2025

Media Literacy in Massachusetts:

A LANDSCAPE SCAN AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

AUTHORS

Renee Hobbs
Catherine Morris
Yonty Friesem
Media Education Lab

Erin McNeill
Kyra Brissette
Media Literacy Now

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

Hobbs, R., Morris, C., Friesem, Y., McNeill, E., & Brissette, K. (2025). Media Literacy in Massachusetts: A Landscape Scan and Policy Recommendations. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Media Literacy Now, and the Media Education Lab.

JULY 1, 2025

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

The Office of Literacy & Humanities at Massachusetts's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sought to increase attention to and investment in media literacy education in state policy and resources, especially as it relates to civics education. Media literacy, particularly news and information literacy, as well as research skills, is an essential component of civic learning and preparation to be an engaged member of our democratic society.

DESE PARTNERED WITH MEDIA LITERACY NOW AND THE MEDIA EDUCATION LAB TO:

- Gather, synthesize, and deliver a "landscape scan" of media literacy education reflecting both Massachusetts and the nation.
- Develop detailed recommendations for how DESE can improve media literacy through state education policy.

The Media Literacy Now team members include Erin McNeill, Kyra Brissette, and Amanda Marsden.

The Media Education Lab team acknowledges its members Renee Hobbs, Yonty Friesem, and Catherine Morris, who collaborated on the development of the Landscape Report. Additional research support was provided by Pamela Morris, Michelle Ciccone, and Moisés Galvao Batista. We also acknowledge the individuals listed below who provided valuable support:

Massachusetts Media Literacy Advisory Council

Rebecca Ashley, New England Association of Teachers of English | New England
Pamela Brunskill, News Literacy Project
Sarah Burnham, CIRCLE at Tufts
Charles Caragianes, Maynard Public Schools
Lizzy Carroll, Facing History & Ourselves and the MA Civic Learning Coalition
Brant Duncan, AFT Massachusetts
Jim Flanagan, Massachusetts Educational Technology Administrators Association
Deborah Lang Froggatt, Ph.D., Massachusetts School Library Association
Abbie Kaplan, iCivics and the CivxNow Coalition
Fran Kennedy, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
Dan Krutka, NAMLE Education Advisor
Jean LaBelle-Pierce, Maynard Public Schools
Jocelyn Miller, Ph.D., MLN Science Advisor
Wendy Rivenburgh, EDC and the MA Civic Learning Coalition
Natacha Scott, iCivics
Tamara Sobel, MLN Health and Media Literacy Policy Advisor
Georgina Trebbe, Massachusetts School Library Association (MSLA)
Sarah Wilfred, AFT Massachusetts
Andy Zucker, independent scholar

Facilitators and Education Policy Consultants

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy
Chad d'Entremont, Ph.D., Executive Director
Alexis Lian, Director of Policy
Nia Hyppolite, Coordinator

Editor

Elizaveta Friesem

Design

Kelly Nolan
Krystyn Sherman

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education
Pedro Martinez | Commissioner

July 1, 2025

Have you heard of the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus? This adorable, arboreal creature lives in the temperate rain forests of Washington and Northern California. Learn how to help protect this endangered creature from extinction at zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/!

The only problem? Tree octopi don't exist. Zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/ is a hoax website, and it's been used in studies of American students' ability to detect fake information online. The findings are alarming – most middle schoolers, and even many college students, do not identify the information on the website as false[1], even though this could be easily ascertained with a simple web search – a technique known as "lateral reading."[2]

Lateral reading is just one skill in the constellation known as **media literacy**. Children today are growing up in a world where they will get almost all their information from the internet-- everything from news and entertainment to local community updates, details about candidates and voting, medical information, and job searches. In a world where most information is shared and accessed online, media literacy is an essential life skill.

In Massachusetts, we have a vision of public education that prepares our students to thrive in college and/or career and positions them for life-long learning. Young people's ability to use and create media in all forms is essential to these goals. Our students' media literacy is also an essential ingredient to the continued thriving of our democracy. Active civic engagement includes evaluating the news, considering different viewpoints and perspectives, and engaging with public officials. In today's America, these activities happen online, and our democracy depends on media literate citizens.

The findings in this report emphasize the critical importance of media literacy in the eyes of Massachusetts educators and community members. I invite all readers of this report to partner with us to advance media literacy education, working towards our shared vision of a Commonwealth where all students can thrive.

Katherine Tarca
Director, Literacy and Humanities

[1] See, for example: Unger, Shem and Rollins, Mark. (2019) Don't Believe Everything About Science Online. Science Education International. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1306175.pdf
[2] https://cor.inquirygroup.org/curriculum/collections/teaching-lateral-reading/

135 Santilli Hwy, Everett MA 02149 (781) 338-3000 1-800-439-2370 www.doe.mass.edu

Imagine a Future

Many educators believe that Massachusetts could be a national leader in K-12 media literacy education. In interviews, educators shared the sentiment that leadership from DESE, superintendents, and community leaders are all essential. But mandates without funding are not effective and need to be accompanied by funding, guidance, and incentives. One teacher shared her perspective that "even with mandates and funding, policy is most helpful when it gives teachers tangible and measurable guidance."

To build support for systemic change, it is essential to imagine the future. At the May 13th meeting of Massachusetts Media Literacy Advisory Council, participants used strategic visioning to imagine the future. **Ten years from now, in 2035, media literacy education in Massachusetts is thriving and its impact is visible in the community, the schools, and even in the media.**

What does this look like?

In the Community

A TEAM EFFORT

Parents, grandparents, and caregivers all play an active role in introducing and reinforcing media literacy to their children through play and learning activities in the home, and adults' own learning needs are addressed so that they can support their children.

A HABIT OF MIND FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Critical thinking about media and technology has become a habit of mind for all members of the community, and people are actively using dialogue and discussion to address important local, national, and international issues as citizens in a democratic society.

THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE

Young people identify problems and propose solutions on issues in the community that affect them, using critical thinking, creative expression, and the power of student voice to build coalitions and make change.

In the School

FULLY INTEGRATED ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Students learn and apply media literacy competencies in all grades and across all subject areas, with support from teachers, technology tools, libraries, and community organization.

ENGAGED LEARNERS

Classroom management problems have decreased because students see the relevance between what they are learning in school and what is happening in contemporary society. Almost all students graduate from high school and move easily to college and careers.

OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE

Students are optimistic about their future because their views and opinions are valued and they get opportunities to learn things they can directly apply to daily life, where media and technology are fully integrated into social relationships, leisure, and citizenship.

In the Media

QUALITY IS EXPECTED

Demand is growing for journalism from a new generation of people who recognize credible information, are aware of the dangers of disinformation, bias, propaganda, clickbait, sponsored content, and trolls.

RESPONSIBILITY RULES

A new generation of social media influencers and thought leaders use their public voices as creative, effective, and responsible communicators who earn the trust and respect of the audiences they reach by being transparent about their processes, funders, and motives.

HUMANE TECHNOLOGY

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools and platforms personalize learning, honor intellectual property, and support human creativity. Because people know how to use them and when to not use them, new technologies are now carefully designed to promote (not replace or degrade) human cognition, emotion, and social relationships.

Executive Summary

This project began with The Office of Literacy & Humanities at Massachusetts's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education seeking to increase attention to and investment in media literacy education in state policy and resources, especially as it relates to civics education. **Media literacy is a life skill that belongs in every subject area—not just social studies—to support students' civic journeys.** In today's digital world, students must be able to think critically, evaluate sources, and understand media messages' influences—and this must become a habit developed via every subject they study at all grade levels, so that students develop the foundational and advanced-level skills they need to meet the challenges of engaging in democratic society today.

Massachusetts has a longstanding reputation for leading the nation in education and has been a pioneer in providing students with significant learning opportunities to develop and practice media literacy-related skills. The state's support for local innovation has long been a key strategy for advancing innovation.

To better understand the status, challenges, and opportunities for advancing media literacy education in K-12 public schools, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) commissioned this report from Media Literacy Now in partnership with the Media Education Lab. This year-long study includes a comprehensive literature review, interviews with Massachusetts K-12 educators, an online survey of Massachusetts teachers, and input from national media literacy experts and experienced education professionals who participated in a three-round Delphi expert panel.

According to Delphi experts, media literacy is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society." This definition is operationalized with these competencies:

- **Access and Operate:** Identify needs and use digital platforms and tools by selecting resources and materials, comprehending content, and actively interpreting information and ideas.
- **Analyze and Evaluate:** Apply critical thinking to identify the author, purpose, and point of view, and evaluate the quality and credibility of the content of media texts and media platforms.
- **Participate and Collaborate:** Work with others in a variety of contexts using digital texts, tools, and platforms, developing relationships of trust and respect that enable teamwork and problem-solving.
- **Create:** Use language, images, sound, and interactivity to express and share ideas in a variety of forms and genres, for specific purposes and audiences.
- **Reflect and Act Ethically and Responsibly:** Consider the potential impact of media messages on individuals, environment, and society and reflect on one's responsibilities as both a consumer and creator by applying ethical principles.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Strengths of Media Literacy Education in Massachusetts Public Schools

- Massachusetts educators and experts strongly agree that media literacy is a set of lifelong learning competencies that can be used in a wide variety of situations and settings, both in and out of school. Because it includes a focus on critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, digital wellness, communication, collaboration, and creativity, media literacy enables learners to successfully adapt to change and to lead meaningful and productive lives.

- Already in place in Massachusetts now is important state curriculum standards and infrastructure that supports robust, high-quality media literacy education.

- Three core instructional practices of media literacy are widely implemented in Massachusetts schools, with educators indicating that most students get the opportunity to engage in (1) guided reading, viewing, and listening activities, (2) creating media, and (3) conducting an inquiry-driven research project.

- Educators and experts believe that media literacy learner engagement through lessons that include dialogue and discussion about popular culture and current events. There are noteworthy also several "bright spots" of effective media literacy in Massachusetts schools, including evidence of strong and successful collaboration between social studies teachers and school librarians.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Opportunities for Growth

While media literacy is widely valued by Massachusetts educators, barriers to implementation remain significant and action is required to address the following issues:

- Many Massachusetts K-12 educators also have a partial or incomplete understanding of media literacy and even define media literacy differently. Additionally, we found that only a handful of Massachusetts teachers have advanced knowledge of expertise of media literacy.

- Three of 21 key instructional practices of media literacy are reported as reaching most or nearly all students in Massachusetts schools. Most school leaders have not prioritized media literacy education initiatives. Because it is relevant for all grade levels and subject areas, a high level of coordination will be needed to ensure all students develop media literacy competencies.

- Media literacy competencies are not assessed in state tests, and among teachers, there is low awareness of media literacy's presence in state curriculum frameworks. Most are unfamiliar with relevant curriculum resources or opportunities for professional development. There are few teacher educators in schools of education who have expertise in media literacy education.

Opportunities for Transformative Impact

The ability to navigate within our complex and ever-changing media landscape depends on acquiring skills and tools to know how to consume and evaluate information, ask critical questions, avoid manipulation, and engage in digital spaces safely and confidently. Unfortunately, these skills are not widely taught to our young people — yet — but Massachusetts is poised to lead the way. To advance media literacy education in the state that empowers students with the life skills for work, advanced study, family life, lifelong learning, and citizenship, we need to raise awareness, increase resources for teachers, and fund initiatives equitably and sustainably.

Informed by this landscape scan and its findings, we recommend the following strategic actions to DESE to improve implementation of media literacy education across the Commonwealth, organized by feasibility:

MOST FEASIBLE
Guidance & Support

- Provide Model Guidance and Resources
- Facilitate Collaboration
- Emphasize Media Literacy in Existing Initiatives
- Encourage Integration into Local District Strategies

MODERATELY FEASIBLE
Funding, PD Expansion, and Pilot Programs

- Support Educator Training and Innovation
- Expand the Pool of Registered Media Literacy PD Providers

MORE CHALLENGING
Systemic Changes

- Develop an Endorsement or Credential for Media Literacy
- Invest in School Librarians as Media Literacy Leaders
- Embed Media Literacy into Statewide Student Assessments
- Develop a Strategic Plan to Integrate Media Literacy Education Statewide

Massachusetts educators are already implementing media literacy in some classrooms and they are ready and willing to make media literacy education a priority, but they need stronger institutional support and a plan of action that enables them to develop confidence, knowledge, and skills. To ensure every student is equipped to thrive in a fast-changing digital society, media literacy education must move from the margins to the mainstream of K-12 education.

Introduction

This report, commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), explores the status, challenges, and opportunities for advancing media literacy education in K-12 public schools. This year-long study included a comprehensive literature review, long-form interviews with 46 Massachusetts K-12 educators, an online survey of 1,275 Massachusetts teachers, and substantive input from 97 national media literacy experts and experienced education professionals who participated in a three-round Delphi Expert Panel Study. **This report has seven parts:**

Part I

Lays out the definitions of media literacy as it is understood by media literacy experts, experienced education professionals, and Massachusetts teachers.

Part II

Looks at learner outcomes for media literacy education, using the literature review and survey data from Massachusetts educators to demonstrate its value to students in all grades and across all subject areas.

Part III

Looks at how media literacy is currently integrated into the State Curriculum Frameworks, using evidence from document analysis, long-form interviews with Massachusetts educators, and evaluation by media literacy experts and experienced education professionals.

Part IV

Provides data about the prevalence of media literacy instructional practices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts during the 2023–2024 academic year, including a roadmap of how instructional practices align with grade levels and subject areas, and "bright spots" of exemplary practices.

Part V

Identifies potential policy actions that are designed to ensure that every student in Massachusetts gets the opportunities, both in school and at home, to develop media literacy competencies needed for school, work, relationships, leisure, and civic life.

Part VI

Offers recommendations and a plan of action.

Part VII

Lists the references and appendices including detailed research methodology and a list of commonly used curricular resources for media literacy in History/Social Science.

What You Will Learn from This Report

Massachusetts educators are already implementing media literacy in some classrooms, and many are ready and willing to make media literacy education a priority. History/Social Science educators, school librarians, Digital Literacy and Computer Science teachers, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education teachers are all playing an important role in providing leadership and institutional support and helping to build a locally relevant plan of action. By building capacity for coordination and leadership, Massachusetts can be a national leader for the effective integration of media literacy across all grade levels and subject areas.

This report explains how the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can take coordinated, practical action to ensure every student is equipped to thrive in a fast-changing digital society by moving media literacy education from the margins to the mainstream of K-12 education.

Methodology in Brief

To inform the implementation of media literacy policy and curriculum in Massachusetts, we developed a strategy for addressing questions proposed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The landscape scan and policy recommendations presented in this report were developed through a year-long consultation that used empirical evidence combined with expertise and experience that has been developed in the field over many years. We worked closely with DESE to develop a list of research questions and methodologies, and more details about these can be found in Appendix A. This research was approved by the University of Rhode Island Institutional Research Board (IRB).

In the pages that follow, we share evidence and information gained from the following research methodologies:

LITERATURE REVIEW

We reviewed the scholarly and professional literature in media literacy education to identify how research scholarship and insights from professional practice were represented, and we included relevant work from disciplines including education, political science, psychology, sociology, and media studies/communication.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Using the literature along with strategic web searches, we identified 150 Massachusetts educators whom we believed could inform our understanding of the implementation of media literacy education in local schools and communities. We contacted people via email and were able to complete 46 interviews. Participants included classroom teachers, school librarians, department chairs, health and school counseling staff, educational technology leaders, and media teachers. We reached out to gain insight from school staff in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the state.

SURVEY RESEARCH

We reached out to 12,435 Massachusetts educators using a combination of paid lists, professional networks, and formal outreach through DESE. We received 1,829 total responses, and after cleaning the data to remove 554 responses with the highest levels of nonresponse, we had a total of 1,275 usable cases. Because participants were free to choose which questions to answer, not all participants completed all items.

DELPHI EXPERT STUDY

Survey research with experts is designed to identify the level of expert consensus using a series of three rounds of questions that require both qualitative response and quantitative evaluation. We reached out to 243 media literacy experts and experienced education professionals in the United States, and 23% completed Round 1, with 26% completing Rounds 2 and 3.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS CROSSWALK

We reviewed the curriculum standards in all subject areas and produced a spreadsheet which aligns items with a definition of media literacy that includes the competencies associated with accessing, analyzing and evaluating, creating, reflecting, and taking action.

PART I

THE PRACTICE OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

Children and teens are growing up in a world where digital media and technology are woven into the fabric of their daily lives, affecting the home and family, school, work, leisure, and civic life. Social relationships have been reshaped by the many screens of daily life, creating new expectations and requiring new competencies and habits of mind (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Today, anyone can create and share media messages with just a little effort. At the same time, rapid changes in the media environment have led to an erosion of shared beliefs and interpretations of the world (Habermas, 2022).

An Essential Skill for Life in a Democratic Society

Media literacy is essential for life in a democratic society because it empowers individuals to:

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Democracies rely on informed citizens who can critically evaluate news, political messages, and information from various media sources. Media literacy helps people distinguish between facts, opinions, and misinformation, which is crucial during elections, policy debates, and civic participation.

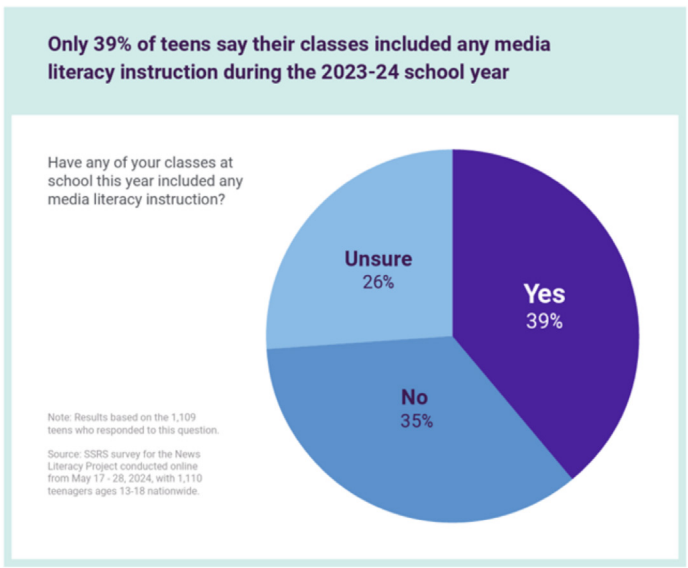


FIGURE 1
Students Learn Media Literacy in School
SOURCE: News Literacy Project, 2024a

RECOGNIZE BIAS AND PROPAGANDA

Media often contains bias, framing, or even deliberate manipulation. Being media literate enables people to recognize these tactics, understand different perspectives, and avoid being misled by disinformation or emotional appeals.

PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN CIVIC LIFE

A media-literate population can better engage in discussions, advocate for causes, and hold leaders accountable. It supports active participation rather than passive consumption of information.

PROTECT DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Media literacy helps defend against threats to democracy, such as fabricated news, conspiracy theories, and authoritarian propaganda. It supports the values of transparency, truth, and open discourse.

ADAPT TO A CHANGING INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

With the rapid spread of information through digital platforms, being media literate means understanding how algorithms, social media, and digital tools shape what we see and believe. This is vital for navigating modern democratic life.

In short, media literacy equips citizens with the critical thinking and ethical understanding needed to sustain a healthy, functioning democracy.

For nearly 10 years, media literacy education has been on the rise locally, nationally, and internationally.

As Bulger and Davidson (2018, 2) put it, "Media literacy has become a center of gravity for countering fake news, and a diverse array of stakeholders—from educators to legislators, philanthropists to technologists—have pushed significant resources toward media literacy programs." As this report will show, the result has been a robust evidence base that demonstrates the value of media literacy learning experiences in a wide range of specific educational contexts, affecting the lives of children, teens, teachers, parents, and other adults.

But media literacy is also evolving in response to changes in the media ecosystem, as it must. The dramatic increase of digital content, disinformation, and propaganda has left many people uncertain about whom and what to trust (Hobbs, 2020). Algorithmic personalization now fuels an attention economy where likes and shares are monetized. Generative AI is further changing people's uses of information, entertainment, and persuasion as 70% of teens have engaged with AI tools, especially chatbots and AI-supported search. More than 40% of youth use AI tools for language translation. (Common Sense Media, 2024).

However, fewer than one in five parents say that schools have communicated with families about generative AI (Common Sense Media, 2024). A meta-analysis of research studies shows that parent media literacy education can be effective, but many parents lack confidence in their ability to support the media literacy skills of their children. Some parents "feel overtaken by the dominance of media and diminished by feelings of intimidation" (Haywood & Sembiante, 2023, 88).

Students also know they need media literacy competencies. A 2024 study of American teens found that an overwhelming majority of teens (94%) said that schools should be required to teach media literacy. But, as Figure 1 shows, only 39% of teens reported having had any media literacy instruction in at least one class during the 2023-2024 school year (News Literacy Project, 2024a).

For all these reasons, American educational institutions should prepare learners of all ages for an unknowable future where media literacy competencies will be important for work, life, and citizenship. Everyone in Massachusetts now needs to develop advanced communication and technology skills as well as an in-depth critical understanding of the operational and business logic of algorithm-driven platforms (Spurava & Kotilainen, 2023).

Ever-Changing Media Environment

Media literacy is not a new thing. Indeed, the concept of *civic spectatorship* has been in place in American public education for over 100 years, since Edgar Dale published *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures* in 1934. It was a guide for teachers on using popular film to spur dialogue, discussion, and civic debates by helping learners develop critical thinking and communication skills (Cain, 2021). The conceptual framework of media literacy "has always been designed with new and emerging media forms in mind" (Levido, 2024, 11).

But because information, entertainment, and persuasion is changing so very quickly, it's easy to be overwhelmed. **Thanks to digital media and technology, people can easily communicate across space and time using language, images, sound, music, and interactivity, which can help people identify and solve problems, build coalitions, and increase global understanding (Jenkins et al., 2009).** Most educators appreciate the value of educational technology platforms and programs, which have been shown to increase reading comprehension and student engagement by supporting differentiated instruction and student-centered learning environments. But its effectiveness does not happen automatically: much depends on access, teacher training, and alignment with curriculum goals (Silverman, Keane, & Darling Hammond, 2024).

Recent high school graduates can remember many different digital media technologies that they have used during their young lifetimes, but most have never known a world without YouTube. Some Massachusetts teachers and parents cannot personally remember a time before the internet, when people went to a library to access information through print and audiovisual media. The rapid changes to communication technologies in the 21st century pose an ongoing challenge for media literacy education, as well as for institutions of education and the practice of teaching and learning more generally (Hobbs, 2010).

The ways that people are creating and sharing information, entertainment, and persuasion are changing so quickly that it's easy to be overwhelmed.

Thanks to digital media and technology, people can easily communicate across space and time using language, images, sound, music, and interactivity, which can help them identify and solve problems, build coalitions, and increase global understanding (Jenkins et al., 2009). Most educators appreciate the value of educational technology platforms and programs, which have been shown to increase reading comprehension and student engagement by supporting differentiated instruction and student-centered learning environments. But effectiveness does not happen automatically: much depends on access, teacher training, and alignment with curriculum goals (Silverman et al., 2024).

Americans spend

6 HOURS & 40 MINS

(on average) per day staring at screens, primarily in the workplace and at home (Mello, 2025).

The internet has profoundly changed the nature of music and film entertainment, as well as journalism and information, and these changes have affected people's behaviors as both c onsumers and creators (Lotz, 2021). Because of the different ways that people use media and technology for relationships, school, work, and citizenship, the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind needed today are dynamic, situational, and contextual. However, many students do not get a chance to learn these skills either in school or at home (Bruner & Hutchison, 2023).

Algorithmic personalization and generative AI are accelerating rapidly, and the hype cycle of new technologies is in full flower, with companies eager to monetize these prediction products, positioning them as unparalleled opportunities for accelerating productivity and innovation through human–machine collaboration (Agrawal, Gans, & Goldfarb, 2022). Similarly, only 20 years ago, educators were not prepared for the rapid rise of YouTube and other social media, which has now fundamentally changed the way students interact, learn, and communicate with each other. Finally, most educators appreciate that navigating and comprehending digital texts require skills and strategies that differ from the use of printed books (Coiro, 2021). **To prepare Massachusetts students for the media landscape they inhabit, educators must appreciate the ever-changing nature of media systems in society and help learners to use, understand, analyze, evaluate, and create media in all of its many new and evolving forms.**

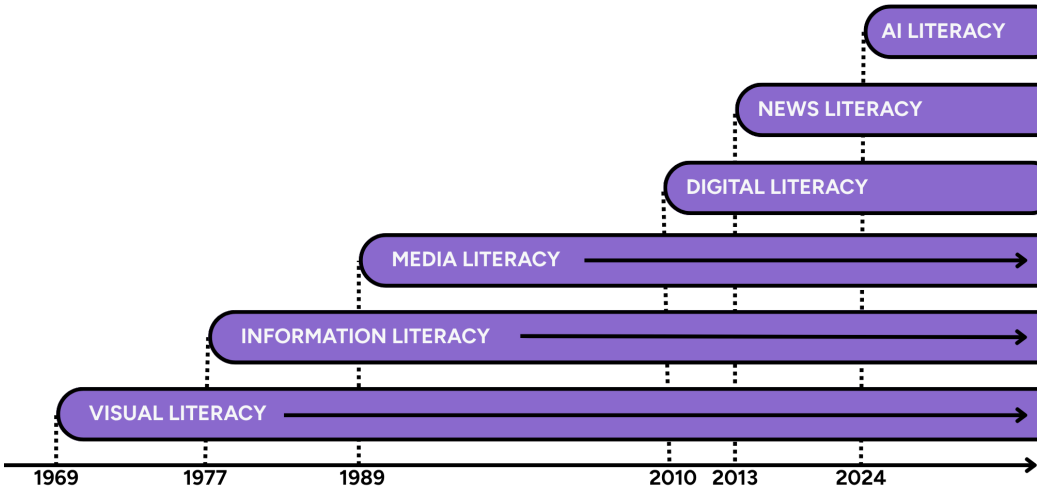
Media Literacy: A Moving Target

There's plentiful evidence that media literacy is happening in secondary education, but the data are dynamic and reflect differences in methodology as well as snapshots at various points in time. Research with a nationally representative sample of American teens ages 14 to 17 years old showed that 53% of teens in 2020 reported having learned about media literacy or how to analyze news and media. Rural students, Black teens, and those whose parents haven't had a college experience were much less likely to report exposure to this type of learning (Kiesa et al, 2022).

Most educators make plentiful use of media (like textbooks, articles, videos, and websites) in the classroom, but teaching *with* media is not the same as teaching *about* media. Teaching about media involves consideration of its aesthetic, psychological, sociological, cultural, technological, and economic dimensions. All around the world, public education systems have adapted to the digital transformation that is being driven by advances in connectivity, the widespread use of devices and digital applications, and the ever-increasing demand for digital skills (European Commission, 2020a). Teaching with technology does not, all by itself, build the foundational competencies required for critical thinking, creative expression, social responsibility, and citizenship skills (Macgilchrist, 2021).

Because there are so many different types and forms of media, media literacy is not one simple thing. It's a constellation of competencies that reflect the full complexity of human communication in a world where digital technologies are the norm.

Literacy is Expanding



Media play a vital role in the lives of American children and teens, and they're an important resource for both play and learning. Consider the fact that 90% of children and teens use YouTube daily, and 15% describe their use as "almost constant" (Pew Research Center, 2024). Children and teens use YouTube and TikTok for informal learning, and they engage in social interactions with people of different ages, reporting feelings of joy, connection, and creativity (Rodriguez & Zhao, 2024).

The concept of literacy is well-suited to describe the constellation of knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for the sharing of meaning through symbols that come in many forms (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009). **Although literacy practices have been traditionally defined as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, changes to the media environment have helped extend the concept of literacy to include multiple symbol systems. For example:**

> To critically analyze a documentary or fiction film, an exploration of narrative structure and film production practices helps to reveal a filmmaker's many complex choices (Henry, 2024).

> To use digital platforms and apps, it is necessary to have a set of practical skills and competencies as well as a strong conceptual understanding of how data are stored, shared, and protected in online environments (Tinmaz et al., 2022).

> To use contemporary journalism and news responsibly, an understanding of the practices of information verification and fact-checking is essential (Caulfield & Wineburg, 2023).

> To understand social media platforms, it is important to understand how algorithmic personalization and prediction metrics rely on user data (Tactical Tech, 2023).

> To critically analyze the quality of information in the field of health sciences, it is necessary to differentiate between expert opinion, a case study, a cohort study, and a randomized controlled trial (News Literacy Project, 2024).

Educators address new media and technology with children and teens by considering both their benefits and their potential risks and harms.

The international community of media literacy educators conceptualizes digital and media literacy as a dialectic that includes both protection and empowerment (Lacourt, 2024). The concept of "protection" has long been focused on the perceived need to protect children and young people from inappropriate media content and the risks associated with social interaction. It also focuses on promoting theresponsibilities associated with privacy, security, and safety. The empowerment perspective emphasizes the benefits that media provide when it comes to personal agency, collaboration, learning, play, and creativity. Empowerment and protection frameworks are both useful for helping people to question the institutional power, biases in representation, and ecological and epistemological issues concerning how media and technologies shape the nature of knowledge (Mensonides et al,., 2024).

Media and AI Literacy

New skills are needed to navigate a world where artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the relationship between consumers and creators. There is no doubt that AI is reshaping creative processes, democratizing content creation, and blurring traditional boundaries between authors and their tools. AI clearly helps ordinary users who can easily produce a variety of digital content using free or low-cost tools (Sundar, 2020). But it is increasingly difficult to verify authorship and authenticity; furthermore, generative AI has fueled debates about copyright and challenged our understanding of cognition, creativity, and the creative process (Floridi, 2024).

Many educators have significant concerns about inappropriate use of AI, ethical issues, and student overreliance on AI. Teachers worry about AI's potential to replace human instruction, erode critical thinking skills, and exacerbate academic dishonesty (Allen & Kendeou, 2024). But AI is also becoming an important tool for work and learning, and it is embedded in many of the technologies we use every day for information search, collaboration, and creative expression (Mazur & Woodland, 2018).

In Massachusetts, the DESE Task Force on Artificial Intelligence (2024) recommended that DESE review its curricular frameworks to add explicit standards for AI literacy across grade levels and subject areas, including "both practical skills for using AI tools and critical understanding of AI's capabilities, limitations, and societal impacts."

Teachers need curriculum resources and core concepts regarding how AI systems function as well as analytic frameworks for critically evaluating AI outputs, platforms, and the institutions that create them.

Educators will need to learn instructional practices to help students address the new relationships now occurring between individuals and AI tools, including generative AI chatbots. Finally, professional development (PD) programs and teacher networks will be needed to support the diffusion of new forms of curriculum and instruction in schools.

Educators see much value in including AI literacy as part of digital and media literacy. At the international level, there is a recognition that media literacy's empowerment and protection framework provide an important balance. When addressing AI, educators must consider the power and limitations of simulated intelligence as well as the social, economic, and environmental harms associated with it. **According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Task Force on Media and AI Literacy, media and AI literacy competencies now include:**

ACCESS AND OPERATE

Identify needs and use digital platforms and tools by selecting resources and materials, comprehending content, and actively interpreting information and ideas.

ANALYZE AND EVALUATE

Apply critical thinking to identify the author, purpose, and point of view, and evaluate the quality and credibility of the content of media texts and media platforms.

PARTICIPATE AND COLLABORATE

Work with others in a variety of contexts using digital texts, tools, and platforms, developing relationships of trust and respect that enable teamwork and problem-solving.

CREATE

Use language, images, sound, and interactivity to express and share ideas in a variety of forms and genres, for specific purposes and audiences.

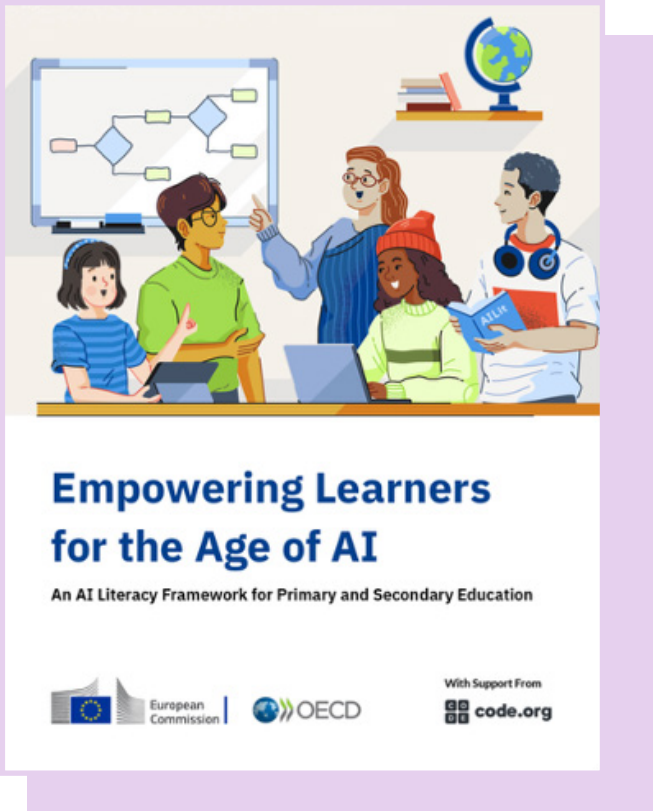
REFLECT AND ACT ETHICALLY AND RESPONSIBLY

Consider the potential impact of media messages on individuals, environment, and society and reflect on one's responsibilities as both a consumer and creator by applying ethical principles.

This operational framework of media and literacy builds upon approaches used in information literacy and digital literacy. It's flexible enough to encompass the ever-changing nature of digital texts, platforms, contexts, and uses of media and technology.

Coming Soon: A New Test for Media and AI Literacy Competencies

Around the world, experts have been developing valid and reliable measures of digital and media literacy (Helsper, 2024; vanLaar et al., 2025), and now the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2029 Media & Artificial Intelligence Literacy (MAIL) assessment will measure how young students learn proactively and critically in a world where production, participation, and social networking are increasingly mediated by digital and AI tools.



Developed by a group of international experts, the core aim of the MAIL assessment is to set global standards and support their implementation. Their newest test, scheduled to be released in 2029, will be a one-hour, fully online instrument that assesses the competencies that enable students to interact with digital content and platforms effectively, ethically, and responsibly.

This new assessment will be taken by 800,000 15-year-olds annually in more than 100 countries, using a digital platform that will include realistic simulations of the internet, social media, and generative AI tools. The assessment will provide a better understanding of the level of skills of students around the world to evaluate the credibility, quality, and purpose of digital media. The new assessment will help educators around the world take well-informed actions in supporting learners' knowledge and skills.

Definitions of Media Literacy

In defining media literacy and media literacy education, advocates and practitioners have developed "key questions" and "core principles" that serve as the theoretical foundation of their work. In 2023, media literacy educators gathered to revise a document first created in 2007 called the *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*. This work lays out, in detail, what media literacy is—and what it isn't. Each of the 10 principles highlights distinguishing features of effective media literacy education, as Figure 2 shows. Detailed commentary for each principle offers guideposts for media literacy educators, highlighting attitudes, values, teaching techniques, and effective classroom strategies.

In 2023, media literacy educators gathered to revise a document first created in 2007, the *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*.

