CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Are Media Reports About Internet Predators Accurate?

From 2004 to 2007, Dateline NBC investigated the suspicious activities of internet "sex predators" in about a dozen locations across the US. Volunteers from an internet watchdog group lured potential predators by posing as underage girls in chat rooms and social networking sites, then documented the sexually explicit correspondence they received. For each investigation, Dateline NBC provided hidden cameras and a house for use as a rendezvous point between the men and the "girls" they hoped to meet. The Dateline series "To Catch a Predator," with host Chris Hansen, was one of the most popular shows on NBC for those three years, and the success of the series was crowned by Hansen's 2007 book *To Catch a Predator: Protecting Your Kids from Online Enemies Already in Your Home*. Hansen was brought on the set of NBC's "The Today Show" to promote the book just before its release. In their commentary on the show, Hansen and Today Show host Meredith Vieira did what television journalists sometimes do best--use anecdotal evidence to reach conclusions not entirely supported by the facts. As they viewed excerpts of the on-camera sting operations, Hansen and Vieira together spun out a scenario for viewers in which predators lurked anywhere in any town in America, waiting for an opportunity to meet your children. If we're willing to trust NBC, the fact that 250 men were successfully enticed by volunteers and appeared for meetings should lead us to believe that Hansen was really uncovering the tip of the iceberg. But this isn't necessarily so.

Information from the federally funded Youth Internet Safety Survey has been exploited in similar ways by journalists, politicians and advocacy groups alike, and in countless venues. The survey, undertaken in 2001 and 2005, is carried out by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Crimes Against Children Research Center of the University of New Hampshire, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In 2001, fifteen hundred youth between the ages of 10 and 17 participated in brief telephone interviews. The phrase "one in five" came into wide, immediate and long-lasting circulation after the survey reported that 19% of survey respondents had received "sexual solicitations" online.

The second survey of 2005 (YISS-2) reported that 13%, or about 1 in 7 children received sexual solicitations online. Yet in 2006, an Illinois Congressman appeared at a Libertyville middle school to warn 8th graders that "pedophiles approach 1 in 5 kids using sites like My Space." To date, the website for Commonsense Media, a media awareness organization, still instructs parents to remind their children that "1 out of every 5 kids gets sexually solicited online."   Most summaries of the findings neglect to add one pertinent detail--as of 2005 44% of these solicitations were made by children 18 or younger. Many summaries also fail to observe the distinction made by the survey between unwanted solicitation--which could be a matter of asking suggestive questions about a recent date--and more aggressive solicitation, in which the solicitor asks to meet the youth in person, calls them on the telephone, or sends offline mail, money, or gifts. Four percent of 2005 respondents received aggressive solicitations. And while it is truly unfortunate that any of these respondents were also victims, just two respondents to the 2005 survey-- about 1/10 of 1% of the sample--reported that they had been assaulted after agreeing to meet offline.

Despite the many scare stories out there in search of willing audiences, it isn't difficult to find good sources of information and advice--even from the same sources that generate those stories. The Dateline NBC web page features a short video of an NYU psychologist who recommends that parents listen to their children before they take any adversarial role in enforcing rules for internet use.

The Commonsense Media website www.commonsensemedia.org includes a substantial collection of reviews which can help parents make informed decisions about the kind of media products their children should use. The Family Online Safety Institute www.fosi.org, another notable organization in this field, provides links to dozens of organizations which can provide a wealth of resources. I-Safe www.isafe.org, an organization endorsed by the US Department of Education, provides a package of online tutorials for parents, including packages for those who are interested in becoming involved in local media awareness campaigns. As with any source of online information, exercise your own judgment in choosing which sites to trust.

Research Highlights

NCTE Website Features Partnership for 21st Century Skills Literacy Map

Recently, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) featured a literacy framework on its website produced by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The Partnership emphasizes the teaching of skills called for by employers in a 21st century workplace. NCTE chose the Partnership's 21st Century Skills Map for English as a model "multimodal literacy" framework which demonstrates how a variety of texts--printed, visual and aural--can be integrated into a more traditional language arts curriculum. As NCTE's guideline for multimodal literacy states: "The techniques of acquiring, organizing, evaluating and creatively using multimodal information should become an increasingly important component of the English/Language Arts classroom."

In earlier days, educators and politicians called for more computers in the classroom, but were unsure of what exactly they would do with them. The map produced by the Partnership offers a wide range of assignments which show how digital technologies can be used as effective learning tools. For example, one assignment asks fourth grade students to contribute multi-media displays to a local historical society that provide information about a community group that hasn't yet been included in the society's exhibits. With this assignment, the work that students turn in is not simply evaluated by a classroom teacher and left in a folder, but created to meet standards of presentation and production required for public exhibition.

As NCTE observes in its guideline, "With more opportunities and greater ease in sending their work out into the world, the quality of the ideas and the effectiveness of the communication media will become more important and more relevant to students." If schools can give students the learning opportunities outlined by the Partnership's 21st Century Skills Maps, students will not only become knowledgeable producers of media, but will also very likely leave school with the skills they need to enter a 21st century workforce.

New Report Documents Success of Achieve's American Diploma Project

A new report released this summer by Achieve, Inc. shows that individual state efforts to set college- and career-ready standards for high school graduates have led to a remarkable degree of consistency in English and mathematics requirements.

Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan, non-profit organization formed in 1996 by the nation's governors and business leaders, launched its American Diploma Project in 2004 in response to criticism from founding members that most state high school standards are not anchored in the skills and knowledge employers and colleges demand. In that year, Achieve developed and published a series of English and mathematics benchmarks to help states align their standards with these real-world skills. The English and Communications benchmarks also include two "strands" for "viewing" and "producing digital media," the first media skills benchmarks to be disseminated nationwide. Thirty-three states joined the ADP Network. Achieve's report, "Out of Many, One: Common State College and Career-ready Standards from the Ground Up," followed the work of sixteen ADP states which voluntarily re-drafted their standards for

instruction. The report found that:

- States increased the rigor of their English and mathematics standards
- State standards have a clear, well-defined common core in English and mathematics
- The common core was a byproduct of aligning standards to real-world demands

This "common core" has significant implications for on-going deliberations in Congress over legislation of national standards. While policy leaders debate national standards, is it possible that state-led efforts have already changed the debate?

Whatever the final outcome, some state leaders are already expressing satisfaction with the results of their work. According to Governor Phil Bredesen of Tennessee, "Not only did this effort help us to raise the bar and increase the rigor of our English and math coursework in Tennessee, it spurred other key education reforms that will help guarantee our students better lives."

Department of Education Hires Consortium Consultants for Professional Development Workshops

For the past four summers, the Department of Education has conducted workshops for teachers around the country focusing on professional development in reading, math, science and other core content areas. The Department's Office of Educational Technology (OET) decided to add technology sessions to this year's workshops, and contacted Tessa Jolls and Brad Koepenick to lead them. As OET's David Butler reflected on the choice, he said, "Media literacy is an important and relevant topic for teachers today, and I was interested in having sessions on integrating media literacy concepts into the core curricular areas." Koepenick and Jolls conducted sessions in Pacific Palisades and Twenty-Nine Palms on August 12th and 13th. Koepenick has taught media literacy skills in Los Angeles charter middle schools for several years. He began his session with this question: "Who rented your eyes this weekend?"

Med!aLit moments

Introducing MediaLit Moments!

MediaLit Moments are short clips and/or activities that provide teachable 'AHA' moments to illustrate one of the *Five Key Questions* for media literacy. Designed for ease of use in the classroom, lessons require limited preparation and are easily downloadable.

This month's MediaLit Moment: Who Gave SpongeBob His Square Pants? *(see page 9)*

CONSORTIUM
for MEDIA LITERACY

Uniting for Development

About Us…

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

Media Literacy Resources

Tip of the month: Teaching media literacy is different than teaching factual knowledge. Media literacy provides a process for learning—the process of inquiry—which can be applied to any content or subject area. The *Five Key Questions* are a starting point but it takes repeated practice of applying the questions to different media and in a variety of activities to really master the process. It's like learning to tie your shoes or ride a bike—you usually don't "get it" the first time. Becoming media literate takes practice, practice, practice!

Featured sites in this issue:

Common Sense Media   www.commonsensemedia.org

Family Online Safety Institute www.fosi.org

I-Safe   www.isafe.org

National Council for Teachers of English www.ncte.org

Consortium for Media Literacy www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org

Express Yourself! We invite you to write your Congressional representative to express the need for media literacy education in our schools www.house.gov/writerep

Med!aLit Moments

Who Gave SpongeBob His Square Pants?

Aside from the celebrities who lend their voices to big budget productions by Pixar, voiceover artists are some of the least known people in Hollywood. Yet these are the very people who are so instrumental in the creation of animated characters that we all know and love, from SpongeBob to the Family Guy to Remy the Rat in *Ratatouille*.

In this MediaLit Moment, students get to discover what it takes to create an animated character.

AHA! -- Somebody had to create this character before he ever came to life! SpongeBob is the result of someone's imagination.

Key Question #1: Who created this message?

Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.

Grade Level: 3-6

Materials: DVD player, DVD of The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie, or access to Tom Kenny in Central Park
http://www.nick.com/turbonick/index.jhtml?extvideoid=46669

Activities: Ask students what they know about the making of cartoons. How are cartoons created? Who decides what the character looks like, what he says, what he wears, where he lives, who his friends are? Who is your favorite cartoon character? Why?

For any of the SpongeBob DVDs, play the special features which discuss Tom Kenny's role in creating the SpongeBob character. Make sure to include live shots of Kenny voicing the character in studio. Or see the link above for Tom Kenny in Central Park.

Ask students questions to assess their comprehension of the feature they've finished watching. Who is Tom Kenny? What does he do? How important is Tom Kenny's voice to the character of SpongeBob? What did Kenny and others do to turn SpongeBob into the character we see on the screen?

Extended activity: Can you draw a cartoon character? What would the voice of your character sound like?

Key Question #1 for Producers: What am I authoring?

Materials: "Animatics" special features on SpongeBob DVDs. The animatics features re-play voice tracks from the DVD while displaying just the storyboards for the corresponding scenes. Or access the Inside Nicktoons Studio with SpongeBob SquarePants at http://www.nick.com/turbonick/index.jhtml   You'll find a link there to a video of an artist drawing characters.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2008, Center for Media Literacy, www.medialit.com