundred fifty colleges and universities nationwide offer undergraduate or graduate

programs in film and media education, so this field is highly competitive. Nearly 60 percent of all people working in the film industry work freelance, on a contract basis, or part-time, a figure that is seven times higher than the average for all other professional occupations. Because employment is irregular, the majority of media professionals also report that they are unable to earn a living solely from their film/video/television-related work (Sheffield 2001). As a result, it would seem irresponsible to continue to implement instructional programs at the high school level that focus on a narrow range of vocational skills. Given the current (and future) economic realities, career success in the dynamic environment of the twenty-first century demands a broad range of intellectual, emotional, social, and technological skills, as suggested by a recent report of the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2003). A narrow vocational training that does not offer these competencies to students is educationally irresponsible. Table 2 outlines the capacities described by the partnership as essential for students to become effective workers and citizens in an information age. These competencies are increasingly valuable for all workers in the United States, and K–12 educators must ensure that students graduate from high school with these skills firmly in place.

Initial teacher certification and continuing professional education. In Pennsylvania, media education teachers must be certified to teach courses in communication. By getting an undergraduate degree from an approved educational institution and taking a two-hour multiple choice Praxis test in communication, Pennsylvania teachers can become certified communications instructors, qualified to teach advertising, journalism, radio/TV, debate, public speaking, theater, acting, English language arts, and other similar courses to students in grades 7–12. It is not known how many graduates take this test annually and gain certification in teaching communication. The performance and exit competencies identified for the communications test emphasize exclusively a “content knowledge” perspective. The

Praxis tests, initiated by the state in 2002, cover topics including general communication, speech, theater, media, literature, and language. Such a wide spectrum of subject areas (with little emphasis on demonstrating critical thinking or creative skills) virtually guarantees that new communications teachers will enter the classroom with little depth of experience in analysis and production of theater, speech communication, or media and little exposure to the academic literature of the pedagogy of media education. As a result, Pennsylvania’s new teachers may lack the skills, knowledge, and competencies to design and implement effective instruction in media education.

Staff development and teacher education. To the author’s best knowledge, there have been no major statewide, regional, or district-level efforts to introduce media literacy to K–12 educators through staff development programs in Pennsylvania. A few universities and colleges are providing opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills, but these programs are not well-promoted or highly visible, particularly among school administrators and program leaders. The author is aware of only three graduate-level courses offered by colleges and universities to K–12 teachers on this topic (at the University of the Arts, Pennsylvania State University, and Villanova University). Considering that Pennsylvania ranks fifth among all states in its percentage of service jobs that are in education, this absence is striking. Few school districts have developed programs for educators as part of their continuing education, in-service, or professional development offerings. However, in one initiative at the University of Pennsylvania, teachers from the Communications and Technology Academy of Roxborough High School in Philadelphia met regularly to discuss reading material from the Penn course on film and race and engaged in reflection and curriculum planning. In this program, filmmakers provided several hands-on workshops for the academy high school teachers on the basics of film and video technology (Center for

TABLE 2. Twenty-first Century Learning Skills

Information and communication skills	<p>Information and media literacy Accessing, analyzing, managing, integrating, evaluating, and creating information in a variety of forms and media. Understanding the role of media in society.</p> <p>Communication skills Understanding, managing, and creating effective oral, written, and multimedia communication in a variety of forms and contexts.</p>
Thinking and problem solving	<p>Critical thinking and systems thinking Exercising sound reasoning in understanding and making complex choices; understanding the interconnections among systems.</p> <p>Problem identification, formulation, and solution Ability to frame, analyze, and solve problems.</p> <p>Creativity and intellectual curiosity Developing, implementing, and communicating new ideas to others; staying open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives.</p>
Interpersonal and self-directional skills	<p>Interpersonal and collaborative skills Demonstrating teamwork and leadership; adapting to varied roles and responsibilities; working productively with others; exercising empathy; respecting diverse perspectives.</p> <p>Self-direction Monitoring one's own understanding and learning needs; locating appropriate resources; transferring learning from one domain to another.</p> <p>Accountability and adaptability Exercising personal responsibility and flexibility in personal, workplace, and community contexts; setting and meeting high standards and goals for one's self and others; tolerating ambiguity.</p> <p>Social responsibility Acting responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind; demonstrating ethical behavior in personal, workplace, and community contexts.</p>

Source. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2003). *Learning for the 21st Century: A Report and MILE Guide for 21st Century Skills*. Washington, DC.