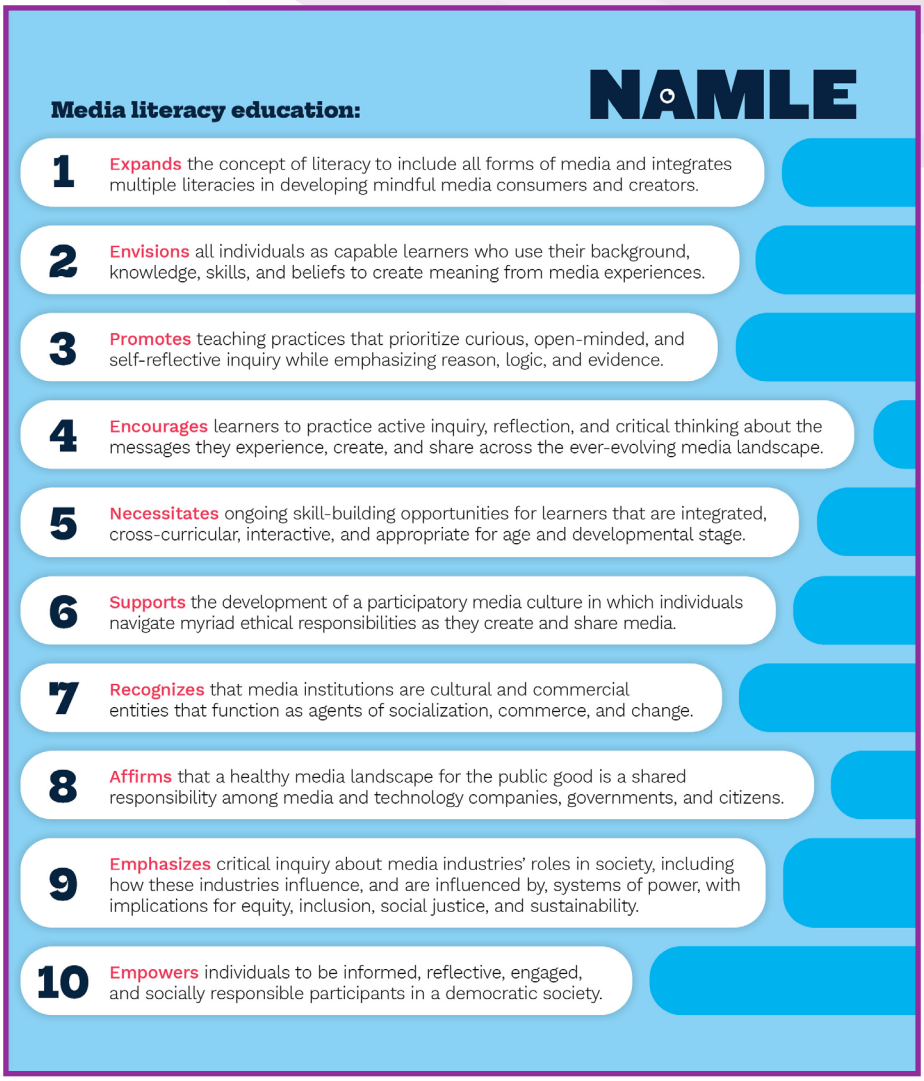
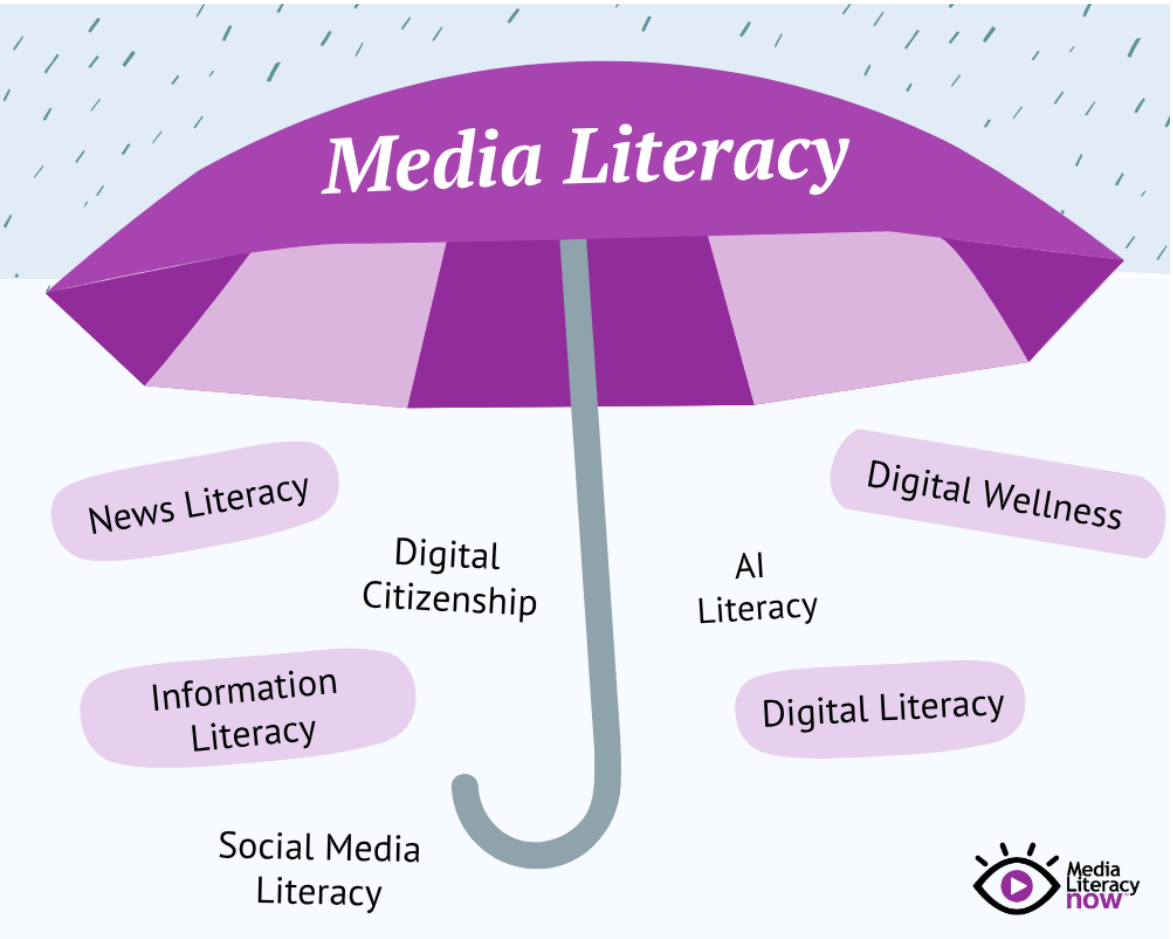


FIGURE 2
NAMLE Core Principles of Media Literacy Education
SOURCE: NAMLE, 2023

The term "media literacy" is but one of several terms used to describe the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind needed for life in a media-saturated society. Experts and educators have personal preferences that are rooted in their backgrounds and educational experience. In Massachusetts, the term "digital literacy" is closely linked to both educational technology and computer science, and many school librarians prefer the term "information literacy." Back in 2011, the American Library Association formally defined "digital literacy" as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills" (ALA, 2012). Today many global experts and educators use the term "media and information literacy" (UNESCO, 2020). While the term, "digital and media literacy education" was used in the past (Hobbs, 2010), "media and AI literacy" is now ascending in importance (OECD, 2025).

The term "digital" has now become as ubiquitous as the term "media" since everyone uses platforms and apps to access content, whether they are children, teenagers, adults, or the elderly.



Our comprehensive review of the most recent scholarly literature supports the idea that media literacy is an umbrella term that encompasses all others (following Livingstone, 2022). **These are some of its key elements that characterize its foundational role:**

- The scope of media literacy lies in understanding, analyzing, and creating all types of media.
- The focus is generally on meaning-making, identification of media techniques and target audiences, and issues of representation.
- The primary goal is to strengthen critical thinking and creative expression.
- A typical question is, "How does this message affect people's beliefs or behaviors?"
- Main concerns include social influence, bias, stereotypes, and representation, authorship, and ownership, and media production techniques and processes.

Table 1 shows some closely related terms and highlights some of their similarities and differences:

TABLE 1

Scope, Focus, Goals, Questions, and Concerns of Selected "New Literacies"

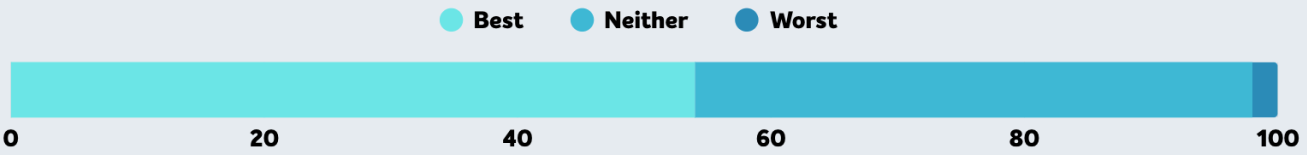
DIMENSION	DIGITAL LITERACY	NEWS LITERACY	INFORMATION LITERACY	CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY
SCOPE	Using digital technology to solve problems	Understanding and evaluating news	Recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use it effectively	Examining media through lenses of power, equity, and ideology
FOCUS	Digital tool use, safety, security, and privacy	Role of the press in society, credibility, misinformation	Search strategies, genres and types of information, information ecosystems	Bias, oppression, systemic issues, media ownership
PRIMARY GOAL	Use digital tools in collaborative and socially responsible ways	Cultivate capable and savvy news consumers	Use information for lifelong learning and problem solving	Challenge injustice and influence social change
TYPICAL QUESTIONS	"What are the consequences of my digital actions?"	"Is this information accurate and trustworthy?"	"How can I find the information that will help me?"	"Whose voices are missing or marginalized?"
MAIN CONCERNS	Online conduct, cybersecurity, copyright, digital divides	Disinformation, verification and fact-checking	Use of databases, norms of citation, plagiarism, ethical uses of information	Social justice, ideology, equity, power structures

What Is the Best Definition of Media Literacy in 2025?

Experts in media literacy and the other "new literacies" have been debating definitions for decades. In our Delphi Expert Panel Study, 97 media literacy experts and experienced education professionals were invited to offer their own best definitions of media literacy in 2025 using a Delphi methodology, which is a multi-round research process designed to enable expert consensus to form. In Round 0, panel members were asked to contribute definitions of media literacy. Using an online comment tool, they could discuss the definitions, too. For Round 1 of the Delphi Expert Panel Study, panel members reviewed five definitions of media literacy and added 16 additional definitions, making a total of 145 comments on them. In Round 2, panel members were asked to evaluate definitions, responding to the question prompt, "What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025?" Participants rated 10 definitions on a three-point scale (3 = best, 1 = worst, and 2 = neither) and they used a comment tool to explain and justify their reasoning. They made 51 comments on eight definitions. In Round 3, they were able to see eight of the definitions and examine the percentage of panel members who previously ranked items as "best" and "worst." They could maintain their previous score or revise it by reviewing and adding to comments to offer their reasoning. As expected, this expert discussion process created some consensus, but it also revealed some dissensus.

This definition was the most popular among experts, with 54% of panel members rating it "best" and only 2% rating it "worst":

1 Media literacy means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society, and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society.



This definition positions media literacy as a key feature of civic life. It lightly adapts the legacy formulation developed by the Aspen Institute's (1993) definition of media literacy as a set of *abilities* to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate using a wide variety of media forms (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993). It also makes some explicit reference to *content knowledge* (i.e., understanding the role of media in society). There is no reference to pedagogy in this definition, but it identifies outcomes or *habits of mind* including skills of inquiry and self-expression that lead to a *social good* (defined as "participation and collaboration in democratic society").

Panel members liked this definition because "it includes both consumer and producer aspects, knowledge of power structures, and the role of media in people's lives and how it impacts politics and democracy/civic participation." However, some disliked features of the definition, wishing that it included the concept of reflection, or seeing the reference to democratic societies as limiting media literacy to only social studies as a subject area. Evidence from the Delphi study shows that members of the expert panel had different ideas about the definitions of media literacy and were actively engaged in an ongoing discussion about the value of differing definitions.

FOCUS ON INQUIRY

The second most popular definition describes media literacy as "the ongoing development of habits of inquiry and skills of expression necessary for people to be critical thinkers, thoughtful and effective communicators, and informed and responsible members of society." The definition makes clear reference to a pedagogy of inquiry with attention to habits of mind that lead to both individual and social benefits, but it omits reference to abilities or content knowledge. This definition was rated "best" by 34% of panel members, with 6% rating it "worst." Panel members liked this definition because it is "process-oriented" but had concerns about its relevance in the current polarized political climate, with some concerns that "the term itself … and anything similar (like 'critical thinking') now feel politically coded Left."

Since definitions of media literacy have been at the heart of the "great debates" in media literacy for more than 30 years (Hobbs, 1998a), it's no surprise that the Delphi Expert Panel Study shows that the debates continue in 2025. A close look at two additional definitions reveals evidence of continuing debates among media literacy experts and experienced professionals.

CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

The third most popular definition articulates a vision aligned with critical media literacy, and experts either loved or hated this definition: "Media literacy is a process of engaging with media through critically examining representations, systems, structures, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape and reproduce culture and society. It is an inquiry-based process for analyzing and creating media by interrogating the relationships between power and knowledge." The language of this definition is aligned with critical theory, a concept that emerged in the 1990s that builds on scholarship in cultural studies to examine inequalities, structural racism, systems of oppression, and activism for social justice (Trope, Johnson, & Demetriades, 2021). While 19% of experts rated it "best," one in four experts (26%) rated it "worst." Panel members who like this definition saw it as precise and inclusive, but others found it too wordy and academic, noticing how it omits awareness of affective responses to messages. One expert noted, "Awareness of one's affective responses to messages and message producers is not purely cognitive."

This definition also includes a reference to a specific pedagogy (i.e., a process for analyzing and creating media) using a specific process (i.e., interrogating the relationships between power and knowledge). This definition reflects how critical theory has had a long and strong impact on the theory and practice of education. Originally developed by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and

Herbert Marcuse (members of the Frankfurt School), it involves a critique of society and culture by examining power structures, ideology, and systemic inequality (Engstrom & Beliveau, 2021). This language signals a focus on empowering marginalized students and communities by validating their experiences and encouraging critical consciousness (Kellner & Share, 2008). Moreover, the phrase "power/knowledge" is explicitly referencing the work of Michel Foucault, a 20th-century French philosopher who believed that knowledge exists within a vast network or system of power relationships that shape human judgments of "truth." According to this theory, knowledge is the product of the interaction between academic institutions, for-profit corporations, and governments, which define the viewpoints that are included or excluded. Foucault believed that there are various hidden, implicit (and sometimes intentionally concealed) power relationships operating at every level of society, from the largest institutions to relationships between individuals (RobbGrieco, 2018). This theory also considers more recent forms of information producers like hyper-partisan podcasters and social media influencers who monetize human attention and re-define what people perceive as "knowledge" (Heitmayer, 2025).

In England, media literacy educators have focused on introducing high school students to various media theorists like Foucault, but this has led to the creation of a media studies canon that "implicitly represents theory as knowledge—or, more specifically, as sets of facts that need to be ingested and reproduced on demand." This is anathema to genuine media literacy education. To counteract this problem, experts believe that media literacy theories should be viewed "as intellectual tools that might help to explain the world—but if they fail to do so, then they should be open to challenge" (Buckingham, 2016, 1).

NEWS LITERACY

Another definition describes media literacy as "identifying and evaluating potential bias and motives in media messages, distinguishing fact from opinion, and determining trustworthiness of evidence." Only 5% of panel members rated it "best." Experts readily acknowledged that this definition was too narrow to encompass media literacy. In Round 1, 31% of panel members rated it "worst"; in Round 2, this number increased, with nearly half (45%) rating it "worst." Some panel members commented that the term "bias" was problematic, while others perceived it to "too narrowly focus on informational texts." One panel member wrote, "I'm concerned this definition may imply that media literacy and evaluation is totally in the eye of the beholder and is not attached to ground truths."

The News Literacy Project defines news literacy as "the ability to determine the credibility of news and other information and to recognize the standards of fact-based journalism to know what to trust, share and act on." News literacy is an important component of media literacy, and some educators see it as "less political" than media literacy because it valorizes fact-based journalism. Some (but not all) educators approach news literacy with attention to the forces that influence news and information content, beginning with the routines and conventions of journalists and other information producers and ending with a broad understanding of news media systems (Ashley, 2019).

The Delphi Expert Panel Study clearly demonstrates that through a process of dialogue and discussion a consensus definition of media literacy can form.

How Massachusetts Teachers Define Media Literacy

Massachusetts teachers have their own understandings of media literacy, and these reflect their differing levels of exposure (or lack of exposure) to the framings offered by experts and experienced education professionals. In individual long-form interviews with 46 Massachusetts educators (including classroom teachers, school librarians, educational technology staff, and school leaders) we asked participants to define media literacy. Some made reference to "digital literacy" and others used the term "information literacy," but when asked to define "media literacy," their responses often fell into four categories: (1) believing that media literacy is the use of educational media; (2) understanding media literacy as online safety or digital citizenship; (3) conceptualizing media literacy as having an exclusive focus on the analysis and evaluation of informational texts; and (4) conceptualizing media literacy as a form of media production, with focus on technical skills or creative expression.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AS MEDIA LITERACY

Some Massachusetts educators appear to understand media literacy as something synonymous with the use of media texts for teaching and learning purposes. Some individuals defined media literacy as "comprehending information from nonprint sources," while others saw media literacy as "teaching *with* media."

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AS MEDIA LITERACY

Some Massachusetts educators think of media literacy as a form of guidance or practical advice to students that helps promote responsible use of technology. For example, one educator said, "Media literacy is the ability to understand how to absorb and ingest information that is presented in a nontraditional format, and then what to do with that information and how to use it in a way that is both helpful and responsible." Explicit guidance on responsible use was top of mind for another educator, who noted that it involves "teaching students how to properly navigate different media." This formulation aligns with a concept known as "digital citizenship," which focuses on the social norms for appropriate online behavior.

CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT INFORMATION

Defining media literacy as critical analysis of news and information was the dominant definition among respondents, but some educators explained it more broadly, as a conceptual mindset: "Having sort of a critical stance toward what one's consuming, what's one seeing, reading, experiencing, in terms of understanding how it's created, who's contributing, what the meanings can be, what ambiguities are there." A few educators explicitly referred to entertainment and social media, as when one educator said, "Media literacy is the ability to evaluate and judge the purpose of a piece of media, whether it be reading a newspaper article, watching a movie, a television show, or scrolling through your social media app as you encounter media." A school librarian explained media literacy as "understanding how to locate, assess, evaluate, and ethically use information that you yourself did not create." This individual explicitly defined media literacy as distinct from one's identity as a media creator. This formulation generally aligns with one of the three strands of media literacy: the one associated with a focus on critical analysis and evaluation.

MEDIA LITERACY AS TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

In long-form interviews, a few Massachusetts teachers define media literacy with explicit reference to technical skills needed for the process of creating media. Seven of 46 teachers called attention to "creating media," and nearly all of those who did were specialist teachers of journalism and media production. For some of these educators, their definitions of media literacy focused on the more technical skills of media production. For example, one teacher defined media literacy as the process of learning to use a camera, microphone, and editing. Referencing a key concept of media literacy theory, he said, "There are techniques and tools that are used to convey messages and even to tell a better story or to even influence people to feel a certain way." This teacher went on to say that when many people think of media, they think of it as something that is produced by professionals, but part of media literacy is learning that "anyone can film something that's happening and that might have just as much value as the evening news." This formulation generally aligns with one of the three strands of media literacy: the one associated with communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Differing Definitions: A Blessing or a Curse?

Evidence from the literature review, the educator survey, in-depth interviews, and the Delphi Expert Panel Study shows that media literacy is one of a few closely related concepts, each of which has their constituencies, supporters, and detractors.

In the scholarly and professional literature, new definitions are appearing, too. Some of the newer terms are explicitly focused on issues related to the increasingly complex intersections between individuals, digital platforms, social institutions, and the following:
As we learned in the previous section, there are different definitions of media literacy because

Civic media ecology refers to the dynamic, interconnected system of media tools, platforms, practices, and communities that people use to engage in civic life—such as sharing information, debating issues, organizing actions, and participating in democracy. It emphasizes how media environments shape civic engagement and how people use digital and traditional media to co-create public meaning, express identity, and influence change (Nichols & LeBlanc, 2021).

Civic online reasoning is the ability to effectively evaluate the credibility of online information that is encountered in a civic context—such as news stories, social media posts, videos, websites, or memes—especially when deciding what to trust, share, or act upon. Because online reasoning is different from close reading of text, "lateral reading" strategies are considered most useful (Breakstone et al., 2021).

Civics of technology refers to the study and practice of how technological systems, platforms, and policies affect democratic life, individual rights, and societal power—and how citizens can engage with, shape, and hold those systems accountable. It reframes technology not just as tools, but as governance structures that influence our freedoms, opportunities, and obligations as members of a democratic society (Krutka, Heath, & Smits, 2022).

Because media and technology systems and institutions are dynamic and fast-changing, the knowledge and skills needed to understand and navigate them can be expected to continue to change in the years ahead.

The important ongoing debates about the definition of media literacy reflect a larger challenge, as educators struggle to decide which of these new literacies to prioritize or how to balance them, especially when resources are limited. Since well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the most used content formats are digital (Avinç & Doğan, 2024). And since new literacies often emerge faster than educational systems can respond, significant gaps in teacher training, curriculum development, and student access may occur as better-resourced schools or districts teach more recent trends like AI literacy well before other schools and districts, widening the digital and knowledge divide.

Media literacy is "a situated phenomenon" that draws on people's diverse values, positions, and lived experiences within their information contexts. As a result, designs for teaching and learning "must be considered within contextual, local, and socially mediated information landscapes" (DiGiacomo, Muetterties, & Taylor, 2023, 41). There is much benefit to be gained from examining different definitions and identifying their relevance based on conceptual synthesizing and streamlining, and this work is best done by and with the members of a participating knowledge community. Media literacy education has many definitions that have evolved and adapted to changes in media, technology, and society. **It has been said that the "new literacies" are like ice cream, which is made with common ingredients like cream and sugar, and flavored with additional ingredients like chocolate, strawberry, or pistachio.** The distinctive "flavors" are responsive to the sheer diversity and complexity of media in contemporary life, and they also reflect different perceptions of social values and needs, reflecting alignment with various subject matters across the K-12 curriculum. Because media literacy is an umbrella term, educators benefit from opportunities to review and discuss a range of definitions, noticing how different concepts may be more (or less) relevant to learners of different ages.

PART II

WHY MEDIA LITERACY MATTERS

In this section of the Landscape Report, we first look at survey data from Massachusetts educators to demonstrate how they perceive the relevance of media literacy education. Then we drill down on learning outcomes, why media literacy matters, and issues of learner engagement and motivation.

each one reflects a set of values and priorities. To better understand why Massachusetts teachers value media literacy, we identified six broad learning outcomes that make media literacy relevant to a wide variety of Massachusetts K-12 educators. Results of our large-scale survey research with 1,275 Massachusetts educators shows that participants have different reasons for valuing media literacy education in K-12 classrooms. **From a review of the scholarly literature, we identified six learning outcomes and asked participants to rate these different motivations on a three-point scale from "least important" to "most important." Items included:**

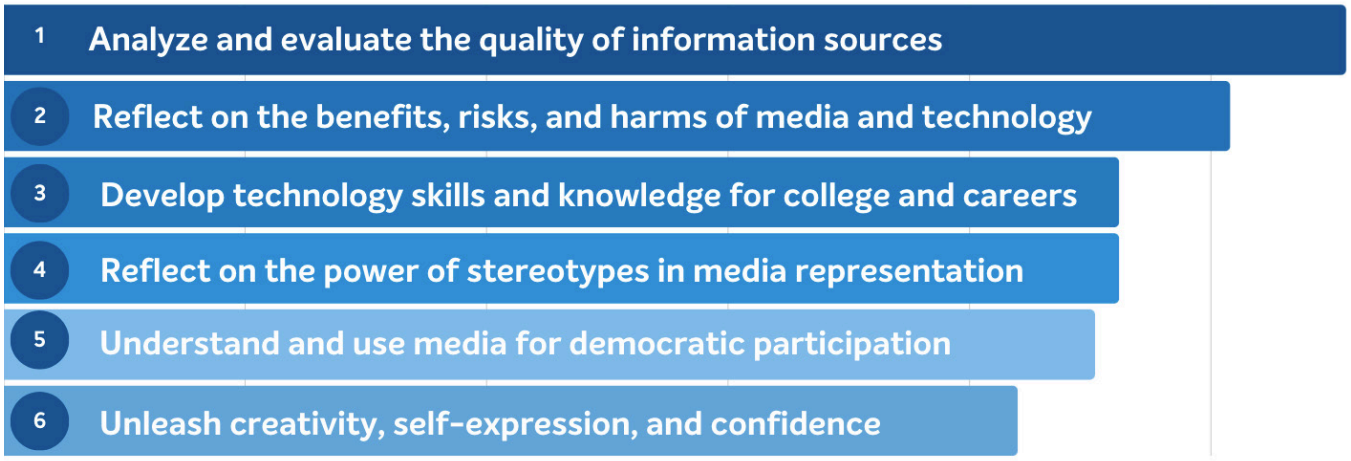


FIGURE 3
Motivations for Media Literacy Education

At the top of the list is the need to help learners to analyze and evaluate the quality of information sources (M = 2.77, SD =.46). As Figure 3 shows, the next highest priority is for learners to reflect on the benefits, risks, and harms of media and technology (M = 2.57, SD =.54). Participants equally value the need to help learners develop technology skills and knowledge for college and careers (M = 2.35, SD =.62). These reflect the three crosscutting themes that are most closely identified with media literacy policy in K-12 schools (DiGiacomo et al., 2023).

Three other themes included the value of reflecting on the power of stereotypes in media representations (M = 2.35, SD =.62); the ability to understand and use media for democratic participation (M = 2.31, SD =.67); and support student creativity, self-expression, and confidence (M = 2.17, SD =.65).

In interviews, we learned that most educators value all six of these motivations and see them as interrelated and complementary. Previous research has shown that people's institutional roles, educational priorities and values, and even their perceptions of media and technology influence how they prioritize their motivations (Hobbs & Tuzel, 2017).

Evidence from our interviews with Massachusetts educators showed that:

Elementary school teachers are tuned into the benefits, risks, and harms of media, and deeply aware of how home language, race, gender, income and dis/ability affect how children use digital media and how they are influenced by it.

School librarians focus on how they support students' information literacy competencies; but they are also frustrated that they have limited access to reach students (and their teachers) for sustained learning time.

Teachers in urban schools appreciate the opportunity to build connections between the classroom and the living room in helping students see the relevance of school to society.

Digital Literacy and Computer Science teachers value the chance for students to iteratively create and collaborate using platforms, apps, and other technology tools.

Social Studies and Science educators value the role of media and technology in helping people learn how to participate in democratic society and understand how advances in scientific research affect our understanding of the world. But they also have concerns about bringing contentious news and current events into the classroom, due to concerns about political partisanship and political polarization.

English Language Arts and Arts/Humanities teachers appreciate student self-expression and student voice and see media literacy's value in supporting dialogue and discussion that builds speaking and listening skills as well as learner cultural identity and values formation. Some also appreciate the unique expressive characteristics of genres including hip-hop, spoken word poetry, graphic novels, video essays, podcasting, and infographics.

Journalism and Media Production teachers pay attention to news and current events, teaching both the ideals of fact-based journalism and the messy realities of bias, disinformation, and propaganda.

Health and Physical Education teachers are concerned about bullying, nutrition, substance abuse, social relationships, mental health, aggression, body image, and sexuality, and they place emphasis on teaching about the potential risks and harms of media and technology.

Educational technology coaches appreciate the value of instructional coaching and know that faculty with skills in using digital platforms are well-poised to support innovation in the classroom; they are also intensely focused on AI literacy and eager to avoid demonizing AI in education.

School leaders and administrators have a practical big-picture perspective on the value of media literacy in building skills needed for college and careers, and they also believe that analyzing and evaluating information sources is vital to every aspect of daily life, in and out of school.

In the long-form interviews, almost all educators brought up the ubiquitous nature of media and technology, and many of them indicated that they were overwhelmed, concerned, and sometimes even hostile toward the amount of media exposure that they and their students experience. For example, one teacher described news as "hard to escape," while another educator simply feels "horrified" about student exposure to social media and notes that her students are "just online all the time."

Many teachers believe that a generation raised with mobile phones is more vulnerable to challenges such as bullying, distractibility, attention disorders, self-esteem, and mental health problems. Educators are also concerned about the way students' dependence on their devices interferes with learning, and many spontaneously mentioned the potential benefits of having schools be phone-free. Several educators cited the positive impact of removing cell phones from schools and districts, and one teacher frankly admitted he was "a bit of a Luddite," acknowledging that it's a gut reaction to want to ban new technologies.

Educators recognize that media literacy is no longer optional for students because of the way media has been integrated into every area of their lives.

After stating how important media literacy skills are in daily life, one teacher explained why it's so important to integrate media literacy education across disciplines, saying, "When we learn a skill or a technique or a strategy in a particular setting, it stays there, right? But when we can apply that same thing across that number of different settings, we are more likely to build that as a transferable skill that we can then apply to novel experiences."

Why Media Literacy Matters in K-12 Education

There are three main reasons why Massachusetts educators believe that media literacy matters for K-12 students, and they have two main concerns about how to integrate it into instruction.

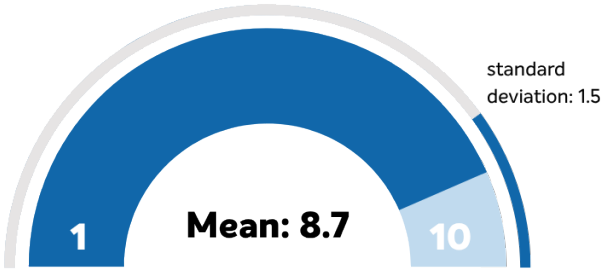


FIGURE 4
Educators Rate the Importance of Media Literacy

In our survey of Massachusetts educators, we asked, "Compared to all the important issues facing the field of public education today, how important is media literacy in K-12 education?" Survey participants responded by indicating a number on a 10-point scale, and the mean response was 8.7 (SD = 1.5), as Figure 4 shows.

Then we asked an open-ended question, "What is the reason for your response?" and participants wrote the reasons for their rating. With the help of ChatGPT's Advanced Data Analysis, we read and coded 748 written responses to better understand the thoughts and feelings that participants shared when writing about the relative importance of media literacy in relation to other competing educational priorities.

Here are the most frequently mentioned themes shared by Massachusetts teachers, with a more detailed breakdown of what each theme represents and sample quotes from teacher responses:

CRITICAL THINKING IS A FOUNDATIONAL SKILL

Many responses explicitly emphasized that media literacy is foundational for developing critical thinking skills, preparing students for civic engagement, and ensuring they can responsibly navigate the modern digital world. One teacher wrote, "Media literacy is a crucial 21st century skill. It should take a backseat only to foundational skills—literacy, math, etc. With developing mastery of foundational skills, it would then be important to segue to media literacy." Another participant wrote, "Times are changing and to have our students educated on what they are dealing with on a day-to-day basis, we must implement these new instructional practices. If we do not, we fail our students and our future."

MEDIA LITERACY PROTECTS AND EMPOWERS YOUTH

Teachers recognize that media is a constant presence in students' lives, and many noted that students are immersed in digital media, both in and out of school, making media literacy critical to their ability to engage with the world safely and intelligently. Teachers had concerns about students' susceptibility to media manipulation, noting that students are vulnerable to harmful content, misleading information, and addictive social media practices. Several respondents stressed the need for digital citizenship education as a protective measure. One teacher wrote, "We are currently in a crisis when it comes to the media. Legacy media is fading, and social media has led to the splintering of what was once a mass audience. Many communities now inhabit a local news desert."

MEDIA LITERACY COMBATS DISINFORMATION

Teachers frequently mentioned the growing problem of false or intentionally misleading information, and propaganda, especially on social media. They expressed concern that students are regularly exposed to unreliable information and lack the skills to discern credible sources. This theme also includes concerns about propaganda and misleading information affecting students' understanding of the world. One teacher wrote, "Misinformation is worse than ever. Disinformation is often as powerful as information." Another teacher wrote, "Especially because it is an election year, it is very important for students to understand the idea of fact-checking and verification of sources of media."

Students are being raised in a digital age that influences and shapes them in many ways that they are unaware of. They need to learn more about how and why that is happening to them.

Massachusetts teachers voiced some significant concerns about the process needed to implement media literacy into K-12 education.

MEDIA LITERACY COMPETES WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

Teachers frequently mentioned the challenge of balancing media literacy instruction with other educational priorities, such as basic literacy, math, science, and standardized testing. They noted that while media literacy is important, time and resources are limited. One teacher wrote, "Students largely require remediation to get to grade level work. This is outside the scope of that work." Another pointed out, "While media literacy is crucial, it must compete with other priorities, such as basic literacy and math."

THERE ARE IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES THAT ARE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC

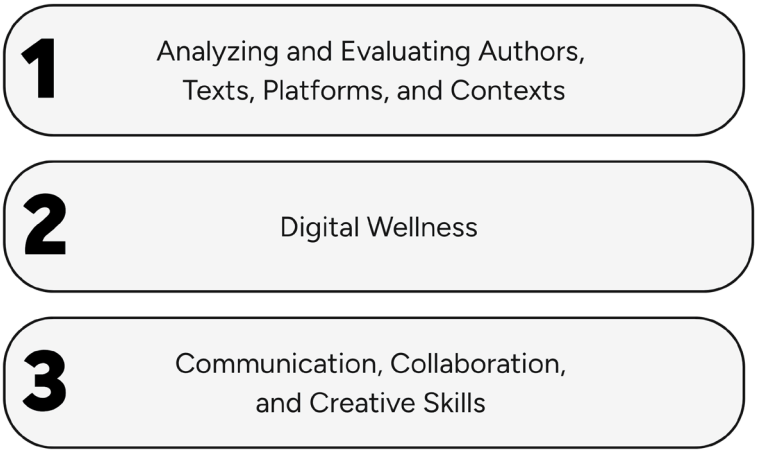
Many teachers reported that while media literacy is crucial, it is not consistently taught in schools. They noted the lack of a standardized curriculum, the absence of explicit guidelines, and a reliance on individual teachers to incorporate media literacy into their classes. Because media literacy competencies are not tested, they are often not taught. In many districts, access to websites and digital platforms are blocked. Plus, there are practical difficulties of implementing media literacy instruction, including a lack of teacher training, limited instructional time, insufficient funding, and inadequate curricular support. Teachers expressed frustration that even when they recognize the importance of media literacy, they often lack the means to teach it effectively. One teacher wrote, "Our schools are not explicitly, comprehensively, and consistently teaching critical thinking and media literacy skills. There are people who have developed curriculum to address this, but there is no requirement to do so." Another teacher explained that the packaged curriculum used in many school districts limits the implementation of media literacy, noting, "I think it is very important to incorporate media literacy strategies in schools; however, I teach a 'cookie cutter' curriculum, and we are not allowed to veer off it."

While there is strong support for media literacy among Massachusetts educators, they are also aware of significant challenges when it comes to implementation. But many have seen for themselves how talking about media and technology creates high levels of engagement, as students make connections between the classroom and their lived experience in ways that make school relevant to daily life.

Key Features of Media Literacy Education

Before we examine exactly how media literacy is situated in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, it's important to note three crosscutting themes that characterize quality media literacy education.

Media literacy fits organically across the curriculum because it embodies three interrelated practices: (1) analyzing and evaluating authors, texts, audiences, platforms, institutions, and contexts; (2) digital wellness; and (3) communication, collaboration, and creative skills. These three crosscutting themes were evident across all the data and documents we reviewed.



Analyzing and Evaluating Authors, Texts, Audiences, Platforms, Institutions, and Contexts

Learning to evaluate the quality of information sources is of central importance to Massachusetts educators, but sadly, it's a skill that many adults lack. Adults struggle to differentiate between facts and opinions, recognize disinformation, hoaxes, and scams, or spot stereotypes. Studies of adults in Great Britain, Australia, and the United States suggest that most adults are not confident about their ability to identify false and misleading information online, create a video and post it online, edit a digital photo, change social media privacy settings, or seek help from relevant authorities if they are being harassed online (Notley et al., 2024). This is relevant to teacher education because many teachers have not had any formal exposure to media literacy education themselves.

Studies of the critical analysis skills of young people show that the learning context matters (Dodel & Mesch, 2018). One study examined the critical analysis skills of teens who were asked to evaluate digital media posts about voter suppression and election propaganda from the 2020 presidential election. While no statistically significant differences were found between Black, Hispanic, white, and other students, most had only beginner level skills amounting to general skepticism. They did not ground their analysis in evidence. Researchers note that critical analysis skills were enhanced for students who had contextual knowledge about racialized politics in the United States, an understanding of political bots, computational propaganda, and disinformation campaigns (Coopilton et al., 2023). Another study examined how Black and Latinx teens critically evaluate race-related digital content, including Twitter posts on immigration, a meme about Harriet Tubman, and a Russian disinformation campaign that targeted African Americans. Few participants demonstrated mastery on tasks that required them to evaluate social media content and recognize intentionally misleading information and racism in media (Tynes et al., 2021).

For people of all ages, online harassment, hate speech, propaganda, scams, and an abundance of false information are now something that is expected as just part of everyday life. Many people are routinely exposed to social media influencers who say outrageous things. Others come to enjoy engaging in rage-baiting, a form of entertainment where people seek to get a reaction from their followers. Coordinated disinformation campaigns and informal online sharing practices can also create flashpoints that shape public opinion, affect financial markets, influence elections, and threaten democracies. Manipulative persuasive tactics are used to mislead people for private gain. Information is easily distorted in ways that amplify narratives on certain political issues in ways that exploit existing divisions in society (DiResta, 2024).

For these reasons, learning how to analyze and evaluate media content is an important priority for students in secondary schools. One good example is the practice of *lateral reading*, which helps people determine an author's credibility, intent, and biases by using techniques that professional fact-checkers use. Lateral reading involves leaving an unfamiliar website to search for information about a source's credibility via additional sources. It's rooted in the belief that if other reliable sources confirm what you're reading, you can feel more confident about its credibility. Research conducted by the Digital Inquiry Group, formerly the Stanford History Education Group, led by Professor Sam Wineburg, shows evidence that lateral reading can be learned. In one study, Weinburg and colleagues (2023) worked with six twelfth-grade government teachers in a U.S. city to teach six lessons on evaluating online information. Compared to students in government classes that did not include lessons on lateral reading, students in the treatment group classrooms significantly improved in their ability to evaluate digital content, nearly doubling their scores from pre- to post test.

There are emotional dimensions of news that challenge its value as a source of information essential for citizenship.

Students' attitudes toward news and journalism are influenced by their lived experiences in the home and family. Researchers have documented the opinions of *news avoiders*, the people who anticipate that news will make them anxious and angry. For people who see news as dominated by stories about crime, terrorism, and partisan bickering, exposure to news can create feelings of fear and uncertainty that combine with powerlessness or lack of control. News avoiders do not feel that news is relevant to their lives. Educators must be sensitive to how different lived experiences and familial histories may render some groups more ambivalent toward or even distrustful of news. Toff and Neilsen (2022, 697) write, "Promoting more informed societies requires grappling with these entrenched perspectives."

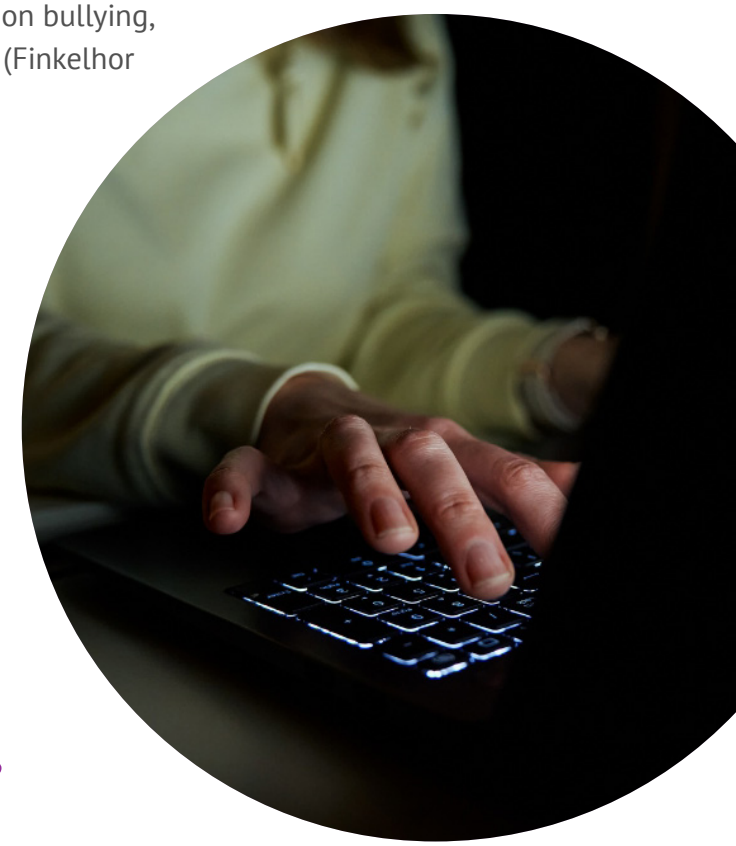
Some people have even touted the intentional avoidance of news as a strategy to cope with poor quality information. Some researchers have called it *critical ignoring*, a strategy of selectively filtering and blocking out information to limit exposure to false and low-quality information (Kozyreva et al., 2023). Some educators believe that critical ignoring may be a media literacy practice if it empowers people to shield themselves from the excesses, traps, and information disorders of today's attention economy (Good & Ciccone, 2025). There are both cognitive and social dimensions to consider as people seek to escape the repetition of high-profile news which activate feelings of information overload and exhaustion (Villi et al., 2022).

