CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

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In This Issue…

Where Are We Now? Institutionalizing Media Literacy

It isn't often that we take a step back to ask ourselves "How are we doing in introducing media literacy to society and to institutionalizing it in the education system?" Yet given the enormity of the change that is required to institutionalize media literacy in today's globalized world, it is a vital question that demands perspective and knowledge of how change management works.

Given the ubiquity and impact of the internet and social media tools, change is well upon us and accelerating with global consequences. What was scarce in the past is now plentiful: access to information. What was plentiful in the past is now scarce: face-to-face interaction, guidance and filtering from caring adults for youth as they access information. What used to be static is now more dynamic: design and delivery of curriculum. What used to be dynamic is now becoming more static: individual state standards have moved to a common core of national standards (Council for Chief State School Officers, 2009). Instruction that is one-size-fits-all with lockstep progress, is now yielding to individualized instruction, tailored to individual progress. Many of these changes are rooted in technology, and the story is just beginning.

Like it or not, the very fabric of everyday school life is being rewoven. And none too soon! The call to action is compelling, driven by changing demographics and the inexorable demands of a global economy. Yet in the U.S., the exodus from the education system continues and is dramatic: the National Student Clearinghouse reports that 55 percent of first-time college undergraduates who matriculated in the fall of 2008 finished a degree within six years, versus 56.1 percent of those who began in fall 2007. Keep in mind, the U.S. already had the lowest college completion rate in the developed world, at least among the 18 countries tracked by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The K-12 system also has a substantial portion of students voting with their feet: the latest figures from the U.S. Dept. of Education report that in the 2009-2010 school year, 21.8 % of high school students dropped out before earning their high school diploma, with higher averages for subgroups such as African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans (http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/index.html?exp). This is especially troubling in light of the fact that as of July 1, 2014, Hispanics comprise 26.3% of all babies younger than age 1; while 13.7% of babies younger than age 1 were blacks and 4.4% Asians, meaning that for the first time, "minority" children will no longer be the minority, since they will comprise 50.4% of U.S. children now being born, with expectations for continued growth in these populations in the U.S. (http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/05/17/explaining-why-minority-births-now-outnumber-white-births/).

With such conditions, the argument over the sustainability of the present system should be over, with the real question being what characteristics the education system should now embrace and embody. Due to the proliferation of technology tools and the engagement of youth with the technology, the need for valuing change and changing values is urgent. Even

those teachers and administrators hailing from "successful schools" are typically being measured by yardsticks rooted in the past, not the future. With the proliferation of media tools, media literacy is a necessity, not a luxury, for today's students.

Students themselves are calling for media literacy education. In an April 2015 column for the *Indiana Daily Students*, Griffin Leeds wrote: "The University has a clear obligation to its students that isn't being fulfilled. Required courses aren't unusual to any of the students here. These exist to help ensure students have a basic grasp in general areas like math, science and the humanities. Most colleges would defend that there is an importance to fostering a love of learning even outside one's field of study. It behooves the University to claim it produces well-rounded students who can face the modern world with newly-acquired skills. So why doesn't IU have a media literacy course mandatory for all students?"

It is time to introduce a new set of the 3 R's, to Re-examine, Re-value and Re-Imagine what we mean by the words "an educated person" or a society with "high levels of education." Media literacy is now recognized as a skill-set that should be at the center of education today – but change management continues to be needed to realize this vision.

Read CML's [Change Management e-book here](#).

This month's *Connections* also includes an interview with the leaders of NAMLE, and a MediaLit Moment that will give your students a new view on data and statistics.

Change Management

"In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed."
Abraham Lincoln, first Lincoln-Douglas Debate, August 21, 1858

Through the years, the education system has been subject to waves of theories and fads, most of which have faded with time. Teachers weary of "revolutions" in education and the "flavor of the month" are often understandably cynical in regards to calls for change. Yet media literacy education has persisted and grown in spite of the obstacles, perhaps because its very participatory nature is compatible with how change is accomplished over time, since change is totally dependent on whether people want change or not, and on whether public sentiment ultimately favors and sustains change.