Community Partnerships 2004). Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and other states have implemented significant district-level or state-level initiatives in providing in-service education opportunities to teachers.

Universities and colleges should consider opportunities to develop leadership in media literacy at the state level. In New York, Ithaca College has sponsored a large-scale collaboration with the Ithaca Public Schools. Entitled *Project Look Sharp*, the initiative brings together college faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and K–12 classroom teachers for professional development experi-

ences that encourage a community-wide critical discourse about media and provide opportunities for youth media production with children from elementary and secondary schools in the region.

Artist-in-residence programs in media education. Pennsylvania has a large number of media professionals, filmmakers, and visual artists with expertise in multimedia. Some of these individuals work on a case-by-case basis with students and educators in K–12 schools. For example, in Meadville, Pennsylvania, documentary filmmaker Mike Keeley worked with a group of middle-school students and senior citizens, in collaboration with the Active Aging

Center, to create a documentary about dance as a form of creative expression. In a program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Keeley taught seniors and teens how to use portable video equipment, and they created a film about the variety of types of dance in the community and screened the video at a community event.

Based on interviews with media professionals and media artists, it appears that the more typical paradigm in Pennsylvania is to serve schools and communities as producers, documenting specific initiatives in schools and communities and creating videos that may be screened for local groups or on local access television. Many times, media professionals are asked to create a video for a school or community so that the video can be used to promote specific events, programs, or initiatives. Media professionals have volunteered their time to create videos on behalf of school and community organizations, where students, teachers, and staff are filmed. But such work, important as it is, does not promote media literacy skill development (Bazelgette 1997; Masterman 1985).

School-based collaborations with organizations. A number of for-profit organizations and agencies provide opportunities for children and teens in Pennsylvania to engage in media literacy activities. In Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, Cinekyd is a for-profit educational service, developed by Robert Clark, Jr., where, for the past twenty-eight years, children and teens from ages eight to seventeen have participated in hands-on video and audio production experiences in a fee-based program. In 2003, the Allegheny County Library System established a media literacy arts lab in the Main Library of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The project includes collaboration with a group called the Pittsburgh Filmmakers to develop a fourteen-week long educational program to teach media literacy to underserved teenage students. Pittsburgh Filmmakers is one of the largest and oldest independent media arts centers in the country, and in the fall of 2004 they offered a fee-based media production program for youth from ages fourteen to seventeen.

Another noteworthy nonprofit example is the Big Picture Alliance (BPA), which offers programs for disadvantaged and underserved youth in developing self-expression, life, and job skills through the collaborative process of creating media arts. With an annual budget of nearly half a million dollars from organizations including Comcast and the William Penn Foundation, BPA has partnered with schools, community centers, and arts organizations to help students access advanced technologies, including digital media, computer arts, and the Internet. Through hands-on training, the BPA uses young people's interest in media making to develop language and communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, and self-esteem. The BPA has a diverse staff and network of professional media makers, reaching more than five hundred youth between ages fifteen and twenty over the past ten years. In these productions, students are empowered to create projects that speak of their lives, dreams, and communities. Videos and films that have been created by young people have also been used in some Pennsylvania schools for screening and discussion, as groups of students get a chance to hear and respond to the voices of their peers.

In most communities across the United States, it is difficult to provide opportunities for young people's media works to be screened or distributed. In Philadelphia, however, the Prince Music Theater has been a leading supporter of youth-produced media artwork, and their initiative has been recognized nationwide. Supported by the Sharon Pinkerson Film Project, the Prince Theater hosted an energetic week-long celebration of young media artists and activists between the ages of ten and twenty-one. Over sixty films from the Philadelphia region were screened in May 2004. It is uncertain if this will be an annual event, but such initiatives are critically important in helping to provide an audience for work created by students.