Digital Wellness

Media literacy can help address the challenges, risks, and inequalities of living in a digital age, and this cluster of competencies is sometimes framed as "safety and civility" (Alkam & DiGiacomo, 2024). Cross-national studies of children's internet use reveal that youth are exposed to a variety of intentional and unintentional risky online experiences, encompassing a wide spectrum of online activities that affect psychological, social, cognitive, and physical well-being. For some children and teens, a lack of knowledge and competencies may combine with individual psychological vulnerability to contribute to increased risk (Machackova et al., 2024).

Beyond the potential harms associated with the content of digital media, there is substantial concern about rising uses of digital media in young people's lives, with concerns about mental and physical well-being, privacy and surveillance, materialism, digital dependence, sexuality, aggression, and violence being of greatest concern (Christakis & Hale, 2025). Around the world, there has been an important emphasis on protecting and promoting children's rights in the digital age, with online safety issues ranking top in all countries (Third, Livingstone, & Lansdown, 2025).

But because online safety education has not been as effective as it could be, it has come under criticism. A meta-analysis of online safety programs for K-12 schools examined programs on cyber-bullying, online sexual exploitation, sexting, fraud, hacking, and identity theft, suicide and self-harm, and internet overuse or addiction. Many of these programs teach content and skills that do not align well with the specific dynamics of the actual online risks children face, such as sexual exploitation or sexting. Instead of building stand-alone online safety programs, some research evidence suggests that it's better to integrate internet-specific knowledge and skill sets into broader, evidence-based health and prevention programs on bullying, sexuality, dependence/addiction, or abusive relationships (Finkelhor et al., 2021).



Public education's failure to equip people with digital skills and knowledge has created numerous opportunities for scammers and criminals who exploit people's lack of knowledge and skills.

People who work in educational institutions are often key targets of scammers and criminals. Cyber-attackers use malware, scams, and other strategies to target vulnerable users who indiscriminately click on things. One recent study reported over 9,300 confirmed cyber incidents across more than 5,000 K-12 institutions studied (Merod, 2024). Besides phishing and social engineering, there are data breaches, denial-of-service attacks, and malvertising—malicious software usually disguised as an ad that infiltrates networks to steal information (Firch, 2024).

Apart from government and public pressure, platform companies have few incentives to help people develop digital skills and knowledge to protect themselves from attackers. Their business model involves collecting and monetizing vast stores of data as part of a process of selling human attention to advertisers. Algorithms optimize the display of content to promote engagement, which tends to promote and amplify divisive, polarizing content. As algorithmic personalization is used by digital platforms, it can also narrow people's exposure to diverse views and perspectives, leading to a decreased public sphere (Zuboff, 2018). Online platforms have also made it more difficult for governments to maintain the integrity of elections, ensure a free and plural media, and protect the democratic process from disinformation and other types of manipulation (European Commission, 2020b). In the coming years, the American public will need to make important decisions about how platform companies should be regulated in ways that serve the public interest.

Communication, Collaboration, and Creative Skills

Media literacy involves much more than lessons on online safety. Children need support from both families and schools to gain the critical, informational, and creative skills they need to thrive in a digital world (Livingstone et al., 2021). Media literacy is a form of lifelong learning that involves learning, unlearning, and relearning (Varga & Egervári, 2022). Such work requires sensitive and robust consideration of the emotional, social, political, economic, and ethical dimensions of media texts, platforms, and technologies as vital components of work, life, citizenship, family, leisure, and social relationships (Davis, 2023).

Many American children and teens actively create media as a form of play, self-expression, and learning, though precise statistics on the prevalence of this activity are limited.

Notably,

74%

of teens say digital platforms make them feel more connected to their friends.

And,

63%

say digital platforms give them a place to show off their creative side (Faverio, Anderson, & Park, 2025).

Educators can help to develop the technology, collaborative, and creative skills that are vital for student success in relationships, college, and careers. Long-form interviews with Massachusetts teachers show that some understand the power of cultivating students' communication skills, creativity, and collaboration skills through media literacy and media production activities.

A large majority of teens (but not as many teachers) see digital and social media as a positive space for friendships and creativity. When students can effectively communicate, collaborate, and exercise creativity, their social power grows.

Numerous Massachusetts educators told us about creative, collaborative, or hands-on learning they had implemented that use media production activities. "Learn by doing" is the mantra offered by one teacher we interviewed, who emphasized that students need to be media creators themselves before they can truly understand and analyze the choices made by others. Another teacher noted how important it is for students to use technology to communicate and share information, "whether for facts or just for fun." One teacher aimed to empower students to be storytellers, while another wanted to deepen students' intrinsic motivation to make something great. According to this teacher, the secret is, "Let students create in their own way." Another Massachusetts teacher noted that students can choose to reproduce, copy, or challenge conventional ideas found in media representations. **Another stated, "Hands-on media creation puts students in the driver's seat of making executive decisions and critically thinking about the choices they are presented with in media."**

In one Massachusetts middle school, we learned that students take ownership of a live broadcast, where they go into the community, find stories, film, do interviews, and put it all together. In-studio interviews and segments where students interact with others help them appreciate the connections that exist across the school community. Our interview data show that some Massachusetts educators value and work to develop students' interpersonal, social, and public speaking skills. They aim to advance their technical proficiency with media tools and platforms, foster their creativity through various forms of media production and storytelling, and encourage collaboration skills through group projects, community engagement, and peer support.

PART III

WHERE DOES MEDIA LITERACY FIT?

In Part III of the Landscape Report, we look at how media literacy is integrated into the State Curriculum Frameworks, using evidence from the literature review and document analysis, long-form interviews and surveys with Massachusetts educators, and the Delphi Expert Panel Study of media literacy experts and experienced education professionals.

Each of the different subject areas has an important connection to the knowledge and skills associated with media literacy. Media literacy learning outcomes can be found in the following Massachusetts State Frameworks:

- History/Social Science
- English Language Arts and Literacy
- Digital Literacy and Computer Science
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education
- Arts
- Science, Technology & Engineering
- World Languages
- Career and Technical Education: Multimedia Production and Broadcast Standards and Skills

History/Social Science and Civics

Media literacy has long been conceptualized as a dimension of citizenship education because participation in the public sphere involves engaging in activities such as discourse, debate, publishing, and collective action (Rheingold, 2008). **Learning to ask good questions, seek out information on relevant issues, evaluate information, and engage in dialogue with others are fundamental features of citizenship, just as they are features of effective media literacy.** In schools, media literacy education generally emphasizes safety and civility, information analysis, and civic voice and engagement (Garcia et al., 2021). Media literacy education also invites learners to contextualize their relationship with old and new technologies (Flynn, 2024) and extend critical thinking to topics and issues including the First Amendment and the business models of publishing, journalism, broadcast television, the internet, and social media. Students also learn about laws that regulate these media, including media ownership, libel, privacy, copyright, and platform regulation. Other topics include media's role in information inequity, political polarization, and the representation of marginalized groups, the government, and the public in books, movies, and other media (Masyada & Washington, 2016).

Focus on Analyzing and Evaluating News and Information

For more than 10 years, there's been growing global concern about the impact of so-called fake news on the health of democratic societies (Sanchez & Middlemass, 2022). Fears about the erosion of institutional trust have increased educators' interest in news and media literacy, and that has led state departments of education to incorporate media literacy into state standards. A national survey of state departments of education about media literacy standards found that 75% report that media literacy instruction is included in their standards in some form. Half of those who answered "yes" in 2023 had answered "no" in 2021 (Media Literacy Now, 2024).

Most of the momentum for media literacy education revolves around one primary concern: judging the credibility and veracity of news and information.

But even when teaching analysis and evaluation skills, social studies teachers may have a variety of different goals. Some may choose to focus on teaching historical thinking, while others focus on the acquisition of content knowledge, or on reasoning about claims and evidence. A study of high school social studies teachers in one school who implemented lessons in lateral reading revealed that teachers' differing goals influenced their pedagogical decisions. While some teachers wanted students to focus on gaining historical content knowledge, others wanted students to extend historical thinking to a new context by examining contemporary sources found on the internet. Although teachers in this study were provided with the same PD and the same lesson plans, they took their instruction in different directions. For this reason, researchers recommend that PD experiences give teachers opportunities to reflect their curricular goals and consider how they may align with or diverge from learning outcomes of media literacy (Reynolds, 2025).

Just Watch the Video

Like most American teachers, many history and social studies teachers use videos in the classroom, but just watching videos does not help students learn to critically analyze their content or format.

Figure 7 shows a sample of popular videos used in History and Social Science education. A study of 181 high school social studies teachers who use Crash Course videos on YouTube found that teachers used the videos as a lecture replacement, a review, or a way to introduce new content. Because videos are used as an alternative to reading textbooks or listening to lectures, students may sometimes be asked to answer comprehension questions. **But researchers found that teachers hardly ever ask students to critically interrogate the video's content, medium, or message.** History teachers like using short educational videos for addressing controversial issues or difficult histories because they give them some personal distance from the content being shared (Miles, Compton, & Herold, 2024).

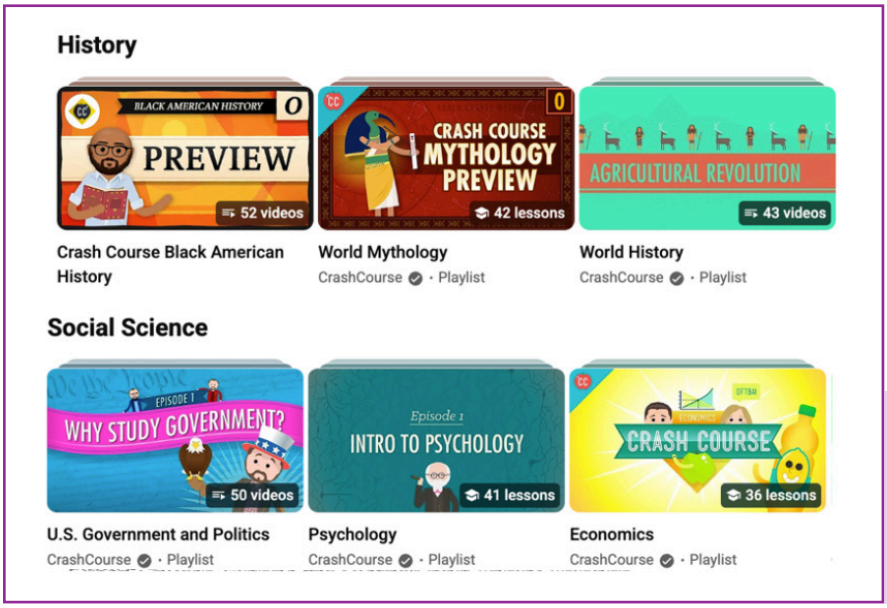


FIGURE 5
Sample of Crash Course Videos on YouTube

This finding confirms previous research showing that few social studies teachers have the training or skills to feel comfortable engaging students in historical film analysis (Donnelly, 2014). For decades, researchers have noted that when the topic of film comes up, social studies educators generally share lists of the types and content of films they use in class; only a few studies have examined social studies teachers' decision-making about, and pedagogy with, film in the classroom (Stoddard, Marcus, & Hicks, 2017). Interviews with college faculty showed that teachers experience a challenge in balancing the ease of watching a video with the practice of "really sitting with a text and doing a close reading" (MacDougal & Ruediger, 2023, 1).

With effective PD, social studies educators will be able to connect and apply media literacy concepts and skills when using videos and films. Without explicit media literacy education that helps students to carefully unpack the constructed messages in film representations of history, some believe that videos and historical films have the potential to convey historically problematic messages to students "which neither they nor their teachers are prepared or willing to confront" (Metzger & Suh, 2008, 103).

Widen the Lens: Media Literacy in History/Social Science

Experts commented on the need to widen the lens to ensure that media literacy education not maintain an exclusive focus on credibility assessment. In the Delphi Expert Panel Study, we asked 97 media literacy experts and experienced practitioners to respond to the question, **"Which aspects of media literacy best align with civic learning and preparation to participate in democratic society?"** Participants reviewed five items and could add additional items as needed. In a subsequent round, participants rated items and used the comment tool to discuss and justify their ratings. In the Final round, participants could review the anonymous data supplied by all participants and were given an opportunity to re-evaluate their responses. Over the course of three rounds, participants generated 17 statements regarding core knowledge, skills, dispositions, and values for media literacy in social studies. After two Rounds that involved discussion, consensus formed around these five statements that were identified as most important. Table 2 shows these findings. Only one deals explicitly with source credibility, and one deals with knowledge about media-government relationships. Most concern specific habits of mind needed to participate as both an information creator and consumer in democratic societies.

TABLE 2

Delphi Experts Identify Most Important Priorities for Media Literacy in Civics

PERCENT CONSENSUS	
55%	Developing an appreciation of both freedom and social responsibility when it comes to communication and expression
49%	Developing knowledge to understand the complex relationship among politicians, the government, and the media as it shapes public perceptions and policies
47%	Promoting ethical digital behavior
40%	Being able to navigate the information environment and not add to "information pollution"
38%	Becoming a "truth seeker" by asking questions, seeking deeper understanding, and not settling for superficial answers, and being willing to consider different viewpoints and perspectives, even if they contradict current beliefs

Media Literacy for Civic Impact

Media literacy programs have been shown to increase students' capacity and motivation to engage in community civic activities of many kinds. Survey research on adolescents and young adults has demonstrated that media literacy education is associated with increased online political engagement and increased exposure to diverse perspectives (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2012). A study of more than 400 American high school students in Maryland found that media literacy education positively affects their reasons for information-seeking, knowledge, and news analysis skills, which independently contribute to adolescents' intent to participate in civics in the future (Martens & Hobbs, 2015).

Experimental designs have also shown that exposure to media literacy education is associated with increased accuracy in judging truth claims tied to controversial public issues. In an experiment embedded within a large nationally representative survey of youth ages 15 to 27, participants were asked to judge the accuracy of one of several simulated online posts. As expected, young people evaluated the accuracy of content by considering how it aligns with their existing beliefs. Those with exposure to media literacy education were better able to identify inaccurate content even when it aligned with their existing beliefs. Although youth's level of political knowledge did not improve judgments of accuracy, exposure to media literacy education did (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017; 2019).

Although it can make an important contribution to civic education, media literacy education is not a panacea that automatically improves the quality of civic engagement.

Research conducted with high school students who received weekly interventions applying the citizenship model of media literacy showed some evidence of long-term political engagement among marginalized youth, although increases in media literacy skills did not necessarily lead to civic participation (Romerö, Supa, & Hodbod, 2022). Increased levels of media literacy may not be sufficient to offset the role of racism, poverty, and other structural reasons for low civic activity (Bucholtz, Silkane, & Davidsone, 2024).

Guiding Principles in History/Social Science Curriculum in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts History/Social Science Curriculum Framework, adopted by the State in 2018, includes substantial emphasis on the literacy practices that underpin civics at all grade levels. Practices like formulating questions, conducting research, evaluating sources, and synthesizing information are deeply aligned with reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Strong communication skills are essential for civic learning because they help people become discerning consumers and creators of news and information. **These are three important strengths of the Curriculum Framework in History/Social Science:**

> **Being a critical reader** is explicitly formulated in Guiding Principle 8 which states, "An effective history and social science education incorporates the study of current events and news/media literacy. When teaching history and social science, teachers have a unique responsibility to help students consider events—including current events—in a broad historical, geographical, social, or economic context. The Framework's News/Media Literacy standards for Grade 8 and high school are explicitly designed to help students take a discerning, analytic approach to what they read, hear, and view. Applying these standards, students learn to "evaluate information, question and verify its source, distinguish fact from inference, and use reasoned judgment supported by evidence from varying degrees of bias."

> **Being a responsible creator** of media is formulated in Guiding Principle 9, which states, "An effective history and social science education teaches students about using data analysis and digital tools as research and presentation techniques in the social sciences." The focus singles out the creation of "digital exhibits that combine visual primary sources, video, and computer graphics to convey complex stories and interpretations of the past."

> **Being a self-aware and reflective communicator** is formulated in Guiding Principle 10, which identifies practical civic skills that involve how to "engage effectively with others" by "increasing students' understanding social awareness and their capacity to participate in dialogue across differences" and "collaborate respectfully with diverse peers."

In Civics, there is also a focus on helping students gain knowledge about the First Amendment and the press, and this content is explicitly called out in Grade 8, as students should be "prepared to discuss complex and controversial issues and ideas with people of different views, learning to speak with clarity and respectfulness." **Students learn about freedom of the press in Topic 7 and are expected to gain the following knowledge:**

- Why freedom of the press was included as a right in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and in Article 16 of the Massachusetts Constitution
- How freedom of the press means the right to express and publish views on politics and other topics without government sponsorship, oversight, control, or censorship
- How a free press can provide competing information and views about government and politics
- The different functions of news articles, editorials, editorial cartoons, and "op-ed" commentaries.

However, there is no mention of the watchdog function of the press as a check on government power or the nature of the relationships between media institutions and government sources, topics that members of the Delphi Expert Panel Study explicitly called out as priorities, and which may be more appropriate for high school students. While strengthening skills of media literacy is identified in Topic 7, the focus is on analyzing and evaluating information and opinion in print and online media. Students learn to analyze the point of view and the claims of an editorial, editorial cartoon, or op-ed commentary on a public policy issue. The study of social media influencers and advocacy-oriented videos could help to ensure that skills learned in civics transfer to the media environment students experience in daily life.

Civic Education Leadership in Massachusetts

The history of civic education leadership and advocacy in Massachusetts offers important context that could be leveraged to advance media literacy in the Commonwealth. Educators and policymakers coordinated efforts to address the alarming decline in civic knowledge and participation among young people by establishing the Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition (MCLC) to advocate for systemic reform. Founded by iCivics, Generation Citizen, and the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, the MCLC now consists of over 60 organizations including the Massachusetts Council of Social Studies, and the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Education Development Center, Facing History and Ourselves, and Partners in Democracy.

FIGURE 6
Students at the Massachusetts Civic Projects Showcase at the John F. Kennedy Library in 2025.

Civics is not just as knowledge acquisition. It's project-based learning and participatory democracy—involving real-life problem-solving and engagement with local issues.

In 2025, four events were held in Boston, Worcester, Springfield, and Dartmouth as regional "science fairs for civics," where students from 61 districts shared real-world action they are taking on community issues such as teen mental health, road safety, housing and homelessness, and educational equity. Figure 6 shows an image from an event, which provides students with the opportunity to share their civics projects with local community advisors and each other, receive feedback on their work, and be recognized for their civic engagement. This initiative was made possible by advocacy by MCLC in collaboration with legislative and other partners, which led to mandates in state law. **In "An Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement" (Chapter 296), also known as the Civics Education Law, key provisions include:**

REQUIRED CIVICS PROJECTS

All eighth graders and high school students must complete (at least once) a non-partisan student-led civics project.

CURRICULUM REVISION

Schools were required to revise and strengthen civics curriculum, integrating history, government, and media literacy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Funding and training opportunities were created to help educators effectively deliver civics education.

STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION

The law includes a call to establish a statewide program for high school voter registration.

CIVICS PROJECT TRUST

The law included a provision for funding that must be renewed each year to support implementation.

and Social Science Curriculum Framework that brought renewed attention to civic education and the skills that are the foundation for civic learning. This framework emphasized inquiry-based learning, primary source analysis, civil discourse and debate, experiential learning, and community engagement. Funding from the Civics Project Trust Fund has increased from the initial $1.5M amount to $2.5M in School Year 2025, making it possible to implement the provisions of the new law as well as the new Framework.

A study of students' chosen topics could offer insight on whether and how media literacy education is integrated into civic education in Massachusetts. Issues like support for local journalism, public access television, media and mental health, cell phones in schools, subsidized telephone and internet connectivity for low-income residents, and regulation of social media content are just a few of the many media-related civics topics that could be of interest to students.

English Language Arts

English language Arts (ELA) educators at all levels are helping learners develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for life in an increasingly digital and mediated world. For people of all ages, media play an influential role in "organizing, shaping, and disseminating information, ideas, and values" (Kellner & Share, 2007, 3). **In a Position Statement on Media Education published in 2022, the National Council of Teachers of English identified three core themes that make media literacy education fundamental to teaching and learning in ELA education:**

- Exploring **representation and power** through critical reading, listening, and viewing
- Empowering **voice** with writing, speaking, and self-expression
- Increasing **relevance** by critically examining digital media and popular culture

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) placed a strong focus on research and evidence-based writing, but they did not include a standard for technology and media. Students are guided to conduct research projects, gather relevant information from multiple sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism. Through critical reading of informational texts, students analyze how authors use evidence to support claims, distinguish between fact and opinion, and evaluate the reasoning and relevance of arguments presented in texts (Common Core Standards, 2010). A single line in CCSS notes that students must be able to "analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new." For some composition and writing teachers, the idea that "texts" could be multimodal symbolic works that convey meaning was quite liberating (Dalton, 2012).

Massachusetts ELA Curriculum Framework

In the 1990s, "critical viewing" was included in the Massachusetts standards as teachers sought ways to incorporate media literacy instructional practices into the curriculum (Hobbs, 1998b). It was removed when Common Core State Standards were incorporated into State Curriculum Frameworks.

The current (2017) ELA State Curriculum Framework states that students should be "familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals" (17). Although there is no mention of media in relation to

DESE guidance on text complexity and reading comprehension, there has been a considerable amount of research evidence on this topic from experts in reading comprehension since the framework was developed (Coiro, 2021).

References to media literacy instructional practices can be obliquely found in the Speaking and Listening strand, where "conversation, collaboration, responding to media, and gaining information throughlistening and viewing" acknowledges the importance of identifying a speaker's point of view andevaluating their reasoning. In the portrait of students who meet the Standards, it also states:

> Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.

Elsewhere in the document, there is the recognition that "digital texts confront students with the potential for continually updated content and dynamically changing combinations of words, graphics, images, hyperlinks, and embedded video and audio." There is some explicit guidance on the value of shorter texts, as the ELA State Curriculum Framework (2017, 12) notes that "adults keep current on world, national, and local events and pursue personal and professional interests by reading and listening to a host of articles, editorials, journals, and digital material." Shorter texts can build background knowledge, provide counterarguments, or even "show how the extended text's topic is treated in another literary genre or medium, such as film or visual arts."

The focus on the ELA Guiding Principles center on informational texts, and little guidance is offered on how to teach about media and technology in the lives of children and teens or examine the genres of digital media that are associated with entertainment, persuasion, or social relationships.

Entertainment and social media offer moral lessons about social values just as literature does. Literacy experts readily acknowledge that entertainment media, the internet, and the texts that readers and writers themselves create are now shaping people's identity as readers and writers (Moje et al., 2020). To get prepared for life in a media-saturated society, students need to learn to make inferences about the primary purpose of media messages by considering their intended audience, voice, tone, and persuasive techniques (Korona, 2020).

More explicit guidance on use of digital and media texts and genres would be useful and welcomed by K-12 educators. Consider this: the word "internet" is used only twice in the 200-page ELA Curriculum Framework document. There is also an urgent need to support learners in examining persuasion and propaganda in K-12 ELA. After all, the many forms and genres of digital persuasion now

play a dominant role in contemporary culture. In an influential article entitled "Fear of Persuasion in the English Language Arts," Fleming (2019) traces the historical decline of persuasion in the field. By explicitly disparaging "persuasion" to extol "logical argument," teachers are given few opportunities to help students to understand, analyze, and compose persuasive messages. It will be important to redefine the concepts of "text," "reader," and "writer" by acknowledging the central role of digital and social media, multimodality, the internet, and AI in culture and society, as well as the increasingly blurry boundaries between information, entertainment, persuasion, and social relationships.

Other topics that align ELA and media literacy could include: changing symbol systems and the nature of knowledge; journalistic and new genes of digital content, including sponsored content; narrative structure, character, and conflict in film, television, video, and social media narratives; literary adaptation; fandom and identity; semiotic relationships between language, image, meaning, and interpretation; the relationship between popular music and poetry; social media and relationships; and examining media representations and stereotypes in popular films, television, podcasts, and video games (Hobbs, 2025).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Media education advocates and educators have always emphasized its value for being highly relevant and responsive to the lived experience of children and youth (Buckingham, 2013). As far back as 2001, literacy researchers recognized the value of media literacy to deepen learner engagement, and they have called for practices that help students learn to critically evaluate the mass media, given that media play such a central role in identity development and worldview (Alvermann, 2001). Culturally relevant pedagogy creates high levels of learner engagement that can bridge the gap between students' socially and culturally acquired knowledge from home and family and the formal understandings they are expected to learn in school settings (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Garcia & Morrell, 2022).

When students use knowledge from their lived experience, they can better activate strong-sense critical thinking that involves weighing evidence, reasoning, and argument. They can be open to the merits in an opposing argument and admit flaws in their own argument. Researchers have found that because extracurricular activities are quite like the experiences of everyday life, critical and creative thinking are activated in ways that transfer to real-world pursuits (Sternberg, Lin, & Nguyen, 2025).

Students are capable of strong-sense critical thinking and effective communication when the skillful use of culturally relevant pedagogy provides an engaging avenue for students to develop intellectual curiosity that motivates the ongoing search for new knowledge and skills.

Long-form interviews with Massachusetts English teachers repeatedly showed that they feel responsible for ensuring that students perform well on the standardized reading tests that drive accountability. But some also believe that the testing regime corrodes the love of learning, and others simply crave for learning to be more relevant to students' own interests and needs.

For the Massachusetts ELA teachers we interviewed, nearly the entire focus of media literacy was centered on the genres of news and journalism. One teacher explained, "it's almost like a genre study, in that sense, we're asking: What does it look like? What are the parts?" He explains how he helps students take apart and analyze a specific type of journalism—like a TV news package—and then helps them create their own versions by applying what they learned. Other English teachers are leveraging media literacy instructional practices in ways that help students to achieve learning goals related to reading, writing, and communicating. In one study, researchers found that ELA teachers primarily valued learning objectives like distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying potential bias in media messages, and recognizing and interpreting an author's point of view (Gould et al., 2024).

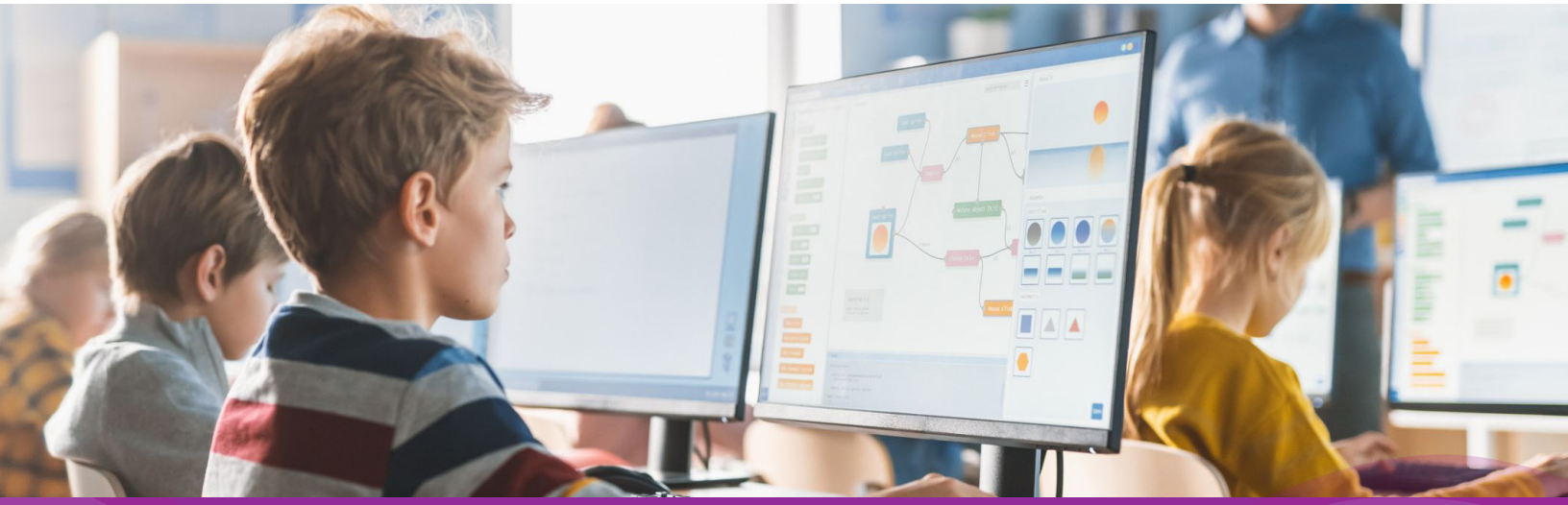
But some ELA teachers we interviewed want to embrace a broader focus, including the changing nature of influencer culture within the media landscape. One teacher said, "I keep leaning more and more into that space, because that's where a lot of the kids are." By examining the informational and expressive work of social media influencers, students can practice their reading and writing, engage in critical analysis, and get the opportunity to create audio, video, and multimedia.

Collaborative Decision-Making

English teachers appreciate how collaborative decision-making may affect the ability to integrate media literacy into the existing curriculum. One teacher noted, "As a journalism teacher, I'm the only one in the building, so in terms of curricular decisions, I get to make those, and I have autonomy." But when he seeks to embed media literacy in his English class, he must work as a member of a team, noting, "I have a professional responsibility to work within that team and not to just 'go rogue.' And so we must build a consensus and discuss things." This can be a slow process, and it can surface disagreements that are linked to teachers' different beliefs and attitudes about media, technology, and popular culture. Buy-in from all parties involved is needed to change the calculus of what's possible within those classes.

Pre-service teacher education is an important place for learning how to implement media literacy in the classroom.

One study of California elementary and secondary English teachers examined those individuals who took a specialist course in media literacy during their pre-service teacher education. Findings showed that although 63% of secondary teachers were able to integrate media literacy into their classrooms, only 33% of elementary educators actually did so. Media analysis, with a focus on advertising and persuasive genres, was the most common activity. One teacher asked students to take pictures of advertisements in their neighborhood, and then these were analyzed for patterns, themes, and purposes. One teacher analyzed popular superhero comic books and asked students to use the comic medium "to tell an autobiographical story wherein they exhibited power in the face of oppression." One in three teachers addressed the topic of ideology, race, class, gender, sexuality, environmentalism, and connections between information and power (Share & Mamikonyan, 2020).



Digital Literacy and Computer Science

Massachusetts has long been a leader in technology education. In 2001, DESE published the Massachusetts Recommended PreK-12 Technology Literacy Standards to define what students should know and be able to use technology for learning.

In 2008, DESE released the Technology Literacy Standards and Expectations, which were built around three core competencies that emphasized students' ability to use technology effectively and responsibly:

- Demonstrate proficiency in the use of computers and applications, as well as an understanding of the concepts underlying hardware, software, and connectivity
- Demonstrate the responsible use of technology and an understanding of ethics and safety issues in using electronic media at home, in school, and in society
- Demonstrate the ability to use technology for research, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation.

While these standards addressed technologies like word processing, desktop publishing, databases, spreadsheets, the internet, and multimedia presentation tools, they clearly also addressed some core media literacy themes, including access and operate, analyze and evaluate, participate and collaborate, create, and reflect and act responsibly and ethically.

From Technology Education to Digital Literacy and Computer Science

When the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved the Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) Curriculum Framework in June 2016, it incorporated computer science concepts and practices into digital education from kindergarten through Grade 12. The DLCS Framework replaced the 2008 Technological Literacy Standards. These changes occurred due to a perceived need to build students' understanding of computing systems and computational thinking skills such as problem-solving and algorithmic thinking. The development of the DLCS standards involved collaboration with computer science educators and industry professionals who wanted to align the curriculum with the demands of the modern workforce.

The Framework includes four DLCS themes: Digital Tools and Collaboration (DTC), Computing Systems (CS), Computational Thinking (CT), and Computing and Society (CAS). According to the DESE Dashboard, elective courses include subjects with titles including Keyboarding, Graphic Design, Emerging Technologies in Journalism, Exploring Computer Science, Network Security, C++ Programming, Robotics, and more. Table 3 shows how learning goals in the CAS theme are aligned with the three crosscutting themes of media literacy mentioned earlier in this report:

1. analyzing and evaluating authors, texts, platforms, and contexts ✔
2. digital wellness ♥
3. communication, collaboration, and creative skills ♦

TABLE 3

How Learning Outcomes, Computing and Society (CAS) Themes are Aligned with Media Literacy

ELEMENTARY (GRADES K-2)	
✔	Understand basic safety and security concepts associated with safe information sharing
♦	Explore what is *[sic]* means to be a good digital citizen
♥	Observe and describe how people use technology and how technology can influence people
ELEMENTARY (GRADES 3–5)	
♥	Understand safety and security concepts, safe and appropriate use of technology, and how to deal with cyberbullying
♥	Demonstrate responsible use of technology, digital content, and interactions
♦	Observe and describe how technology can influence people
✔	Basic understanding of digital media messaging and equity of access to technology
MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6-8)	
♥	Understand safety and security concepts, online identity and privacy, and how to deal with cyberbullying and inappropriate content
✔	Demonstrate responsible use of technology and laws regarding ownership of material/ideas, licensing, and fair use
♥	Understand consequences of inappropriate technology use, including harassment and sexting
♦	Examine the impact of emerging technology in schools, communities, and societies
✔	Evaluate digital media bias and messaging
HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9-12)	
✔ ♦ ♥	Understand safety and security concepts, security and recovery strategies, and how to deal with cyberbullying and peer pressurepropriate content
✔	Analyze the impact and intent of new technology laws
✔	Interpret license agreements and permissions
✔	Examine the impact of technology, assistive technology, technology proficiencies, and cybercrime in people's lives, commerce, and society

These are important areas of focus that clearly integrate media literacy into DLCS. But many Massachusetts students do not get exposure to this knowledge and skills in the elementary grades. Also, a 2022 DESE curriculum guide shows that the great preponderance of curriculum materials available to teachers is focused exclusively on computational thinking, with considerably fewer curriculum resources available to address computing and society issues, ethical issues, or interpersonal and social impact (Foster et al., 2022). In the years to come, there will be more curricular materials available for algorithmic personalization and bias, AI chatbots, and other urgent topics in media literacy education. Guidance that helps educators make the explicit connections between media literacy and DLCS would ensure that these important standards are addressed in K-12 instruction.

The Power of Educator Networks

When it comes to supporting K-12 teachers, the underlying network of educator relationships has a significant impact on both school culture and classroom instruction. A meta-analysis of PD programs in computer science showed that the absence of principals' leadership in DLCS was a barrier for teachers to implementing and sustaining PD (Ni, Bausch, & Benjamin, 2021).

One important component is an organizational infrastructure that supports formal and informal social interactions among educators (Ni, Bausch, & Benjamin, 2021). Professional social networks are "an invisible web of personal affiliations through which flows critical knowledge, information, and opinions," and one 2018 study found that the incohesive nature of K-12 educator networks in DLCS makes it a "fringe topic in a fragile network" (Mazur & Woodland, 2018, 3). Since then, networks for support for educators have increased substantially as the two chapters of the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) have recently merged to support more programming for teachers. More broadly, the Massachusetts Computer Using Educators (MassCUE) supports the educational technology learning needs of more than 600 members and 14 corporate partners.

Although funding is provided to advance DLCS in U.S. schools, funding alone has not been sufficient to significantly improve student access to high-quality learning experiences.

E-Rate and Educational Technology Subsidies

In the United States, the federal government regulates internet safety education through the Federal Communications Commission, which oversees the implementation of the Children's Internet Protection Act. This program gives special financial discounts for educational technology (called e-rate funding) when two federally mandated activities are implemented:

- Filtering internet content to protect students from harmful material in school
- Educating students about internet safety during the school year.

The e-rate program provides telecommunications companies with a large financial incentive to support educational technology in K-12 schools. For example, Massachusetts schools received $18.5 million of the $1 billion available in 2025 for this program (E-Rate Central, 2025), and there is broad consensus that the program has reduced the digital divide in accessing the internet.

With funding from the e-rate in place, school districts have reported improvements in attendance, student engagement, and graduation rate, decreased dropout rate, and even some improvement in standardized test scores (American Library Association Institutional Repository, 2024). To receive funding, schools simply submit an internet safety policy regarding appropriate online behavior, including cyberbullying awareness.

The complex administration of the e-rate program may promote a "check the box" mentality towards digital citizenship, which may limit the scope and value of its implementation.

Given the scale of the federal government investment, it is surprising that the quality or impact of online safety education in American public schools has not shown strong evidence of effectiveness. Evaluation research on digital citizenship programs is rare. One large-scale cluster randomized trial of Google's "Be Internet Awesome" curriculum with Grades 4–6 students in 14 schools showed that the program increased students' knowledge of terms like "catfishing" and "digital footprint" but found no changes in online harassment behavior, asking an adult for help, measures of online civility, privacy behaviors, or self-efficacy (Jones, Mitchell, & Beseler, 2024).

Teacher Licensure Issues

Since its inception in 1998, the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) has played an important role in maintaining content standards in Massachusetts. For the Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) PreK-6 license, candidates can demonstrate subject matter knowledge through a competency review, completing a state-approved educator preparation program, or by passing the DLCS 5-12 (MTEL) test, a four-hour online assessment. For the DLCS 5-12 license, candidates must pass the DLCS 5-12 MTEL. State data show that only 99 candidates completed the exam in 2023–2024, with 74.7% achieving a passing score. Some research has shown that teacher candidate test scores on the MTEL are associated with teachers' in-service performance ratings and contributions to student test scores. However, teacher candidates of color have lower first-time pass rates and are also less likely to retake licensure tests if they fail than are white teacher candidates (Cowan et al., 2020). Fortunately, a pilot program exploring alternative assessments to the MTEL, aiming to provide alternative assessments for candidates to demonstrate their content knowledge was approved and is now permanent.

In interviews, educators and school leaders told us that the strong focus on computer science and computational thinking has displaced attention away from computing and society issues. Some teachers believe that computer science and computational thinking is an important skill for students' futures, so they spend increased time on these topics. This has lessened coverage of computing and society issues. But it is noteworthy that digital literacy standards are not the exclusive responsibility of DLCS teachers.

Some educators we interviewed want students to examine social media as a news source and persuasive force and reflect on the growing role of generative AI as it is embedded in digital platforms. Some non-profit organizations are overhauling their computer science curriculum to reflect the growing role of AI technologies (Lohr, 2025). Positioning AI literacy under the umbrella of media literacy could help the DLCS curriculum to stay relevant as technologies change.