Media literacy has long survived (and sometimes thrived) at the grassroots level. It is individual parents and teachers who want their children to understand media messages – and to be able to decide freely about the contents or calls of such messaging – who have enabled today's increasing emphasis on the importance of media literacy education.

The words "media literacy" are not new, nor does "new media" change the essence of what media literacy is, or affect its ongoing importance in society. In a 1955 issue of the Better Broadcasts Newsletter, a publication of the American Council for Better Broadcasts (a predecessor of today's National Telemedia Council), Louis Forsdale discussed seven specific in-school activities and then said, "Through activities like these (and many many more) we may hasten the inevitable maturation of the newer media and help our students gain necessary multi-media literacy. Is there an educational job to be done which has a higher priority?" (Forsdale 1955).

This 1955 statement gave media literacy the name "media literacy" in the U.S., but the call for media literacy goes back to the days when radio was the latest communication technology. The "Wisconsin Association for Better Radio Listening Bibliography Helpful to Teachers" lists and describes booklets with titles such as "Skill in Listening" (published by the National Council of Teachers of English) and details 22 articles about "good listening" dating back to 1935. (Spence, 1950). Dr. Leslie Spence, Ph.D., Chairman of Education for the Wisconsin Association for Better Radio and Television, also addressed the new technology of television with her 1952 title "Let's Learn to Look and Listen," featuring a slogan on the front cover which said "Radio-TV: Everyone's Responsibility." (Spence, 1952).

As the internet and television and mobile phones have placed media before billions of people, citizens have come to see the importance of understanding the role of media in our lives, and calls for media literacy education have consequently increased. These calls for media literacy are not confined to the U.S., indeed, media literacy is a global movement that transcends

boundaries. But regardless, because change is unsettling and risky – especially when the education of our children is being affected. Change that is sustainable cannot easily be imposed. It must be enabled so that people are empowered to embrace change. And though the grassroots are essential for sustaining change, systemic change requires leadership and top-to-bottom efforts as well as the needed bottoms-up support.

John Kotter, a professor at Harvard Business School and a change management expert, introduced a series of eight steps – considered classics -- in his 1995 book, "Leading Change." New media tools can amplify these steps towards faster adoption of new ideas and processes: these 8 steps, and some examples of how they relate to the media literacy field, are:

1. **Create Urgency**. First, people must perceive that change is necessary and needed and beneficial. Step 1 requires a great deal of time and effort – it's important to identify benefits, threats, scenarios, and opportunities. There must be convincing reasons why change is desirable (for example, the current high school drop out rate demonstrates that the U.S. education system needs change). In a corporate setting, Kotter says that 75% of a company's management team need to support the change – and when translated to enabling media literacy in a setting like the U.S. population or education administrators at more than 17,000 school districts and more than 3,000 four-year-degree-granting institutions, this support for change requires a significant number of individuals.

   This step is never really completed – people must continue to see media literacy as a vital need for them to sustain media literacy education. As an example of one organization doing its part to promote media literacy, since 1989, CML has continued to emphasize the importance of media literacy education in all its work, whether at the policy level or with individual schools, teachers, parents and students. Elizabeth Thoman, CML's founder, began her work in the late 1970s; she helped identify the need for media literacy through her founding of Media&Values Magazine and her advocacy work through the years. This work remains as relevant today as it was at the beginning of CML's existence.

2. **Form a Powerful Coalition**. Change never happens in a vacuum; both the grassroots and leadership must work together to gain currency and to control and disburse resources. Leaders often emerge from outside a traditional hierarchy; change comes from the efforts of influential people whose power comes from a variety of sources.