Initiatives supported by media organizations. There have been a few special initiatives in Pennsylvania to support media education, almost exclusively coming from the public television com-

munity. These programs are often designed as afterschool programs to serve low-income and minority youth. One distinguishing characteristic of these projects is that they may have a distinctly vocational or career orientation, and many are short-lived and small-scale. For example, the National Black Programming Consortium, affiliated with PBS, supported a media production project where Philadelphia inner-city high school students, working with media artists and mentors, were involved in all aspects of creating broadcast-quality narrative projects. WDIY, a public radio station in Easton, Pennsylvania, trained high school students in the art of radio writing and production. Teens in the program received hands-on training in all aspects of radio, including interviewing, writing, and producing feature-length stories that aired during local broadcasts of National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. Such programs may have educational value to students, but critics may see this as a novel extension of the media industry's proclivity to use interns as an unpaid labor force. According to one station's Web site, "Once a student is trained we expect at least a six-month commitment, but it is our hope that teens will stay on with WDIY throughout their school career and beyond" (WDIY 2004). In May 2004, WHYY piloted a program where Philadelphia teens met twice a week at Houston Community Center in South Philadelphia to create two short documentaries in a collaboration between WHYY and United Communities Southeast Philadelphia. This afterschool program incorporated video production training, media literacy, and community activism as students created videos on the problem of school truancy. Through the video production process, the students learned to view media critically and developed leadership, team building, and creative skills. It is not known why newspaper publishers, radio stations, cable companies, and other Pennsylvania media providers have not been more active in supporting media education. In states such as California, Indiana, Maryland, Ohio, and Texas,

there have been more proactive efforts on the part of leaders of media firms (and industry professional associations) to support media literacy in K-12 education. For example, the Texas Cable and Telecommunication Association collaborated with the Texas Education Agency (the state department of education) to offer *Viewing and Representing: Media Literacy in Texas*, a comprehensive secondary-level media literacy curriculum (Hobbs 2004).

As the evidence presented above suggests, there is not a well-defined community of media educators in K-12 education who help articulate to educational leaders the aims, goals, and objectives of this work. Instead, there appear to be a very small number of college faculty, classroom teachers, and media artists and professionals active in individual schools, plus some entrepreneurial initiatives in Philadelphia and other larger cities spearheaded by nonprofit organizations. However, there is little evidence of local, regional, or statewide collaboration, informal or formal information sharing, peer critique, staff development initiatives, or other processes that promote the development of a consensus among reflective practitioners. The variety of approaches described above suggests that educators, community leaders, artists, and media professionals in Pennsylvania are making a meaningful effort to bring opportunities to young people to critically analyze and create messages using digital and electronic media. Other states appear to have made more progress in creating consensus among stakeholders about both the aims and goals of media education and in creating the institutional structures (including leadership, resource allocation, professional staff development, and networking) needed to create change at the state level.

Approaches to Media Education Nationwide

Media literacy practices often vary widely from school district to school district, as many different approaches to building media literacy skills are proliferating (Hobbs 2004). But these differ-

ent practices can be conceptualized along a continuum with four phases, as articulated by Elizabeth Thoman (1996):

1. *Awareness of time and choice in media consumption.* This component of media literacy involves gaining consciousness and sensitivity regarding the extent and magnitude of individuals' exposure to different kinds of media messages, from billboards, tee shirts, newspapers, television, video games, movies, and the Internet. Activities may involve counting and measuring one's use of media, exploring different pleasures and satisfactions people receive from a range of media messages, and learning strategies for managing media and technology use in the home.

2. *Critical reading/viewing skills and media production activities.* This component of media literacy involves developing skills for analyzing and producing media messages, explicitly extending the traditional skills of literacy to include "critical reading" and "writing" for the mass media. Producing media messages has long been understood as one of the most valuable methods to gain insight on how messages are constructed. Critical analysis examines specific techniques involved in constructing messages by looking inside the frame of media messages to study specific patterns in choice of aesthetic forms, genres, and modalities, with an emphasis on choices that shape the representation of social reality. "Looking inside the frame" includes examining the range of choices made by the author about the "text," including asking questions about the author's motives, purpose, and point of view; the techniques used to attract attention; the use of image, sound and language to convey meaning; and the range of different interpretations that are likely for different individuals.

3. *Analysis of political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of the media environment.* This component of media literacy involves gaining knowledge about the ways in which media institutions are shaped by the historical, political, economic, and social forces. For example, students can learn about the historical and economic conditions which, during the nineteenth and early

part of the twentieth centuries, led to the rise of photography as a mass medium. They can examine the economic relationships between advertising and a consumer culture; study the patterns of representation of masculinity, power, and violence in sports reporting; examine how advertiser preferences shape TV programming; understand government's role in subsidizing the technologies that comprise the Internet; or learn about the historical dimensions of broadcast deregulation and reform and advocacy initiatives.