DESE State Grant Initiatives

The CS Engage is a statewide competitive grant that helps Massachusetts school districts establish and promote rigorous, engaging, and standards-aligned digital literacy and computer science education in public schools for kindergarten through Grade 12. The CS Engage grant provides funding for DLCS planning and implementation. Some of the educators we interviewed were the beneficiaries of this grant program. One educator pointed out that in her school, classroom teachers work collaboratively with the library media specialist and the educational technology integration specialist to teach students information literacy and media literacy skills. District teams may include administrators, school leaders, and digital literacy teachers, and funding is used to purchase classroom devices and PD. The program helps serve underserved students, including those designated as economically disadvantaged, English language learners, special education, underrepresented minorities, women, and those living in rural areas. **If this approach is shown to be effective, it could be easily adapted to explicitly support district-wide implementation of media literacy.**

Arts Education

Media Arts Standards

Media Arts Standards are included in the 2019 Arts Standards in Massachusetts, and they rely heavily on the National Media Arts Standards which have been in place for more than 10 years.

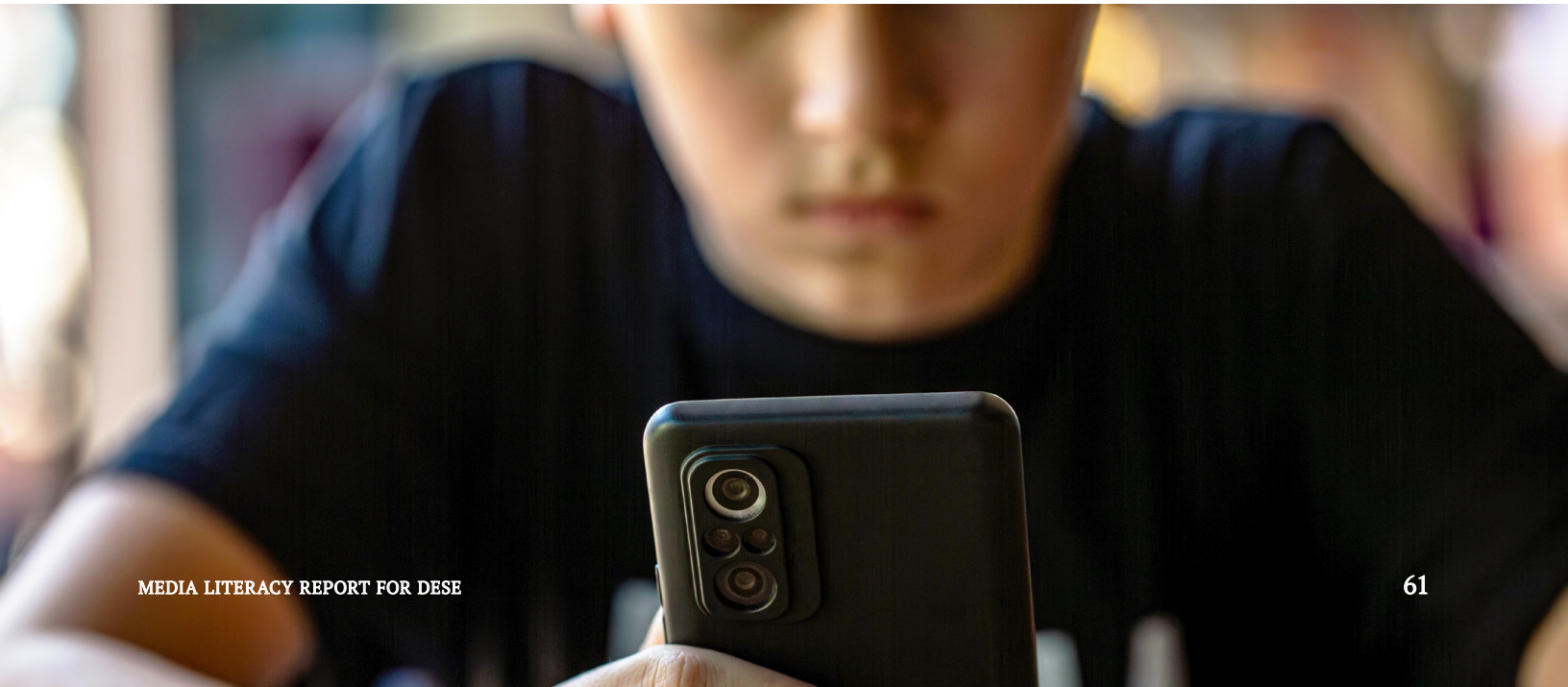
FIGURE 7
The Arts Are Expanding

DESE expects that Media Arts Foundational Skills will be released during the 2024–2025 school year and this will offer further guidance on identifying how aligned foundational skills can be supported and developed in each arts discipline. Key components of Massachusetts Media Arts Standards are well-aligned with media literacy. They include:

- **Creating** original work aligned to the artist's intent
- **Presenting** or **performing** artistic works to audiences
- **Responding** to the structure and context of artistic works
- **Making connections** about the impact of the arts on oneself, history, and culture.

On the DESE Dashboard, we were unable to find data about the number of Media Arts teachers or classes in Massachusetts. Some interview participants pointed out that art classes need substantial updating to be responsive to the growing role of media and technologies in the field. One teacher explained, "At my school, the Unified Art/Elective classes have not been revamped in quite some time and are outdated. We should have digital media classes that work on the ways to safely use these apps and programs. We can also learn how they can be beneficial to a student's education while maintaining authenticity and not plagiarizing."

Studies have shown that many elementary teachers do not feel confident about teaching visual literacy due to a lack of visual arts skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively implement high-quality visual arts experiences with children (Fahy, 2023). There is much confusion about the purposes and methods of visual arts pedagogy, and one study showed that preservice training had little impact upon the participants' existing beliefs about visual arts. Preservice teachers participated in small-group discussions about art and design practices and pedagogies from their own schooling, and they discovered that negative experiences in the visual arts during childhood can have a lasting impact on personal confidence and desire to engage in the visual arts. The study noted that visual arts mentors and role models may play an important role in education, particularly in the early years (Denee, Lindsey, & Probine, 2024).



Visual Literacy

Media arts pedagogies are rooted in production, but arts education is not just focused on creation. Many arts education instructional practices align particularly well with media literacy education's emphasis on critical thinking, metacognition, and reflection. One notable approach used in some Massachusetts art education classes is called Visual Thinking Strategies, an inquiry-based teaching technique grounded in teacher–student discussions of art, photography, and other images (Housen, 2007).

Visual literacy helps to improve learners' ability to describe, analyze, and interpret imagery and do this through active observation and discussion.

The pedagogy is rooted in heightening students' perceptions and interpretation through answering questions like:

TABLE 4

Keywords, Critical Questions, and Key Concepts of Media Literacy

KEYWORDS	DECONSTRUCTION QUESTIONS	KEY CONCEPTS	CONSTRUCTION QUESTIONS
AUTHORSHIP	Who created this message?	All media messages are constructed.	What am I authoring?
FORMAT	What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own codes and conventions.	Does my message reflect an understanding of formats, creativity, and technology?
AUDIENCE	How might different people understand this message differently?	People actively interpret media messages in different or conflicting ways using their prior knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes.	Is my message engaging and compelling for my audience?
CONTENT	What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented or omitted from this message?	Media have embedded values and points of view.	Have I clearly and consistently presented my values in the content I create?
PURPOSE	Why is this message being sent?	Many messages are created to gain profit or power.	Have I communicated my purpose effectively?

SOURCE: Jolls & Wilson, 2014

Curriculum resources that connect visual arts to news and journalism are particularly useful for media literacy education. For example, the *New York Times* weekly lesson plan "What's Going on in This Picture?" invites students to look closely at an image that has been stripped of its caption. Students can join a moderated online conversation to comment on the image, which may heighten curiosity, attention, interpretation, and inference-making. For older students and their teachers, Michael Shaw's Reading the Pictures (2025) is a web-based resource dedicated to visual culture and media literacy. The website offers detailed analysis of photojournalism and social media images, a nd students learn how images function "in an age of unrelenting persuasion, promotion, and variable truth."

Comprehensive Health and Physical Education

There is growing concern about how children and young people are being affected by social media and the constant presence of smartphones. **Concerns about declining attention spans, mental and physical health problems, and distraction from learning have led parents and educators to align with Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Anxious Generation*, who calls for an immediate ban on cell phones in schools.** In Florida, cell phones are restricted in school, and instruction in social media safety includes information on how social media platforms work. In New Hampshire, the governor signed an executive order calling for a social media literacy curriculum in K-12 health classrooms. Unfortunately, it only requires teachers in K-12 health education courses to explain the potential negative impacts of use of social media platforms—and it does not address any of the potential benefits (State of New Hampshire, 2023). Massachusetts Attorney General with support from DESE and consultation with Media Literacy Now, released *Cell Phones and Social Media in Schools: A Toolkit for School Leaders and Communities*. The toolkit discusses three types of policies that restrict cell phone use, offers guidance for developing community norms on cell phone and social media use outside of school hours, and includes digital media literacy topics and strategies.

Many teachers perceive that students use their phones as a shield that protects them from engaging directly with the world.

Balancing Empowerment and Protection

Research has shown that educators are struggling to navigate a generation gap that has resulted from the rise of TikTok, a platform that enables *disconnected connectedness*. Educators feel that their students are "pulling away from difficult material and conversations" (Mihailidis et al., 2025, 141). **Some educators are using approaches that encourage students to imagine inclusive futures, engage in caring practices, and use creative media to express personal and collective agency that leads to meaningful engagement in communities in the real world.**

Media literacy instructional practices generally balance a dual focus on empowerment and protection, aiming to help students navigate the potential risks and harms of media texts and platforms while also taking advantage of the many opportunities provided by an ever-growing array of media texts and genres (Bulger & Davison, 2018). Numerous research studies have found a positive relationship between media literacy and measures of well-being (Gordon et al., 2025). These findings occur because media literacy education empowers individuals to make informed decisions about the media content they consume and create.

K-12 Health Education teachers are finding themselves at the crossroads of media, technology, and adolescent development. These educators are observing profound changes in student behavior, mental health, and engagement with education content. **Fortunately, media literacy concepts are embedded in nearly all of the core practices for 2023 Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework:**

PRACTICE 1

Decision-making and Problem-solving. Make health-promoting, informed, responsible decisions and solve problems in a variety of health-related situations.

PRACTICE 2

Self-management and Goal Setting. Set goals, engage in health promoting behaviors, and avoid risky behaviors.

PRACTICE 3

Social Awareness, Relationship, and Communication Skills. Enhance relationships, personal health, and the health of others through social awareness and effective communication.

PRACTICE 5

Self-awareness and Analyzing Influences. Examine how emotions, thoughts, needs, values, beliefs, and other factors (both internal and external) influence behaviors and articulate how these influences impact health behavior and outcomes.

PRACTICE 6

Information and Resource Seeking. Access, evaluate, and use valid and reliable health information, products, services, and related resources.

PRACTICE 7

Self-Advocacy and Health Promotion. Promote personal, family, and community health and well-being.

When we asked health teachers about the impact of media on their students' lives, it became clear that these educators feel surrounded by the discourse about cell phone use and the many risks and harms of digital media. We saw the pervasiveness of this trend when many of the educators and administrators we interviewed made little mention of media literacy's benefits and possibilities but offered a strong case for limiting access to digital devices both at home and in school.

Health educators we interviewed have mixed feelings about a cell phone ban in school. They want students to be prepared to make informed decisions, and they appreciate that increased agency occurs when learners gain meaningful personal insight on how they use and respond to digital media. **Learning to be a responsible user of technology takes practice, and reflection is a key component of this work.** For example, when learners recognize that some digital content is strategically designed to stir up emotions like anger, outrage, feelings of inadequacy, or a sense of grievance, both knowledge and feelings can then inform a person's behavior. When students gain knowledge about the potential connection, they can learn to apply strategies to monitor their own emotions as they interact with digital media (Garcia et al., 2021).

Media's Role in Health and Relationships

Critical thinking about media is a skill that has shown to have an impact on health behavior and social relationships. Media literacy can be used to address risky health behaviors associated with body image and eating disorders, especially in adolescents. Researchers conducted a meta-analytic review of existing school-based interventions for children grades 5-9 that were designed to enhance media literacy in order to reduce body dissatisfaction and to promote a positive body image. They found 17 different program evaluations involving 7,392 participants, finding that media literacy interventions improve media literacy and reduce body dissatisfaction (Kerr et al., 2022). Researchers also conducted a meta-analysis of 23 studies concerning the effects of media literacy interventions on health behaviors such as alcohol use, smoking, body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders. They found that media literacy interventions decrease a variety of problematic behaviors and unhealthy attitudes in children and adolescents (Xie, Gai, & Zhou, 2019).

Perhaps the most important health outcome of media literacy education is developing young people's ability to engage in meaningful and productive social relationships.

Media literacy requires knowledge and skills, but it also requires social interaction that involves a deep appreciation of the lived experience of others. For this reason, dialogue and discussion is a central feature of most media literacy pedagogies (Mihailidis, Shresthova, & Fromm, 2021).

Massachusetts Health Teachers Talk about Media Literacy

Today's health educators are tasked with more than teaching nutrition or physical fitness. They are navigating a generation shaped by screens, misinformation, and digital dependency. As one teacher pointed out, "They're not the same kids we taught 10 years ago." Another noted, "This generation already knows more than we do."

Our interviews revealed that these are some of the top issues that Massachusetts health educators care most about.

DIGITAL DEPENDENCE

Massachusetts health teachers are deeply troubled by the psychological struggles that many students experience, but few offered insights on how they productively help to support student needs. One teacher noted that their students are using screens almost constantly, to the point where "[i]t leads … to the sedentary lifestyle that they now have." Several health educators refer to digital media use as an addiction. "They're sick," one teacher lamented, "I probably shouldn't be so dramatic, but it definitely, definitely has hurt them." Another teacher shared a story of this dependence from her experience proctoring MCAS testing. She explained, "If you take [the phone] away from them, it is like you have unplugged their life and they can't breathe."

SELF-IMAGE AND SOCIAL COMPARISON

Teachers also highlighted the effects of digital media on students' self-image and perception of reality. Due to social comparison, algorithmic echo chambers, and the rate of speed that gossip can spread, "there's relationship drama happening all the time," one teacher said. Another pointed out, "If we have a fight in the building, within three to five minutes, it's everywhere, all over social media. Like, boom, just like that." This can be overwhelming to everyone in the school community.

SEX EDUCATION

Massachusetts health teachers report that many students have near-constant access to sexually explicit materials online, which complicates their understanding of consent and the reality of real-life relationships. Several health educators noted that the main concern they address with their students is the students' own participation in the creation of sexually explicit content. This is where the issues of consent and legality come up the most. Hyper-individualized technology and algorithms are also leading some of their students to be exposed to sexually explicit content at drastically different rates than that of others in their class. This makes standardized instruction difficult, especially when some families opt their children out of sex education for political or religious reasons.

LESS MEDIA, MORE ACHIEVEMENT

A few Massachusetts educators pointed out that students without phones or social media tend to thrive. One explained, "It is literally kids who get all As and have lots of social skills. They're the ones who say, 'I don't have a phone yet.'" Educators also suspect that several parents are addicted to their own digital devices and rely on having constant access to their children through their phones.

LISTEN TO KIDS

Educators recognize that students are defensive about their reliance on technology and that it can be hard to have honest conversations about media use. They also fear that without media literacy competencies being modeled in school, students will struggle to apply media literacy skills in their daily lives. One educator pointed out that students will not disclose their media- and technology-related habits unless they believe they will be met with a non-judgmental attitude. She said, "What works is to ask open-ended questions and listen with an open heart—and students themselves will generate potential solutions to their problems."

USE MEDIA TO ENGAGE LEARNERS

The health teachers we spoke to advocate for responsive teaching and meeting students where they are. "I use media—like I'll use kind of a TikTok format—so that they'll want to pay attention," one teacher explained, "I have to almost shape my curriculum like media for them to even pay attention." This is crucial when it comes to attention spans, but they also note that the information they're sharing with students must be relevant to their lives. But health education cannot be taught in a vacuum, and one teacher noted that the curriculum is often misaligned to the reality of the students in their community. "You're analyzing nutrition," a teacher said, "but these kids don't even have access to fruits and vegetables."

Detailed guidance is needed to support school leaders and health educators to address these issues in ways that balance protection and empowerment through media literacy education. Such work could also help establish media literacy as a district-wide priority, and in doing so, also help elevate the importance of health education more generally. Since not all Massachusetts students receive health education due to disparities in funding and staffing, cross-curricular integration with media-related health topics will also be important.

Science and Technology/Engineering (STE)

Media literacy competencies are only lightly and indirectly referenced in the Science, Technology, and Engineering Framework, but the following activities, referenced in the Framework, could help to activate students' media literacy competencies:

> **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**
> Use informational text to provide examples of improvements to existing technologies (innovations) and the development of new technologies (inventions). Recognize that technology is any modification of the natural or designed world done to fulfill human needs or wants.

> **MIDDLE SCHOOL:**
> Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence for the effects of periods of abundant and scarce resources on the growth of organisms and the size of populations in an ecosystem

> **MIDDLE SCHOOL:**
> Communicate a design solution to an intended user, including design features and limitations of the solution. Examples of intended users can include students, parents, teachers, manufacturing personnel, engineers, and customers.

The most aligned practice is STE Practice 8, (Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information), but media literacy skills of all kinds can be addressed in STE. Although technical knowledge and skills are important, students also need to consider the larger social implications of science, technology, and engineering (Media Literacy Now, 2023). An important assumption of science education is that students must be able to "use their knowledge and skills to analyze and understand scientific phenomena, designed systems, and real-world problems to successfully contribute to civic society and the economy" (Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks STE, 2016, 102).

Scientists need to recognize how values are embedded in choices that sometimes disguise themselves as simply being "technical" in nature, and science educators around the world have explored how critical engagement with media content can help promote reflection on social values. An important goal for K-12 science education is to teach students how to find trustworthy scientific information, which would help mitigate the growing threat of harmful scientific misinformation. (Media Literacy Now 2023). In one project, high school biology students were taught how to recognize the way that news stories frame stories about genetics. Students fully grasped the idea that there are different ways of framing the concept of the gene and they were able to recognize the different frames found in news media. Not only did students become more critical of media claims in general, they also deepened their understanding of genetic causation (Carver, Wiese, & Breivik, 2013).

Students need to recognize the levels of scientific evidence in science reporting to make informed judgments about the quality of information.

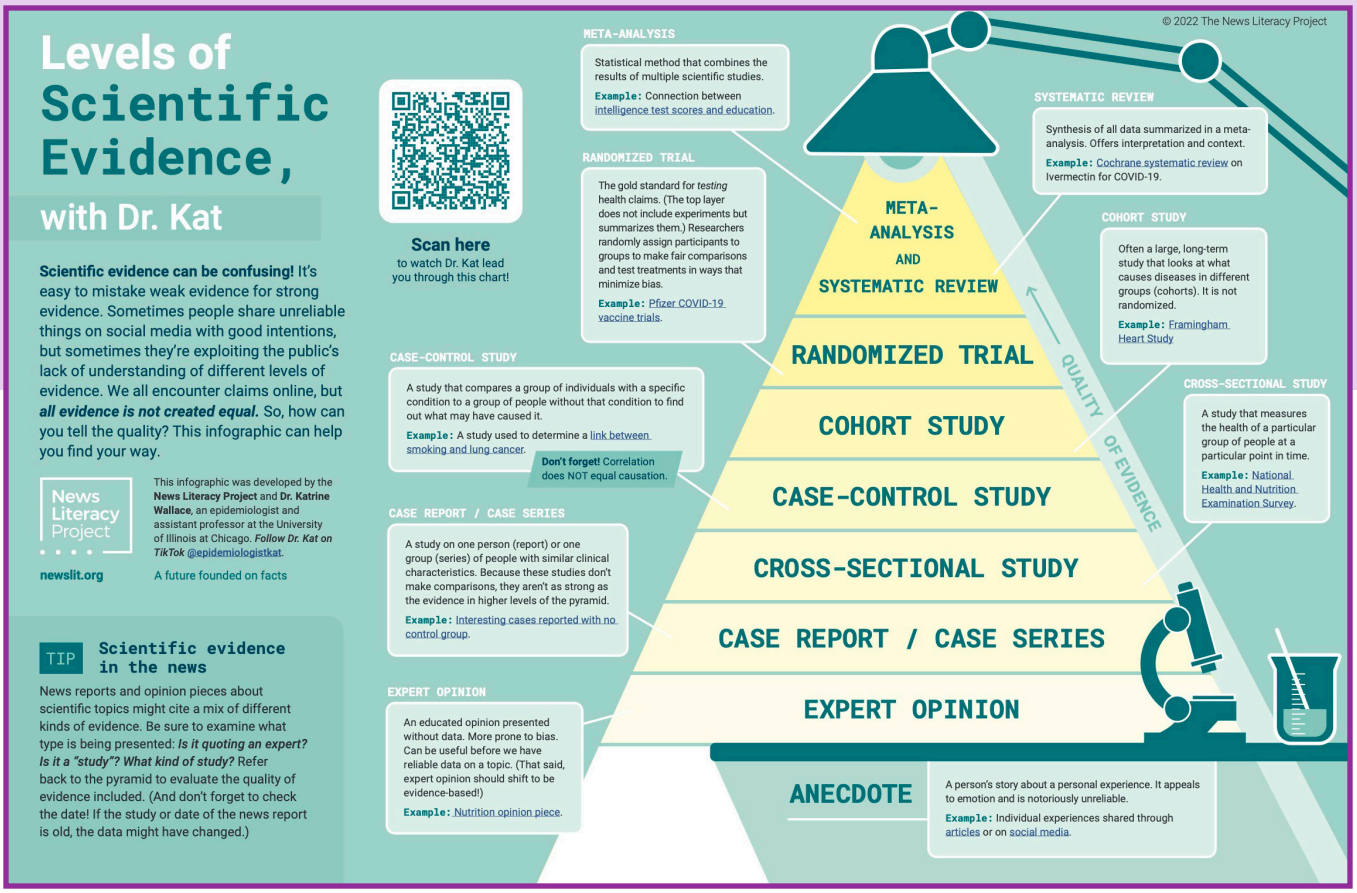


FIGURE 8
Levels of Scientific Evidence
SOURCE: News Literacy Project (2024b)

The ability to engage critically with the media is particularly relevant to the development of scientific literacy, which is defined as the ability of students to understand how media products are created and how scientific knowledge is incorporated into them, and to engage critically with science in the news (Jarman & McClune, 2010). One qualitative study of Canadian teenagers examined their understanding of science news. Although all students attended the same school and the same classes, they each possessed very different sets of strengths and weaknesses as critical thinkers. Some students could not identify the main idea of the story, while others struggled to interpret data regarding percentages. The relatively low levels of comprehension and analysis found in this study suggest that students need more regular opportunities to evaluate the levels of scientific evidence presented in science news (Bissonnette, Chastenay, & Francoeur, 2021). Figure 8 shows an example of a strategy for teaching about the different types of scientific evidence.

Educators have demonstrated the value of technoskepticism that helps students learn to think about technologies as not-neutral tools. To engage in this kind of thinking, educators explore the material structure of technology (Krutka, Heath, & Mason, 2020). They call attention to the psychosocial dimension that focuses on humans' experiences with technology and the ways that technologies affect how people think and interact. They reveal the political dimension by explaining who makes decisions about how technologies are designed and used, from individual users to companies to lawmakers (Pleasants, 2024).

World Languages

Although popular culture provides essential opportunities for learners to engage in literacy practices, few researchers have paid attention to the roles of popular culture in second-language learning. Outside of school, some students are learning English-language pop song lyrics and improving listening skills through film watching and TV shows (Chik, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2015). All around the world, language teachers have long made use of authentic texts and media content that introduce students to language and culture in a variety of discourses and genres. Classes in language and culture also offer students plentiful opportunities to critically examine racial, cultural, and gender stereotypes. Teachers of world languages have used media literacy pedagogies to help students move from beginning to intermediate levels of language proficiency (Evans-Romaine & Klimanova, 2023).

Responding to films, comics, short stories, and videos gives students dialogue and discussion opportunities, promoting language learning through cooperative social interaction (Garcia & DeFeo, 2014). In one project, bilingual fourth-grade students in California learned how to illustrate their vocabulary words with photography. First, they took pictures that showed words they encountered in their textbooks. Students engaged in class discussion about the meaning of different words and practiced posing their bodies to create photos that communicate the intended meanings. Because students liked the activity, they generated a massive collection of new words, which led to the spontaneous development of a flashcard game as learners created personalized pocket-sized books and trading cards that enabled them to become media creators (Share & Gambino, 2023).

Students analyzed photographs from newspapers and magazines and brainstormed a list of techniques that photographers use to convey feelings and ideas, such as camera angles, composition, and lighting.

The Massachusetts State Frameworks in World Languages were adopted in 2021, and they include a focus on social emotional skills and social justice "inherent in the teaching and acquisition of World Languages." There is little reference to media and technology. Students are asked to think critically about their own cultural context as they participate in new cultures and the Framework explicitly references reading, viewing, and listening skills and "multimodal linguistic and cultural proficiency." Educators are urged to "select content and topics that are connected to students' interests and background knowledge." But there is only a single reference to technology in the Frameworks.

Research shows that language learning classes that are responsive to news and current events can promote language proficiency. In Brazil, high school students in an English as a Second Language class worked to critically analyze a viral video on WhatsApp and research multiple news sources. Students compared multiple news articles and videos from international online newspapers and constructed alternative journalistic articles in response to their analyses of news information about COVID-19 (Meyrer & Frank Kersch, 2021). Such media literacy activities increased students' vocabulary development. One study examined learners' second language oral communicative competence as language teachers set up opportunities for Taiwanese English language learners to watch a CNN news broadcast and discuss it with peers. To measure language learning, students were asked to summarize the story, and measures included the number of new vocabulary words from the broadcast that were spoken by students. Data revealed that all participants increased their application of target vocabulary with mild-to-full accuracy and improved their oral linguistic output, proving that the method was effective for vocabulary learning (Kung, 2016).

Career and Technical Education

Approximately 20% of high school students in Massachusetts participate in some form of career and technical education (CTE). In 2023, there were 64,739 students enrolled in CTE programs at the secondary level. CTE is funded at the federal level with a grant of $23 million from the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The program has more demand than available supply of seats, so more investment will be needed to scale CTE programs across Massachusetts (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2025).

We reviewed only curriculum frameworks for two programs in Art and Communication Services that have integrated some media literacy concepts and instructional practices into their newly revised frameworks, which are currently under review by the Commissioner.

- Standard 6 of the Multimedia Production framework states that students will "Demonstrate the ability to access, critically assess, and create media content across various platforms and formats, including digital, broadcast, and social media, by applying journalistic principles, production techniques, and ethical standards."
- Standard 1 of the Graphic Design and Visual Communication Framework states that students will "Assess the impact of the internet and social media on modern graphic design and visual communications within contemporary marketing and communication strategies."

Although we did not review the subject area NOCTI test exams associated with these programs, interviews with Massachusetts educators suggested that the exams for these programs have not kept pace with the rapidly changing nature of the fields. National data identify several challenges in hiring for open CTE teaching positions across the United States, with many CTE teachers having less than three years of teaching experience (NCES, 2024).

School Libraries and Information Literacy

School librarians have long been leaders in media literacy education but their ability to implement curriculum and instruction is uneven. In Massachusetts, school libraries vary from place to place, and these variations reflect differences in school culture, funding and staffing levels, grade levels, and fixed vs. flexible school scheduling. Effective library programs rely on school librarians who perform multiple roles, including teaching, collection development, program administration and library management, and technology leadership. In many school libraries, movies, music, graphic novels, visual art, technology, and digital resources are nearly as plentiful as printed books (Hobbs, Deslauriers, & Steager, 2019).

In Massachusetts schools, classroom teachers and licensed school library teachers share a responsibility for teaching information literacy. These competencies are integrated within curriculum frameworks in ELA and DLCS. The Digital Literacy standards are often covered by library/media teachers in elementary and these standards are also cross-cutting standards. School librarians are also familiar with the National School Library Standards, created by the American Association for School Libraries (AASL), which show how a school's instructional mission is aligned with broader educational goals like inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning. **AASL defines information literacy in a way that is well-aligned with media literacy. They define it as the ability to:**

- **Inquire:** Encourage curiosity and deep questioning
- **Include:** Embrace diversity and build equity
- **Collaborate:** Work with others to learn and solve problems
- **Curate:** Gather, evaluate, and use information effectively
- **Explore:** Foster personal and academic growth through discovery
- **Engage:** Act ethically and with responsibility in learning and life

One Massachusetts licensed school librarian explained, "It's better when information literacy is embedded than if I just say, 'Let me tell you about this really cool way to evaluate the things you find online.'" Instead, she introduces students to information and media literacy concepts by connecting them to what "your teacher wants you to do" or "to help you finish a project off."

Many Massachusetts school library teachers value an integrated approach to media and information literacy.

Other school librarians are finding ways to increase relevance and student voice and choice through the formation of student book and media clubs. In a book club, students talk about books with each other. It works because "[s]tudents choose to participate, they choose the book they want to read, they choose their reading pace, and they choose what to talk about" (Vaccaro, 2025, 1). In one Massachusetts school media club, students created podcasts. Their first one included a review of the school play, with interviews featuring the student cast members discussing their personal reflections on the production (Steere, 2020).

Leadership from School Librarians

The Massachusetts School Library Association developed a Strategic Plan (2024–2028) to address the inequalities of service that exist among students from urban and rural districts as compared with students from suburban districts. They recommend:

> Every public school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should have a school library and a licensed school library teacher.

> Establish a position and responsibilities of the School Library Curriculum Specialist at DESE.

> Support a culture of inquiry in schools that sustains inquiry and resource-based learning, collaborative teaching, and the integration of digital technology to improve access for all students.

In many school libraries, there are plenty of fiction and nonfiction books for children and adolescents that specifically address media literacy themes. In a long-form interview, one Massachusetts educator said, "Our media center does a great job at creating informational guides to assist students in understanding 'how to do it' as well as the impacts of media." Another said, "Our school has a full-time librarian who does collaborative curricular projects about information, media, and digital literacy."

Licensed school library teachers can provide resources and support for student learning, including topics of misinformation, digital literacy, and information evaluation. They can also provide PD and collaboration with classroom teachers. School libraries can provide resources that help students and teachers gain knowledge about media, technology, and society. However, we were unable to locate precise data on the DESE Dashboard or the Massachusetts School Library Association website about the current percentage of schools staffed by school librarians in elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Negotiating Collaboration

Many of the licensed school library teachers we interviewed were eager to collaborate with classroom teachers to make sure that media and information literacy concepts are introduced to every student in every grade. But, as one pointed out, "It isn't happening like that. I can't promise that every

single student is getting hit with the same types of media literacy" because it's contingent on the willingness of educators to collaborate and coordinate with the librarian.

Collaboration can be incentivized but it cannot be coerced or forced. Another librarian explained, "Teachers don't actually say they don't want to work with me, but they know that if we work together to add this lesson in, then there is something else they can't do. They wonder: Do I have time to add this into what I'm already doing?" Strong incentives can help to motivate collaboration, but there will always be choices to be made. With teachers feeling pressured by MCAS tests, media and information literacy may not get the time and attention it deserves.

The Unique Needs of Elementary School Teachers

Elementary educators face distinct challenges and requirements stemming from their students' developmental stages, the constraints of their roles, and the speed of change in the digital landscape. One elementary educator explained, "Especially with both advances in AI and generative AI, it feels like in the last 10 years or so, as the internet has become more mainstream and social media has matured, there is a lot more disinformation purposely being put out into the world. Today there are more people with malicious intentions putting out disinformation or misinformation."

Many students are using tablets and social media like TikTok and YouTube even before they enter kindergarten.

Educators emphasized the importance of meeting students where they are developmentally in the introduction of media literacy education. One educator said, "I worry about that all the time, even with my own kids. But I'm finding that although they're involved on the internet with media, they're just not knowledgeable about it—they're not being educated on it."

Many Massachusetts children from lower-income families lack access to quality affordable childcare. One educator said, "The new latchkey kid is the TikTok kid, because they go home and their parents are working two or three jobs … and kids are scrolling away for hours at a time." She believes that some of her young students are up until 1 a.m. playing Fortnite, and she thinks that many of her students lie about their age so that they can access digital platforms.

She said, “They don’t understand that the age selection is in order to keep them safer,” and as a result, media and technology become vital babysitting tools.

One Massachusetts educator who works in a more affluent community shared that by Grade 2, most of her students have their own digital device, “and they use those devices a lot.” These students might not watch traditional television or see traditional ads. She said, “They watch YouTube, they play lots of games, and so they are exposed to a ton of things that we do not even really realize that they are exposed to.”

Most of the educators we interviewed are just not sure how to teach about the new forms of entertainment and persuasion that children encounter online. Some believe that they could benefit from access to curriculum resources and value ready-to-use lesson plans like those offered by Common Sense Media. But others mentioned that those materials are dated, and they would prefer PD that would essentially get them up to speed on the most recent developments in the field of children, technology, and media enabling them to create their personalized resources using relevant examples of media that students actually encounter.

Some of the classroom teachers we interviewed feel stretched too thin between the pressure of MCAS testing and the need to prepare students for the rest of their academic careers, where proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics will be required.

Many Massachusetts elementary schools tend to lack librarians or technology teachers, which leaves classroom teachers responsible for introducing concepts like “evaluating sources” or “distinguishing credible information from bias.” One educator explained, “Unless they have a librarian who takes it on or a technology teacher, I don’t think most elementary schools [in our county] even touch it. There are only three schools that even have an elementary librarian.”

Another educator described the pressure he gets to align instruction with the district’s ELA curriculum, Expeditionary Learning: “But those topics are not necessarily engaging for kids, and they get really bored with them. I want to be able to pick a topic that’s more interesting and more current.” **Other educators called attention to the gaps in the resources and abilities they currently have, noting that they put an emphasis on protection over empowerment.** Curriculum materials like “Be Internet Awesome” are “focused on digital safety topics like cyberbullying and protecting private information, rather than introducing the idea of critical evaluation in an age-appropriate way.”

A Set of Knowledge and Skills, Not a Subject

Some elementary teachers are noticing how teaching analysis and evaluation of sources is "getting harder with AI." One said, "I don't necessarily feel like my students are leaving school with the amount of knowledge that I would like them to have in that area because this work can be time-consuming, and we're not really covering it to the extent that I would like to."

One teacher underlined the point that media literacy needs to be seen "not as a subject, but rather a set of skills that [students] should apply across content areas, like wherever they're getting information, inside of school and outside of school." This educator noted that when asked to evaluate information online, students often use superficial criteria for assessing the quality of information sources—for example, by judging the quality of the graphic design. The teacher noted, "This is a problem because today, if you're running a highly funded disinformation campaign, it's probably going to look really good."

Building Connection between Home and School

An important issue for elementary educators is the need to build bridges between home and school when it comes to the use of media and technology for play and learning. **For children to experience meaningful learning in media literacy, parents need to be partners in the process.** Every teacher we interviewed mentioned the role of parents in the process of developing children's media literacy competencies. One teacher said, "Media literacy needs to be modeled, constantly. Many parents do not understand that there's a lot of bad stuff out there." Another explained, "The challenge here is that many parents are, at least, under-informed when it comes to media literacy. If parents develop a stronger understanding of media literacy, they could reinforce these concepts at home."

Family education can support parents, caregivers, and children and teens with media literacy competencies that accelerate learning about and with media.

Some parents and school leaders are concerned about educational technology's dominance in public education and believe that platform companies and their products have for too long set the terms of the argument about what education should be. As one writer put it, "Companies never had to prove that devices or software, broadly speaking, helped students learn before those devices had wormed their way into America's public schools" (Grose, 2024, 1). Some parents are seeking to limit or remove digital devices from schools.

Educators want parents to actively engage in their children's media literacy education. This can be as simple as watching videos together or encouraging discussions about online content and screen time. Some teachers also suggest that parents read newspapers online to stay informed. For parents who want to be more engaged, some schools and libraries offer workshops and seminars on internet safety, digital storytelling, screen time, and media literacy. In one Massachusetts community, a group of staff is working to promote Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* (2024) as they work with staff and families to reduce cell phone usage. One educator explained, "In the district where I live, the administrators brought in a few speakers for parents on social media, media literacy, and [specialists in] children and technology brain development. But these speakers were lightly attended. I'm not sure how to engage parents in these discussions but that is certainly part of the process."

Elementary educators believe that parents could be encouraged to support media literacy education at home, especially by starting with parents of the youngest students.

School-Wide Supports

What other activities are helping to advance people's media literacy competencies in the home, classroom, library, school, or community? Three major school-wide supports for media literacy were identified by educators who provided 834 open-ended responses to a question about what they value. Qualitative analysis of these data revealed three important themes: (1) the value of educational technology for media literacy education, (2) meeting the needs of new immigrants and students with disabilities, and (3) DESE initiatives that promote innovation.

Access to Educational Technology Platforms, Devices, and Tools

Interest in media literacy has grown among educational technology leaders in K-12 in Massachusetts. In 2025, the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) released the 2025 Driving K-12 Innovation Report, which includes themes that connect today's education challenges with tomorrow's opportunities. One new theme identified in 2025 is media literacy which "stresses that students must develop the ability to critically analyze, evaluate and discern the authenticity and credibility of information across various media platforms, giving them the skills needed to distinguish between primary sources, manipulated media and fabricated information." (CoSN refers to this as "critical media literacy.")

Educators in our survey noted that access to computers can facilitate media literacy learning, but it should not be equated with media literacy learning.

Before the pandemic, 60% of school administrators in the United States provided 1:1 digital devices for every middle and high school student, and 40% of elementary schools had devices for every student. During the pandemic, adoption rates for middle and high school programs increased dramatically, and many educators described how increased access to digital technology has impacted teaching and learning. This was a typical response: "Students in the older grades have their own device that they can take home and use for assignments. We also use the Google platform at our school, so students are learning a lot about how to use computers through exploration of their 'own' device. Students take their laptops with them to all classes, including library and music, where they use their devices to gather information and create presentations."

