

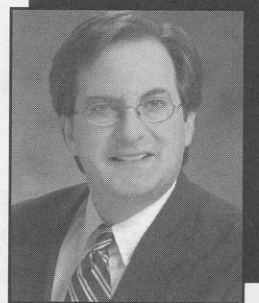
Media Literacy: One of the New Literacy Skills for the 21st Century

This past October, it was my pleasure to have been invited to present on media literacy at the Ohio Educational Library Media Association's annual conference. My workshops were designed to introduce school library media specialists to the new media literacy standards and to share some ideas and resources. As a media educator, I welcome the opportunity to help educators learn more about teaching with AND about the media.

It has been my experience, upon visiting school library media centers, that most school libraries have little in the way of books (or other resources) in either student or professional collections that could be described as related to media literacy. Rather than recommend one or two books, I have created categories of recommended resources on my Web page, The Media Literacy Clearinghouse (<http://medialit.med.sc.edu>). You will find resources on Advertising, Body Image, Current Events, Motion Pictures, Propaganda, and Television, just to name a few. I invite you to look at the vast resources listed there.

Media literacy is not a topic that should be taught in isolation; instead, it fits into English, Social Studies, Health, Math, Science, Arts, Technology and more. Many of us in media literacy education are also advocates for bringing youth culture into the classroom. I know a colleague who uses *The Simpsons* to teach satire. Another uses *Mad Magazine* to teach parody. Yet another uses "hip hop" song lyrics to teach alliteration. The list is endless.

As gatekeepers of the media, school library media specialists can help promote media literacy through the use of newspapers, magazines, television, videos, the Internet, and more. Frequently, I will clip a photo, ad, or an article from a newspaper or magazine that I think is particularly well written and file it away or post it on my website. Leading up to the 2004 Presidential campaign, I created a special Web page called "The Role of Media In Politics" and posted many articles and resources related to political campaign advertising. Recording these "spots"



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from television and radio and using them in the classroom is an excellent way to get students to understand the techniques of persuasion used in political campaign messages.

During the holiday season I promote a lesson plan/activity called "TV Toy Commercials and How They Influence Kids." Of course, this workshop can be done anytime of year. Again the goal is to capture some relevant children's television commercials and use them as a learning experience.

Most recently, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills issued its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy Maps with recommendations for English language arts. As an example, by the fourth grade students should be able to make a record of commercials aired during Saturday morning cartoon programming. Then they should be able to categorize and tally such details as:

- the kinds of products advertised,
- the method(s) the ad uses to attract younger viewers,
- the gender the ad seems to address,
- and estimated ages of children appearing in the ads

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org> [ICT Literacy Map]

The future of education must include media literacy in my opinion. That is why I have been such a strong advocate for many years. I hope you might consider how you can help your teachers and students become more media literate in the coming months. I look forward to hearing from you.