4. *Media advocacy, media action, and social change.* This component of media literacy involves active participation in efforts to mobilize public opinion toward a specific policy of media reform, or in using specific media strategies to attract press interest, build coalitions, shape policy making, and change offensive or problematic practices on a number of social issues. For example, students can write letters to advertisers about programs that they dislike, or they can support campaigns that raise awareness of the need to protect First Amendment rights in cyberspace. They can create their own media campaigns to promote a particular social health issue, such as violence, alcohol abuse, or smoking. For example, teachers and students in the community of Billerica, Massachusetts organized a comprehensive antismoking media campaign (with print letters to the editor and editorials, video PSAs aired on local community access television, a community billboard, and posters) as part of their school-wide "Ad Lab" project in 1994.

A number of states have articulated media education more comprehensively than is evident in Pennsylvania. Wisconsin has developed a statewide curriculum framework for media arts, recognizing its intersection with the fields of the arts, communication, and education. In state documents, *media arts* is defined as the study of human communication through film, photography, video, audio, computer/digital arts, and interactive media. There are two strands in the curriculum: *the creative strand* encourages students to employ the ele-

ments of space, time, light, motion, color, and sound to express their perspectives, feelings, and ideas; and *the critical strand* invites students to interpret, analyze, and evaluate media within aesthetic, cultural, and historical contexts to become more enlightened consumers and effective citizens (Perpich Center, 2002, 1). In presenting a scope and sequence of instructional goals, the following rationale is useful for including media arts within the context of K–12 arts education:

1. The media arts teach students how to communicate effectively and creatively using the new technologies of visual and auditory communication.

2. The media arts give students the critical skills to ensure that they control the images they see or hear, rather than let those images control them.

3. The media arts emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting the personal, cultural, and historical contexts of media.

4. The media arts are oriented towards the meaningful use of knowledge—the ability to apply classroom analysis to the world in which they live.

5. The media arts emphasize a process of inquiry-based approach to learning.

6. The media arts are crossdisciplinary and offer students an opportunity to apply knowledge in more than one discipline.

7. The media arts teach students to work effectively in groups.

Wisconsin builds consensus about the aims and goals of arts education through regular statewide conferences and staff development programs for educators, community leaders, artists, and media professionals. For example, in February 2004, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, a coalition of statewide arts education organizations, held its annual conference with a special focus on "The Intersection of Media, Education, and the Arts." This program featured national scholars and local practitioners in a two-day program. New literacies that involve images, sounds, movement, spaces, and experiences are becoming recognized by arts educators as crucial to learners'

development and for effective leadership in the twenty-first century (Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education 2004).

Another state with a strong focus in media arts is Minnesota. As a result of strong leadership among media arts educators since the 1970s, media arts have long been included within arts education in the state. Arts education standards for media arts begin in grade 9, with two strands: analysis and interpretation and creation and performance. For example, in the creation and performance standards, students are expected to be able to

1. understand the integration of the following components of media arts:

- a. elements, including images, sound, space, time, motion, and sequence;
- b. principles, such as repetition, unity, or contrast;
- c. vocabulary;
- d. structures, such as chronological or spatial;
- e. styles, such as documentary, narrative, or abstract;
- f. technical skills, such as the selection and use of the tools of the medium;

2. understand the cultural, historical, or social contexts that influence the creation of media arts;

3. use artistic processes to create a single, complex work or multiple works in media arts;

4. generate and clarify artistic intent for work in media arts;

5. make decisions based on artistic intent;

6. make choices based on analysis of audience and occasion for media artwork; and

7. revise media artwork using multiple sources of critique and feedback (Minnesota State Department of Education 2003).

The state's academic standards clearly privilege the creative expression dimension of media arts, but many media arts education projects in the state incorporate collaboration with community artists and activists on social issues. For example, middle-school girls in Minnesota and Michigan took part in a project that included two videoconferences hosted via the state's provider of Internet2 band-

width. In the first conference, in February 2003, the girls shared ideas on visual literacy, compared and contrasted video and print ads, and took a specific ad and transformed it into their own version. In the second session in April, they learned how to tell a story in images and make their own video public service announcement. Founded by a group of women media professionals, *TVbyGirls* (2004) works with art educators in schools to reinforce girls' leadership potential and hone their critical thinking skills to combat devaluing messages received from the media.