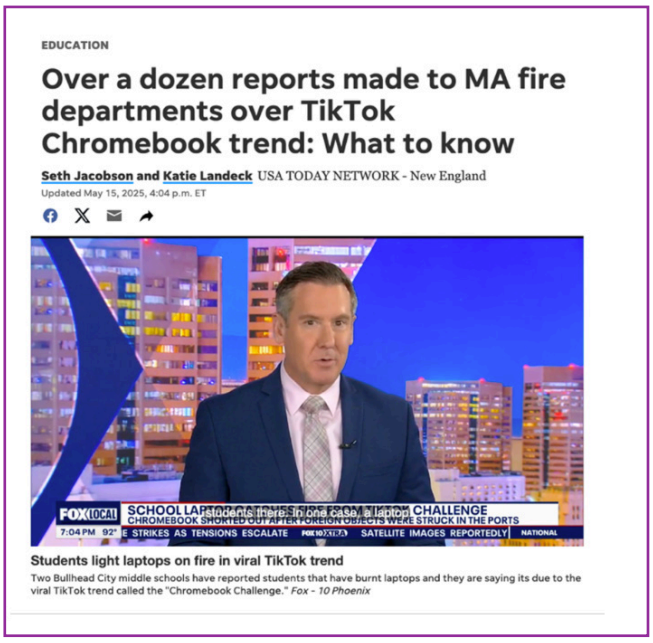


FIGURE 9
Chromebook Misuse: A TikTok Challenge
SOURCE: USA Today Network New England

But there are numerous concerns about the misuses of educational technology in and out of schools. Figure 9 shows a screenshot from a news report from May 15, 2025, when more than a dozen incidents were reported in Massachusetts schools as students imitated a social media "challenge" which encouraged students to insert conductive objects into the charging ports on their laptops. By using objects such as paper clips and pencil lead, students can cause their laptop to short circuit, increasing the device's temperature and causing smoke, sparks, or even a fire, according to fire officials. Students' rough treatment of school-issued devices has also been a concern for educational technology leaders.

Teachers don't like feeling like police, but they also note that oversight is essential. One teacher noted, "It is important that media use is monitored so that students are not being exposed to inappropriate content." A technology specialist has created 10-minute videos on various media literacy topics, such as "How to Share Information Ethically" (to avoid plagiarism) and "How to React to Breaking News."

PART IV

HOW IS MEDIA LITERACY BEING IMPLEMENTED IN MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS?

In Part IV of the Landscape Report, we provide data about the prevalence of media literacy instructional practices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts during the 2023–2024 academic year, and offer a roadmap of how instructional practices align with grade levels and subject areas.

We wanted to gauge the prevalence of media literacy education in Massachusetts schools to help establish a baseline and benchmark for integrating media literacy into public education. We used a modification of the Media Literacy Index (MLI), a validated measurement instrument that provides a clear picture of the needs for PD in media literacy at the local or state level (Hobbs et al., 2022a).

CORE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

These 21 core instructional practices help learners develop cognitive, social, and emotional competencies to prepare them for college and careers.

How often do students in elementary or secondary schools encounter media literacy through its core instructional practices? We identified 21 activities that are commonly used in elementary and secondary schools in subject areas including English language arts/literacy, social studies, the sciences, visual arts & design and the performing arts, mathematics, engineering and technology, comprehensive health, and world languages. While each of these instructional practices can be implemented using digital technologies, they do not require it.

Survey data collected from 1,166 elementary and secondary classroom teachers, school leaders, edtech, library, and district staff from 14 counties and 155 school districts across Massachusetts, October 7 - January 7, 2025

Access & Operate

- Accessing Digital Platforms and Apps
- Images and Advertising
- Art, Music, & Cultural Values
- History or Literature Through Film
- AI & Algorithmic Personalization

Analyze & Evaluate

- Guided Viewing/Reading/Listening
- Analyze Media Texts
- How Media Messages Influence
- Stereotypes
- Examine the News

Participate & Collaborate

- Reflect on Your Interpretations
- Create Community Service Messages
- Civic Dialogue

Create

- Create Media
- Research Project
- Digital Production for an Authentic Audience
- Present a Strong Point of View

Reflect and Act Ethically and Responsibly

- Balancing Online and Offline Life
- Social Responsibilities of Communication
- Media Law and Policy
- The Business of Media

Instructional practices (or methods) engage all students in meaningful learning. Methods are differentiated to meet student needs and interests, subject area and task demands, and the learning environment.

Previous research has demonstrated that even when educators are unsure whether these types of instructional practices are happening or not, their inferences about the frequency of instructional practices are consistent with the views of district-level stakeholders, including parents, school leaders, staff, and community members (Hobbs et al., 2022b). The MLI was adapted by a high school student for use in a student research project in Maynard, Massachusetts. Results show that students' reports of exposure to media literacy instructional practices were highly consistent with educators' own assessments of the prevalence of media literacy instructional practices in the community (Media Education Lab, 2023a).

Estimating the Prevalence of Media Literacy Instructional Practices, 2024–2025

As we will show in the data presented below, most students in Massachusetts are getting significant opportunities to develop knowledge and skills associated with three media literacy activities, which are frequently reported as normative practices in classrooms. Survey participants were asked to estimate how many of the learners in their school get exposure to various instructional practices, and they made their estimates on a 10-point scale, using a slider bar that ranged from 1 = "hardly any" to 10 = "nearly all". Because participants were not required to answer every question on the survey, the number of subjects who completed MLI estimates varied from 1,028 to 1,252.

Most students in Massachusetts schools get learning opportunities like these:

1 CREATE MEDIA

In these types of activities, students plan and create original content in a particular media genre, including PowerPoint Slides, written scripts, animations, video, or graphic design. With access to digital platforms, such create-to-learn pedagogies are easily implemented with students even in the primary grades. This instructional practice had a mean score of 7.93 (SD = 2.28).

2 GUIDED VIEWING/READING/LISTENING

With a teacher's support, students examine a media artifact to identify author, purpose, target audience, and point of view. This is a fundamental practice of media literacy education, and literacy educators have long argued that this kind of inference-making supports critical reading skills. It is closely aligned with constructivist learning theory, a cornerstone of cognitive psychology and education, which posits that learning is an active process where individuals construct their own understanding through experiences and reflection, rather than by passively receiving information. This instructional practice had a mean score of 7.62 (SD = 2.33).

3 RESEARCH PROJECT

Students generate questions and gather information from multiple media sources to learn something new and then summarize what they learned by creating a written work, video, oral presentation, podcast, infographic, or other media project. This instructional practice had a mean score of 7.60 (SD = 2.38).

As Table 5 shows, 18 other instructional practices received significantly lower ratings, indicating that survey participants do not believe that many Massachusetts students are receiving opportunities to engage in these kinds of learning activities. This table is organized from most prevalent to least prevalent activities. Note that several of the lowest-ranked items include issues that are vital in today's complex digital environment, such as education about balancing online and offline life, AI and algorithms, and the business of media.

TABLE 5

Estimated Prevalence of Media Literacy Instructional Practices in Massachusetts Schools, 2023–2024

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION	MEAN	N	STD. DEVIATION
Create Media. Students plan and create original content in a media genre, including PowerPoint Slides, written scripts, animations, video, or graphic design.	7.99	1251	2.22
Guided Viewing/Reading/Listening. With a teacher's support, students examine a media artifact to identify author, purpose, target audience, and point of view.	7.68	1252	2.28
Research Project. Students generate questions and gather information from multiple media sources to learn something new and then summarize what they learned by creating a written work, video, oral presentation, podcast, infographic, or other media project.	7.67	1171	2.34
Present a Strong Point of View. Students make a speech, write an article, or create a media presentation that advocates for or against a specific action, using reasoning and evidence to defend their point of view.	6.83	1138	2.48
Analyze Media Texts. Students compare and contrast two different media artifacts to identify similarities and differences in authorship, audience, content, format, and point of view.	6.34	1204	2.43
Access Digital Platforms and Apps. Students consider their information and entertainment needs in selecting appropriate content, platforms, and apps.	6.17	1195	2.61
Media, Law, and Policy. Students learn about the First Amendment and other laws that empower them as citizens in a democracy.	6.10	1080	2.77
Art, Music, and Cultural Values. Students explore art or music from different time periods to identify how it activates strong emotions in ways that reflect and shape community values.	5.96	1148	2.54
Civic Dialogue. Students learn how to reduce conflict and disrupt hurtful or aggressive talk and actions through civil dialogue and active listening.	5.95	1130	2.51
Digital Production for an Authentic Audience. Students create digital content (graphic design, video, audio, or interactive game), and their work is viewed by parents, peers, or the community.	5.73	1177	2.59

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION	MEAN	N	STD. DEVIATION
Reflect on Your Own Interpretations. Students examine various information sources and consider how their existing beliefs may influence their interpretation of who and what to trust.	5.65	1123	2.43
Images and Advertising. Students examine how images can be manipulated and reflect on how advertising affects emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.	5.62	1212	2.33
Examine the News. Students assess the quality and credibility of journalism and identify differences between a news story, informed opinion, sponsored content, and entertainment.	5.54	1170	2.44
The Social Responsibilities of Communication. Students reflect on ethical issues in human communication, observing how online and face-to-face interaction affects social relationships.	5.38	1099	2.45
Stereotypes. Students analyze examples of different types of media to spot stereotypes and examine how values and ideologies are embedded in characters and stories.	5.36	1140	2.45
Create Community Service Messages. Students work collaboratively to create a community campaign designed to raise awareness, promote a cause or an event, or motivate people to take action in the community.	5.21	1105	2.53
How Media Messages Influence. Students identify the many different choices that creators make and consider how the design of media messages may influence people's feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.	5.16	1126	2.40
History or Literature through Film. Students evaluate the realism and accuracy of a movie that depicts historical events or examine the choices made by a filmmaker in adapting a book into a movie.	5.00	1060	2.60
Balancing Online and Offline Life. Students keep track of their use of digital media over a period of time and discuss how it may be beneficial or harmful to their health, identity, and relationships.	4.26	1109	2.46
The Business of Media. Students learn that selling audience attention is the way that media companies make money.	4.25	1114	2.40
AI & Algorithmic Personalization. Students understand that their digital data are a commodity and that algorithms and AI are used to target personalized content to them.	4.24	1028	2.33

Who Should Teach Media Literacy Instructional Practices?

We asked media literacy experts and experienced education professionals to offer their best judgment about how the 21 instructional practices could be aligned with the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks. In Round 2, 87 members of the Delphi Expert Panel Study rated each item, selecting "essential" to indicate which grade levels or subject areas should include these activities. We summed these data to identify consensus on the question, "Who should be responsible for teaching media literacy across the curriculum?" Table 6 presents these findings using the framework of the OECD Media and AI Literacy competencies to align instructional practices with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

TABLE 6

Instructional Practices of Media Literacy Aligned with Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks

Stars represent a level of consensus among media literacy experts and experienced education professionals who consider these instructional practices to be "essential" in the subject areas shown.

		English Language Arts	History and Social Science	Science, Tech & Engineering	Math	Health Education	Arts	CTE	Digital Literacy & Computer Science	World Languages
Access & Operate	Access Digital Platforms and Apps	★	★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
	Images and Advertising	★★★	★	★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★	★★★	★
	Art, Music, and Cultural Values	★	★	★	★	★	★★★★★	★	★	★★★★★
	History or Literature Through Film	★★★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
	AI and Algorithmic Personalization	★	★	★	★	★	★	★★★	★★★★★	★
Analyze & Evaluate	Guided Viewing/ Reading/Listening	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★
	Analyze Media Texts	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★	★	★	★	★
	How Media Messages Influence	★★★	★★★	★	★	★★★★★	★	★	★★★★★	★★★
	Examine Stereotypes	★★★★★	★★★	★	★	★★★	★★★	★	★	★★★★★
	Examine the News	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★	★	★	★★★	★
Participate & Collaborate	Reflect on Your Own Interpretations	★★★	★★★	★	★★★	★★★	★	★	★	★
	Create Community Service Messages	★	★★★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
	Practice Civil Dialogue	★	★★★	★	★	★★★	★	★	★	★
Create	Create Media	★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
	Research Project	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★	★	★★★	★★★
	Digital Production for an Authentic Audience	★★★	★	★★★	★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
	Present a Strong POV	★★★★★	★★★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Reflect and Act Ethically and Responsibly	Balancing Online and Offline Life	★	★	★	★	★★★★★	★	★	★★★	★
	Social Responsibilities of Communication	★	★	★	★	★★★★★	★	★	★★★	★
	Media Law and Policy	★	★★★★★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
	Understand the Business of Media	★	★	★	★	★	★	★★★	★★★	★

Media Literacy in Electives and Student Clubs

In personal interviews with 46 Massachusetts educators, we asked them to tell us of any electives, extracurricular activities, or student clubs offered at their schools that might support media literacy learning outcomes. Then we asked survey respondents to select items from this list to identify those offered in their school. Out of 1,154 respondents, fewer than half report their school offering any of the relevant subjects. Figure 10 shows these data.

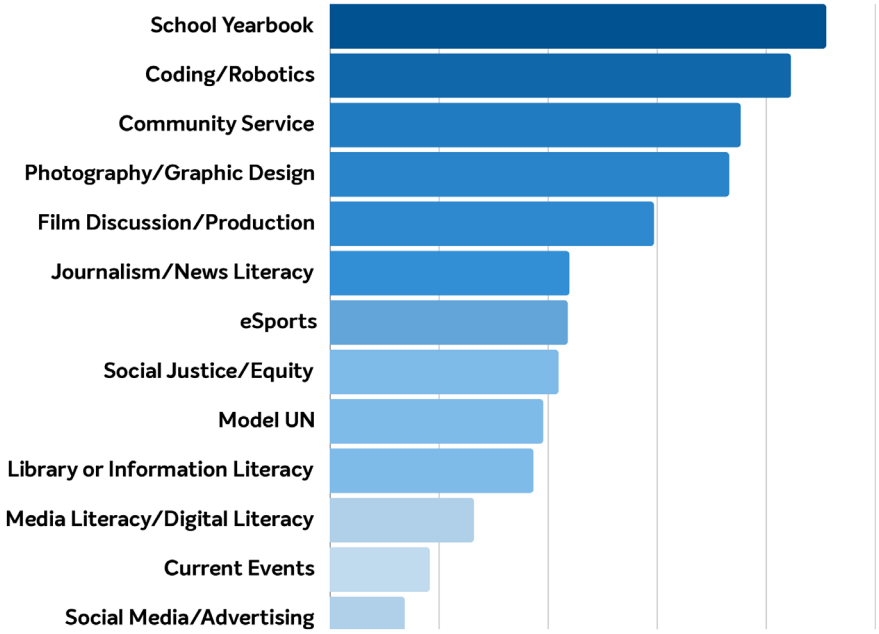


FIGURE 10

Prevalence of Electives and Clubs Offered in Massachusetts Schools

Media Literacy Education Should Begin with the Youngest Learners

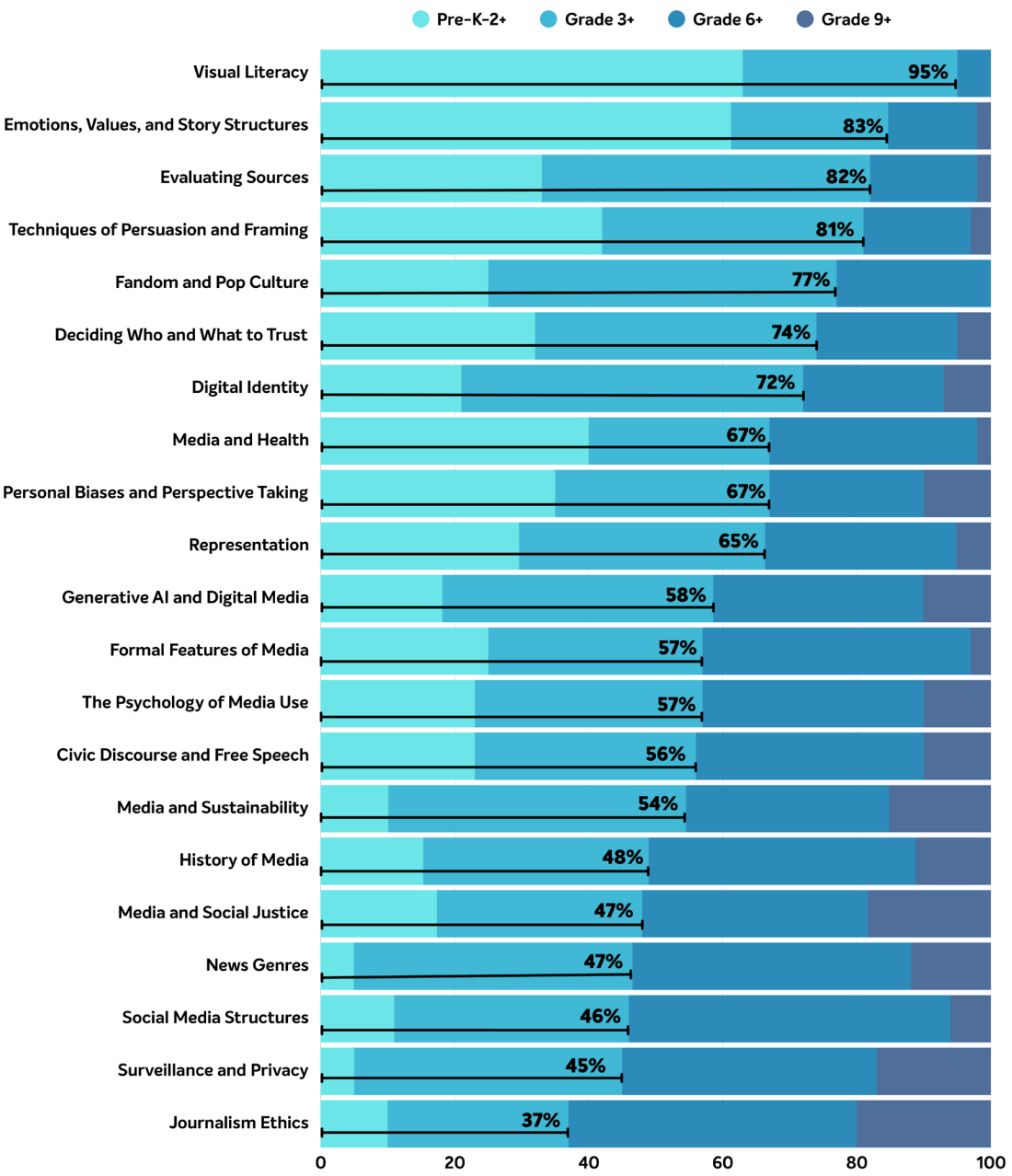


FIGURE 11

Experts Say Many Media Literacy Topics Should Be Introduced in the Elementary Grades

In the Delphi study, experts were invited to generate topics that they believed were of central importance in media literacy in K-12 education. Then we asked them to identify the earliest grade where these issues should be introduced. Most media literacy topics should be introduced before middle school, experts say.

As Figure 11 shows, media literacy experts and experienced educational practitioners believe that four topics can be introduced to students in PreK through Grade 2, including (1) visual literacy; (2) emotions, values, and story structures; (3) evaluating sources, and (4) techniques of persuasion and framing.

This finding stands out because early childhood educators have long focused only on protecting children from excessive use of screen media. They often see it as a threat that contributes to childhood obesity, eating disorders, sexualization, youth violence, family stress, depression, low self-esteem, underage drinking and tobacco use, and more (Linn, 2010). In the eyes of many early childhood educators, young children need to be protected during the critical period when their brains and bodies are developing. But fortunately, the protection paradigm is starting to shift for media literacy in early childhood education. As Rogow (2023, 10) explains, "In a public health paradigm, if there are media literacy lessons at all, they typically are designed to inform children about media dangers, usually via direct instruction. The consistent message to children is that there are always better ways to spend their time than to use screens." This stance does not contribute to developing critical thinking skills; it must be modified in a more nuanced way for media literacy education in Massachusetts to thrive.

Media literacy experts and experienced education professionals believe that more than half of core media literacy concepts and topics can be introduced to children well before middle school.

Educators can provide opportunities "to help children think more deeply about the media they routinely encounter — including screen media that wouldn't qualify as 'high quality'" (Rogow, 2023, 12). The Erickson Institute's report on Media Literacy in Early Childhood offers sample lesson plans and activities for children from ages three to seven and notes that there is a need for more resources, including frameworks, curriculum, lesson plans, and activities to support them getting started, as well as concrete examples such as how-to videos to model teaching media literacy (Herdzina & Lauricella, 2020). The News Literacy Project also offers a Framework for Teaching News Literacy (2024c) that highlights news literacy standards, essential questions, and knowledge/skills objectives, along with suggested performance tasks and learning activities by grade band.

Research shows that many elementary educators report not receiving PD related to media literacy or digital technology, which is why they lack the confidence to effectively incorporate technology into their pedagogy in developmentally appropriate ways (Lauricella, Herdzina, & Robb, 2020). Observational studies of technology use in early childhood education have shown that there are also classroom management issues that teachers are not always aware of — for example, children's off-task behavior when using digital tablets (Lauricella & Jacobson, 2022). A substantial statewide investment in PD for elementary educators will be needed to help them effectively integrate media literacy into instruction, but this could be facilitated by licensed school library teachers who get training as media literacy coaches to introduce media literacy instructional practices to the youngest learners.

Bright Spots: Media Literacy In Massachusetts

There are a wide variety of talented individuals in Massachusetts who are passionate about media literacy and who have pioneered innovative programs and services for children and teens, both in and out of school. Here we showcase some important work happening in the Commonwealth.

University–Community Partnerships

We found several examples of partnership programs developed by Massachusetts college or university faculty who work with educators and students in local public schools. For over a decade, a media studies professor has been partnering with a local elementary school, where they and their undergraduate students co-create and deliver customized media literacy curricula in classrooms. The project allows the undergraduate students to learn civic engagement and applied scholarship. Through meaningful collaboration with the school's licensed library teacher along with a veteran classroom teacher, lessons are aligned with the needs of the school and its students.

They began this collaboration as an extension of an undergraduate course, framing the school partnership as a service-learning option for undergraduates. Initially, they focused on the topic of the class in this partnership: media violence. These early efforts focused on unpacking complex issues from representations of social groups in violent media to the economic motives driving the production of such content. Over time, they expanded their approach, offering this opportunity to students in other courses, shifting the focus of the curricula to address broader topics such as commercialization, data privacy, and the ethical implications of online behavior.

This partnership also allowed for research on the impacts of media literacy education. Their initial research design employed quantitative methods, comparing students who participated in media literacy lessons with control groups to measure differences in outcomes. However, for practical reasons like access to students and not wanting to deprive control groups of useful skills and education, their methodology shifted to reflect a focus on qualitative data. They explain that qualitative data "can get at some richness," bringing "students' own words" into view.

This evolution has allowed the professor and the team to delve deeper into the perspectives of sixth-grade students, offering insights into how they engage with complex topics like cyberbullying, data commercialization, and media's portrayal of violence. **In one project, after Grade 6 students learned about gender stereotypes, they completed a homework activity with three open-ended questions:**

A. Do you think YouTube has added diverse people to the media that kids your age see? Why or why not? Please give as much evidence as you can for your answer.

B. Do you think YouTube has many of the same stereotypes related to gender compared to other media types? Please explain.

C. What messages do you think the YouTubers that you know send directly or indirectly about gender?

Students' responses were shaped by their participation in the media literacy program itself, as in research evidence from their writing that students understood and could deploy the concept of counter-stereotypes, noting that YouTubers sometimes do fit into the mold created by stereotypes or normative expectations, while in other cases, identity expression is more flexible as YouTube allows content creators the space for varied expressions (Scharrer et al., 2023).

This initiative is a testament to the power of partnerships between higher education and local K-12 education communities to address pressing societal issues. Through a dynamic interplay of teaching, research, and service, this program has created a sustainable model for advancing media literacy that benefits both university students and local youth.

Media & Democracy Class

For over three decades, a team of Social Studies high school teachers in a Massachusetts school district has offered a class entitled "Democracy and Media Literacy." The course has focused on equipping students with tools to critically analyze news and navigate the media landscape, which has changed radically over the 30 years that this course has been offered.

One of the course's signature activities involves students selecting a news story and analyzing it, using three different sources in the process. Through this process, they uncover

bias by identifying clues like selective adjectives and omissions. The real "aha moment" often comes through what's omitted, as students realize which critical elements are missing when comparing one story to the next. Students also learn to research political campaigns and candidates, gaining a nuanced understanding of where politicians stand on key issues.

In the Media & Democracy class, students learn a simple strategy for evaluating the credibility of news and other content. It's called WAIL and it helps them learn to recognize how bias and point of view can appear in media content. WAIL is an acronym that stands for the following actions:

W: Find the most powerful **words** used in the content.
A: Identify **adjectives and adverbs** and consider how they might suggest a point of view.
I: Notice the information **included**.
L: Learn more to identify information that has been **left out.**

The teacher who offers this course notes that teaching it is no simple task, as government, current events, and media evolve rapidly, demanding a continuous and flexible approach to curriculum revision. This important insight was echoed by many of the Massachusetts educators we interviewed. To support the needs of all learners, the educator who created the class also works closely with special education teachers to support differentiated learning. The course has also inspired students to testify before state legislators about the importance of media literacy education. Over time, the course has faced setbacks related to budget constraints and scheduling allowances, which has forced the removal of some topics like the representation of different demographic groups in media. Yet, the core skills imparted—rooted in resources that have "stood the test of time"—continue to empower students to engage critically with the world around them.

Tech Coaches

The Director of Technology and Innovation in one Massachusetts school district told us the story of what's working in their district: technology integration combined with school and community collaboration. It works because it fosters a spirit of shared ownership among classroom teachers, librarians, and technology specialists in supporting student learning. In this district, civic engagement activities are intertwined with media literacy, as when students interviewed senior citizens to document community history using digital tools. They have created actionable frameworks that integrate civic engagement and media literacy into the curriculum, which avoids overwhelming classroom teachers by providing meaningful structure and support.

One of their major contributions has been reframing the role of librarians as collaborators, co-teachers, and instructional coaches, particularly in media literacy. This approach, they noted, addresses hesitations stemming from a perceived hierarchy, allowing librarians to embrace coaching roles without compromising their sense of identity within the school community. Part of this approach is simply calling out instances of informal coaching during librarian–teacher collaborations to shift librarians' mindsets to include coaching as part of their skillset. They also underscored the potential in leveraging librarians as partners in student learning.

Since the pandemic, school leaders in many Massachusetts school districts have assumed that teachers developed a proficiency with digital tools that eliminates the need for technology integration specialists. But in this community, technology coaches are seen as vital to equipping students with digital and media literacy skills. That's why they have 10 technology integration positions and 11 librarian positions in a district that serves 5,600 students.

For members of this small Massachusetts community, this powerful strategy is leading to a gradual cultural shift toward shared accountability in technology integration and media literacy.

Media Literacy in U.S. Government Grade 12

A Massachusetts high school teacher and licensed school library teacher collaborated to implement a 10-week media literacy unit designed to promote dialogue and discussion about media, technology, and society. The school librarian adapted the Courageous Conversations program, developed by the Media Education Lab, for use in a vocational high school (Media Education Lab, 2023b). By aligning their lessons with benchmarks for the Grade 12 U.S. Government and Politics class, the collaborative team gained support from the school administration, students, and parents.

The team introduced the curriculum by engaging students in discussions about current events, encouraging skepticism and curiosity. Through interactive activities, video analyses, and discussion-based lessons, students learned to make inferences about the purpose and intent behind media messages, and consider the broader societal implications of hate speech, disinformation, and propaganda. **The curriculum is centered around critical analysis of media and small-group discussions, where students wrestle with questions including:**

- How is social media reshaping people's decisions about who and what to trust?
- What do people need to know about social media economics and the profit motives that underpin conflict?
- What can you do to support people in your life who may be moving toward radicalization?

Homework activities using the Nearpod platform added a layer of interactivity and opportunities for feedback to learners. Over the course of the program, students selected a social issue to explore, and the librarian introduced them to a variety of informational resources to help students develop independent learning and research skills.

The teacher noted the importance of intellectual humility for educators, emphasizing the need to let students grapple with complex issues and resist the urge to over-simplify matters or give students the "right" answers.

This teacher–librarian collaboration created a robust classroom environment where critical thinking was valued and encouraged, and where students were getting meaningful preparation in navigating the modern media landscape with confidence.

Student Civics Research Project on Media Literacy

One Massachusetts school was featured on the pages of *The New York Times* in 2022 when a high school senior, as part of her civics research project, conducted a survey of students in the school district to measure the extent to which they were being exposed to media literacy instruction (Hsu, 2022). To accomplish this, she adapted the Media Education Lab's Media Literacy Index (MLI) for use with 500 children in Grades 4–12. Students completed the survey during class time, and the district fully supported the effort. According to interviews with both the school superintendent and the school librarian, the district takes students' civics projects seriously and has a track record of preparing students to participate in the community and society.

Findings from the student research showed that some instructional practices were commonly used in all grades. For example, two out of three students report that they have discussed how media can be beneficial or harmful to their health, identity, and relationships, including 61% of fourth-graders. Nearly 80% of twelfth-graders say that they have had lessons that help them differentiate between a news story and an opinion story in the news, and two out of three students say they have learned about how the First Amendment and other laws give you freedom of speech and help you learn how to use that freedom responsibly.

But there were some important gaps. Only 34% of students in Grades 4–12 had opportunities to analyze stereotypes, and only half of twelfth-graders said that they have learned how selling audience attention is the way media companies make money. Fewer than half of students had the opportunity to create a social action or awareness campaign to promote an event or motivate people to take action.

The insights from this project inspired a staff-led community-wide survey supported by the local community's education foundation, and the results of the staff survey were consistent with the student data. This led to the creation of a task force of librarians and teachers to study district-wide solutions. The group determined they would start with a unifying instructional theme across all schools: examining current events at all grade levels with an eye on learning to be critical consumers of information.

Over time, the focus on learning to analyze the quality of information sources has become embedded across social studies and ELA starting in high school and then moving further down in the curriculum to Grade 6. According to the curriculum director, there is still work to be done in the early grades. Yet more educators in this district now believe that students can demonstrate the ability to gather and assess information earlier than is commonly assumed.

In one Massachusetts community, children did not perceive that parents and guardians were helping them to develop media literacy competencies.

Discussions about media and society are an important form of information learning for both parents and their children. But the student survey revealed that only 7% of students in this Massachusetts community say they have often worked with parents or guardians to create videos or other media together. Only 12% report experiences where they discuss with their parents or guardians the advantages and disadvantages of online life. Half of all students reported that they hardly ever discuss at home what makes media sources trustworthy. Most students also reported that they hardly ever read and discussed books, newspapers, or magazines at home. Creative approaches for strengthening home-school connections will be needed to support Massachusetts parents as they help their children develop these essential life skills.

Youth Media Organizations in Massachusetts

Educators in Massachusetts are lucky to have access to additional talent and knowledge resources in many communities where there is ongoing work in youth media. These programs have grown significantly since the 1990s, with numerous organizations and programs promoting youth participation in media creation. In Massachusetts, some robust youth media programs are generally offered outside of school in libraries, settlement houses, museums, and non-profit organizations:

- **New England Public Media's Media Lab** is a youth media training initiative that teaches the tools of audio, video, and digital storytelling. They teach interview tips and techniques and show students how to record audio and video using professional equipment, building the knowledge and confidence to work with any media type.

- **Educational Development Center (EDC)** is an organization that has pioneered youth media education initiatives for more than 20 years. They offer a free online civics curriculum and teacher toolkit called SRVCE. It blends civic inquiry, media literacy education, and exploration of public service careers to prepare students to be active citizens and to thrive in workplaces.

- **Cambridge Community Television** offers youth media programs for high school students. Funded by city partners, they offer a School Year Production Program (SYPP), which is an afterschool program designed to provide teens with an opportunity to develop career readiness, media production skills, confidence, and portfolio building experience. Their Summer Media Institute (SMI) is a six-week work experience and media production program run through a partnership with the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. Each summer, teens in the program attend workshops where they learn to operate cameras and develop skills in professional editing, lighting and audio, animation and graphic design, media arts, technical production, and computer applications. As participants develop media skills, they are paid to work as media artists while producing a variety of projects.

- **Loop Lab** was founded in 2017 as a media arts training center designed to empower Boston young women and people of color with interests in careers in video, audio, and media production. Through hands-on instruction, paid apprenticeships, and mentorship, they are building pathways into the creative economy. They specialize in digital storytelling, and the program helps each participant to define their aspirations and pursue their own professional journeys.

- **Somerville Media Center** has a youth program that empowers young producers to tell their own stories, offering a safe space for young people to use media tools to communicate. They teach digital literacy through intensive workshops, strategic community partnerships with youth-serving agencies, teen internships, movie nights, and field trips.

- **Brookline Interactive Group** offers residents of Brookline, Massachusetts, opportunities to access media-making technologies, amplify their voices and tell their stories, develop media literacy skills, and sustain a vibrant and transparent democracy. This integrated media and technology education center is a community media hub for Brookline and the region. They serve over 500 youth and adults annually through innovative classes and partnerships.

- **Tyngsborough Media** in collaboration with **Westford Community Access Television** offered a special School Vacation Week program in 2025 called "Lights, Camera, Action!" to introduce middle school students to the world of video production, filmmaking, and storytelling, with hands-on experience in broadcast production, filmmaking, and game show participation.

- The **Institute for Contemporary Arts** offers the Teen Digital Cooperative, a program that introduces students to digital illustration to create unique pieces of art.

Community Concerns

We close Part IV with two community concerns that came up repeatedly in interviews with Massachusetts educators: (1) restricting the use of digital devices in schools and (2) rising levels of political partisanship at the local and national levels. Both issues affect how media literacy integration may develop in schools and communities across the state in the years to come.

Restricting Digital Devices in Schools

Some educators see the growing problem of student distraction as an opportunity for media literacy education to increase in K-12 schools. Teen use of cell phones in school is being seen as a growing threat to teaching and learning. As Figure 12 shows, a national survey of teachers showed that 72% of high school teachers say that students being distracted by their cell phones is a major problem in their classroom (Hatfield, 2024).

High school teachers most likely to say cellphone distraction is a major problem

*% of public K-12 teachers who say that students being distracted by their cellphones is a **major problem** in their classroom*

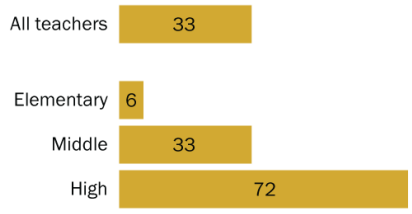


FIGURE 12

Cellphone Distraction

SOURCE: Pew Research Center

Eleven states have passed statewide policies that ban or restrict cell phone use in schools.

Many policymakers and leaders in education suggest that phone-free spaces in schools will help mitigate youth mental health concerns and distractions during academic instruction (Panchal & Zitter, 2025). In January 2025, the Massachusetts Attorney General with support from DESE and consultation with Media Literacy Now, released *Cell Phones and Social Media in Schools: A Toolkit for School Leaders and Communities*. The toolkit discusses three types of policies that restrict cell phone use, offers guidance for developing community norms on cell phone and social media use outside of school hours, and includes digital media literacy topics and strategies. The Massachusetts Attorney General also introduced The STUDY Act (S.335 / H.666) (2025b) to promote safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth. This bill seeks to prohibit student access to personal electronic devices during the school day and to regulate social media companies to combat harmful effects on youth. If it becomes law, it would require all public schools to have formal policies regarding the use of cell phones,

tablets, and other personal electronic devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities. School policies would need to prevent students from physically accessing their personal electronic devices during school hours, although exemptions to the policy would be provided in certain circumstances, such as to accommodate a student's needs as provided by their individualized education program or health plan.

Unfortunately, there is no meaningful provision in the bill for media literacy, but the law would require schools to have a policy educating students about the social, emotional, and physical harms of social media use. Fortunately, media literacy education does not require unrestricted access to digital devices.

A robust program of media literacy education should accompany any implementation of cell phone bans at the school, district, or state level, and guidelines from DESE could help to support this effort.

Parent Pushback on Education Technology

Some parents are concerned about the personal information safety risks to children and families in the educational technology products and platforms widely used by American schools. Nearly all educational apps share children's personal information with third parties, including for advertising and monetization, and typically without the knowledge or consent of the users or the schools (Cherkin, 2024). As pushback over the use of educational technology grows, some educators feel that this tension can make teaching "more intimidating these days." One teacher we interviewed noted that more support from administration could be vital because when educators don't have that support, they "really fear what happens." **But parent pushback on educational technology should not be feared: it is an opportunity for media literacy education that builds bridges between home and school.**

Teachers worry that they will not be supported by school leaders if there are challenges from community members or parents.

Political Partisanship and Its Discontents

Teachers also have anxieties about the way that political polarization is affecting the institution of education. School book-banning attempts are one manifestation of rising political partisanship. According to the Massachusetts Library Association, there were 78 attempts to censor books and library resources in Massachusetts in 2022 (Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, 2022). The Massachusetts State House is considering proposed legislation aimed at ensuring that public and school libraries can offer diverse and inclusive books and media without political interference. If passed, the law will ensure that decisions on what materials are appropriate for school and public libraries selected are based on professional training.

Massachusetts Educators Cope with Rising Pressures

Some of the educators we interviewed were concerned about library book bans and other community pressures to reduce the visibility of media content containing themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some educators noted that rising concerns about political polarization are affecting the selection of media for use in the classroom. When it comes to media literacy, "Most parents aren't aware of it, don't really understand what it is, and they're afraid that it's teaching their children something that they [parents] don't understand."

Other educators are sympathetic to the claim that media literacy may be a form of indoctrination. In an interview, one teacher explained his perception of this controversy, explaining that people seem to be reluctant to address media literacy because it can be perceived as "an attempt... to suppress certain types of speech and promote other types of speech," when in reality, "it's an attempt to not influence conclusions that might be drawn, but in fact, to influence the ability to comprehend information, assess information, and assess the validity and basis and fact of information."

When educators become fearful of addressing potentially controversial topics, it leaves students on their own to make sense of these issues, which will come up in their lives whether a teacher initiates a conversation on these topics or not. One teacher mentioned that her students are "always googling 'What do I do about the election?'" She laments that children are left on their own with this difficult topic, which they don't have the skills to address critically because "teachers weren't able to talk about it." This educator pointed out, "By not talking about it — because we as adults are not comfortable with it — kids are going to be under-skilled for the actual sensemaking that they are going to be required to do."