   This is especially true where there is an entrenched bureaucracy, such as the U.S. education system, which is enormous and in which, on average in 2014, public school districts spend $10,658 for each individual student. Although education is overseen and primarily funded at a state level in the U.S., through the U.S. Department of Education, the federal government alone provides nearly $79 billion a year on primary and secondary education programs. As of 2014, taxpayers overall spend $537 billion per

year on primary and secondary education, and an additional $363 billion on college education. Internationally, the U.S. spends more on education each year than any other country, with highly arguable effectiveness.

Yet at present, there are no data available on amounts spent on media literacy education; one can assume that in the greater scale of expenditures, media literacy education only commands a miniscule amount of money. These overall education spending figures, however, provide some perspective and a sense of urgency on the necessity of forming and building a potent coalition capable of wielding political and economic power. It is this recognition of the need for a U.S. coalition that propelled CML's helping to found and to continue to support the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). (Read more about NAMLE and how to get involved on page 10).

3. **Create a Vision for Change**. When asking people to do something, they must be able to understand what to do and why it is beneficial. Components of this step include articulating the values that are central to the change, developing a short statement of the goal or a picture of the end result being called for; creating a strategy to accomplish the vision; and insuring that others can easily share what this vision is. The agenda for providing media literacy education throughout the U.S. (and indeed, the world) is highly ambitious, yet other such large-scale visions have succeeded. For example, Microsoft Corporation recently restated its vision, to put "a computer on every desk and in every home" because it considered this mission to be accomplished.

    Each organization plays a different role in the development of media literacy. For example, the Consortium for Media Literacy, publisher of this newsletter, says that it is dedicated to building a body of research-based programs demonstrating that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy for encouraging citizen engagement, improved literacy and better health.

4. **Communicate the Vision**. The competition for attention in today's global media world is intense, but communications are essential for gaining understanding, acceptance and promotion of the vision.   And communications are not just verbalizing the vision but also acting out the vision, as an example and an inspiration. Communication is a constant and ongoing process – and this newsletter is a prime example of CML's ongoing communication effort, to help share understanding of media literacy education and to give others useful tools for implementing media literacy programs.

5. **Remove Obstacles**. People, processes and structure often impede change, and it's essential to identify these obstacles and to take action to remove such barriers. On the positive side, it's just as important to "find the friendlies" – those who support desired change – and find ways to ally with them and reward their efforts.

In the media literacy field, there are many obstacles to change, and over time, some of these obstacles have been overcome or removed. For example, because of the expense and the time required to incorporate media production into classroom practices, the construction aspect of media literacy education was often neglected in favor of teaching deconstruction. Technology advances and the widespread presence of social media tools has eroded this barrier, and today, everyone is a "producer" of media as media production has democratized. A further barrier, however, is the paucity of pre-service and professional development programs aimed at helping teachers incorporate media literacy and media production into their curricula and classroom teaching. An example of structural barriers, of which many still remain, lie in situations like the NCAA not giving credit for media literacy courses to count in young athletes' required course completions; these types of rules discourage participation of youth in media literacy classes, since additional course work is required to meet NCAA Divisional requirements.

6. **Create Short-Term Wins**.   Success breeds success, and to sustain any change movement, it helps to achieve some short-term goals that build toward the long-term. Such "wins" motivate people to keep trying, and also demonstrate that success is indeed possible. Among some techniques that further short-term wins are finding manageable projects that can be completed within budget; identifying projects that can be completed independently of critics or those who don't support the change; measuring results and being able to demonstrate quantitatively that the desired goals were accomplished; and recognizing the people who successfully implement programs and projects. These types of "wins" build a critical mass that becomes impossible to ignore, while building support over time.

   In the media literacy field, such short-term wins have nurtured and sustained media literacy education for many years. The field has celebrated many "firsts" that many dedicated people have initiated – these stories are celebrated through many venues as examples of media literacy education at its best.

7. **Build on the Change**. Victory cannot be declared too early, Kotter warns. Long term change requires more than quick wins; each success provides an opportunity to build on what went right and what improvements may be needed. Fresh ideas, fresh leadership draw on the "bench strength" that is needed to fuel growth and support.