In a federally funded initiative entitled *A Choice of Weapons*, Minneapolis educators pioneered a media arts program that sought to improve students' understanding of media arts and media literacy through a substantial emphasis on teacher staff development, parent outreach, and community forums. Library/media specialists, art teachers, technology specialists, and grade-level classroom teachers worked together to engage grade 4–8 students in activities where they helped students analyze media violence and create their own anti-violence messages. For example, one group of students shot images of the positive and negative features of their neighborhood and produced a public display of their work. Another group of students created video public service announcements that presented positive alternatives to destructive behavior. Staff development specialists provided opportunities for teachers to get assistance in lesson planning and to help identify resources for instruction; they conducted mini-workshops for teams of teachers who were working in collaborative teams. A program assessment revealed that, to sustain innovative instructional practices, teachers need professional development learning experiences and plenty of practice with visual and digital technologies; they need planning time to work as a team; and they need opportunities to share their experiences and learn from each other by trying new practices and reflecting on what happened with supportive colleagues (Ingram 2001).

Policy Recommendations

Arts educators may worry about the blurring of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary perspectives that inform media education; at the same time, they recognize that it is far better to empower children and young people with the ability to sift through and critically analyze media and create messages than to tell them to "stick their head in the sand" (O'Brien 2002). Media education has the potential to energize arts education in the State of Pennsylvania by connecting the goals and aims of arts education to the lived experiences of students who are growing up in twenty-first-century contemporary culture. The following recommendations stem from the findings presented in this report:

1. *Support statewide and regional staff development to build leadership in media education.* To enhance the ability of Pennsylvania educators to integrate media literacy into arts education, teachers and educational leaders need opportunities to develop their own capacity for critically analyzing and evaluating media messages and creating their own forms of self-expression and communication using images, language, and sound. With leadership from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and support from a few school districts with a history of academic leadership, interested teachers with expertise in theater, visual arts, music, humanities, or English education should be encouraged to attend summer institutes and regional workshops that introduce them to the theoretical concepts of media education and the growing array of instructional materials available for K–12 educators. Particular attention should be paid to assist in curriculum development and teacher education for the faculty who staff the career and technical education communications programs in the School District of Philadelphia.

2. *Develop networking and information sharing among educators to improve instructional practices.* Temple University launched the Media Smart Seminars in spring 2004 to bring together K–12 educators and college faculty

with interests in media literacy. There need to be many such opportunities for teachers across Pennsylvania to share their experiences with colleagues and receive the support of “critical friends” who encourage reflective practice. Universities or colleges in major metropolitan areas of the state should consider establishing regional membership in the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA), the national non-profit membership organization that supports the National Media Education Conference, a biannual event that brings together media educators from K–12 and higher education nationwide for sharing, networking, and professional development. These regional groups could develop one-day conferences to introduce teachers and parents in the community to media literacy.

3. Create a blue-ribbon commission to make recommendations for revising the PDE Communication certificate. The Pennsylvania Department of Education Communication certificate appears to be an artifact of the 1970s and is in need of significant updating. A group of state educators, scholars, and national leaders with expertise in media education and allied areas should be convened to explore how the PDE Communication certificate could be strengthened to reflect current realities of educational theory and practice in twenty-first-century classrooms. Such a commission report could enable state universities and colleges to revise their instructional offerings to reflect a more sophisticated understanding of effective practices of teaching and learning in media education.

4. Provide increased opportunities for showcasing student work. Many communication teachers in Pennsylvania’s high schools have been producing the same cycle of talk shows and morning announcements for years on end. Teachers and students benefit from having opportunities to screen and respond to works that move beyond this tradition to explore a wider range of genres and expressive forms. A nonprofit arts organization should be enlisted in helping to identify and gather examples of creative works of student media production.

With low-cost DVDs or online streaming video, it would be possible to increase access to youth-produced media substantially in the state, perhaps through a network of local community access centers or through online access.

5. Provide funding to support research to identify best practices. Pennsylvania is blessed with an abundance of resources in the field of mass media and communication arts. Arguably the country’s best graduate program in communication studies is located at the University of Pennsylvania, which also has an outstanding graduate program in education. Temple University, Penn State, the University of the Arts, and Drexel University have strong programs in media studies, broadcasting, public relations, journalism, advertising, and new media. Pennsylvania’s scholars could help to identify best practices, explore the conditions that most optimally support student learning, and help develop programs that bring competent, well-trained teachers into Pennsylvania’s K–12 classrooms.