In interviews with educators, we found widespread interest in collaboration and learning. Some educators mentioned that conversations around media literacy education are usually "siloed," and stressed the importance of "getting everyone on the same page," which may include family nights, teacher PD, training for administrators, and maybe even a consultant who can help them coordinate, integrate, and apply what they're learning. One teacher suggested a centralized process, expressing that existing bright spots could be inspiring across district lines.

One educator explained how the lack of clarity between educators and parents can interfere with innovation. Another teacher acknowledged that, in her district, there's already an ongoing conversation between educators, school librarians, administrators, and parents concerning the way that their students are using technology in the classroom.

In interviews and in open-ended responses, Massachusetts educators also called for greater advocacy at the policy level to ensure media literacy is recognized as a fundamental educational priority. This includes lobbying for dedicated funding, curriculum mandates, and providing support and resources for teachers in the application process. In Part V, we share insights from educators on key policy options that could be used to advance media literacy in Massachusetts.

PART V

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

In Part V, we identify potential policy actions that, taken together, could ensure that every Massachusetts student gets opportunities both in school and at home to develop the media literacy skills to know how to consume and evaluate information, ask critical questions, avoid manipulation, and engage in digital spaces safely and confidently.

In teacher interviews, the educator survey, and the Delphi Expert Panel Study, and at a face-to-face meeting of the Massachusetts Media Literacy Advisory Council, we inquired about various actions that could be most beneficial to advance media literacy in Massachusetts public schools. In long-form interviews with educators, we asked the following questions:

1

WHAT APPROACHES TO TEACHER PD IN MEDIA LITERACY HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE? HOW IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT USED TO BUILD TEACHER CONFIDENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS?

2

WHAT POLICIES HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN OTHER STATES FOR DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION STATEWIDE, ESPECIALLY NEWS AND INFORMATION LITERACY?

Opportunities to Learn: Teacher Education in Media Literacy

Massachusetts teachers do not feel prepared to teach media literacy. In Massachusetts, some preservice teachers are getting some exposure to media literacy education in teacher education programs through a mix of strategies tailored to their specific teaching context. In some university teacher education programs, there is a limited focus on critical media literacy, which emphasizes activities that involve explorations of media representation that examine power, authority, and social justice (Gambino & Share, 2024). **But educators need exposure to all the "flavors" of media literacy, including information literacy, visual literacy, news literacy, digital literacy, and AI literacy, and this should begin in pre-service teacher education programs.**

In our interviews, many participants talked about the need to gain a deeper understanding of media literacy. For example, one teacher compared media literacy to social and emotional learning, suggesting that if teachers are tasked with learning media literacy to the point of fluency, they could then "model it all the time." Although it may take up to three years for teachers to deeply internalize the pedagogy and practice of media literacy education (Hobbs & Cooper Moore, 2013), researchers have found that even short introductory courses have been shown to enhance teacher confidence and skills (Botturi, 2019).

Still, because educators' comfort with and understanding of media literacy varies, this results in inconsistent implementation. One educator we interviewed explained, "For those of us who have been teaching for more than 15 years, we were not trained to teach in the digital world. AI has added another layer of uncertainty."

Many educators made a point to explain that they did not learn about media literacy as part of their own educational backgrounds.

Another educator recalled her days as a beginning teacher: "We all … had to figure this out on our own." A teacher explained that they didn't feel prepared to teach it because they didn't learn it. Another wished for specialist licensure programs and thought that pre-service educator training should have a stronger focus on media literacy, suggesting that it start at that level because "You can't teach what you don't know."

Structure, Support, and Incentives

Educators identified the need to enhance their own media literacy skills to capably teach these crucial skills to their students, but they require structure, support, and incentives. PD programs—including workshops, seminars, and ongoing online courses—are some of the ways that Massachusetts educators have developed expertise in media literacy. But most report learning on their own, valuing practical application over theory as they seek to implement what they learn as quickly as possible.

Respondents identified several training-related challenges that affect the implementation of media literacy teaching practices in the classroom. There is an uneven distribution of training opportunities across districts or schools, which is then compounded by a lack of time and resources for PD. Teachers noted that they were sometimes introduced to media literacy through a state conference, like Mass-CUE or the Massachusetts School Library Association. But only four of 46 Massachusetts educators interviewed for this study could name any PD programs that offer training in media literacy education. **Participants mentioned the following programs:**

- Summer Institute for Journalism Education, Fitchburg State University
- MediaEd Institute, Media Education Lab
- Summer Institute in Digital Literacy, University of Rhode Island
- iCivics Education Information and Media Literacy Pathway
- News Literacy Educator Certificate, News Literacy Project
- KQED Teach: Media Literacy Self-Paced Online Learning

Some of the educators we interviewed chose to enroll in free PD or self-pay for programs, although others were reimbursed by their school districts. In rare cases, non-profit organizations may even subsidize teachers' PD, as in the News Literacy Project's competitive Fellowship Program. In several states, micro-credentials are being used to supplement teachers' PD on topics identified as priorities by education leaders. Most of these states offer micro-credentials at no cost to educators, or offer a stipend to those who complete one, to encourage participation (DeMonti, 2017). Micro-credentials enable educators to verify competencies that they have gained through prior learning, on-the-job training, or lived experiences. People demonstrate their competence through "learn by doing" type assessments that require them to implement the skill as evidence of competency.

For historically and systematically excluded learners, micro-credentials can broaden opportunities to gain recognition for skills regardless of when, where, and how they were developed.

The State of Alaska offered its first micro-credential via the National Education Association (NEA), which offers the Improving Teaching Practices through Competency-Based Personalized Learning Program (Galindo et al., 2024).

Micro-credentials are more effective when educators are part of a collaborative group or learning community. NEA offers 175 micro-credentials on a wide range of topics. When these resources are combined with an implementation support model that brings educators together in collaborative groups, such as professional learning communities, to focus on common learning goals, micro-credential completion reaches 87% as compared to 53% without support (NEA, 2022).

What Works: Practical Advice for Teachers

In the Delphi Expert Panel Study, media literacy experts and experienced education practitioners generated practical advice to help teachers implement media literacy instruction, and then they rated the relative importance of items. Over two rounds, panel members were asked, "Which of these items of advice should be recommended to K-12 educators regarding teaching media literacy?" They placed items in rank order to represent top recommendations. Figure 13 presents the six suggestions that represent core insights about "what works" to implement media literacy in the classroom, and they are well-supported in the scholarly and professional literature.

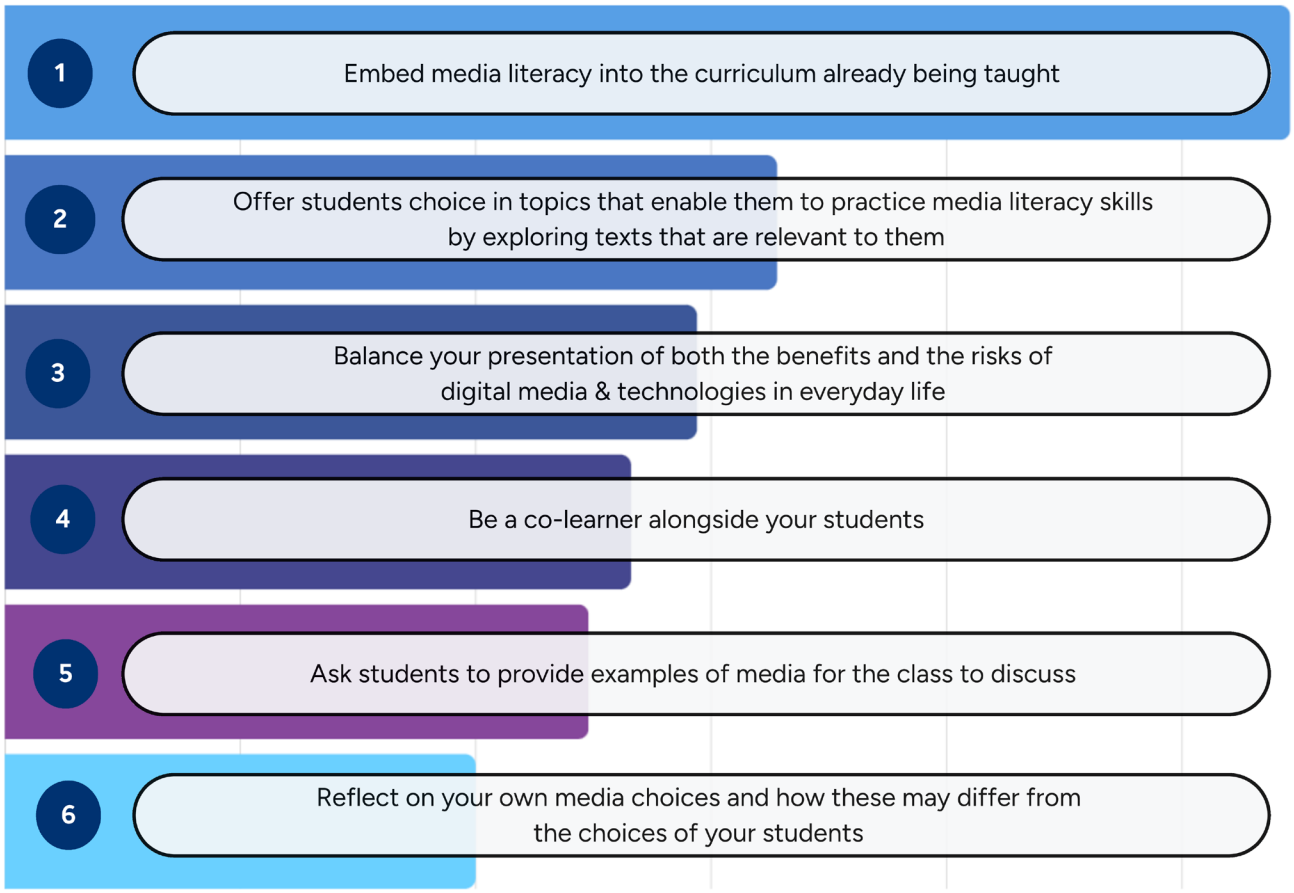


FIGURE 13

Delphi Experts Offer Practical Advice to Educators

Policy Actions Recommended by Delphi Expert Panel Study Members

We also asked Delphi panel members to prioritize policy recommendations over three full rounds of discussion. In Round 1, media literacy experts and experienced education professionals responded to an open-ended question and generated 12 recommendations for actions that could be implemented at the federal, state, or local levels. In Rounds 2 and 3, they used an online dialogue process to add new recommendations, and rate and comment on the actions that were most likely to be effective. The following actions received the highest level of support from panel members.

1. **State Education Department Support**: Active backing by state education departments through mandates, curricula prioritization, and redirecting of resources..
2. **Elementary Media Literacy.** Media literacy lessons and training are provided to elementary school teachers, parents, and community members.
3. **Responsive Curriculum.** Continually updated media examples and artifacts ensure lessons are relevant to students' lived experience.
4. **Media Literacy Coaches**. Specialist staff help educators design, implement, and assess lessons and offer outreach programs to parents and families.
5. **New State Laws.** Enact legislation requiring K-12 schools to provide instruction & training in media literacy.

Media literacy experts and experienced education professionals in the Delphi Expert Panel Study offered explanations for their ratings. Here is a sample of their comments:

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SUPPORT

- "State support and mandates will result in media literacy actually getting taught."
- "It would be helpful if DESE became a strong advocate for K-12 media literacy education and offered support, such as suggestions for lesson plans in different subject areas at different grade levels. I believe it is more likely that DESE would become an advocate if legislation made it clear this is a priority for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

MEDIA LITERACY IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

- "It's imperative that media literacy is embedded within education from the earliest years of school. Critical thinking skills take time to develop and hone and kids are exposed to all sorts of media well before we want to believe they are exposed to those media—they need to know how to review, analyze, and respond and we can't wait until they're teenagers to do that."
- "My vote is for 'the earlier, the better' in terms of media literacy teaching/integration into subjects. Involving community members is also a great way to allow everyone access to the same foundational critical thinking skills."
- "This approach builds relationships in communities, and it should start when children are young, parents are motivated and can build constructive patterns. This type of approach is most likely to be successful and have long-term success and is built on process that can build long-term outcomes that can be measured."

RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM

- "There are dozens and dozens of resources for teaching media literacy. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. Nonetheless, that does not mean there are excellent materials for all subjects at all grade levels. New materials are always needed."
- "Since media literacy materials get dated quickly, it will be important to develop collections of resources that can be crowdsourced for timeliness and easily updated."
- "It can be a burden for teachers to search for excellent, instructional resources appropriate to their teaching situation. DESE could help by providing pointers, such as lists of resources or searchable databases."
- "I do not think it would be helpful to require a particular curriculum."

MEDIA LITERACY COACHES

- "Media literacy coaches to support K-12 teachers and higher ed standards to train teachers pre-service. Vital to meet teachers where they are."
- "A holistic approach that builds relationships in communities is most likely to be successful and have long-term success, as opposed to mandates that may or may not be approved and approaches that rely on funding that may or may not be provided and then may be cut."

NEW STATE LAWS

- "This allows for the training AND, importantly, the funding to be available to make this happen."
- "Critical in providing a mandate for media literacy education. But this will work only if coupled with funding, curriculum and training."

Other Potential Actions

The following actions were proposed but did not receive the highest level of consensus among Delphi panel members, who had doubts about the potential effectiveness of some of these proposed policy actions:

- **Targeted Funding:** State Department of Education provides targeted funding to under-resourced schools to ensure equitable access to high-quality media literacy education.
- **Required Curriculum:** Core instructional practices are identified by subject area and mandated within grade levels and subject areas.
- **Library Staffing:** Funding for a licensed school library teacher is provided in every school.
- **Graduation Requirements:** Mandate students demonstrate media literacy skills and key dispositions before graduation.
- **Higher Education Standards:** Certify or accredit teacher preparation programs and library/media literacy programs in higher education to ensure media literacy is integrated at all levels of training.
- **Required Course:** Require all high school students to take a one-semester class dedicated to the critical analysis of news, information, and persuasion.
- **Parent Education:** Develop initiatives to educate parents about what media literacy is and why it is important.
- **Prize Competitions:** Annual event promotes innovation in media literacy education and increases the visibility of exemplary work in elementary and secondary schools.
- **Subject-Specific Training:** Media literacy PD is offered by organizations to schools with support from charitable and philanthropic funding.
- **Bully Pulpit:** Active support by political leaders and state education departments communicates a clear message that media literacy is a priority for all learners.
- **Annual Requirements:** Require or incentivize regular media literacy training for all educators.

Building On Success

In this report, we found some evidence of the implementation of media literacy instructional practices in Massachusetts K-12 schools. There is widespread consensus among educators and experts about its importance, but no more than a handful of instructional practices are occurring in most classrooms. **There is a vast gap between theory and belief and actual classroom practice. In this report, the following findings are most noteworthy:**

Teachers are Using Some Core Instructional Practices

Three core instructional practices of media literacy are widely implemented in Massachusetts schools, with educators indicating that most or nearly all students get the opportunity to engage in (1) guided reading, viewing, and listening activities, (2) creating media, and (3) conducting an inquiry-driven research project. These activities give students opportunities to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society, and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society.

Media Literacy Competencies are Relevant to All Learners

Massachusetts educators and experts strongly agree that media literacy is not only focused on analyzing and evaluating information. It is a set of transversal competencies that can be used in a wide variety of situations and settings, both in and out of school. Because it includes a strong focus on critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, digital wellness, communication, collaboration, and creativity, it enables learners of all ages to successfully adapt to changes and to lead meaningful and productive lives.

There are Numerous Opportunities to Deepen Curriculum Standards

In Massachusetts State Frameworks, curriculum standards infrastructure is in place to support a robust, high-quality media literacy education in History/Social Science, where news and media literacy are presented as additional learning standards in Grades 9-12. Media literacy is also represented well in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Digital Literacy and Computer Science, and the Art & Communication Services Career Cluster. While media literacy competencies can be inferred from standards in English Language Arts, Arts (Media Arts), Science, Technology, and Engineering, and World Languages, these frameworks will benefit from a more coherent integration of learning outcomes and instructional practices, and some are currently scheduled for revision.

Media Literacy Increases Learner Engagement

Educators and experts believe that media literacy lessons increase learner engagement through lessons that include dialogue and discussion about popular culture and current events. Because it provides creative opportunities for self-expression, educators appreciate how media literacy instructional practices help to ensure that curriculum is relevant and culturally responsive to the lived experience of all learners. They also see the potential of media literacy to deepen student voice and civic advocacy.

Bright Spots Lead the Way

There are noteworthy "bright spots" of effective media literacy in Massachusetts schools, including evidence of strong and successful collaboration between social studies teachers and school librarians.

Addressing Limitations Through Policy

While media literacy is widely valued by Massachusetts educators, significant barriers to implementation exist and action is required to address the following issues:

Teachers Have Insufficient Levels of Understanding and Knowledge

Many Massachusetts K-12 educators have a partial or incomplete understanding of media literacy, and depending on the students they interact with, experts, educators, and practitioners define media literacy differently. Most Massachusetts teachers do not recognize that media literacy encompasses three crosscutting themes:

- Critical thinking about media and technology texts, platforms, systems, and contexts
- Digital wellness, including online safety and media and mental health
- Practical skills in using communication technology and in applying collaborative and creative skills in the domains of school, work, social relationships, and civic life

Although interest in media literacy is high, we found only a handful of Massachusetts teachers and teacher educators with advanced knowledge and expertise in media literacy. Teacher educators do not see media literacy education as a priority in pre-service teacher education at the elementary level. Among teachers, there is low awareness of media literacy's presence in State Curriculum Frameworks, and most are unfamiliar with media literacy curriculum resources or opportunities for professional development.

There is Uneven implementation of Instructional Practices

Only three of 21 key instructional practices of media literacy reach most students in Massachusetts schools, according to educators surveyed. Some of the many under-utilized instructional practices include:

- **Examine the News.** Students assess the quality and credibility of journalism and identify differences between a news story, informed opinion, sponsored content, and entertainment.
- **The Social Responsibilities of Communication.** Students reflect on ethical issues in human communication, observing how online and face-to-face interaction affects social relationships.
- **AI & Algorithmic Personalization.** Students understand that their digital data are a commodity and that algorithms and AI are used to target personalized content to them.

PART VI

A PLAN OF ACTION

In Part VI, we respond to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) request to make policy recommendations based on the Landscape Report's insights that reflect the perspectives of both Massachusetts educators and national media literacy experts and experienced practitioners from across the nation. We offer the following recommendations for strengthening media literacy through state education policy.

Advancing Education through Policy Recommendations

In today's information-saturated society, the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and produce media is fundamental—not optional—for civic readiness. The Bay State is well-positioned to lead this charge. With existing standards, strong educator engagement, and growing public awareness, DESE can catalyze meaningful change through guidance, professional learning, system integration, and strategic investment. Recognizing Massachusetts's tradition of local control, these recommendations are organized by feasibility and potential systemic impact—ranging from immediate, practical steps DESE can take to more ambitious, structural shifts that would establish media literacy as a core component of K-12 education.

Recommendation: Media Literacy Must Be Early, Integrated, and Sustained

Media literacy readiness demands:

- Early exposure to foundational media literacy concepts
- Ongoing development from elementary through secondary grades
- Cross-curricular integration, especially in the subject areas of ELA, history/social science, science, and digital literacy and computer science (DLCS) courses.

This developmental approach would address key root causes — including lack of pre-service teacher training, fragmented leadership, and limited access to PD — while equipping students to responsibly navigate today's complex information landscape and participate meaningfully in civic life.
Here are the current realities in Massachusetts:

- Social studies teachers often see media literacy's role in civics as limited to fact-checking.
- Media literacy is not consistently integrated into school curricula; where it is included, its depth, quality, and emphasis vary widely from classroom to classroom and school to school.

Immediate Opportunities within DESE's Scope

Organized by feasibility, the following recommendations align with DESE's current authority and operational structures:

Most Feasible: Guidance & Support

- **Provide Model Guidance and Resources:** Issue recommendations, revise curriculum frameworks, and instructional resources—including strategies for leveraging school libraries and licensed school library teachers—to help districts integrate media literacy into existing ELA, social studies, and DLCS standards.

- **Facilitate Collaboration:** Establish a statewide media literacy network or regional communities of practice to support educators (Pre-K-12 and Educator Preparation) in sharing best practices, resources, and professional learning opportunities.

- **Emphasize Media Literacy in Existing Initiatives:** Highlight media literacy skills in DESE's communications and existing programs (e.g., civics education, DLCS, and social-emotional learning) and cell phone policies in schools.

- **Encourage Integration into Local District Strategies:** Offer practical strategies on how districts can measure existing levels of instruction in media literacy through surveys and curriculum audits, incorporate media literacy into their existing curriculum review cycles, and create professional development programs that include communities of practice to coordinate action.

Sample Strategy: Provide guidance on media literacy skills guidance tailored to specific content areas by partnering with, and presenting at, DESE's existing content area Leader Networks—such as ELA, history/social science, DLCS, and civics. DESE can develop and share content-specific strategies, sample lessons, and aligned standards to help educators see how media literacy connects to their subject area.

Moderately Feasible: Funding, PD Expansion, and Pilot Programs

- **Support Educator Training and Innovation:** Provide funding for professional development and pilot programs by offering grants, stipends, or other resources that allow educators—including licensed school library teachers—to receive targeted training in media literacy instruction and test innovative approaches in partnership with higher education and community organizations.

- **Expand the Pool of Registered Media Literacy PD Providers:** Encourage and support additional media literacy professional development providers to become preferred vendors through DESE's process. Expanding the pool of approved providers will ensure more accessible, high-quality options for educators to earn professional development points.

Sample Strategy: Develop a short, engaging virtual PD module on core media literacy skills that all educators complete at the start of each school year. This "Media Literacy 101" training would offer universal, cross-disciplinary strategies to help teachers integrate media literacy into any subject area. To encourage broader adoption of media literacy strategies, DESE could also provide priority points to grant applicants who incorporate media literacy into their proposals.

More Challenging: Systemic Changes

- **Develop an Endorsement or Credential for Media Literacy:** Create a pathway for educators—including licensed school library teachers—to receive a media literacy endorsement or integrate it into existing teacher licensure frameworks.

- **Invest in School Librarians as Media Literacy Leaders:** Allocate dedicated resources to support licensed school librarians as central figures in advancing media literacy, positioning them to curate best practices, lead professional development, and serve as ongoing resources for both educators and students.

- **Embed Media Literacy into Statewide Student Assessments:** Use the existing MCAS framework—particularly in ELA, STE, and civics—to identify core competencies that build on current, underutilized standards in the State Curriculum Frameworks. Measured over time, this would provide demonstrated evidence of embedding media literacy across all subject areas as a core component of K–12 education.

- **Develop a Strategic Plan to Integrate Media Literacy Education Statewide:** Develop a long-term, systemic strategy to integrate media literacy across all grade levels and subject areas by embedding it into state learning standards—ensuring it is recognized not as a standalone skill, but as a foundational competency within K–12 education. This plan could include cross-disciplinary curriculum alignment, educator training requirements, and district-level implementation guidance. Include local media literacy curriculum audits; and implement benchmarks using tools like the Media Literacy Implementation Index (MLI).

Sample Strategy: The plan should offer content-specific strategies, sample lessons, instructional videos, and PD opportunities to help educators embed media literacy into daily instruction. These resources should be practical, adaptable by grade level, and include guidance for collaboration with licensed school library teachers to support implementation.

Outline of a Strategic Plan to Integrate Media Literacy Education Statewide

Building a strong media literacy ecosystem requires a phased, strategic approach that raises awareness, expands educator resources, and secures sustainable funding. **Below is a potential roadmap for state action:**

Raise Awareness

GOAL

Raise awareness about the importance of media literacy across Massachusetts by engaging a broad coalition of stakeholders—including educators, policymakers, and families—and building a shared understanding of its role in supporting civic readiness and academic success.

WAYS TO MEASURE

Number and diversity of stakeholders engaged (e.g., educators, licensed school library teachers, policymakers, families), attendance and reach of strategic convenings, media coverage and social media engagement, growth in public support or awareness, identification and mobilization of media literacy champions across regions and sectors.

Increase Resources

GOAL

Build strategic capacity to support media literacy implementation by expanding access to high-quality PD and curating vetted, transparent, and accessible high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). The approach should meet schools and districts where they are, ensuring that integrating media literacy feels manageable and aligned with their existing priorities and instructional practices.

WAYS TO MEASURE

Number and diversity of approved media literacy PD providers, educator participation rates in PD offerings, availability and use of HQIM aligned with media literacy, educator feedback on ease of implementation and relevance of materials, and growth in the number of districts making explicit policy or practice commitments to incorporating media literacy into instruction.

Fund Sustainably

GOAL

Ensure long-term sustainability of media literacy by securing ongoing funding and embedding it into state and district education policies. This includes incentivizing educator participation in professional development, funding pilot programs to identify best practices, and integrating media literacy into statewide policy frameworks and district improvement plans to support scaled, systemic, lasting change.

WAYS TO MEASURE

Amount and consistency of state or philanthropic funding allocated to media literacy initiatives, number of grants awarded for media literacy programs, educator participation rates in incentivized PD programs, inclusion of media literacy in DESE policy guidance and district improvement plans, adoption of media literacy benchmarks or goals at the district level, evidence of sustained implementation beyond initial pilot or grant funding periods.

CONCLUSION

Massachusetts educators are already implementing media literacy in some classrooms, and they are ready, willing, and eager to make media literacy education a priority, but guidance and leadership from DESE will amplify and extend opportunities for innovation, coalition building, and sustained action. With the growing influence of media in society, DESE should take steps to address the recommendations in this report to build a comprehensive foundation to ensure that all students statewide receive high-quality instruction in media literacy in every class, at each grade in K-12, and in every discipline. To ensure that every student is equipped to thrive in a fast-changing digital society, media literacy education must move from the margins to the mainstream of K-12 education. The time for action is now.

PART VII

REFERENCES

Agrawal, A., Gans, J., & Goldfarb, A. (2022). *Prediction machines, updated and expanded: The simple economics of artificial intelligence*. Harvard Business Press.

Albert, D. J. (2016). An interview with Richard Burrows about the Media Arts Standards: A pathway to expression and knowing the world. *Arts Education Policy Review,* 117(3), 146–152. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2016.1187935

AlGerafi, M. A., Zhou, Y., Oubibi, M., & Wijaya, T. T. (2023). Unlocking the potential: A comprehensive evaluation of augmented reality and virtual reality in education. *Electronics*, 12(18), 3953. https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics12183953https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics12183953

Allen, J. K., Griffin, R. A., & Mindrila, D. (2022). Discerning (dis)information: Teacher perceptions of critical media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education,* 14(3), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-202214-3-1–https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-202214-3-1

Allen, L. K., & Kendeou, P. (2024). ED-AI lit: An interdisciplinary framework for AI literacy in education. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences,* 11(1), 3–10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322231220339

American Library Association Institutional Repository (2024). Coalition letter regarding e-rate support for Wi-Fi hot spots for remote learning, addressing the homework gap through the e-rate program, WC Docket No. 21–31. https://alair.ala.org/items/8d722701-ee44-406b-816f-29880770985c

Anderson, J., & Winthrop, R. (2025). *The disengaged teen: Helping kids learn better, feel better, and live better.* Crown.

Arendt, F. (2013). Dose-dependent media priming effects of stereotypic newspaper articles on implicit and explicit stereotypes. *Journal of Communication*, 63(5), 830–851.

Ashley, S. (2019). *News literacy and democracy*. Taylor & Francis.

Association for Career and Technical Education (2025). State Fact Sheets. https://www.acteonline.org/state-fact-sheets

Aufderheide, P., & Firestone, C. (1993). Media literacy: A report of the national leadership conference on media literacy. The Aspen Institute.

Avinç, E., & Doğan, F. (2024). Digital literacy scale: Validity and reliability study with the Rasch model. *Education and information Technologies*, 1-47. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12662-7

Ballotpedia (2025, May 22). Donald Trumps' Executive Orders and Actions, 2025. https://ballotpedia.org/Donald_Trump%27s_executive_orders_and_actions,_2025

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., &

Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(2), 364–374. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.364

Bardini, T. (ND). When the map becomes the territory: Korzybski and cyberculture. Unpublished manuscript. https://lchcautobio.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Ch-15-Bardini-when-the-map-becomes-the-territory.pdf

Baskara, F. (2025). Conceptualizing digital literacy for the AI era: A framework for preparing students in an AI-driven world. *Data and Metadata*, 4, 530. https://doi.org/10.56294/dm2025530

Bateman, J., & Jackson, D. (2024). Countering disinformation: An evidence based Guidepolicy guide. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/countering-disinformation-effectively-an-evidence-based-policy-guide?lang=en

Bickham, D., Moukalled, S., Inyart H., & Zlokower, R. (2021). Evaluating a middle-school digital citizenship curriculum (Screenshots): Quasi-experimental study. *JMIR Mental Health*8(9):e26197 doi: https://mental.jmir.org/2021/9/e26197

Botturi, L. (2019). Digital and media literacy in pre-service teacher education: A case study from Switzerland. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, *14*(3–4), 147–163.

Bray, A., Devitt, A., Banks, J., Sanchez Fuentes, S., Sandoval, M., Riviou, K.,... & Terrenzio, S. (2024). What next for Universal Design for Learning? A systematic literature review of technology in UDL implementations at second level. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *55*(1), 113–138.

Breakstone, J., Smith, M., Wineburg, S., Rapaport, A., Carle, J., Garland, M., & Saavedra, A. (2021). Students' civic online reasoning: A national portrait. *Educational Researcher*, 50(8), 505–515. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211017495

Bruner, L., & Hutchison, A. (2023). Rethinking text features in the digital age: Teaching elementary students to navigate digital stories, websites, and videos. *The Reading Teacher*, 76(6), 747–756. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2197

Buckingham, D. (2013). *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. John Wiley & Sons.

Buckingham, D. (2016). The travesty of theory. https://davidbuckingham.net/2016/03/19/teaching-media-studies-the-travesty-of-theory

Bulger, M., & Davison, P. (2018). The promises, challenges, and futures of media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 10(1), 1–21.

Burchard, M. S., Konopasek, L., Layman, B., Myers, S., & Poston, L. (2020). Who is my friend? Resources for teaching media literacy in Education.special education Messiah University.

Burns, T., & Gottschalk, F. (2019). Educating 21st Childrencentury children: Emotional well-being in the Agedigital age. Educational Research and Innovation. OECD, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/b7f33425-en

Cain, V. (2024). *Schools and screens: A watchful history*. MIT Press.

Callahan, M. (2025, May 2). Massachusetts could see drastic, cascading economic downturn from new trump policies, BU study finds. Boston University. https://www.bu.edu/articles/2025/massachusetts-economic-downturn-from-new-policies/

Cappello, G. (2017). Literacy, media literacy and social change. Where do we go from now? *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 9/1), 31-44. DOI. 10.14658/PUPJ-IJSE-2017-1-3 (–https://doi.org/10.14658/PUPJ-IJSE-2017-1-3

Carver, R. B., Wiese, E. F., & Breivik, J. (2013). Frame analysis in science education: A classroom activity for promoting media literacy and learning about genetic causation. *International Journal of Science Education*, 4(3), 211–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/21548455.2013.797128

Caulfield, M., & Wineburg, S. (2023). *Verified: How to think straight, get duped less, and make better decisions about what to believe online.* University of Chicago Press.

Center for Humane Technology (2021). The attention economy. https://www.humanetech.com/youth/the-attention-economy

Cherkin, E. (2024). *The screentime solution: A judgment-free guide to becoming a tech-intentional family.* Greenleaf Books.

Chik, A., Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2015). Popular culture, digital worlds and second language learners. In A. Chik (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies* (pp. 339–353). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315717647-28

Chin, H., Song, H., Baek, G., Shin, M., Jung, C., Cha, M., Choi, J., & Cha, C. (2023). The potential of chatbots for emotional support and promoting mental well-being in different cultures: mixed methods study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e51712. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2196/51712

Cho, H., Carpenter, C. J., & Li, W. (2025). Media literacy interventions: Meta-analytic review of 40 years of research. *Human Communication Research*, 51(2), 57–79. https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqaf004

Christakis, D. A., & Hale, L. (2025). *Handbook of children and screens: Digital media, development, and well-being from birth through adolescence*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69362-5

CivxNow (2024). Civics funding holds strong in a tough fiscal environment. https://civxnow.org/fiscal-environment

Coiro, J. (2021). Toward a multifaceted heuristic of digital reading to inform assessment, research, practice, and policy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 9–31.

Common Core Standards (2010). The Core Standards. ELA Literacy, Grades 9–10. https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10

Common Sense Media (2024). The dawn of the AI era: Teens, parents and the adoption of generative AI at home and school. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-dawn-of-the-ai-era-teens-parents-and-the-adoption-of-generative-ai-at-home-and-school

Conner, J., Mitra, D. L., Holquist, S. E., & Boat, A. (2024). How teachers' student voice practices affect student engagement and achievement: Exploring choice, receptivity, and responsiveness to student voice as moderators. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1–30.

Coopilton, M., Tynes, B. M., Gibson, S. M., Kahne, J., English, D., & Nazario, K. (2023). Adolescents' analyses of digital media related to race and racism in the 2020 US Election: An assessment of their needs and skills. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *705*(1), 208-230.

Cowan, J., Goldhaber, D., Jin, Z,. & Theobald, R. (2020). Teacher licensure tests: Barrier or Tool?CALDER Working Paper No. 245-1020. https://caldercenter.org/publications/teacher-licensure-tests-barrier-or-predictive-tool

Dalton, B. (2012). Multimodal composition and the Common Core State Standards. *The Reading Teacher*, *66*(4), 333–339.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher Development.professional development Learning Policy Institute. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606743.pdf

Davis, K. (2023). *Technology's child: Digital media's role in the ages and stages of growing up*. MIT Press.

Day, T. (2023). A preliminary investigation of fake peer-reviewed citations and references generated by ChatGPT. *The Professional Geographer*, 75(6), 1024–1027. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2023.2190373

Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* The New Press.

DeMonti, (2017). Microcredentials for teachers. American Institutes for Research. https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Micro-Creditials-for-Teachers-September-2017.pdf

Denee, R., Lindsay, G., & Probine, S. (2024). Visual arts self-efficacy: Impacts and supports for early childhood teachers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 52(6), 1035–1045.

Devagiri, J. S., Paheding, S., Niyaz, Q., Yang, X., & Smith, S. (2022). Augmented reality and artificial intelligence in industry: Trends, tools, and future challenges. *Expert Systems with Applications,* 207, 118002. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2022.118002https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2022.118002

Dewey, J. (1937). Education and social change. *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* (1915–1955), 23(6), 472–474.

DiGiacomo, D., Muetterties, C., & Taylor, C. (2023). Insights on information literacy from social studies classrooms in the southeast. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 56(1), 56–71. https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/15391523.2023.2264965

DiGiacomo, D. K., Hodgin, E., Kahne, J., Alkam, S., & Taylor, C. (2023). Assessing the state of media literacy policy in U.S. K-12 schools. *Journal of Children and Media*, 17(3), 336–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2023.2201890

DiResta, R. (2024). *Invisible rulers: The people who turn lies into reality.* Hachette UK.

Dodel, M., & Mesch, G. (2018). Inequality in digital skills and the adoption of online safety behaviors. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(5,) 712–728DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2018.1428652. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1428652Donnelly D. (2014). Using feature film in the teaching of history: The practitioner decision making dynamic. *Journal of International Social Studies*, 4(1), 17–27.

Durlak, J. A., Mahoney, J. L., & Boyle, A. E. (2022). What we know, and what we need to find out about universal, school-based social and emotional learning programs for children and adolescents: A review of meta-analyses and directions for future research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 148(11–12), 765.

Engstrom, E., & Beliveau, R. (2021). *Gramsci and media literacy: Critically thinking about TV and the movies*. Rowman & Littlefield.European Commission (2020a, December). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Democracy Action Plan. Brussels. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0790

European Commission (2020, September). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027. Resetting education and training for the digital age. Brussels. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0624

Evans-Romaine, K., & Klimanova, L. (2023). Introduction to the special issue: Issues of teaching media literacy in Russian language education. *Russian Language Journal,* 73(2), 2.

Fahy, E. (2023). Teacher perspectives on an arts initiative in schools: "Filling the pail or lighting the fire?" *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *7*(1), 100390.

Faverio, M., Anderson, M., & Park, E. (2025, April 22). Teens, social media and mental health. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/22/teens-social-media-and-mental-health

Ferguson, G. M., Gardner, J. M. M., Nelson, M. R., Giray, C., Sundaram, H., Fiese, B. H.,… & Powell, R. (2021). Food-focused media literacy for remotely acculturating adolescents and mothers: A randomized controlled trial of the "JUS Media? Programme." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *69*(6), 1013–1023.

Festa, K. (2017). The book trailer project: Media production within an integrated classroom. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *9*(2), 105–113.

Firch, M. (2024, February 23). Nine common types of malware and how to prevent them. Purple Sec. https://purplesec.us/learn/common-malware-types

Fleming, D. (2019). Fear of persuasion in the English arts.Language Arts *College English*, *81*(6), 508–541.

Floridi, L. (2024). On the future of content in the age of artificial intelligence: Some implications and directions. *Philosophy & Technology*, 37(3), 112. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-024-00806-z

Flynn, M. (2024). How ChatGPT will [insert hyperbolic cliché here] the [insert industry here]: Creating media literacy infographics about generative AI. *Communication Teacher,* 39(1), 42–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2024.2392764

Foster, B., Mihailidis, P., Johnson, P. R., Burth, S., Tully, M., Ramasubramanian, S., & Riewestahl, E. (2024). Designing equitable media literacy interventions for critical youth agency. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 14(4), 462–476.

Foster, J., Zeitz, M., Manzi, L. & Petty, D. (2022). 2022 Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Curriculum Guide. STEM Learning Design. https://stemlearningdesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2022-DLCS-curriculum-guide.pdf

Fredrick, J. W., & Becker, S. P. (2023). Cognitive disengagement syndrome (sluggish cognitive tempo) and social withdrawal: Advancing a conceptual model to guide future research. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 27(1), 38–45.

Friesem, Y. (2017). Beyond accessibility: How media literacy education addresses issues of disabilities. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *9*(2), 1–16.

Galindo, M., Fennelly-Atkinson, R., Franklin, K., Luna, C. (2024, August). The role of micro-credentials in lifelong learning and development: Empowering learners, empowering organizations. Digital Promise. https://digitalpromise.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a0742249-256a-479c-92dd-fd9d0784f4f5/content

Gambino, A., & Share, J. (2024). Emboldening democratic pedagogies about media and justice through critical media literacy and peer teaching. In S. Ramasubramanian & O. Banjo (Eds.)., *The Oxford Handbook of Media and Social Justice* (pp. 248–258). Oxford University Press.