   With the early state of adoption of media literacy education, there is no danger of victory being declared. However, as the *Voices of Media Literacy* project revealed through 2009-2010 interviews with media literacy pioneers, it was evident that these pioneers were highly concerned about "what is next" and many of them, while still actively engaged in promoting media literacy education, acknowledged that new leaders and

different approaches must be matched to the times. While early conceptual work regarding media literacy remains valid regardless of the media forms and technologies, new applications require new and expanded understanding.

8. **Anchor the Changes in Culture**. A sure sign of success is when change is normalized and taken for granted in everyday life, when the change is "systematized" and "institutionalized" and embedded in structures that make the change difficult if not impossible to extract. Signs of these anchoring techniques include the celebration of success stories; training programs in which the change is always included; the recruitment and selection of staff who have the requisite skills in alignment with the goals; and insuring that new leadership embraces the changes going forward.

   Media literacy education is far from being institutionalized at this point in time; however, the field has made strides in identifying basics of media literacy – such as the Core Concepts used widely throughout the world -- that can be used in ways that are consistent, replicable, measurable and scalable. These qualities are fundamental to being able to make media literacy available to all, and to being supported through systemic efforts.

Change is not easy. It is not quick. But the importance of critical media analysis and practice in education cannot be ignored.

Kotter's eight-step model is explained more fully on his website: www.kotterinternational.com

NAMLE Announces Conference Presenters
Renee Hobbs, Tessa Jolls, Paul Mihailidis, Carolyn Wilson, Belinha De Abreu, and Antonio Lopez will be presenting at the NAMLE Conference this June! Don't miss this exciting event.

Find more information here.

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 communications that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth. **http://consortiumformedialiteracy.org**

Resources for Media Literacy

A Coalition for the U.S.: National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)

The United States is fortunate to already have a major organization dedicated to providing a coalition for media literacy education – the National Association for Media Literacy Association (NAMLE), which is sponsoring its [two-day national conference](#) in Philadelphia June 25-27, 2015. Comprised of a combination of more than 50 organizational members and numerous individual members from around the U.S., NAMLE has grown since the inception of its predecessor organizations in 1997 and its renaming in 2008. Recently NAMLE restructured its board and established two new Leadership Councils – one for members and one for students – and continued its Advisory Council to meet the evolving demands of the field and to strengthen the foundations for organizing.

"2014 proved to be a good moment to reassess where NAMLE has been and where it is going," said Sherri Hope Culver, who until 2014 led NAMLE as president for seven years. "We see NAMLE as a big tent organization whose purpose is to support and help advance the field. We want to address media literacy in the broadest way possible, and it is important to have our mission and our structure aligned to deliver on our mission."

Now, NAMLE's board is focused on providing a voice for the field and for enabling members to do the field work necessary to build and grow. The board is no longer elected from membership; it is recruited through a committee of the board itself and elected by the board to encourage a broad diversity of views and expertise useful to building a nonprofit membership organization.

Culver said, "When I first joined the board, not many people outside of the media literacy field knew what media literacy is. Today, we don't need to convince people so much – people have heard the words 'media literacy.' But we still need a bigger presence in Washington and elsewhere." Many NAMLE member organizations are joining together to contribute to this push, such as Media Literacy Now, which is pressing legislation at state levels to encourage media literacy. Another example of cooperation is at the NAMLE Conference itself, which will provide a plenary session focused on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and the foundation of a North American Chapter of the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL), an effort supported by UNESCO.

