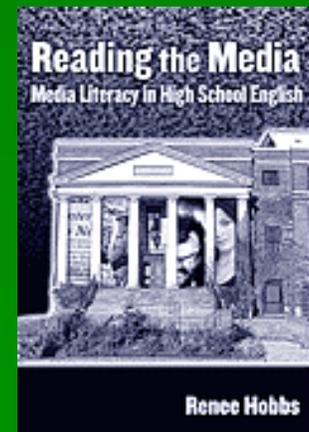


# Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English

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# My Goals

Tell the story of why and how high school English teachers reshaped the curriculum to prepare their students to critically analyze all aspects of contemporary media culture

Describe the development of the innovative curriculum that incorporates popular media, television, journalism, film, and new media into the required English curriculum

Provide empirical evidence of the impact of media literacy on the academic achievement of adolescents



# Research Methods

**QUALITATIVE:** 21 hours of transcribed interviews with teachers and students; student writing samples, curriculum materials

**QUANTITATIVE:** quasi-experimental pre-post design with matched control group with measures of reading, listening, viewing and media analysis skills



# Background

Expansion of the high school for arrival of Grade 9 students creates an opportunity to revise curriculum in Grades 9-12

- **Grade 9** focus on World Literature
- **Grade 10** focus on American Literature
- **Grade 11** focus on Media/Communications
- **Grade 12** focus on elective choices, including creative writing, public speaking, film, poetry, TV production, Shakespeare



# Why They Did It

**RESPONSIVENESS:** “Mass media, popular culture and technology are significant forms of expression and communication in contemporary society.”

**RELEVANCE:** “We are aiming to help students become critical thinkers in responding to the world they live in.”

**RESPECT:** “It’s important to set higher goals to maximize learning for all students.”



# Mind Over Media

Video created by the National Education Association (NEA) and aired on Court TV



# Unique Features of CHS English Dept

**HETEROGENEOUS GROUPING:** Diversity of students' lived experiences makes class discussions worthwhile learning experiences.

**BLOCK SCHEDULING:** Structure enables varied teaching strategies emphasizing multimodal reading/writing

**TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM:**  
Curriculum provides shared aims, goals, And themes while enabling teachers to deploy their unique talents, passions and interests



# Themes

- Advertising, persuasion and propaganda
- Point of view in storytelling, literature, nonfiction and film
- Humans' complex relationship with technology
- The role of journalism in society
- The process of literary adaptation
- How entertainment media reflects and shapes cultural values
- The representation of gender, race and ethnicity in media messages
- The personal and social impact of media violence



# A Focus on Critical Questions

**TURN OFF AND DISCUSS**

TRUE FALSE    \$    GOOD BAD  
Reality Check    Private Gain or Public Good?    Values Check

Read between the lines    What's left out    Record/Save for later

**WARNING**

Stereotype alert    Solutions too easy

Off    Books  
TV    Internet  
Newspapers    Movies  
Radio    Music  
Magazines    Video Games

**Media Education Lab**  
**Temple University**  
<http://mediasmartphilly.com>

**Key Questions of Media Literacy**

1. Who is the author and what is the purpose of the message?  
What techniques are used to attract your attention?  
What styles, values and perspectives are represented?  
How are different people represented?

# Multimodal Texts

## **BOOKS:**

Orwell, 1984

Shelley, Frankenstein

Stark, Glued to the Set

Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Junger, The Perfect Storm

Hamill, News is a Verb

Anderson, Feed

Faulkner, As I Lay Dying

## **FILMS:**

Tough Guise, All the President's Men

High Fidelity, Bamboozled



# Multimodal Texts

**MAGAZINES:** Adbusters, Brill's Content  
The New Yorker, Time, US News & World  
Report

**NEWSPAPERS:** Concord Monitor,  
Boston Globe, New York Times

**TV:** Burden of Proof, 60 Minutes  
20/20



# Instructional Methods

- Activation of prior knowledge
- Close reading & textual analysis
- Discussion connects text to text, text to self & text to world
- Informal pre-writing
- Small-group activities
- Research and information gathering
- Writing for specific purposes to varied audiences
- Variety of writing styles and genres
- Focus correcting (grammar, spelling)