Garcia, A., McGrew, S., Mirra, N., Tynes, B., & Kahne, J. (2021). Rethinking digital citizenship: Learning about media, literacy, and race in turbulent times. In C. D. Lee, G. White, & D. Dong (Eds.), *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse* (pp. 221–254). National Academy of Education.

Garcia, A., & Morrell, E. (2022). *Tuned-in teaching: Centering youth culture for an active and just classroom.* Heinemann.

Garcia, R. M., & DeFeo, D. J. (2014). Finding your "Spanish voice" through popular media: Improving students' confidence and fluency. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 14(3), 110–131.

Good, K. D., & Ciccone, M. (2025). Media quiteracy: Why digital disconnection belongs in the media literacy curriculum. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *17*(1), 150–165.

Gooding Jr, F. (2024). *Race and Media Literacy, Explained (or Why Does the Black Guy Die First?)*. Teachers College Press.

Gordon, C., Ferber, K., Notley, T., Rodgers, R., Bradshaw, E. L., Basarkod, G.,... & Dicke, T. (2025). The relationship between media literacy and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Preprint. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/8m5c9_v2

Gordon C., Jarman H., Rodgers, R., McLean, S., Slater, A., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., & Paxton S. (2021). Outcomes of a cluster randomized controlled trial of the SOME social media literacy program for improving body image–related outcomes in adolescent boys and girls. *Nutrients* 27, 13(11):, 3825. doi: 10.3390/nu13113825.https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13113825

Gould, H., von Gillern, S., Korona, M., & Haywood, A. (2024). ELA and social studies teachers' perspectives on the importance of media literacy for student learning. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 16(3), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2024-16-3-4

Gourley, C. (2022). Learning to read movies: Integrating National Film Study standards in the classroom. In T. L. Lynch (Ed.), *Bringing Critical Media Literacy into ELA Classrooms. Special Issues, Volume 2.* (pp. 113–119) National Council of Teachers of English.

Grose, J. (2024, April 10). Get tech out of the classroom before it's too late. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/10/opinion/schools-technology.html

Habermas, J. (2022). Reflections and hypotheses on a further structural transformation of the political public sphere. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 39(4):, 145–171. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221112341

Haidt, J. (2024). *The anxious generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness*. Penguin.

Hall, S. (2000). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall (Ed),. *Media studies: A reader*, 2,(pp. 51–61.) Routledge.

Hatfield, M. (2024, June 12). 72% of high school teachers say cellphone distraction is a major problem in the classroom. Pew Research Center.

Haywood, A., & Sembiante, S. (2023). Media literacy education for parents: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 15(3), 79-92. https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-202315-3-7

Healy, S. (2022, December 23). New funding for civics. https://civxnow.org/new-funding

Heitmayer, M. (2025). The second wave of attention economics: Attention as a universal symbolic currency on social media and beyond. *Interacting with Computers*, 37(1), 18 – 29. https://doi.org/10.1093/iwc/iwae035

Helsper, E. J. (2024). Digital skills among youth: A dataset from a three-wave longitudinal survey in six European countries. *Data in Brief*, 54, 110396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2024.110396

Henderson, P., Li, X., Jurafsky, D., Hashimoto, T., Lemley, M. A., & Liang, P. (2023). Foundation models and Questionscopyright questions. https://hai.stanford.edu/policy/policy-brief-foundation-models-and-copyright-questions

Henry, M. (2024). Using short film to develop children's moving image literacy. In M. Leask & S. Younie (Eds),. *Teaching and Learning with Technologies in the Primary School* (pp. 117–128). Routledge.

Herdzina, J., & Lauricella, A. R. (2020). Media literacy in early childhood report. Erickson Institute Technology in Early Childhood Center, Chicago. https://mediaparents.eu/media/com_form2content/documents/c3/a471/f96/TEC-MediaLiteracy-Report.pdf

Hobbs, R. (2025). *Media literacy in action: Questioning the media*. 2nd edition. Rowman & Littlefield.

Hobbs, R. (2020). *Mind over media: Propaganda education for a digital age*. W.W. Norton.

Hobbs, R. (2017). Approaches to teacher professional development in digital media literacy education In B. De Abreu, P. Mihailidis, A. Lee, J. Melki & J. McDougall (Eds). *International Handbook of Media Literacy Education* (pp. 88 – 113). New York: Routledge.

Hobbs, R. (2010). Digital and media literacy: A plan of action. A white paper on the digital and media literacy recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. Aspen Institute.

Hobbs, R. (1998a). The seven great debates in the media literacy movement. *Journal of Communication,* 48(2), 9–29.

Hobbs, R. (1998b). Media literacy in Massachusetts. In A. Hart (Ed.), *Teaching the Media: International perspectives* (pp. 127 – 144). Mahwah, N.J: Erlbaum Associates.

Hobbs, R., & Moore, D. C. (2013). *Discovering media literacy: Teaching digital media and popular culture in elementary school*. Corwin Press.

Hobbs, R., Deslauriers, L., & Steager, P. (2019). *The library screen scene: Film and media literacy in schools, colleges, and communities*. Oxford University Press.

Hobbs, R., Donnelly, K., Friesem, Y. & Moen, M. (2013). Learning to engage: How positive attitudes about the news, media literacy, and video production contribute to adolescent civic engagement, *Educational Media International*, 504, 231-246, DOI: 10.1080/09523987.2013.862364()–. https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2013.862364

Hobbs, R., & Frost, R. (2003). Measuring the acquisition of media-literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 38(3), 330–355. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.38.3.2

Hobbs, R., He, H., & Robbgrieco, M. (2015). Seeing, believing, and learning to be skeptical: Supporting language learning through advertising analysis activities. *TESOL Journal*, 6(3), 447-475.

Hobbs, R., & Jensen, A. (2009). The past, present, and future of media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 1(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.23860/jmle-1-1-1

Hobbs, R., Moen, M., Tang, R., & Steager, P. (2022a). Measuring the implementation of media literacy statewide: A validation study. *Educational Media International*, 59(3), 189–208. https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09523987.2022.2136083

Hobbs, R., Moen, M., Tang, R., & Steager, P. (2022b). Measuring the implementation of media literacy instructional practices in schools: Community stakeholder perspectives. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 49(2), 170–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2151621

Hobbs, R., Morris, C., Steager, P., & Jean, Y. (2025). How informal online media literacy education for adults advances active listening and intellectual humility. American Education Research Association, Denver, CO. https://aera25-aera.ipostersessions.com/default.aspx?s=85-AA-15-20-82-7B-5D-E2-EA-64-C6-4D-F3-53-7C-6C

Hobbs, R., & Tuzel, S. (2017). Teacher motivations for digital and media literacy: An examination of Turkish educators. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 48(1), 7–22.

Holochwost, S. J., Wolf, D. P., & Brown, E. D. (2024). Addressing inequity in arts education: The potential of a systems perspective. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 126(2), 65–81. https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10632913.2024.2332779https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10632913.2024.2332779

Housen, A. (2007). Highlights of findings—San Diego: Aesthetic Development and Creative and Critical Thinking Skills Study. https://vtshome.org/research

Hsu, T. (2022, October 22). When teens find misinformation, these teachers are ready. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/08/technology/misinformation-students-media-literacy.html

Huffaker, C. (2024, May 28). More students return to classes: Absenteeism drops from pandemic peak. *Boston Globe*.

Institute for Citizens & Scholars (2024). The civic outlook of youth in America. https://citizensandscholars.org/research

Janks, H. (2009). *Literacy and power*. Routledge.

Jarman, R., & McClune, B. (2010). Developing students' ability to engage critically with science in the news: Identifying elements of the "media awareness" dimension. *The Curriculum Journal*, *21*(1), 47–64.

Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., & Robison, A. (2009). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. The MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/8435.001.0001

Jones, L. M., Mitchell, K. J., & Beseler, C. L. (2024). The impact of youth digital citizenship education: Insights from a cluster randomized controlled trial outcome evaluation of the Be Internet Awesome (BIA) curriculum. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 28, 509–523. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-023-00465-5

Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2017). Educating for democracy in a partisan age: Confronting the challenges of motivated reasoning and misinformation. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 3–34.

Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2019). Can media literacy education increase digital engagement in politics? *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44(2), 211–224.

Kahne, J., Bowyer, B., Marshall, J., & Hodgin, E. (2022). Is responsiveness to student voice related to academic outcomes? Strengthening the rationale for student voice in school reform. *American Journal of Education*, 128(3), 389–415.

Kahne, J., Lee, N. J., & Feezell, J. T. (2012). Digital media literacy education and online civic and political participation. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 24.

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2008). Critical media education, radical democracy and the reconstruction of education. *Educação & Sociedade*, 29, 687–715.

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004404533

Khodyakov, D., Grant, S., Kroger, J., & Bauman, M. (2023). RAND methodological guidance for conducting and critically appraising Delphi panels. RAND.

Kiesa, A., Booth, R. B., Hayat, N., Medina, A., & Kawashima-Ginsberg, K. (2022). CIRCLE Votersgrowing voters: Building institutions and community ecosystems for equitable Participationelection participation. Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. https://circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters

Krutka, D. G., Heath, M. K., & Mason, L. E. (2020). Technology won't save us: A call for technoskepticism in social studies (Editorial). *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 20(1), 108–120.

Krutka, D. G., Heath, M. K., & Smits, R. M. (2022). Toward a civics of technology. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *30*(2), 229–237.

Krutka, D. G., Manca, S., Galvin, S. M., Greenhow, C., Koehler, M. J., & Askari, E. (2019). Teaching "against" social media: Confronting problems of profit in the curriculum. *Teachers College Record*, 121(14), 1–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811912101410

Korona, M. (2020). Evaluating online information: Attitudes and practices of secondary English Language Arts teachers. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 12(1), 42–56.

Korona, M., & Hutchison, A. (2023). Integrating media literacy across the content areas. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 58(4), 601–623.

Kozyreva, A., Wineburg, S., Lewandowsky, S., & Hertwig, R. (2023). Critical ignoring as a core competence for digital citizens. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 32(1), 81–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214221121570

Kung, F.-W. (2016). Facilitating learners' second language communicative competence through the development of media literacy: A conversation analytic approach. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(2), 337–346. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-015-0268-8

Kurz, M., Rosendahl, J., Rodeck, J., Muehleck, J., Berger, U. (2022). School-based interventions improve body image and media literacy in youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Prevention* 43(1):5-23. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-021-00660-1

van Laar, E., van Deursen, A. J. A. M., Helsper, E. J., & Schneider, L. S. (2025). Developing performance tests to measure digital skills: Lessons learned from a cross-national perspective. *Media and Communication*, 13. https:// doi.org/10.17645/mac.8988

Lacourt, A. (2024). Media literacy and the empowerment of users. IRIS. European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe), Strasbourg, France. https://rm.coe.int/iris-2024-2-media-literacy/1680b06196

Lauricella, A. R., Herdzina, J., & Robb, M. (2020). Early childhood educators' teaching of digital citizenship competencies. *Computers & Education*, 158, 103989.

Lauricella, A. R., & Jacobson, M. (2022). iPads in first grade classrooms: Teachers' intentions and the realities of use. *Computers and Education Open*, 3, 100077.

Lemley, M. A. (2024). How generative AI turns copyright upside down. *Science and Technology Law Review*, 25(Spring), 21–44.

Lenhoff, S. W., & Singer, J. (2025). *Rethinking chronic absenteeism: Why schools can't solve it alone*. Harvard Education Press.

Lippmann, W. (2018). *Public opinion*. Random House. (Original work published 1922)

Lin, L. C., Chang, F. C., Huang, T. F., Chen, T. Y., Chiu, C. H., Chen, P. H.,... & Chen, H. C. (2024). Effects of media literacy intervention on weight-control products digital marketing targeting adolescents. *Behavioral Sciences*, *14*(11), 1023.

Livingstone, S. (2022). Media literacy policy–an: A umbrella concept for multiple realities. In Y. Friesem (Ed),. *The Routledge Handbook of Media Education Futures Post-Pandemic*. Routledge.

Livingstone, S., Burton, P., Cabello, P., Helsper, E., Kanchev, P., Kardefelt-Winther, D.,... & Yu, S. H. (2021). Media and information literacy among children on three continents: Insights into the measurement and mediation of well-being. In *MIL Cities and MIL Citizens: Informed, Engaged, Empowered by Media and Information Literacy*. Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios-UNIMINUTO. https://hdl.handle.net/10656/14314

Lotz, A. D. (2021). *Media disrupted: Surviving pirates, cannibals, and streaming wars.* MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13868.001.0001https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13868.001.0001

MacDougall, R., & Ruediger, D. (2023, January 26). *Teaching with Streaming Video: Understanding Instructional Practices, Challenges, and Support Needs*. Ithaka S+R. https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.318216

Macgilchrist, F. (2021). What is "critical" in critical studies of edtech? Three responses. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 46(3), 243–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2021.1958843

Maksl, A., Ashley, S., & Craft, S. (2015). Measuring news media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education,* 6(3), 29–45.

Manca, S., Bocconi, S., & Gleason, B. (2021). "Think globally, act locally": A glocal approach to the development of social media literacy. *Computers & Education*, 160. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.104025

Martens, H., & Hobbs, R. (2015). How media literacy supports civic engagement in a digital age. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, *23*(2), 120–137.

Massachusetts Attorney General (2025a). Cell Phones and Social Media in Schools: A Toolkit for School Leaders and Communities. https://www.mass.gov/doc/cell-phones-and-social-media-in-schoolsa-toolkit-for-school-leaders-and-communities-1232025/download

Massachusetts Attorney General (2025b). The STUDY Act. https://www.mass.gov/doc/study-act-one-pager/download

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (2022). Book challenges up nationwide and in Massachusetts libraries. MBLC Blog. https://mblc.state.ma.us/mblc_blog/2022/11/01/book-challenges-up-nationwide-and-in-massachusetts-libraries/#:~:text=The%20response:,2021%20to%2078%20in%202022.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2024). Integrating Artificial Intelligence. Task Force Report. https://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/integrating-artificial-intelligence.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2024). Career Technical Education. https://macte.ns4ed.com/

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2023). Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2021). Civics Project Guidebook. https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/hss/civics/default.html

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2021). World Languages Framework. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019). Arts Framework. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2018). History and Social Science Framework. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/2018-12.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2017). Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2017). Quick Reference Guide: Text Complexity and the Growth of Reading Comprehension. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06QRG-ReadingComp.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016). Digital Literacy and Computer Science Framework. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/dlcs.pdf

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016). Science and Technology Engineering Framework. https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/scitech/2016-04.pdf

Mass General Brigham McLean (2025, May 25). The Mental Health Impact of Bullying on Kids and Teens. Putting People First in Mental Health. https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/bullying-kids-teens

Mass.Gov (2025, May 15). Governor Healey posts new public dashboard displaying direct funding cuts to Massachusetts state agencies by Trump administration. https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-posts-new-public-dashboard-displaying-direct-funding-cuts-to-massachusetts-state-agencies-by-trump-administration

Masyada, S. S., & Washington, E. Y. (2016). Civil liberties, media literacy, and civic education in the post-9/11 era. In W. Journell (Ed.), *Reassessing the social studies curriculum: Promoting critical civic engagement in a politically polarized, post-9/11 world* (pp. 83–94). Rowman & Littlefield.

Matz, S. C., Teeny, J. D., Vaid, S. S., Peters, H., Harari, G. M., & Cerf, M. (2024). The potential of generative AI for personalized persuasion at scale. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 4692. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-53755-0https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-53755-0

Mazur, R., & Woodland, R. H. (2018). A fringe topic in a fragile network: How digital literacy and computer science instruction is supported (or not) by teacher ties. A*CM Transactions on Computing Education* (TOCE), 18(4), 1–20.

McCormack, J., Gifford, T., & Hutchings, P. (2019, April). Autonomy, authenticity, authorship and intention in computer generated art. In C. Johnson S, Rebelo & I. Santos (Eds.), *International conference on computational intelligence in music, sound, art and design* (pp. 35–50). Springer.

Media Education Lab (2023a, August). Media literacy in Maynard, Massachusetts: A Community survey. https://mediaeducationlab.com/sites/default/files/Maynard%20ML%20Report%20%282%29.pdf

Media Education Lab (2023b). Courageous Conversations Topics. https://www.courageousri.com/topics

Media Literacy Now (2024). U.S. Media Literacy Policy Report. https://medialiteracynow.org/document/u-s-media-literacy-policy-report-2023

Media Literacy Now (2023, September). Learning to Find Trustworthy Scientific Information. https://medialiteracynow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Learning-to-Find-Trustworthy-Scientific-Information.pdf

Mello, J. (2025, March 26). Screen time of Americans above global average. *Tech News World*. https://www.technewsworld.com/story/screen-time-of-americans-above-global-average-study-179667.html

Mensonides, D., Smit, A., Talsma, I., Swart, J., & Broersma, M. (2024). Digital literacies as socially situated pedagogical processes: Genealogically understanding media, information, and digital literacies. *Media and Communication*, 12, 8174.

Metzger, M. J., Flanagin, A. J., & Medders, R. B. (2010). Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online. *Journal of Communication*, 60(3), 413–439. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01488.x

Meyers, S., & Frenkel, S. (2023, June 19). GOP targets researchers who study disinformation ahead of 2024 election. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/19/technology/gop-disinformation-researchers-2024-election.html

Meyrer, K. P., & Frank Kersch, D. (2022). Can high school students check the veracity of information about COVID-19? A case study on critical media literacy in Brazilian ESL classes. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 14(1), 14–28.

Mihailidis, P., Foster, B., Burth, S., Ramasubramanian, S., Tully, M., & Johnson, P. (2025). Centering relation in media literacy practice. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *17*(1), 134–149.

Mihailidis, P., Shresthova, S., & Fromm, M. (Eds.). (2021). *Transformative media pedagogies*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003031246

Miles, J., Compton, A., & Herold, E. (2024). Crash Course in the classroom: Exploring how and why social studies teachers use YouTube videos. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *48*(3), 190-203. https://doi.org/10.1177/23522798241238666

Miller, C. A. (2008). Civic epistemologies: Constituting knowledge and order in political communities. *Sociology Compass*, 2(6), 1896–1919. https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00175.xMills, K. A. (2010). A review of the "digital turn" in the new literacy studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 246–271. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310364401

Moje, E. B., Afflerbach, P. P., Enciso, P., Lesaux, N. K., & Kwok, M. (2020). *Handbook of Reading Research,* Vol. *V*. Routledge.

Møller, L. A. (2022). Between personal and public interest: How algorithmic news recommendation reconciles with journalism as an ideology. *Digital Journalism*, *10*(10), 1794–1812.

Napoli, P. M. (2012). Audience evolution and the future of audience research. International *Journal on Media Management*, 14(2), 79–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2012.675753

National Association for Media Literacy Education (2023). Core principles of media Educationliteracy education. https://namle.org/resources/core-principles

National Center for Education Statistics (2024a). Condition of education, 2024. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2024/tob_508c.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2024b). Fast facts: School dropouts. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16

News Literacy Project. (2024a). News literacy in America: A survey of teen information attitudes, habits and skills. https://newslit.org/wp-content/ uploads/2024/10/NLP-TeenSurvey-Report-2024.pdf

News Literacy Project (2024b). Levels of scientific evidence. https://newslit.org/educators/resources/levels-of-scientific-evidence

News Literacy Project (2024c). Framework for Teaching News Literacy. https://newslit.org/educators/resources/framework-for-teaching-news-literacy/

Ng, D. T. K., Leung, J. K. L., Chu, S. K. W., & Qiao, M. S. (2021). Conceptualizing AI literacy: An exploratory review. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, *2*, 100041.

Ni, L., Bausch, G., & Benjamin, R. (2021). Computer science teacher professional development and professional learning communities: a review of the research literature. *Computer Science Education*, 33(1), 29–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/08993408.2021.1993666

Nichols, T. P., & LeBlanc, R. J. (2021). Media education and the limits of "literacy": Ecological orientations to performative platforms. *Curriculum inquiry*, *51*(4), 389–412.

Nitkin, D., & Wood, J. (2022). Conversations with kids: Insights from a year of listening. Transcend. https://transcendeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Conversations-with-Kids-June-2022.pdf

Nolan, S. (2023). Visual thinking strategies as a pedagogical tool: Initial expectations, applications, and perspectives in Denmark. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 42(3,) 210–227, DOI: 10.1080/1051144X.2023.2261222.https://doi.org/10.1080/1051144X.2023.2261222

Notley, T., Chambers, S., Park, S., & Dezuanni, M. (2024). Adult media literacy in 2024: Australian attitudes, experiences and needs. Research Report, Western Sydney University.

Panchal, N., & Zitter, S. (2025). A look at state efforts to ban cellphones in schools and implications for youth mental health. Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/a-look-at-state-efforts-to-ban-cellphones-in-schools-and-implications-for-youth-mental-health

Pew Research Center (2024, December 12). Teens, social media, and technology, 2024. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024

Pleasants, J. (2024). Engineering for whom? Investigating how engineering students develop and apply technoskeptical thinking. *Engineering Studies*, 16(3), 159–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/19378629.2024.2333242

Potter, W. J. (2004). *Theory of media literacy: A cognitive approach*. Sage Publications.

Probst, D. (2017). Social media literacy as an IEP intervention for social and Learning.emotional learning *Journal of Media Literacy Education, 9*(2), 45–57. https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2019-09-02-04

Reynolds, E. C. (2025). Teaching students to evaluate online information in social studies: A comparative case study of teachers' goals and approaches. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 1–29. https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/00933104.2025.2472785

Rheingold, H. (2008). Using participatory media and public voice to encourage civic engagement. In W. L. Bennett (Ed.), *Civic onlineLife Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth* (pp. 97–118). MIT Press. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative.

RobbGrieco, M. (2018). *Making media literacy in America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Rodriguez, A., & Zhao, X. (2024). Pushing against the panic: Considering the positives of TikTok and children. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779241276011

Römer, L., Supa, M., & Hodbod, V. (2022). Media literacy education nurturing civic participation of disadvantaged youth, or not? *Learning, Media and Technology*, 48(3), 372–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2051046

Roshanaei, M., Rezapour, R., & El-Nasr, M. S. (2024). Talk, listen, connect: Navigating empathy in human–AI interactions. arXiv preprint arXiv:2409.15550. https://arxiv.org/pdf/2409.15550

Salter, C. (2025, May 15). Core values guide us, especially in times of uncertainty. News Literacy Project. https://newslit.org/updates/core-values-guide-us

Sanchez, G. and Middlemass, K. (2022, June 26). Misinformation is eroding the public's confidence in democracy. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/misinformation-is-eroding-the-publics-confidence-in-democracy/

Scharrer, E., Ali Durrani, A., Suren, N., Kang, Y., Zhou, Y., & Butterworth, E. (2023). Early adolescents' views of gender on YouTube in the context of a critical media literacy program. *The Communication Review*, *26*(1), 67-86.

Scharrer, E., & Ramasubramanian, S. (2015). Intervening in the media's influence on stereotypes of race and ethnicity: The role of media literacy education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(1), 171–185. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12103

Share, J. (2015). *Media literacy is elementary: Teaching youth to critically read and create media*. 2nd edition. Peter Lang.

Share, J., & Mamikonyan, T. (2020). Preparing English teachers with critical media literacy for the digital age. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 20(1), 37–54.

Shensa, A., Phelps-Tschang J., Miller E.,& Primack B. (2016). A randomized crossover study of web-based media literacy to prevent smoking. *Health Education Research*31(1):48-59. doi: 10.1093/her/cyv062. , , –https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyv062

Sheridan, J. (2021, November 2). Should you trust the media bias charts? Poynter Institute. https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/media-literacy/2021/should-you-trust-media-bias-charts

Shaw, M. (2025) Reading the Pictures. About. https://www.readingthepictures.org/about/

Siegel, J. K. (2017). Teaching the presidential elections using media literacy in the LD classroom. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *9*(2), 91–104.

Silverman, R. D., Keane, K., Darling-Hammond, E., & Khanna, S. (2024). The effects of educational technology interventions on literacy in elementary school: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 00346543241261073.

Sirlin, N., Epstein, Z., Arechar, A. A., & Rand, D. G. (2021). Digital literacy is associated with more discerning accuracy judgments but not sharing intentions. Harvard Kennedy School. *Misinformation Review*. https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/digital-literacy-is-associated-with-more-discerning-accuracy-judgments-but-not-sharing-intentions

Slama, R., Haynes, E., Sacks, L., Lee, D. H., & August, D. (2015). Massachusetts English Language Learners' Profiles and Progress: A Report for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *American Institutes for Research*.

Söffner, J. (2025). Virtualism: How AI replaces reality. *AI and Society*, 40: 1389 – 1401. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-01999-9

Sousa, C., & Costa, C. (2022). Mapping the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in media literacy research. *Media and Communication10(4)*. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i4.5769.

Spencer, A. (2024). E-rate reporting mechanisms: Closing CIPA's backdoor for unconstitutional infringements on students' First Amendment rights. *Federal Communications Law Journal*, 77(1), 53–74.

Spurava, G., & Kotilainen, S. (2023). Digital literacy as a pathway to professional development in the algorithm-driven world. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, (1), 48–59.

State of New Hampshire (2023). Stop Scrolling. Governor's Executive Order. https://www.stopscrolling.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt956/files/documents/executive-order-2023-2024.pdf

Steere, L. (2020). Student podcasts: Building community. Massachusetts School Libraries. https://www.maschoolibraries.org/spotlight-archive/student-podcasting-building-community

Sternberg R., Lin, S., & Nguyen E. (2025). Are "extracurricular" activities really extracurricular? The activities that matter least in school are the ones that best teach real-world critical and creative thinking. *Journal of Intelligence* 13(1):1. https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence13010001

Stoddard, J., Marcus, A., & Hicks, D. (Eds.). (2017). *Teaching difficult history through film*. Routledge.

Sundar, S. S. (2020). Rise of machine agency: A framework for studying the psychology of human–AI interaction (HAII). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25(1), 74–88.

Tactical Tech (2023). Data Detox Kit. https://datadetoxkit.org/en/home

Tinmaz, H., Lee, Y. T., Fanea-Ivanovici, M., & Baber, H. (2022). *A systematic review on digital literacy. Smart Learning Environments*, 9(1), 21.

Third, A., Livingstone, S., & Lansdown, G. (2025). Recognizing children's rights in relation to the digital environment: Challenges of voice and evidence, principle and practice. In B. Wagner (Ed.), *Research handbook on human rights and digital technology* (pp. 325–360). Edward Elgar.

Toff, B., & Nielsen, R. K. (2022). How news feels: Anticipated anxiety as a factor in news avoidance and a barrier to political engagement. *Political Communication*, *39*(6), 697–714. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2123073

Toole, B. (2021). Recent work in standpoint epistemology. *Analysis*, *81*(2), 338-350.

Tomlinson, B., Patterson, D. J., & Torrance, A. W. (2023). Turning fake data into fake news: The AI training set as a Trojan horse of misinformation. *San Diego Law Review*, 60, 641.

Trope, A., Johnson, D. J., & Demetriades, S. (2021). Media, making & movement: Bridging media literacy and racial justice through critical media project. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 13(2), 43–54.

Tufecki, Z. (2018, March 10). YouTube, the great radicalizer. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html

Tufecki, Z. (2022, December 15). What would Plato say about ChatGPT? *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/opinion/chatgpt-education-ai-technology.htmlhttps://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/opinion/chatgpt-education-ai-technology.html

Tynes, B. M., Stewart, A., Hamilton, M., & Willis, H. A. (2021). From Google searches to Russian disinformation: Adolescent critical race digital literacy needs and skills. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 23(1), 110–130.

UNESCO (2020). Evaluation of UNESCO's work in the thematic area of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) (2014–2019). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374527

Vaccaro, E. (2025). Latest Forum Edition—Spring 2025. Massachusetts School Library Association. https://msla.wildapricot.org/page-18210

Varga, K., & Egervári, D. (2022). Learn, unlearn, relearn: The new way of learning is called media and information literacy. *Tudásmenedzsment,* 23(Special Issue), 120-135.DOI: 10.15170/TM.2022.23.K1.9 – https://doi.org/10.15170/TM.2022.23.K1.9

Villi, M., Aharoni, T., Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. Boczkowski, P., Hayashi, K., Mitchelstein, E., Tanaka, A., & Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2022). Taking a break from news: A five-nation study of news avoidance in the digital era. *Digital Journalism*, 10(1), 148–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1904266

Vraga, E. K., & Tully, M. (2021). News literacy, social media behaviors, and skepticism toward information on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(2), 150–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1637445

Vyas, B. (2022). Ethical implications of generative AI in art and the media. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research,* 4(4), 1–11.

Wahlström, M., Törnberg, A., & Ekbrand, H. (2021). Dynamics of violent and dehumanizing rhetoric in far-right social media. *New Media & Society*, 23(11), 3290–3311.

Walsh-Moorman, E., & Pytash, K. (2021). Making moves: Lateral reading and strategic thinking during digital source evaluation. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 13(1), 106–117. https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-202113-1-9

Ward, L. M. (2016). Media and sexualization: state of empirical research, 1995–2015. *The Journal of Sex Research,* 53(4–5), 560–577. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1142496

Winthrop, R. Shoukry, Y. & Nitkin, D. (2025). The Disengagement Gap: Why Student Engagement Isn't What Parents Expect. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/REPORT_The-Disengagement-Gap_FINAL.pdf

Wilkins, M. (2025). *Exploration of K-12 teaching and learning for teacher educators*. IGI Global.

Wineburg, S., Breakstone, J., McGrew, S., Smith, M., & Ortega. T. (2022). Lateral reading on the open internet: A district-wide field study in high school government classes. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 114, 893–909. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000740

Wineburg, S., & McGrew, S. (2019). Lateral reading and the nature of expertise: Reading less and learning more when evaluating digital information. *Teachers College Record*, 121(11), 1–40.

Winthrop, R. Shoukry, Y., & Nitkin, D. (2025). The disengagement gap: Why student engagement isn't what parents expect. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/REPORT_The-Disengagement-Gap_FINAL.pdf

Wui, M. G. L., Claudio, J. S. R., Zhang, J., Reyes, C. R. R., Reyes, R. T. M., & Leviste, E. N. P. (2025). Role of classroom openness in digital literacy and online civic engagement among Filipino high school students. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 1–20.

Xie, X., Gai, X., & Zhou, Y. (2019). A meta-analysis of media literacy interventions for deviant behaviors. *Computers & Education*, 139, 146–156.

Zhang, J., Wang, X., Lu, J., Liu, L., & Feng, Y. (2024). The impact of emotional expression by artificial intelligence recommendation chatbots on perceived humanness and social interactivity. *Decision Support Systems*, 187, 114347. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2024.114347

Zadrozny, B. (2023, October 6). Michael Benz, a conservative crusader against online censorship, appears to have a secret history as an online alt-right persona. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/michael-benz-rising-voice-conservative-criticism-online-censorship-rcna119213

Zuboff, B. (2018). *The age of surveillance capitalism*. Routledge

Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

We used (1) document review, (2) long-form interviews, (3) survey research, and (4) a three-round Delphi Expert Panel Study to better understand the perspectives of educators and experts on topics related to the current state of media literacy in Massachusetts.

For all research methods reported here involving human subjects, we sought and received approval from the University of Rhode Island's IRB, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards. To protect the privacy of participants, in this report, we do not identify the names, schools, or locations of participants. Fully anonymized data and research instruments are available at the Open Science Repository (https://osf.io/xrzdf) for the methodologies we employed.

Document Review

We reviewed Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Frameworks to identify and align media literacy–related standards in a crosswalk format. The work was informed by the Illinois Crosswalk developed from Illinois Public Act 102-0055. This effort supports the broader objective of strengthening media literacy integration across all K-12 disciplines in Massachusetts. For the purpose of this Crosswalk, we adopted the following working definition of media literacy: *Media literacy means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society, and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society* (Adapted from the Aspen Institute definition in Connecticut Public Act No. 23-150).

DATA COLLECTION

The development of the Crosswalk followed a structured multi-step process:

- All Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks were gathered and reviewed to identify key trends and thematic elements
- The DESE Standards Navigator was used to conduct keyword searches that yielded relevant standards linked to media literacy
- Standards were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and categorized based on their relevance to media literacy definitions and pedagogies
- Standards from other states were reviewed and compared with Massachusetts standards to identify potential gaps
- A list of missing or underrepresented media literacy elements was compiled
- Feedback was solicited from DESE, and revisions were made accordingly

We used (1) document review, (2) long-form interviews, (3) survey research, and (4) a three-round Delphi Expert Panel Study to better understand the perspectives of educators and experts on topics related to the current state of media literacy in Massachusetts.

For all research methods reported here involving human subjects, we sought and received approval from the University of Rhode Island's IRB, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards. To protect the privacy of participants, in this report, we do not identify the names, schools, or locations of participants. Fully anonymized data and research instruments are available at the Open Science Repository (https://osf.io/xrzdf) for the methodologies we employed.

Document Review

We reviewed Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum Frameworks to identify and align media literacy–related standards in a crosswalk format. The work was informed by the Illinois Crosswalk developed from Illinois Public Act 102-0055. This effort supports the broader objective of strengthening media literacy integration across all K-12 disciplines in Massachusetts. For the purpose of this Crosswalk, we adopted the following working definition of media literacy: *Media literacy means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society, and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society* (Adapted from the Aspen Institute definition in Connecticut Public Act No. 23-150).

DATA COLLECTION

The development of the Crosswalk followed a structured multi-step process:

- All Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks were gathered and reviewed to identify key trends and thematic elements
- The DESE Standards Navigator was used to conduct keyword searches that yielded relevant standards linked to media literacy
- Standards were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and categorized based on their relevance to media literacy definitions and pedagogies
- Standards from other states were reviewed and compared with Massachusetts standards to identify potential gaps
- A list of missing or underrepresented media literacy elements was compiled
- Feedback was solicited from DESE, and revisions were made accordingly

The intermediate product included both an aligned Crosswalk across content areas and a "What's Missing" summary. **The Crosswalk was organized by these Media Literacy skills:**

- Accessing information
- Analyzing and evaluating

- Creating media
- Reflecting on media consumption
- Participating and collaborating in a democratic society / Social Responsibility Civics

The Crosswalk was organized by grade clusters across key disciplines, including:

- English Language Arts (ELA)
- History and Social Science
- Health and Physical Education
- Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS)
- Science and Technology/Engineering
- The Arts
- World Languages

DATA ANALYSIS

Health and Physical Education. The updated Comprehensive Health and Physical Education framework includes many important components of media literacy and digital wellness. These support students in critically evaluating media messages related to health, finding quality health information, and making informed decisions in digital environments. The Framework balances attention to risks and harms associated with media use with significant attention to affordances for using media wisely to make healthy choices across the lifetime.

History and Social Science. Media literacy is present within the framework, particularly in Grade 8 Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy. Additionally, the Advanced Supplemental Curriculum for Grades 9–12 provides rich media literacy content. However, as an elective, it may not be widely implemented. Given the inclusion of history in MCAS assessments and the introduction of alternate academic achievement standards, understanding the extent of adoption across districts remains important.

English Language Arts and Literacy. There are a few references to media in the ELA Standards in relation to informational texts and the research paper, and ELA Anchor Standards are well-aligned with media literacy learning outcomes but only if the word "text" is understood as "symbolic work created as a means to share meaning." Unfortunately, the language of the Standards suggests that that the exclusive focus is on books, narrowly defined as "high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts" like "stories, dramas, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods" or academic texts "in history, science, mathematics, the arts, and other disciplines."

Opportunities for deeper integration of media literacy exist in several domains, including:

- Exploring relationships between authors, audiences, and texts in multimedia formats
- Speaking, listening, and communication skills in face-to-face and online environments

- Engaging with popular culture texts, including music, movies, television, video games, podcasts, and social media
- Using audiobooks and text-to-speech tools for reading and writing
- Analyzing persuasive genres, including opinion, advocacy, advertising, propaganda, and sponsored content
- Empowering students as critical thinkers and collaborators through creative media production
- Encouraging appreciation of emotional response, ethical reflection, empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives

Digital Literacy and Computer Science. The DLCS standards encompass essential elements of media literacy, particularly within the Computing and Society (CAS) strand. These include distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying bias, and understanding the impact of media on behavior and perception. Given the natural intersections between media literacy and AI literacy, we are watching the work of the DESE Office of Educational Technology (EdTech) Task Force work on AI in K-12 Schools.

Science and Technology/Engineering. These standards incorporate media literacy by guiding students to evaluate scientific information presented in media formats. Notably, the High School Engineering Technology Systems (ETS) and Earth Science domains provide opportunities for engaging students in critical analysis of media-reported science.

The Arts. The Arts standards promote creativity and critical thinking across disciplines. Music and media arts, in particular, offer explicit avenues for media literacy skill development. Media-related standards are present across all grade levels, emphasizing expression and analysis.

World Languages. While the World Languages standards support intercultural understanding and global communication, media literacy is less explicitly represented. The framework emphasizes communication and cultural competence, but there is room to integrate media analysis and critical engagement more fully.

Long-Form Interview

Interviews are a powerful way to harvest people's stories, opinions, and experiences. We used in-depth or semi-structured formats, which provide rich, detailed data that reveal the complexity of individual experiences and perspectives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To structure interviews, we developed a comprehensive interview protocol that included questions developed by DESE on the topics shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Research Questions for the Landscape Report

DEFINITIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

- What is the meaning of "media" as you understand the term?
- What is "media literacy"?
- What are the reasons why media literacy is important for people today?

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

- What does effective instruction in media literacy look like, in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and integration with various content areas across grade levels?
- How does media literacy connect to and overlap directly with various academic disciplines (history, civics, ELA, computer science, arts, math, science, health)?
- Which dimensions of media literacy align most closely with civic learning and preparation to participate in democratic society?

ISSUES OF EQUITY

How do media impact children and teenagers based on characteristics such as race, home language, gender, income, and dis/ability?

RISKS AND HARMS

- We're interested in the relationship between protection and empowerment when it comes to younger learners and their relationship with technology and media literacy. How much focus is on protection from risks and harm, and how much focus is on empowerment with creativity and collaboration?
- What can you tell us about the balance between allowing our youngest learners to access digital resources for the sake of learning and limiting access for the sake of protection? For example, how do you feel about banning cell phones, blocking specific websites, or sending them to kid-specific websites rather than the open internet?
- One aspect of media literacy is being able to assess the credibility of a source. What approaches are teachers using as the internet and AI continue to develop and change?