Notice that this article does not call for increased funding for hardware and technology. Evidence shows that digital tools already available in American public schools are underused. In a survey of students, *Education Week* (2001) found that digital cameras, video cameras, and computers are widely available and in good working order, but that 50 percent of students say they use school computers for one hour or less per week. Teachers simply don’t know how to integrate instruction that blends critical analysis and creative media production using technology. In Utah, which has committed millions of dollars to wire classrooms across the state, fewer than 20 percent of 3,575 students surveyed said that they had used digital tools to create their own multimedia messages (Tyner 2003). For Pennsylvania educators, the way to improve the likelihood that students will graduate from high school with the competencies they need to be successful in college and in life outside the classroom is to improve the qualifications, skills, and knowledge of those educators who work directly with students to gain the knowl-

edge, skills, and competencies that they need for life in a complex, media- and technology-saturated society. Pennsylvania’s students deserve this opportunity.

References

- Alvarado, M., and Oliver Boyd-Barrett. 1992. *Media education: An introduction*. London: British Film Institute.
- Alvermann, Donna, Jennifer Moon, and Margaret Hagood. 1999. *Popular culture in the classroom: Teaching and researching critical media literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Aufferheide, Patricia, and Charles Firestone. 1993. *Media literacy: A report of the national leadership conference on media literacy*. Queenstown, MD: Aspen Institute.
- Bazelgette, Cary. 1997. An agenda for the second phase of media literacy development. In *Media literacy in the information age: Current perspectives*, ed. Robert Kubey, 69–78. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Boyer, Ernest. 1995. *The basic school: A community for learning*. Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Brunner, Cornelia, and William Tally. 1998. *The new media literacy handbook*. New York: Anchor.
- Buckingham, D. 2003. *Media education*. London: Polity Press.
- Calvert, Sandra. 1998. *Children’s journeys through the information age*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Catterall, James. 2002. The arts and the transfer of learning. In *Critical links: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development*, ed. Richard Deasy. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 151–59.
- Center for Community Partnerships. 2004. Integrated pluralistic arts. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, <http://www.upenn.edu/ccp/ipa/programs.html> (accessed September 14, 2004).
- Deasy, Richard, ed. 2002. *Critical links: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Education Week*. 2001. The new divide: Looking beyond the numbers to reveal digital inequities. May 5. <http://www.edweek.org/> (accessed September 15, 2004).
- Eisner, Elliott. 2002. *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press.
- Film Working Group. 2003. *Making movies matter*. London: British Film Institute.
- Flood, James, S. B. Heath, and Diane Lapp. 1997. *Research on teaching literacy*