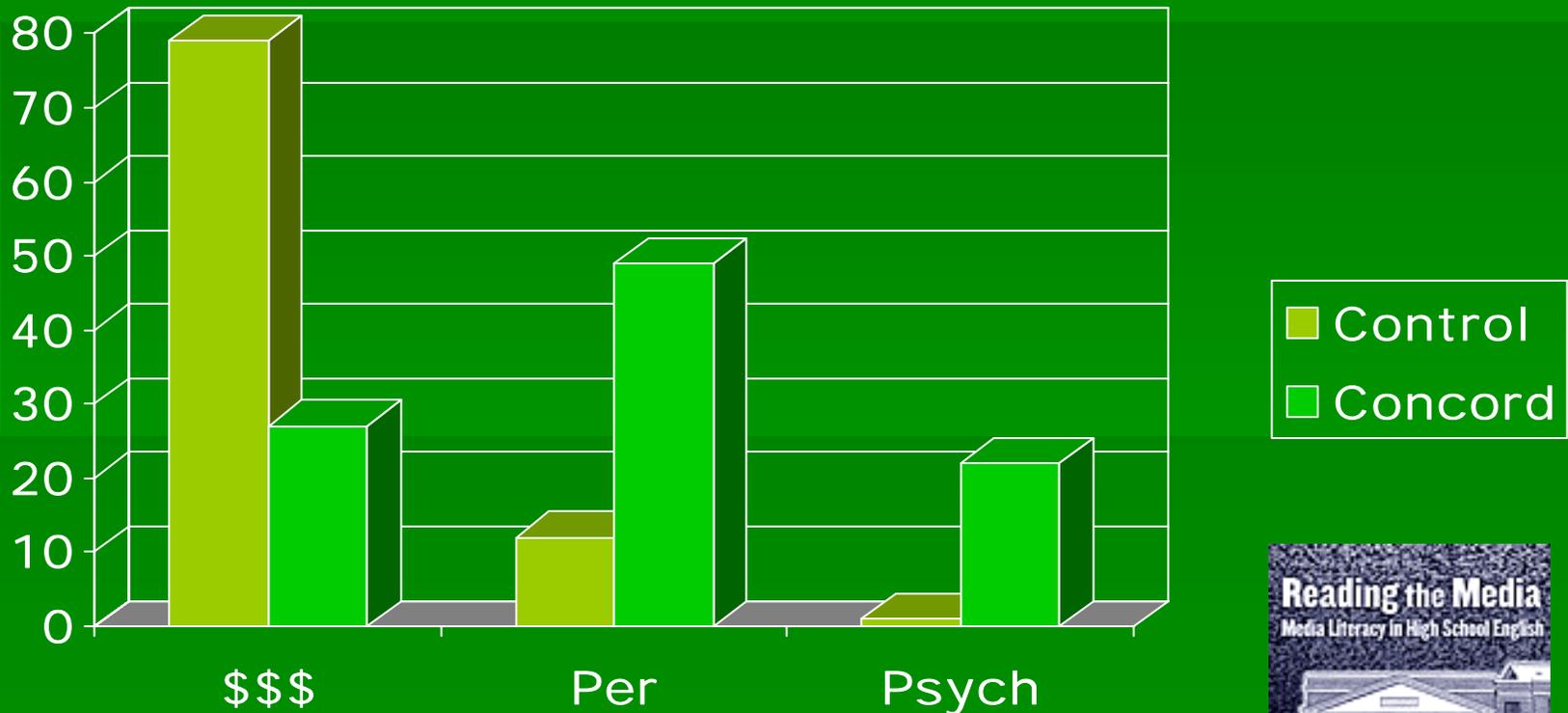


# Measuring Program Impact

1. Advertising Analysis
2. Critical Viewing Skills
3. Civic Engagement
4. Reading Comprehension & Analysis



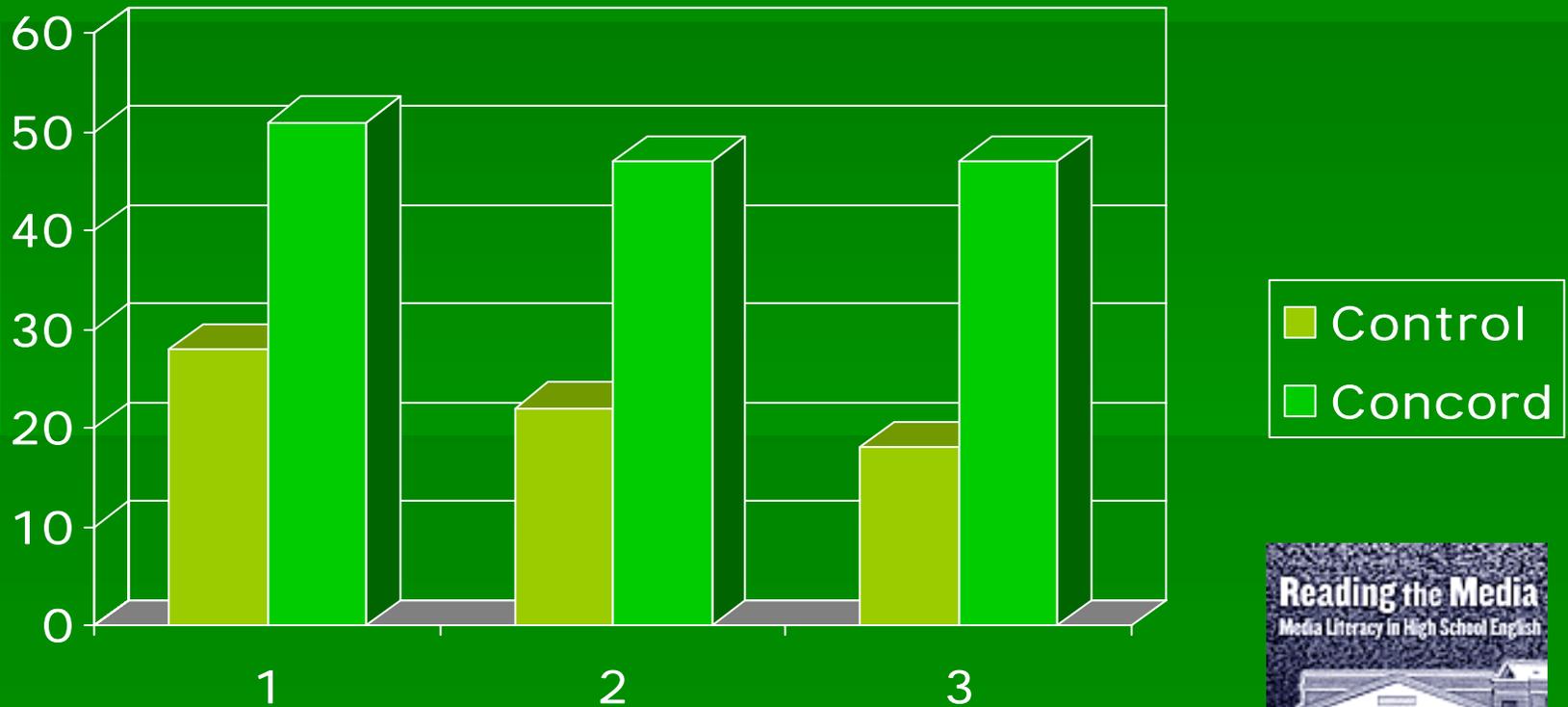
# Increased Understanding of the Complex Purposes of Advertising



\$\$\$ = purpose is a business reason  
per = purpose is a persuasive reason  
psych = purpose strategically links product to emotion