Progress in recent years has been notable: in 2012, NAMLE was able to move from being an all-volunteer organization to having a part-time executive director, Michelle Ciulla Lipkin. Additionally, NAMLE now has a membership coordinator, Jill Brooke, and a position open for an operations coordinator. The ability to fund such operations is key to building: "We've seen that what most media literacy practitioners want is community and communications, and helping fulfill this need is where NAMLE fits into the bigger picture," Lipkin said. "We are helping connect educators and practitioners, organizations, districts and universities. Our

main challenge is to help members engage with the media literacy movement and with each other to build the field itself and the support needed." To this end, NAMLE sponsors numerous projects to communicate and connect. Certainly, one of the most prominent of these projects is the Journal of Media Literacy Education (JMLE), which provides peer-reviewed articles featuring research and voices for the field.

NAMLE is determined to add services beyond its signature conference and professional journal. David Brown, NAMLE's new president and Managing Director of the Marketing Collaborative, noted, "We see advocacy as one of our core functions, and to further the field, we need to strengthen the capacity of NAMLE itself and that of its members. We want to focus our efforts in off-conference years to building our leadership, strengthening our resources and offerings, and to increasing our general operating support. It isn't enough to do good, we must do well, too."

With a background in public television, advertising and the ministry, Browne brings executive experience with change management and organization development to the media literacy field. His vision is inspirational: "Words and pictures matter. Media affect how people see themselves, how they represent themselves, and how they define their lives – media are educators, even if the media doesn't see itself that way. We must ask ourselves, 'What is education today?' and we need to adapt to a new definition that includes media literacy. Many people are 'doing media literacy,' but they just don't know it. Citizens need to be equipped to know how to consume media, how to evaluate it, how to produce it, in a more critical fashion. We have a great foundation with media literacy education; now we must build on that foundation."

Note: A history of NAMLE and current information about projects appears on NAMLE's website at www.namle.net. Elizabeth Thoman, founder of the Center for Media Literacy (CML), was a co-founder of the Partnership for Media Education, a predecessor organization of NAMLE begun in 1997. The Center for Media Literacy was a founding member in 2001 of the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA), the immediate predecessor organization of NAMLE, and Tessa Jolls, CML's president, was the first lifetime member. CML is also a lifetime organizational member of NAMLE.

Med!aLit Moments

How Data Looks

It is one thing to read a listing of dry facts and figures, and it is another to actually see how the data looks in ways that can be illuminating and often surprising. Yet it is still imperative to be confident of the source of the data and the accuracy of the portrayal. The techniques that can be used to illustrate data visually often show a different way of thinking that clearly show how the Text + Context = Message.

In this MediaLit Moment, students have an opportunity to explore the construction of various types of charts, graphs and maps that give them a picture of techniques that can be used to attract attention and go beyond numbers on a page to give new and expanded meanings to the text at hand.

Ask students to evaluate the impact of sample visuals compared to a listing of statistics

AHA!: A picture is worth a thousand words – or numbers.

Grade Level: 5-8

Key Question #1: Who created this message?
Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3: Other people experience the same media message differently.

Materials: Computer with high-speed internet connection, LCD projector and screen. Various visuals and explanations are available at:
http://www.vox.com/2014/9/23/6829399/23-maps-and-charts-that-will-surprise-you

Activity: Review the charts and maps depicted and decide which you would like to critically analyze with your class. Before sharing any of these visuals with your students, begin by asking a provocative question or two that will help students think about knowledge that they may already have about the subject, for example:

- Is Africa bigger than the United States, or about the same size?
- What drugs cause the most deaths in the United States? Are they legal drugs?
- Are there more murders in the United States today than there were ten years ago? What makes you think this? Where do you get your information?
- What countries use the metric system? What is the advantage of using the metric system?

After exploring these questions, show the students the pertinent chart or map that you selected. Ask students if they were surprised by any of the information depicted – and if so, how? And why? Reference KQ #3, and CC #3 as students reveal their differing perceptions. Then ask the students to Think-Pair-Share, focus on KQ #1, so that they identify the source of the information. If students have access to iPads or computers, ask them to look up the

source of the information and use a checklist to determine whether the organization/website is credible or not. Discuss briefly, asking students for evidence to support their opinion on the credibility of the source and the depiction.

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, ©2002-2015.