

Frank Baker Prepared Testimony House Ed Subcmte February 9 2021

2021 Testimony Given 2/9/21 to the SC House Subcommittee on
Education & Public Works

Thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Frank Baker and for more than 20 years I have
taught in media literacy in our state...

Should we be teaching students how to differentiate fake news
from real news? OBVIOUSLY YES. But that's not happening in
South Carolina. The fact is media literacy—teaching critical
thinking about media— does not exist in today's teaching
standards.

Now the State Dept of Ed will tell you it IS being taught, but
let me rebut that. We know that the ability to judge
information, especially that online, is more important than
ever. But In 2017, 2018 and 2019 the state department of
education's own assessment of SC READY test results showed the
majority of middle and high school students failed at the
ability to assess the credibility of information. Consultants
recommended MORE instruction was needed.

SDE will tell you that the Computer Science & Digital Literacy
standards covers media literacy. It does not. Now it would be
beneficial if EVERY STUDENT eligible took that course. But
that's not happening. [According to the SDE: during the
2019-2020 school year only 2200 students were enrolled in this
course which is only 10% the of 9th-12th graders who are
eligible to take it.

Propaganda, which surrounds us everyday —is only found in
Social Studies during study of WWI and WWII.

And the ELA (English language arts) standards are very PRINT-CENTRIC, paying lip service to how media communicate.

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We've just come through UNPRECEDENTED TIMES the last four years—in which misinformation was rampant. And HOW did that happen? Perhaps because many (people who received no MEDIA LITERACY education) believed what they consumed WITHOUT QUESTION.

The actions you take here today will decide if we continue down the same path, or change direction.

Media, especially social media are powerful forces in the lives of young people. That I think we can all agree on.

What we're NOT teaching young people today is:
how advertising works;
how social media can steal your personal information;
how Smart TV's send your viewing information back to advertisers;
how PROPAGANDA didn't just happen during WWII;
how to understand stereotypes and bias and much more.

HB 3332 simply tasks SDE with creating an advisory committee to examine the problem of the absence of media literacy in our schools and make recommendations. Last year, during a hearing before THIS subcommittee, SDE testified they were not opposed to establishing such a task force. Did they? No. SDE will tell you this bill is not needed: that we are already teaching this. We beg to differ. The teaching standards SDE has previously identified are weak at best. And I can point to several states that have stronger, better worded and implemented standards.

Time is of the essence. Moving this measure to the full committee, and the House, and hopefully the Senate and to the Governor's desk for signing would send a strong signal. I hope you will.

THANK YOU.