# Recognition of an Unstated Subtext Message in Advertising



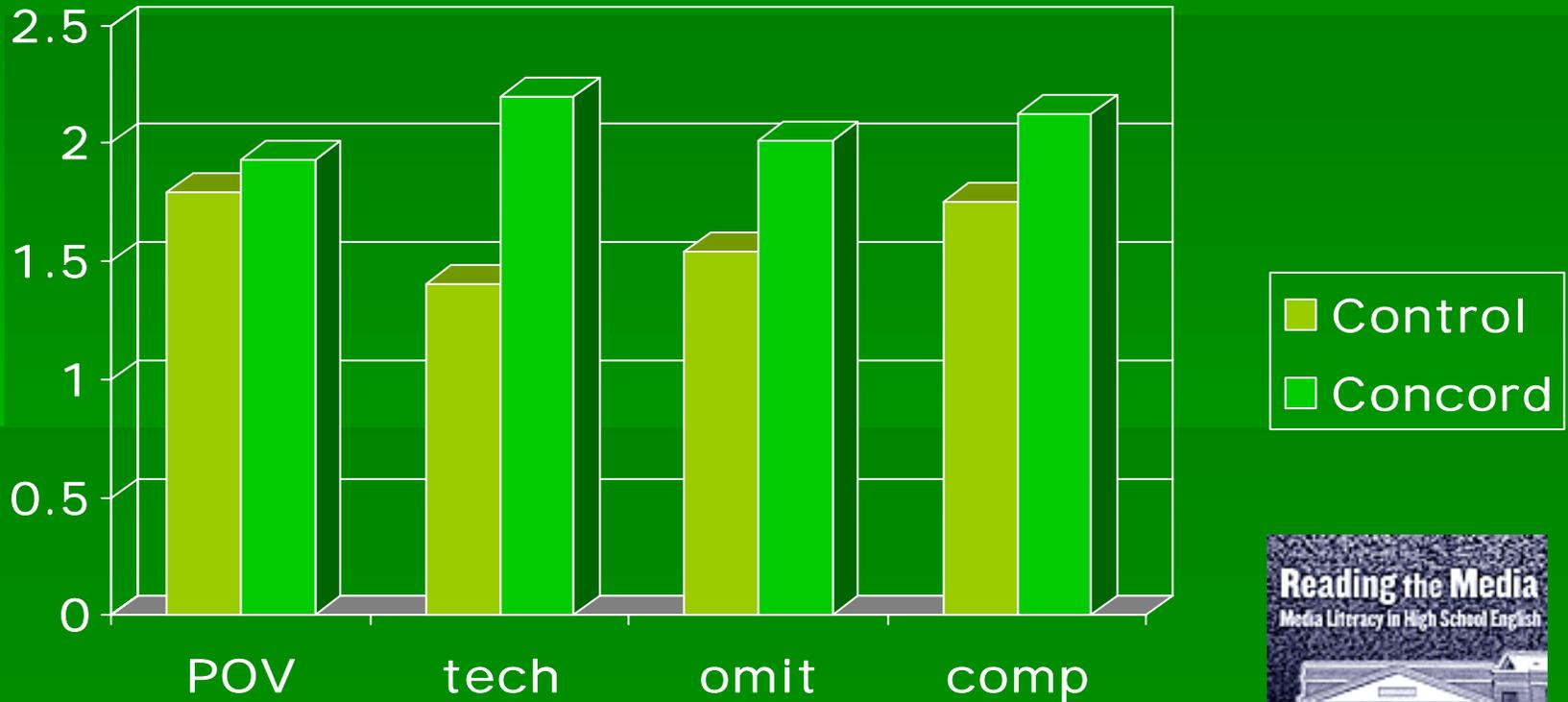
1 = “be cool”

2 = “change your lifestyle by consumption”

3 = “be responsible”