MEDIA LITERACY IN MASSACHUSETTS

- What are teachers in your community doing to integrate media literacy instruction? How does it connect to civics?
- Which Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks currently include standards addressing media literacy?
- Which dimensions of media literacy are addressed in the Frameworks?
- What key skills related to news literacy, digital literacy, and information literacy, if any, are missing across all Frameworks?
- Which educational organizations are considered leaders in the media literacy space, especially news and information literacy, in Massachusetts and nationally?

IMAGINING THE FUTURE

- What approaches to teacher PD in media literacy have been effective? How is PD used to build teacher confidence, knowledge, and skills?
- How would you like to see media literacy addressed in your school? What are the challenges?
- What could DESE do from the state level?
- What could other stakeholders (like parents, business leaders, and others) do?
- Are there "bright spot" classrooms or schools in Massachusetts that you are aware of that exemplify strong media literacy education? Are there examples of media literacy in civics that you're familiar with?
- What policies have been effective in other states for driving improvement in media literacy education statewide, especially news and information literacy?

SAMPLE

To identify prospective subjects, we utilized existing networks of educators actively involved in media literacy education. These networks included connections established through the Media Education Lab's network of 10,000 educators, as well as Renee Hobbs's LinkedIn profile and the names of individuals who had presented recently at the Massachusetts School Library Association, Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies, and MassCUE conferences. We also used Google Search to find names of Massachusetts educators associated with terms including media literacy, news literacy, information literacy, visual literacy, digital literacy, digital citizenship, and AI literacy.

We also employed a snowball sampling technique by asking all participants to recommend others who could offer valuable insights, thus expanding our pool of subjects through their personal networks. We continuously evaluated demographic representation and adjusted our outreach efforts to address any observed imbalances.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

For each potential participant, we initiated contact via email, introducing ourselves, the project, and its objectives. We utilized Calendly to facilitate scheduling a 45-minute interview, which would automatically provide a Zoom link for the chosen day and time. Each session typically involved one interviewee and two team members—an interviewer and an observer.

Interviews began with an informed consent process and were then recorded. The interview protocol employed a semi-structured format, maintaining a core set of standardized questions while allowing flexibility to adapt based on the participant's role, experiences, and responses. This approach ensured both consistency and the ability to explore unique perspectives. Interviews were generally 30–45 minutes in length. We sometimes adapted questions during the interview, allowing for exploration of unexpected topics or clarification of responses.

LIMITATIONS

Interviewing is a time-consuming and intensive research method; even with the use of automatic transcription and generative AI tools, data analysis requires careful organization and interpretation. Subjects' responses may be influenced by social desirability, interviewer presence, or bias. Finally, interviews with a small, non-random sample limit generalizations to larger populations.

DATA ANALYSIS

We utilized Otter AI to transcribe the Zoom recordings. These transcripts were compiled into a shared document, where each interview was presented as a continuous dialogue. To streamline analysis, we wanted to reorganize the transcripts into a spreadsheet format, grouping responses by question rather than by participant. We manually sorted the data by question and answer, transferring the word-for-word transcripts directly into a spreadsheet in the desired format. This restructuring facilitated the identification of recurring themes across different responses for each question asked. With all responses to each question consolidated, we began thematic analysis by identifying and categorizing

recurring ideas and topics. We then used ChatGPT to identify commonly occurring themes; with some manual review and adjustments, we selected the most relevant themes. We then read each response and used codes to signify the presence or absence of the given theme. This allowed us to quantify the prevalence of each theme and provided a statistical representation of key trends within the data.

Survey Research

Survey methodology is useful for preliminary research or hypothesis generation, especially when studying new or under-researched topics. We used the Qualtrics survey platform to develop the Media Literacy Landscape Report survey, which contained a total of 45 questions about media literacy teaching and learning in the state of Massachusetts. The online survey was distributed from October through December of 2024. The survey was open for 12 weeks, and participants were welcomed to widely share the survey with their colleagues. We were able to recruit a large sample of educators from Massachusetts K-12 schools, which increases our confidence in the results.

KEY FEATURES

We adapted the Media Literacy Index (MLI), a survey questionnaire which was originally developed to help policymakers gain knowledge about the scope and depth of implementation of media literacy learning activities in the elementary and secondary grades. The adaptation of a previously validated instrument was more cost-effective than creating a new survey from scratch. The instrument was first developed and validated using a quota sample of stakeholders from across all school districts and local communities in Rhode Island; we relied on an established theoretical framework for media literacy. Validation methods included cognitive pretesting, think-aloud protocols, a content validation of MLI learning activities in relation to national education standards documents, and statistical validation including principal components analysis to assess internal consistency, reliability, and validity (Hobbs et al., 2023a).

Research has shown that nearly half the variance in implementation scores can be explained by obstacles including technology, academic priorities, educator response, school policies, and perceptions of students (Hobbs et al., 2023b). We did not include measures of obstacles in this study. However, since respondents tend to favor choices at the beginning and end of a list because they stay in memory, we used question randomization to overcome order bias — the tendency for the order of answer choices to influence responses.

LIST OF VARIABLES

Media Literacy Learning Outcomes. Participants read and rated the relative importance of six learning outcomes of media literacy using a three-point scale, with 3 representing "most important" and 1 representing "least important." We created a list of learning outcomes from a review of the scholarly literature and asked participants to rank order their importance. Items included:

- help learners to analyze and evaluate the quality of information sources
- reflect on the benefits, risks, and harms of media and technology
- help learners develop technology skills and knowledge for college and careers
- reflect on the power of stereotypes in media representations
- understand and use media for democratic participation
- support student creativity, self-expression, and confidence

Media Literacy Index. We adapted the 18-item MLI developed in 2023 by adding three new items to more closely align the instrument with the Massachusetts State Frameworks. Using a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing "hardly any" and 10 representing "nearly all," participants are asked to offer an estimate, responding to the question, "How many of all the students in your school are likely to encounter these activities during the current academic year?"
New items included:

- *History or Literature through Film.* Students evaluate the realism and accuracy of a movie that depicts historical events, or examine the choices made by a filmmaker in adapting a book into a movie.
- *Civic Dialogue.* Students learn how to reduce conflict and disrupt hurtful or aggressive talk and actions through civil dialogue and active listening.
- *AI and Algorithmic Personalization.* Students understand that their digital data are a commodity, and that algorithms and AI are used to target personalized content to them.

Electives and Student Clubs. We presented participants with a list of 17 electives or student clubs that may be offered to students in Massachusetts school and asked, "Which electives or clubs are offered to students in your school?" Some were focused on arts and humanities, while others addressed social issues, career interests, and technical fields.

Importance and Relevance. We asked participants two scaled questions. The first one asked, "Compared to all the important issues facing the field of public education today, how important is it to implement these types of instructional practices in schools?" The second question asked about relevance. It stated: "In the field of public education today, how relevant are these types of instructional practices in schools?" Both items used a 10-point scale, with 1 representing "not at all important/relevant" and 10 representing "very important/relevant." An open-ended question asked, "What is the reason for your answer?"

Open-Ended Questions. We asked two additional open-ended questions: "What other activities are helping to advance people's media literacy competencies in the home, classroom, library, school, or community?" and "What is needed to ensure that more students in your school and district get learning experiences like the ones you just read about?"

SAMPLE

We emailed a total of 12,435 educators in Massachusetts using a combination of paid lists and manually created lists. We also reached out to school district leaders and invited them to share the survey with their staff. We received 1,166, responses from the paid lists and 763 responses from the manually created lists—a total of 1,829 responses. Those contacted through paid lists were offered an incentive to complete the survey (a $500 gift certificate to one randomly selected participant). We reviewed the data for quality and removed 554 cases that had largely incomplete data, for a total sample of 1,275 responses.

TABLE 8

Grade Level or Age of Learners in the Primary Workplace Setting

LEARNER CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 2	159	9.1
GRADES 3–5	258	14.7
GRADES 6–8	480	27.5
GRADES 9–12	791	45.3
COLLEGE STUDENTS	14	0.8
ADULTS	42	3.4

Participants came from 213 Massachusetts school districts in 15 different counties. In some communities, as many as 30 respondents participated from a single district, but some communities are represented by only a single participant. Table 8 includes data from the 1,744 survey participants who supplied a response to the question, "What learners do you primarily work with?" Nearly half (45.3%) report that they work with students in Grades 9 - 12, 27..5% work with middle school students, and 14.7% work with upper elementary students. Only 9.1% work primarily with students in preschool to Grade 2. A majority of participants (90.7%) reported working at a traditional public or charter school, with only 6.3% at private or parochial schools.

The most common role reported was secondary teacher (52.9%); other roles included school librarians (14.3%), school administrators or leaders (9.6%), and elementary teachers (9.2%). Subjects taught (when reported) were primarily ELA and Literacy (46.6%) and History and Social Science (34.3%). For those that reported gender, female-identifying respondents made up 74.3% of the sample, while male-identifying respondents made up 25.0%. Racially, 92.2% of the respondents reported their race as white or Caucasian, with others being African American (1.4%), Native American (0.2%), Asian (1.2%), Hispanic/Latino (1.3%), MENA (0.4%), and Other/Mixed (3.3%).

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of sampling make findings difficult to generalize to a larger population, as the survey results may reflect systematic differences due to selection bias. We were unable to obtain a complete list of all educators in the state, and we chose not to use statistical weighting to match the sample to be representative of Massachusetts K-12 educators.

DATA ANALYSIS

We used the SPSS statistical package to analyze survey results; findings are reported using simple descriptive statistics. Three open-ended questions were included in the survey. We received 801 responses concerning participants' rationale for the importance of media literacy. We received 834 responses to the question, "What other activities help advance media literacy?" and 902 responses to the needs for the future question. Answers were first analyzed with the help of AI (Open AI's ChatGPT and Microsoft's CoPilot [both GPT-4 model]). The AI suggested and defined themes within the data. The themes were manually checked and slightly amended. Finally, researchers selected representative responses manually to illustrate key themes.

Delphi Expert Panel Study

The Delphi method is a structured group communication process that helps generate evidence or make decisions under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information. Delphi panel studies involve a series of anonymous questionnaires that a group of hand-picked experts answer, initially based on their expertise and personal experience and then based on seeing (and sometimes discussing) how their results compare with those of other panelists.

Delphi-based expert consensus is more reliable than the opinion of a single expert because it harnesses the wisdom of several knowledgeable individuals while mitigating the negative effects of dominant personalities and groupthink that are common in group settings (Dalal et al., 2011). The method empowers panelists who may represent different groups and have different viewpoints to have an equal voice in creating a consensus.

KEY FEATURES

A Delphi expert panel EPStudy helps panelists learn about the opinions of other participants and allows researchers to explore how exposure to different opinions may affect an individual's

ANONYMITY

which is why Delphi panel studies commonly ask participants to prioritize options from he Delphi method has four key characteristics: anonymity, iterative data collection, nelists, and statistical group response. These features are important for identifying areas of agreement and disagreement among panelists, which can facilitate the development of consensus (or confirm existing dissensus) in diverse groups.

Anonymity increases the objectivity of Delphi results by reducing cognitive bias associated with the "halo effect" and enables panelists to share opinions they think would otherwise be unpopular or unconventional. If they wish to change their responses, they can do so without losing face.

Participants respond to open-ended questions and survey items over the course of multiple rounds in a process that enables consensus to form without forcing it to occur.

Feedback is both qualitative and quantitative. Because participants can see the comments of other panel members, it enables them to compare their responses to that of others and to re-evaluate responses based on new perspectives.

Statistical summaries involve calculating frequencies of responses above a certain point to demonstrate a level of consensus. For example, reporting that 75% of participants responded to an item with a rating of 7 or higher is a way to depict a level of consensus with statistical evidence.

LIMITATIONS

Although methodologically powerful, the Delphi method relies on a small sample that is not random or representative of a larger population. Panel members are chosen based on their expertise and experiences, and the quality of the data depends on the willingness of the participants to express and articulate their perspectives. Another limitation is that the design work in developing the Panel Study was conducted by the authors of this report and our own biases in writing the questions could affect panel outcomes.

SAMPLE

We created an email list of 243 American media literacy experts by reviewing the scholarly and professional literature, including publications associated with professional education organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), the National Communication Association (NCA), and the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). We used a definition of expertise that includes both technical and experiential knowledge. We asked participants to tell us whether they considered themselves to be "media literacy experts" or "experienced education professionals." Having representatives from both groups was important to this study because narrow areas of expertise need to be balanced with education professionals who take a bigger picture into account (Khodyakov et al., 2023).

We contracted with Welphi, a survey platform for online Delphi panel studies, and began collecting data on January 4, 2025. Rounds were open for three weeks, with the final round completed on May 23, 2025.

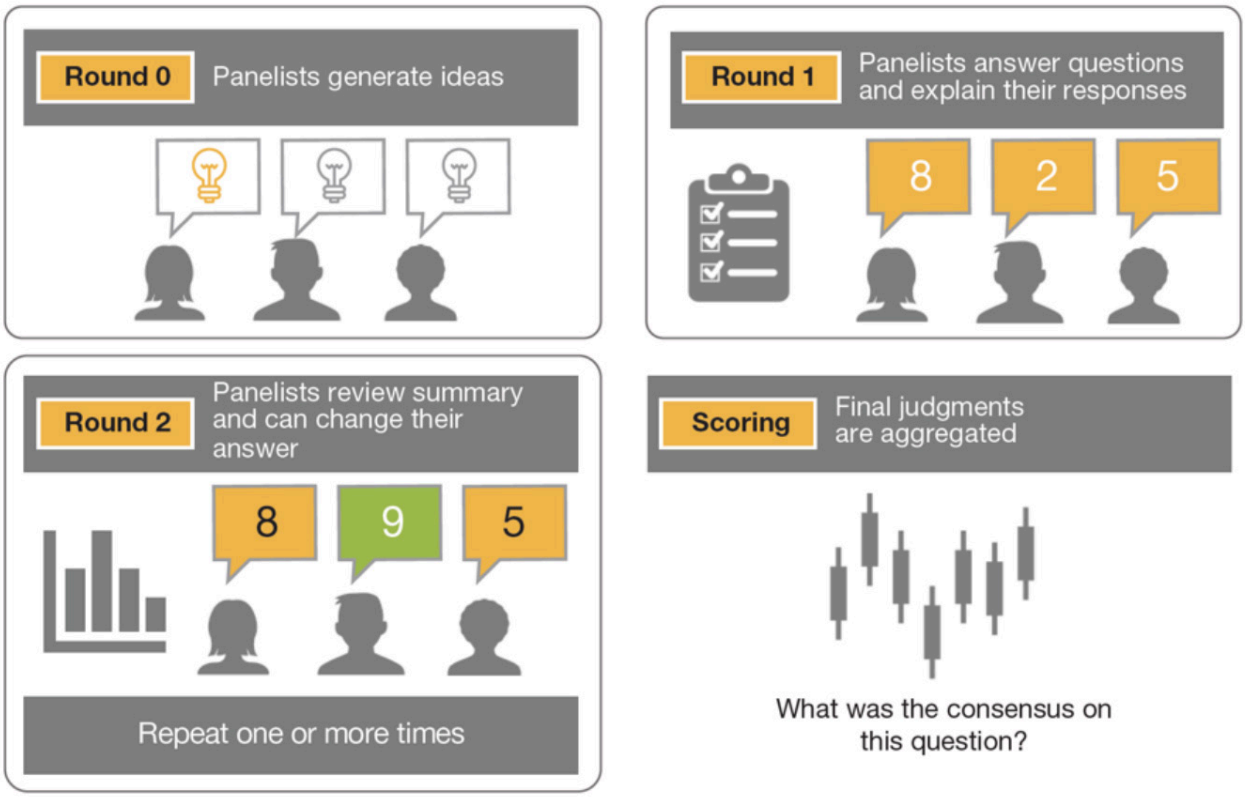
Among the 243 participants who were identified and recruited to participate, 97 total participants completed some or all of the rounds. In Round 0, there were a total of 96 participants (55 panelists who fully completed the survey and 41 who partially completed it). In Round 1, there were a total of 97 participants (56 panelists who fully completed the survey and 41 who partially completed it). Round 2 had 87 participants (63 panelists who fully completed the survey and 24 who partially completed it).

We collected demographic data about participants and found that 44 identified themselves as media literacy experts and 28 identified themselves as experienced education practitioners. Panel members' geographic region and job classification data are shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9

Regional Distribution and Job Classification of Delphi Panelists

GEOGRAPHIC REGION	N	JOB CLASSIFICATION*	N
Massachusetts	20	College teacher: Education	16
Other Northeast	15	College teacher: Other subject	16
Midwest	8	Researcher	20
Southeast	5	Non-profit leader or staff	15
Southwest	4	PD provider	13
West	13	District or state administrator	5
International	3	Department chair	2
		Classroom teacher	4
		Entrepreneur or business professional	4
		School library media teacher	1
		Media professional	3



RESPONSE RATE

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
23% Completed	26% Completed	26% Completed
17% Uncompleted	6% Uncompleted	10% Uncompleted
60% Not started	68% Not started	64% Not started

CONTEXT

Because the Delphi panel took place over a five-month period, news and events that occurred during the Delphi study had the potential to affect the results. Data were collected during the weeks before and immediately after January 20, 2025, when President Donald Trump entered the White House for his second term. It was a time that can be described as politically chaotic, with more than 150 executive orders, 39 memoranda, and 58 proclamations as of May 22, 2025 (Ballotpedia, 2025). During this time, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) closed or sharply limited many federal agencies, including U.S. AID, the Internal Revenue Service, the Justice Department, and the U.S. Department of Education. This undoubtedly influenced the attitudes and behavior of panel respondents, as can be seen in some comments.

VARIABLES OF INTEREST

ROUND 0

In this round, participants responded to open-ended questions.

NAME	QUESTION
ML Definitions	What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025?
Instruction	What are the core features of effective instruction in media literacy education?
Curriculum Content	What content topics are of central importance for media literacy education in Grades K-12?
Civic Learning	Which aspects of media literacy best align with civic learning and preparation to participate in democratic society?
Teacher Education	What are the most promising or successful approaches to teacher education for media literacy education?
Policy	What policy actions are likely to be most effective in advancing media literacy education in Massachusetts?
Ongoing Debates	What other questions should be debated and discussed when it comes to media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools?

ROUND 1

In this round, participants reviewed responses and comments from previous rounds and rated items on scales of importance or value.

NAME	QUESTION
Curriculum Content	At which grade level should these topics be introduced to students in elementary and secondary schools
Ongoing Debates	Which questions are most important to address for the future of media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools?
Civic Learning	How important are these goals for the learning needs of students in elementary and secondary schools?
Teacher Education	Which approaches to teacher education are most likely to be successful in improving media literacy education in K-12 schools?
Policy	How likely is it that these actions will advance the quality of media literacy education in Massachusetts?
ML Definition	What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025?
Instruction	Which of these items of advice should be recommended to educators regarding teaching media literacy?
Other Issues	What's missing? What topics or issues need further consideration in the next round?

ROUND 2

In this round, participants rated items using scales of importance or value after reviewing ratings, responses, and comments from previous rounds.

NAME	QUESTION
ML across the Curriculum	Who should be responsible for teaching media literacy in Massachusetts schools? What instructional practices fit best in which subject areas?
Ongoing Debates	Rank order the top three questions that you believe are most urgent to address.
Civic Learning	What should be the top priorities for media literacy and civic learning?
Teacher Education	How likely is this approach to be successful in improving media literacy education in K-12 schools?
Policy	How likely is it that these actions will advance the quality of media literacy education in Massachusetts?
ML Definition	What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025?
Instruction	Rank order these suggestions to indicate which three pieces of advice you believe are most likely to help educators improve the practice of media literacy education in K-12 schools.

APPROACH TO ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF CONSENSUS

In Round 0, panelists are given a series of open-ended questions with a small sample of answers to comment on. Participants add additional items as needed. Round 0 is primarily a means to generate qualitative responses that can be further subjected to testing in future rounds. For all items, we used question randomization to overcome order bias—this means that items were randomly displayed to individual panel members in different orders. Each item had an equal chance of being first or last in any grouping.

In Round 1, participants rated items and used the comment tool to discuss and justify their ratings. In Round 3, participants could review the anonymous data supplied by all participants and were given an opportunity to re-evaluate their responses.

EXAMPLE: DEFINITIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

An example of an analysis strategy is shown for a single question about definitions of media literacy. To appraise the practice of media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools, a working definition of media literacy in 2025 is important.

ROUND 0

In Round 0, participants were asked, "What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025? Review the responses below and offer your opinion using the comment icon. If you would like, you can add a new definition using the 'Add Indicators' button." **They reviewed the following five definitions:**

- Media literacy is the ability to decode media messages (including the systems in which they exist); assess the influence of those messages on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; and create media thoughtfully and conscientiously.
- Media literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy.
- Media literacy prepares students for a society where social media, mass media, and digital culture are important for work, leisure, and citizenship.
- Media literacy is the process of accessing, analyzing, and creating media messages, reflecting on the power of information and communication, and taking action to make a difference in the world.
- Media literacy includes all the technical, cognitive, social, civic, and creative capacities that allow a citizen to have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it.

Participants added a total of 16 new definitions and made a total of 145 comments responding to them. For example, in response to the definition, "Media literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy," **participants said:**

- "I think this is too vague and too passive; does not take into account the access, analysis, or interrogation of any form of media."
- "This definition isn't super precise, but it is probably closest to my own understanding of the concept—an extension of 'literacy' to media forms beyond alphabetic reading/writing. This definition avoids the assumption that 'literacy' (and, by extension, 'media literacy') is inherently good, making it more aligned with scholarship in literacy studies that suggests that 'literacy' is, and has always been, an ideological project, capable of being mobilized for good and bad purposes."
- "Yes, but this isn't nearly comprehensive enough and doesn't tell someone who isn't a literacy specialist that you mean decoding, application, critical assessment, and the like."
- "This is, I think, basically true... but it doesn't really give a reader anything to hold onto. Still, this language is important, in that we cannot underestimate (and we cannot afford to understate) the idea that literacy itself simply isn't the same in a digital space. It has never been true that a person literate in some given arena (say, a skilled reader of novels) will automatically be able to transfer that literacy (say, to being able to 'read' an advertisement or a film without any further education); it is, I think, even less true now, given that we still have so much to learn about exactly how interactions in digital spaces work."

ROUND 1

Panel convenors reviewed the feedback received in Round 0 and prepared additional questions for participants to address. In Round 1, panel members provided responses to quantitative survey items and made comments on their choices. Participants rated 10 definitions on a three-point scale (3 = best, 1 = worst, and 2 = neither). They could also use the comment tool to explain their reasoning, and 51 comments were made. **Sample comments are placed below each definition:**

> Media literacy is a process of engaging with media through critically examining representations, systems, structures, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape and reproduce culture and society. It is an inquiry-based process for analyzing and creating media by interrogating the relationships between power and knowledge.

- "This is a pretty good definition but a bit too jargony for public uptake."
- "Typical parents will find this definition full of jargon. It seems meant to impress rather than to help people unfamiliar with media literacy."
- "I considered labeling this one 'worst.' Wordy and abstract—to say nothing of being *very* polysyllabic..."
- "Too political (although I agree with parts of this)."
- "I don't like the inclusion of power in this definition—especially for younger students. This pre-disposes it toward foregrounding of power struggles in society, which need context that is beyond the MLE [Media Literacy Education] class."
- "This one is sure to raise partisan alarm and attract lots of opposition. It's scary sounding."
- "As a scholar I like this definition the best but it contains academic jargon that the average reader might not understand."
- "This might be the best definition for how I approach media literacy, but not the best definition for the field and advancement of media literacy. Could be a contender for 'best' in the extended definition category. This would be more fun to think of as an awards show presentation!"

> Media literacy includes all the technical, cognitive, social, civic, and creative capacities that allow a citizen to have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it.

- "Too vague, assumes too may common understandings about what these competencies are."
- "It's the most encompassing and the simplest. Too many of the others focus a bit too much on power, but that is likely to be a turnoff for anyone on the conservative side of the spectrum and it ignores all the bad media and messages that aren't necessarily power-driven but just ignorance-driven. A TikTok influencer giving mental health advice might be very earnest and well-meaning but a kid needs to be able to ask whether this person has the training to be giving good enough advice - that's—' not so much power as platform. Kids spreading rumors on social media isn't necessarily power-driven, but it takes a critical thinking lens to interrupt the rumor mill. Media literacy is the big stuff but also the small communications."
- "Remove 'all",' and I think this is actually better than the current 'access, analyze, create, communicate, and reflect' definition."

- "The word 'critical' here seems too academic or, worst case, alarming."
- "Not just individual; not just understanding. This might be the worst."
- "I think this is the best definition, with the word 'critical' entailing not just critical thinking but the interrogation of systems and power."

ROUND 2

Round 2 provides opportunities for consensus to form, and this is evident among the members of the Delphi Media Literacy Expert Panel regarding a definition of media literacy in 2025. In Round 2, panel members were again asked to evaluate eight definitions using the question prompt, "What is the best definition of media literacy in 2025?" Participants rated definitions on a three-point scale (3 = best, 1 = worst, and 2 = neither). They could also use the comment tool to explain their reasoning and view the comments of their peers. A total of 29 comments were made; sample comments are placed below each definition:

> Media literacy means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with media in all forms by understanding the role of media in society, and building skills of inquiry and self-expression essential to participation and collaboration in a democratic society.

- Although strong consensus exists for this definition, some experts quibble about the language used.
- Round 2: 54% of panel members rated it "best," 2% rated it "worst. "
- Round 1: 32% of panel members rated it "best," 0% rated it "worst."
- Comments:
  - "I still stand by this definition as it includes both consumer and producer aspects, knowledge of power structures and the role of media in people's lives and how it impacts politics and democracy/civic participation."
  - "Add 'reflection' and I could support this as a consensus definition."
  - "I would take out 'collaboration' .'"
  - "The first part is better than the second part, which narrows it so much that it becomes specific to a topic area. ML [media literacy] is relevant to all topic areas and encompasses both sources and content. And is ML unimportant in non-democratic societies, for goodness' sake? So it starts out seeming like one of the best ones and ends up being one of the worst ones."

> Media literacy education is the ongoing development of habits of inquiry and skills of expression necessary for people to be critical thinkers, thoughtful and effective communicators, and informed and responsible members of society.

- This definition came very close to our consensus threshold, with 34% rating it "best," but some people considered it to be the worst.
- Round 2: 34% of panel members rated it "best," 6% rated it "worst. "
- Round 1: 21% rated it "best," 4% rated it "worst."

- Comments:
  - "As noted before, the term itself 'media literacy' and anything similar like 'critical thinking' now feel politically coded Left."
  - "Pro: This is process oriented. Con: ML is more than 'habits.'"

> Media literacy is a process of engaging with media through critically examining representations, systems, structures, ideologies, and power dynamics that shape and reproduce culture and society. It is an inquiry-based process for analyzing and creating media by interrogating the relationships between power and knowledge.

- This definition received the most polarizing responses. One in five experts rated it "best," but one in four rated it "worst."
- **Round 2: 19% of panel members rated it "best," 26% rated it "worst."**
- Round 1: 21% rated it "best," 26% rated it "worst."
- Comments:
  - "Including power, knowledge, ideology and culture in a definition of media literacy helps people know what is at stake in being able to analyze, evaluate, critique, debate, and create using our primary forms of communication and information sharing."
  - "This is more precise and inclusive but too wordy and academic."
  - "Critical examination, yes; but it also includes an awareness of one's affective responses to messages and message producers. It is not purely 'cognitive.' Also, some ML [media literacy] is based on the equivalent of muscle memory as our skills are well developed. We only have so much in terms of cognitive resources to apply at any one time."

> Media literacy involves identifying and evaluating potential bias and motives in media messages, distinguishing fact from opinion in media messages, and determining trustworthiness of evidence in media messages.

- There was substantial consensus that this was the worst definition, with consensus increasing across rounds.
- Round 2: 5% of panel members rated it "best," 45% rated it "worst."
- Round 1: 7% rated it "best," 31% rated it "worst."
- Comments:
  - "I'm concerned this definition may imply that media literacy and evaluation is totally in the eye of the beholder and is not attached to ground truths."
  - "The use of the term bias here is problematic for me. "
  - "This is the worst one in my opinion because it isn't broad enough."

Because the Delphi Expert Panel methodology functions as an anonymous focus group, media literacy experts and experienced education professionals were able to "think together" about the various questions.

Appendix B: Media Literacy Resources in History/Social Science

Here we feature some commonly used examples of curricular resources for integrating media literacy into K-12 Social Studies education.

OPERATE & ACCESS

GRADE LEVEL	TITLE & AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS
Elementary	Great News Websites for Students Common Sense Media	The youngest learners need access to developmentally appropriate, reliable news. This site lists several free news sites developed for elementary school learners.	MA.HSS.1, NML.T5.1
Middle	CTRL-F C.I.V.I.X	A website with a curated set of lessons and activities that help learners develop online search skills, verification skills, and AI Literacy.	NML.T4.1, NML.T4.2, NML. T4.3, NML.T4.4
High	Journalism in Action: Civic Engagement and Primary Sources through Key Moments in History PBS Newshour Classroom	Highly engaging interactive lessons that explore how journalists covered 12 moments in history. Students conduct research using primary and secondary sources and create media projects to demonstrate learning.	MA.HSS.3, MA.NML.T1.3, MA.NML.T1.4, MA.NML.T1.5, MA.NML.T5.3

ANALYZE & EVALUATE

GRADE LEVEL	TITLE & AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION & STANDARDS	
Elementary	What Is a Campaign? Project Look Sharp	Students analyze a variety of campaign media (hats, yard signs, flags, websites) and reflect on the importance of civic participation and how citizens make decisions about who they will vote for.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.4, MA.HSS.6, MA.NML.T4.4
Middle	Making Sense of the 24/7 News Cycle UVA Center for Politics: Youth Leadership Initiative	This lesson has students take a deep dive into social media to analyze and evaluate the legitimacy of social media news stories.	MA.HSS.4, MA.HSS.5, MA.NML.T3.1, MA.NML.T3.3, MA.NML.T4.4
High	Daily Do Now Slides News Literacy Project	Maximize learning in the opening minutes of class with brief activities that activate analysis skills while boosting student engagement. These activities are updated weekly throughout the school year.	MA.HSS.4, MA.NML.T1.5, MA.NML.T4.1, MA.NML.T4.2

PARTICIPATE & COLLABORATE

GRADE LEVEL	TITLE & AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION &	STANDARDS
Elementary	How to Be an Expert Fact Checker National Geographic Kids	This tip sheet for young learners simplifies the steps professional fact-checkers follow to ensure that the news stories are correct before publication and encourages young news consumers to check the facts.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.5, MA.NML.T3.2, MA.NML.T4.3
Middle	The Fundamentals of News NewseumED	Students watch a video that differentiates news, journalism, and media, then reflect on and discuss the role of news media in their civic lives.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.7, MA.NML.T3.5
High	Filter Bubbles EAVI: Media Literacy for Citizenship	A standalonealone lesson featuring a TED Talk and discussion questions that engage students in considering the impact of filter bubbles on society and the responsibilities of media platforms and citizens.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.7, MA.NML.T1.1, MA.NML.T2.1, MA.NML.T3.1. MA.NML.T3.4

CREATE

GRADE LEVEL	TITLE & AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS
Elementary	Meet the Media Monsters Campaign and Lesson Plan NAMLE	Lesson plans aimed at helping young media consumers and producers learn how to interact with media in their everyday lives. A culminating project has students create an audio or video Public Service Announcement related to media literacy and digital citizenship.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.6, MA.HSS.7, MA.NML.T5.3
Middle	Journalism for Justice Learning for Justice	Students research, create, edit, and distribute a journalistic artifact centered on a civic issue.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.2, MA.HSS.3, MA.HSS.4, MA.HSS.5, MA.HSS.6, MA.NML.T3.4, MA.NML.T3.5, MA.NML.T2.2, MA.NML.T5.1, MA.NML.T5.2, MA.NML.T5.3, MA.NML.T5.4, MA.NML.T5.5
High	Journalism Skill Builder Lesson Series Pulitzer Center	In this series of five lessons, students identify underrepresented news stories in their communities, conduct research including interviews, and create a podcast or photojournalism piece to tell their story.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.2, MA.HSS.3, MA.HSS.4, MA.HSS.5,MA.HSS.6, MA.NML.T3.4, MA.NML.T3.5, MA.NML.T5.1, MA.NML.T5., MA.NML.T5.3, MA.NML.T5.4, MA.NML.T5.5

REFLECT & ACT ETHICALLY AND RESPONSIBLY

GRADE LEVEL	TITLE & AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION	STANDARDS
Elementary	Meet Head of the Digital Citizens Common Sense Media	In this introductory lesson, young students are introduced to the concept of news and media literacy. Students reflect on and discuss why it is important to figure out what is true.	MA.HSS.5, MA.NML.T4.1
Middle	Is This Story Shareworthy? NewseumED	Middle school students consume vast quantities of digital media each day. This lesson introduces students to a flow chart they can use to determine whether the news that comes across their social media feeds is share-worthy or not.	MA.HSS.5, MA.HSS.6, MA.HSS.7, MA.NML.T1.1, MA.NML.T1.2, MA.NML.T1.5, MA.NML.T3.1, MA.NML.T4.1, MA.NML.T4.4
High	Media and Influence iCivics Education	This unit challenges individual students to consider how their consumption of constructed media messages impacts them and influences their participation in society.	MA.HSS.1, MA.HSS.7, MA.NML.T3.1, MA.NML.T3.3, MA.NML.T3.5

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section contains a collection of media literacy resources that can be utilized in social studies and civics education.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE LEVEL(S):
Circle - Youth Media Making Toolkit for Educators	"The Youth Media-Making Toolkit promotes youth voice, voting, and democratic participation through media creation. Lessons guide teens to plan, make, and share diverse media about voting and civic engagement: short videos, photos, internet memes, animated GIFs, and persuasive images for social media."	Elementary, Middle, High
Civic Online Reasoning	"The COR curriculum provides free lessons and assessments that help you teach students to evaluate online information that affects them, their communities, and the world."	High
Ctrl-F	"CTRL-F features two distinct modules: Online Search Skills and Verification Skills. Each module has been designed for a particular age range but can be adapted as needed. The modules include lessons, tutorial videos, practice examples and pre/post assessments, plus more."	Middle, High

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE LEVEL(S):
Critical Media Project	"Critical Media Project (CMP) is a free media literacy web resource for educators and students (ages 8-21) that enhances young people's critical thinking and empathy, and builds on their capacities to advocate for change around questions of identity."	Elementary, Middle, High
Digital Civics Toolkit	"The Digital Civics Toolkit is a collection of resources for educators to support youth to explore, recognize, and take seriously the civic potentials of digital life. The Toolkit draws on the research and work of the **MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics (YPP).** The Toolkit explores a range of civic opportunities and dilemmas via 5 modules focused on: Exploring Community Issues, Investigation, Dialogue, Voice, and Action."	High
EAVI: Media Literacy for Citizenship	"EAVI—the European Association for Viewers Interests—is an international non-profit organisation registered in Brussels which advocates media literacy and full citizenship. EAVI supports the adoption of initiatives that enable citizens to read, write and participate in public life through the media."	High
iCivics Education	"From educational games and short-form, just-in-time materials to comprehensive inquiry-based curricula, iCivics resources encourage students to interact with complex concepts in ways they can understand and relate to."	Elementary, Middle, High
Learning for Justice: Digital Literacy Curriculum	"Learning for Justice is a community education program of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) that cultivates and nurtures dialogue, learning, reflection and action from those closest to and harmed most by injustices in the South."	Elementary, Middle, High
Media Smarts	"MediaSmarts has been developing digital media literacy programs and resources for Canadian homes, schools and communities since 1996. Our work falls into three main areas: education, public awareness, and research and policy."	Elementary, Middle, High
Learning To Navigate Generative AI	"This mini-lesson introduces students to changes generative AI could bring to the media landscape, helps them learn about the potential for generative AI to spread misinformation, guides them through steps to verify information they see online, and helps them learn about how generative AI models create new images. "	High
News Literacy Project—Checkology	"Checkology is a free e-learning platform with engaging, authoritative lessons on subjects like news media bias, misinformation, conspiratorial thinking and more. Students develop the ability to identify credible information, seek out reliable sources and apply critical thinking skills to separate fact-based content from falsehoods."	Middle, High
PBS Newshour Classroom	"News videos with accompanying transcripts to support all students' understanding of key facts, providing opportunities for students to share their ideas and questions on complex topics. Students and teachers can share their thoughts on current issues that are important to them by publishing original work on Classroom's Educator and Student Voice blogs."	Middle, High

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	GRADE LEVEL(S):
Project Look Sharp	"...a nonprofit, mission-driven outreach program of Ithaca College. Our mission is to help K-16 educators enhance students' critical thinking, metacognition, and civic engagement through media literacy materials and professional development."	Elementary, Middle, High
Pulitzer Center	"The Pulitzer Center's K-12 education programs and resources cultivate a more curious, informed, empathetic, and engaged public by connecting teachers and students with underreported global news stories and the journalists who cover them."	Elementary, Middle, High
Student Reporting Labs—Storymaker	"Projects, lesson plans, storytelling resources and tutorials just for you. StoryMaker is a powerful learning platform developed by PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs to build the next generation of media creators."	High
Youth Leadership Initiative	"YLI, a program of the University of Virginia Center for Politics, develops FREE education resources designed to assist civics teachers, and encourage students to participate in the political process."	High
Courageous Conversations	"Lesson plans, PPTs, video, listening skills lessons, and creative expression activities help teachers use small group dialogue and discussion to activate media literacy competencies and reduce the fear and hate that lead to violence. "	High
Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education	"The Mind Over Media platform enables users to share examples of contemporary propaganda for educational purposes using crowd-sourcing. Anyone can upload an example of propaganda and comment on it, considering its potential impact on public opinion. Free downloadable lesson plan helps teachers explore contemporary propaganda at the intersection of information, entertainment, and persuasion."	Middle, High
Hacking Hate	"SELMA (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness) is a two-year project co-funded by the European Commission which aims to tackle the problem of online hate speech by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance, and respect. More than 100 activities help teachers and students consider the connections between socio-emotional learning, media literacy, and citizenship education. "	Middle, High
Thinking is Power	Foundations of critical thinking are presented in activities that help students recognize the limits of human knowledge and the ways people deceive themselves to justify irrational and biased beliefs.	Middle, High