



## **Universal K-12 Media Literacy Education Calls for Multiple Policy Approaches**

Position Statement from Media Literacy Now

We all need literacy skills to be active participants as learners, family members, employees, and citizens. But today's students need more than just reading and writing to be literate in the 21st century. Since the onset of the COVID pandemic, screen time among teens doubled from 3.8 hours per day to 7.7 hours according to data published by JAMA Pediatrics in November 2021. And that study excluded the hours spent in virtual classrooms. How are they, and we, learning to decode and understand the tens of thousands of media messages we receive every day?

Media literacy is the literacy of the 21st century. The Center for Media Literacy defines media literacy as “a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet.” The CML also notes that media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. This is not meant to be an add-on to an already full curriculum. It's an educational approach or practice consisting of the skills of critical analysis that can be applied across the curriculum.

**Ideally, all school districts would incorporate media literacy as a standard pedagogy into all subjects at all grade levels. However, there are a number of potential policy approaches that will help us arrive at this ideal.**

### **Statutory laws mandating media literacy teaching in schools**

Some state legislators are seeking to mandate direct media literacy lessons in schools, in some grade levels, or at all grade levels, as a stand-alone subject or incorporated into subject areas. In other approaches, state legislators seek a partial media literacy mandate in the form of, “social media literacy,” “digital citizenship,” information literacy, news literacy, or other form of media literacy. For example, Illinois requires a unit of media literacy in high schools, and New Jersey required “information literacy” (defined as including media literacy) in all grades. New Mexico law allows a media literacy elective to count toward graduation requirements. State legislatures can also require teacher or librarian training, across the board or for certain subjects. For example, Texas requires teacher training for civics. Some state legislatures, such as Hawaii, have taken a first step to elevate and prioritize media literacy via resolutions that encourage districts to incorporate media literacy.

### **Education standards**

Media literacy education is being explicitly added to education curricular standards or frameworks for multiple subjects, including social studies, civics, science, health, technology, financial literacy, and English/language

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arts. This can be as a result of state legislative mandate or as a result of regulatory change. For example: Florida and Ohio mandate media literacy be incorporated into standards for all subject areas; Media literacy education is a prominent theme in the Massachusetts [social studies standards for grades 8 to 12](#); Montana recently adopted updated K-12 [Library Media and Information Literacy](#) standards.

### **Funding**

Washington, New Hampshire, and New Mexico provide examples of states in which the legislature has appropriated funds for teacher training, statewide conferences, state-level coordinators, or directly for new projects initiated by schools or teachers. Funding can also come through federal bills directly related to media literacy, or in a related area, such as the recent [civics education appropriation](#).

### **Instructional resource recommendations**

Some states review instructional resources, showcase resources they believe are especially well-aligned with the state education standards, and make those resources conveniently available to schools and teachers.

### **Other policies**

Laws or regulations could require professional development or pre-service teacher or librarian training or certification. Laws or regulations could require a media specialist in every school, trained in media literacy pedagogy. Laws or regulations could require the evaluation of media literacy learning in schools.

### **Local policies**

School boards could adopt policies requiring media literacy. School district administrations could adopt policies requiring media literacy.

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