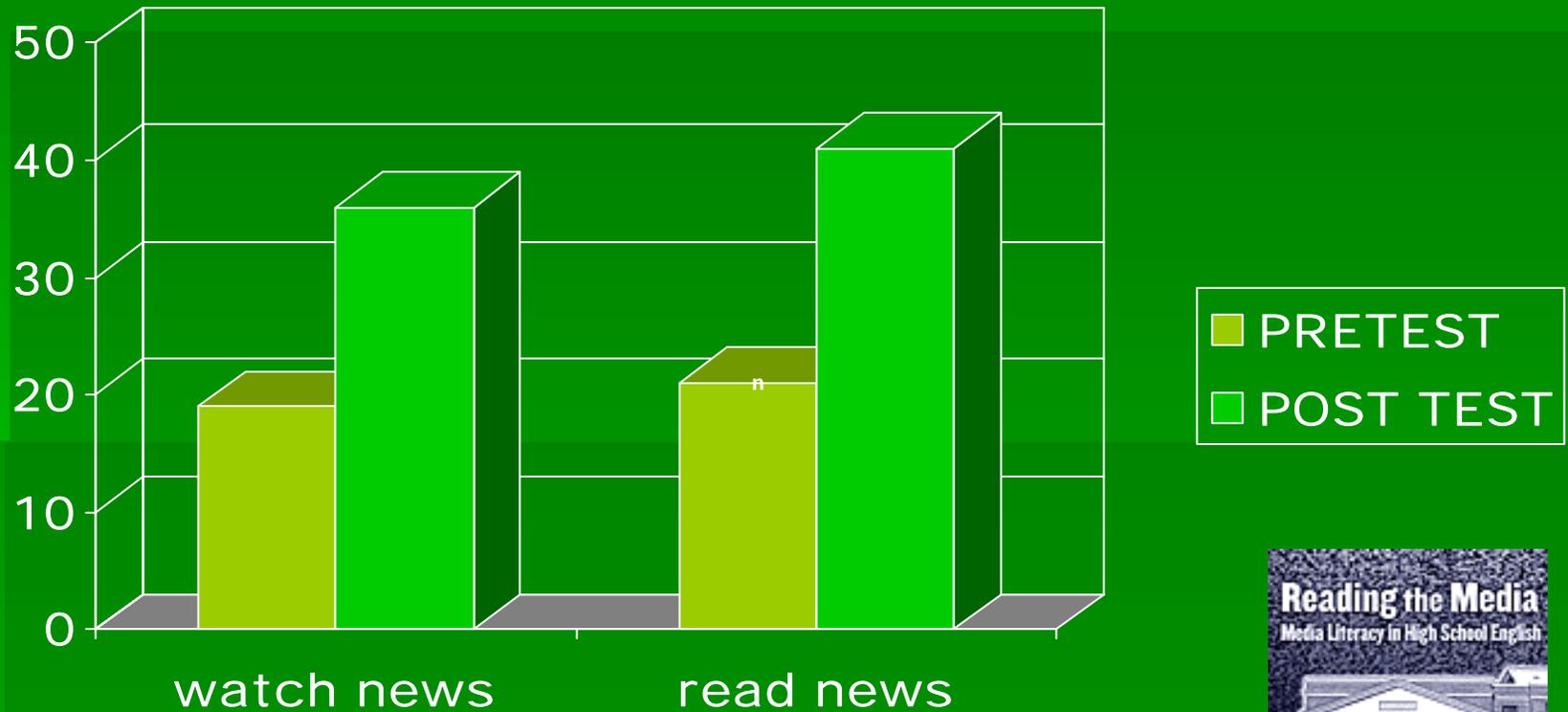
# Critical Viewing of Television News



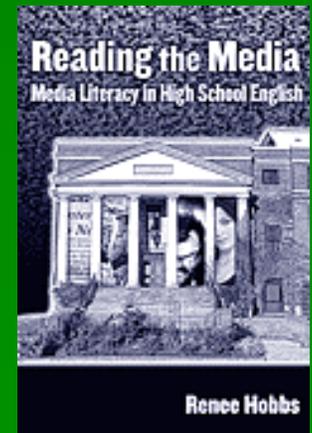
**POV = number of multiple points of view identified**  
**tech = creative construction techniques identified**  
**omit = omitted information supplied**  
**comp = points of comparison/contrast**