- through the communicative and visual arts. New York: Macmillan.
- Florida, Richard. 2002. *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Galligan, Ann. 2001. Creativity, culture, education and the workforce. Center for Arts and Culture. <http://culturalpolicy.org/pdf/education.pdf> (accessed September 1, 2004).
- Gitlin, Todd. 2001. *Media unlimited*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Goldfarb, Brian. 2001. *Visual pedagogy: Media cultures in and out of the classroom*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.
- Goodman, Steve. 2003. *Teaching youth media*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hobbs, Renee. 1998a. The seven great debates in media literacy education. *Journal of Communication* 48 (2): 9–29.
- . 1998b. Media literacy in Massachusetts. In *Teaching the media: International perspectives*, ed. A. Hart, 127–44. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- . 1999. *Assignment: Media literacy*. Maryland State Department of Education. Bethesda, MD: Discovery Communications.
- . 2004. A review of school-based initiatives in media literacy education. *American Behavioral Scientist* 48 (1): 48–59.
- Hobbs, Renee, and Richard Frost. 2003. Measuring the acquisition of media literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly* 38 (3): 330–54.
- Ingram, Denise. 2001. A choice of weapons: Using media arts and media literacy to combat violence. Year one evaluation report. http://tis.mpls.k12.mn.us/sites/5df1b159-7ce3-4aa3-8e718e60a7b98e6c/uploads/choice_weapons_2.pdf (accessed September 5, 2004).
- Kaiser Family Foundation. 1999. *Kids & media@the new millennium*. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/1535-index.cfm> (accessed May 15, 2004).
- . 2003. *Zero to six: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers*. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=22754> (accessed September 1, 2004).
- Katz, Bruce, Amy Liu, Jennifer Vey, Kurt Sommer, and Damon Jones. 2003. *Back to prosperity: A competitive agenda for renewing pennsylvania*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Center of Urban and Metropolitan Policy. <http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/pa.htm> (accessed May 1, 2004).
- Katz, Elihu. 1993. The legitimacy of opposition: On teaching media and democracy. In *Media competency as a challenge to school and education*, ed. Bertelsmann Foundation. Gutersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Foundation Press, 37–46.
- Masterman, Len. 1985. *Teaching the media*. London: Routledge.
- Messaris, Paul. 1994. *Visual literacy: Image, mind and reality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Minnesota State Department of Education. 2003. *Minnesota academic standards, arts, K–12*. <http://education.state.mn.us/content1065946.doc> (accessed November 19, 2004).
- O'Brien, Tom. 2002. Kill your television? *Arts Education Policy Review* 104 (2): 37–39.
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2003. *Learning for the 21st century: A report and MILE guide for 21st century skills*. Washington, DC, <http://21stcenturyskills.org/>. 2002.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education. 2002. Standards for the arts and humanities. http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/lib/stateboard_ed/pdfarts.pdf (accessed August 1, 2004)
- . 2004. *Certification in communications* <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=90&Q=32511&g=140&teachingNav=93|94|&teachingNav=1904|1911> (accessed September 20, 2004).
- Perpich Center. 2002. Media arts curriculum for the state of Minnesota. <http://www.peace.k12.mn.us/rac/pubs/facs/media.pdf>.
- Sabal, Robert. 2001. Teaching media. *Journal of Film & Video* 53 (1).
- Samples, Diane. 2001. When a frog is not a frog. *Arts Education Policy Review* 102 (6): 33–35.
- Scripp, Larry. 2002. An overview of research on music and learning. In *Critical links: Learning in the arts and student academic and social development*, ed. Richard Deasy. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership, 132–36.
- Semali, Ladislaus. 2000. *Literacy in multimedia America: Integrating media education across the curriculum*. New York: Falmer.
- Sheffield, Sandra. 2001. Streetwise: Rethinking motion picture arts education. *Journal of Film & Video* 53 (1): 20–24.
- . 2001. The new divide: Looking beyond the numbers to reveal digital inequities. *Education Week* (May 5). <http://www.edweek.org/> (accessed September 20, 2004)
- Thoman, Elizabeth. 1996. Media literacy. Paper presented at the founding convention of the Cultural Environment Movement, St. Louis, MO, March 18.
- . 2001. Skills and strategies for media education. Santa Monica: Center for Media Literacy. http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/pdf/CMLskillsandstra.pdf (accessed March 18, 2004).
- Turow, Joseph. 1997. *Media systems in society: Understanding industries, strategies and power*. New York: Longman.
- TV by Girls. 2004. <http://www.nksd.net/schools/wms/tvbygirls.html> (accessed November 7, 2004).
- Tyner, Kathleen. 1994. Video in the classroom: A tool for reform. *Arts Education Policy Review* 96 (1): 18–27.
- . 1998. *Literacy in the digital age*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- . 2003. Beyond boxes and wires: Literacy in transition. *Television & New Media* 4 (4): 371–88.
- U.S. Department of Commerce 2003. *Visions 2020: Transforming education and training through advanced technologies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- U.S. Department of Labor. 2004. Advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations and sales managers. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Outlook. <http://bls.gov/oco/ocos020.htm> (accessed September 20, 2004)
- . 2003. National occupational employment and wage estimates: Arts, design, sports, and media occupations, Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://stats.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes27ar.htm> (accessed September 1, 2004).
- Vigue, D. 1999. Building bridges: Knowing teen culture gives teacher opportunity. *Boston Globe*, September 24.
- WDIY. 2004. *WDIY youth media*. <http://www.wdiyfm.org/volunteers/youth/> (accessed September 30, 2004).
- Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education. 2004. *The intersection of media, education and the arts conference*. <http://www.waae.org/home.htm> (accessed September 14, 2004).

Renee Hobbs is an associate professor and codirector of the doctoral program in mass media and communication (MMC) at the Temple University School of Communications and Theater.

Copyright of Arts Education Policy Review is the property of Heldref Publications and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.