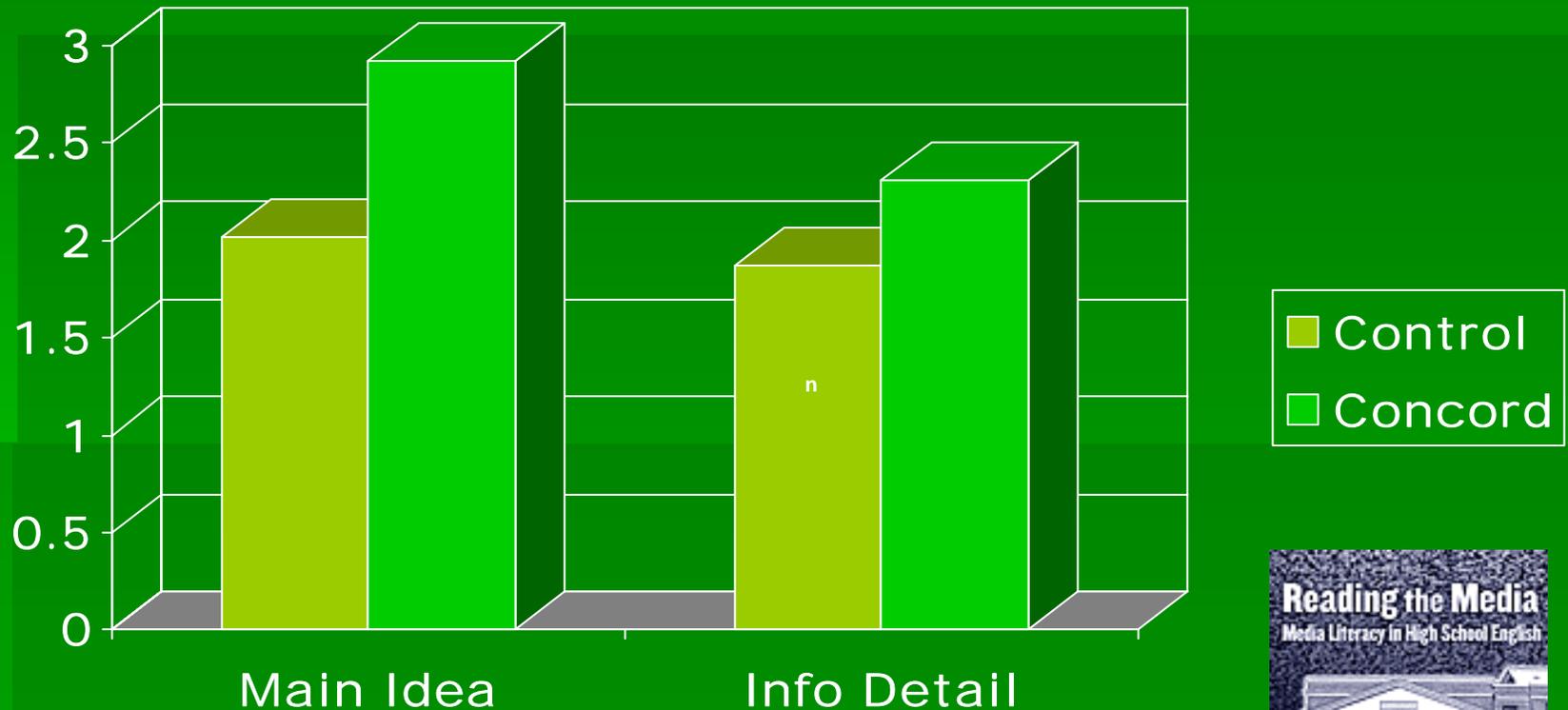
# Increased Numbers of Students Choosing News & Current Events



Percent who watch or read news and current events every day



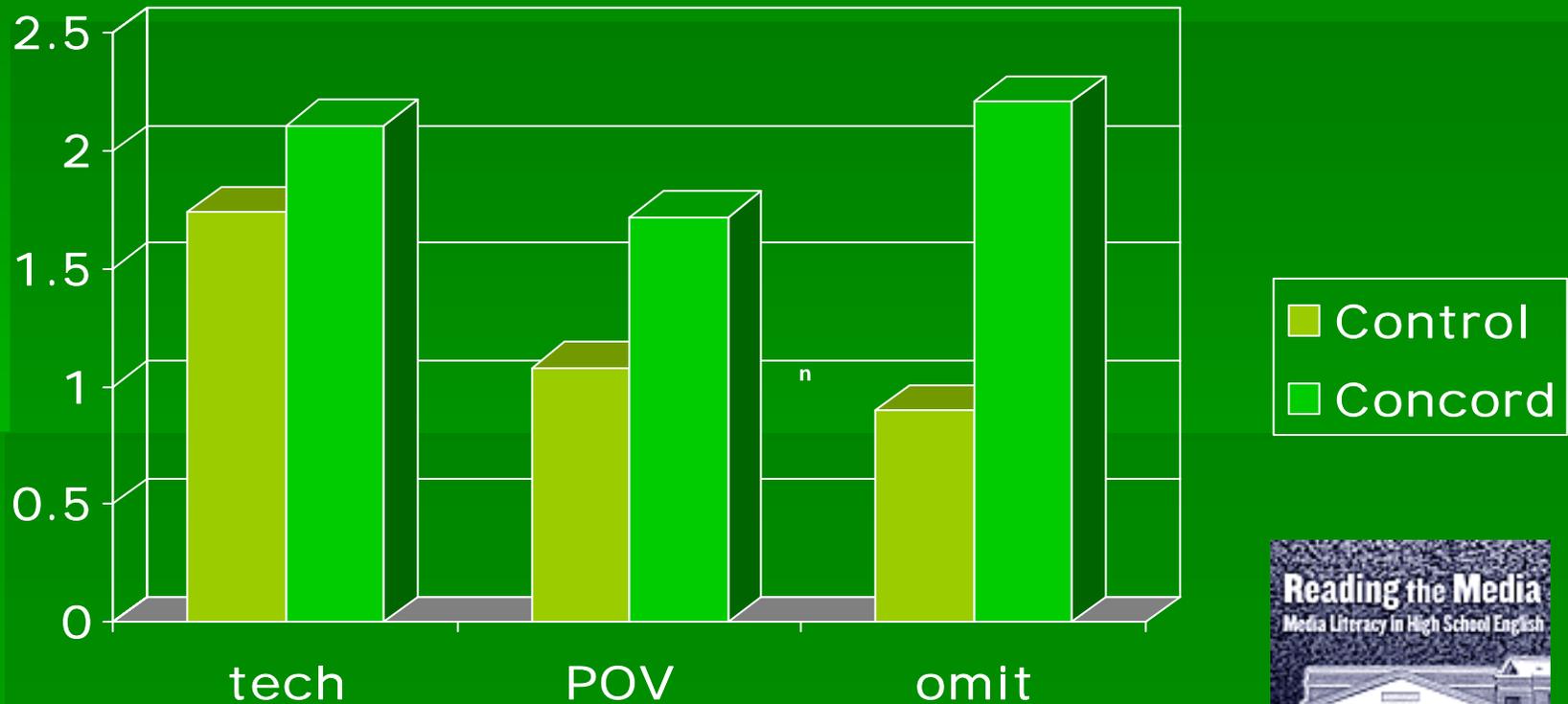
# Increased Reading Comprehension Skills



**Main Idea = number of key points identified in summary**  
**Info Detail = number of specific details recalled**



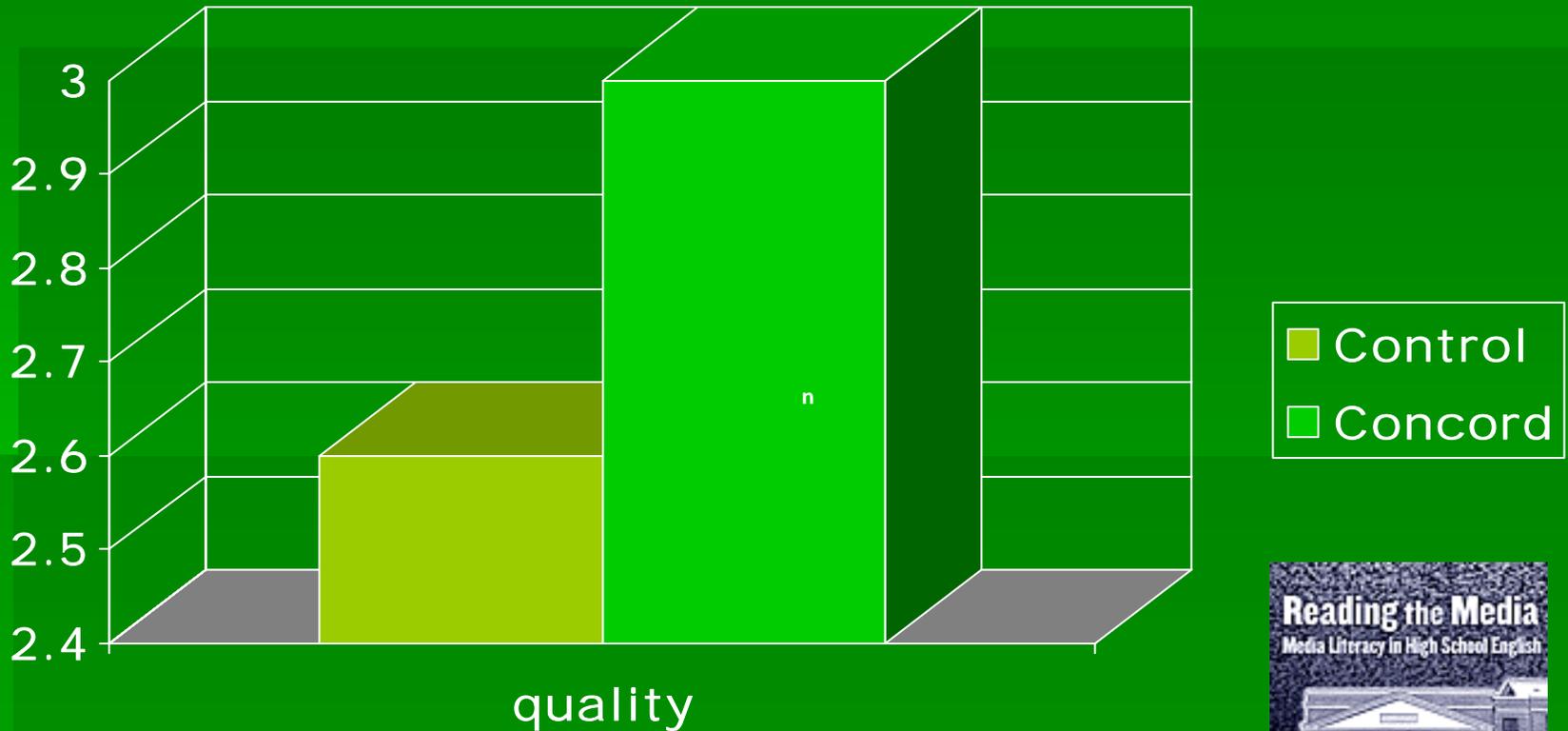
# Increased Non-Fiction Reading Analysis Skills



**tech = number of creative construction techniques identified**  
**POV = multiple points of view identified**  
**omit = omitted information supplied**



# Writing Skills



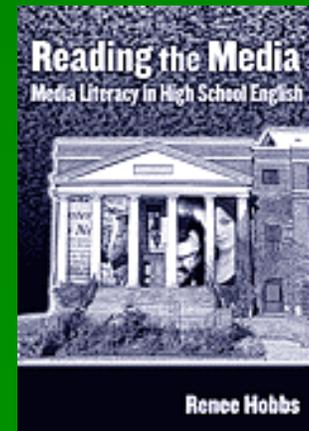
**Quality = holistic score (1 – 5) evaluating clarity, coherence, and sentence structure**



# Measuring Program Impact

## Advertising Analysis

- Increased understanding of the complex purposes of advertising
- Recognition of unstated subtext messages in advertising



# Measuring Program Impact

## Critical Viewing Skills

- Increased skills in analyzing purpose, point of view, subtext & construction techniques

## Civic Engagement

- Increased reading and viewing of news and current events



# Measuring Program Impact

## Impact on Print Literacy Skills

- Ability to summarize non-fiction informational text and recall details
- Ability to analyze author's purpose, point of view, subtext and creative construction techniques
- Writing skills improve



# Student Voices

“Creators of books and movies have to make critical decisions about how to construct a story just like newspaper editors and TV news directors.”

“I found myself wondering about the intentions of things that in the past I would have ignored or absorbed at face value.”



# Student Voices

“Though I considered myself a critical thinker prior to the course, I don’t think that label fit my reading style at the time... I had been trained to passively read a book with a ridiculously obvious theme, come up with the thesis statement, and crank out a paper. This course made that impossible.”



# The Learning Environment at CHS

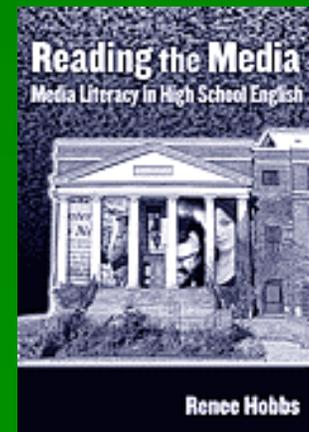
Curriculum reform initiated by faculty

Block scheduling, heterogeneous grouping & common planning time

Vibrant school library media center

Support from school administration

High quality local newspaper



# Challenges for the Future

**RELEVANCE:** Continuing to be responsive to students' lived experience with media and popular culture

**INTERNET ANALYSIS:** Critical thinking about online media and technology

**AUTHORSHIP:** Providing multimodal production opportunities for all students

**OUTREACH:** Implications for education policy statewide



# Why It Matters

“A democratic civilization will save itself only if it makes the language of the image into a stimulus for critical reflection, not an invitation to hypnosis.”

-Umberto Eco

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