CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue...

Theme: Introducing CML's Media Literacy Trilogy

Media literacy advocates often attempt to attract educators to the cause by pointing to students' high levels of engagement with media content and new media tools, but this message seems to gets lost as teachers feel compelled to prepare students for state benchmark tests in traditional subjects such as English and mathematics. Both teachers and administrators might change their minds if they paid greater attention to high school completion rates.

Last June, *Education Week* released its *Diplomas Count 2011*, a report on post-secondary educational pathways which included a detailed analysis of graduation rates across the United States. Although the *Diplomas Count 2011* report hailed the graduation rate of 72% as "the highest level of school completion in more than two decades" (p.1) and called this figure a "dramatic turnaround," the fact remains that 28% of our nation's youth are dropping out of high school.

The figures are even more dismal for large urban districts such as New York City Schools and Los Angeles Unified, where graduation rates hover around 50%. All these figures suggest a persistent and systemic failure of our public education system.

Academics, administrators and journalists alike tend to focus on ethnicity and socioeconomic status as causal factors for low graduation rates, sometimes with good reason. According to a 2006 report commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, dropout rates approach 50% for African American, Latino and Native American students (Bridgeland et al, "The Silent Epidemic," p. i). But what reasons do high school dropouts actually give for their decision to leave school? In this same study, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts," in-depth focus group interviews were conducted with 467 young men and women in 25 locations across the United States. The interviews yield some interesting answers.

The most common reason given by interviewees was that they had felt disengaged from school. "Again and again, participants recounted how high school was 'boring, nothing I was interested in,' or 'it was boring. . .the teacher just stood in front of the room and just talked and didn't really like involve you' " (p.4).   47% said that classes were not interesting, and 69% said they did not feel motivated and inspired. By comparison, 35% said they left because they were failing school, and 32% left to search for a job. The interviewers also asked students what might have kept them in school. 81% said there should be more opportunities for real-world learning, 81% wanted better teachers, and 75% called for more individualized instruction that could connect to their interests and would be relevant to their lives (pps. iv-v, 11-12). If these findings are any indicator, institutionalized discrimination is not the main problem, though it may be a significant one. Rather, it seems that students are expressing their dissatisfaction with one-size-fits-all instruction—a central component of the industrial model of

education that has dominated American schooling since the opening decades of the 20th century. In this light, media literacy instruction, with its capacity to engage students in both personal reflection and intellectual inquiry, looks less like a "frill" which schools can ill afford, and looks more like an instructional strategy which schools will need to integrate into their curriculum if they are to make any credible claim to relevance and inclusiveness.

In this issue of *Connections*, we introduce the CML Trilogy, which includes two e-books on the role of media literacy in the systemic change in education which is already underway; professional development materials for teachers interested in using the CML framework; and a comprehensive set of tools for media literacy instruction in the classroom. In our research section, we draw from the e-books to discuss a new paradigm of education which is less like a utopian dream and much more like an existing, expanding phenomenon. We also use 'diffusion of innovations' theory to discuss the role of media literacy educators as change agents in the educational system. And in the MediaLit Moment for this issue, your students will have the chance to study and debate the ethics of political campaign advertising.

The Revolutionary Power of Media Literacy Education in an Information Age

In his 1988 book *Megatrends*, author John Naisbitt quips that we are "drowning in information and starved for knowledge." Naisbitt wrote his book over twenty years ago, yet schools are still acting as if this were not the case. University graduates who have familiarized themselves with the information base of separate disciplines deliver chunks of subject matter content to students, often through lecture and direct instruction. Students are conceptualized as containers for content, and are expected to store it, retrieve it and decant it onto the pages of standardized tests.

Yet somewhere in cyberspace, virtual clouds of data float above us, ready to rain down information at the touch of a button. Clearly, accessing information these days is not as important as what we do with it. It's easy enough to find that Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, but historians may differ on the reasons why he issued it at this time. So should we catalogue these differing views as information brought to us by the Web, or as opinions that need to be evaluated? Media literacy skills come into play as we ask, who published this? Who are the authors? Are they a credible source of information? If the Proclamation is criticized and the Confederacy cast in a favorable light, could the publishers be Southern revisionists attempting to completely re-frame the history of the Civil War?

Asking relevant, productive questions is the way to create knowledge from what once appeared to be inert and "uninterested" information. How do we learn to ask those questions? Through practice with critical thinking skills, many of which are defined in Bloom's Taxonomy of Knowledge, an educational tool discussed at some length in the e-books which introduce the CML Trilogy. How can we learn to ask questions for critical thinking in a systematic way? The CML framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts provides a reliable model for this process. Though the framework is specific to the field of media literacy, it has been field-tested time and again in classrooms across the world.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education published a National Educational Technology Plan which argued that schools should not simply integrate educational technologies into classroom instruction, but should also utilize them in the 'front office' to more effectively target the needs of individual students. In the e-books to the Trilogy, CML President and CEO Tessa Jolls conducts an in-depth exploration of the potential of new media and communications technologies to make systemic changes possible. For example, curricula published in physical textbooks were necessarily presented in a linear and sequential "cookbook" fashion. With the advent of the interactive textbook, curricula can be presented in dynamic, interchangeable modules—modules which can be used to investigate questions or issues of interest to students themselves.

The e-books differ somewhat in emphasis. The first in the series focuses on Change

Management and the revolutionary impacts of new media and communications technologies on our educational system. With so much information available from a wide array of sources, many of them authoritative, teachers have lost their monopoly on subject matter expertise. What should their role be now? The second e-book discusses the philosophy, history and practice of media literacy education for Deconstruction *and* Construction. For example, educators who are interested in implementing media literacy programs in their home institutions will find essential reading in the 'criteria for success' gleaned from previous media literacy implementations both large and small.

The e-books will be particularly useful for teachers, administrators and parents who are uncertain about the relative advantage of these technologies compared to the risks which their use entails. For decades, media literacy instruction has been used to build students' capacity to assess risks and make health-related decisions (e.g., nutrition, violence prevention). Where parents and schools are concerned about student exposure to harmful or otherwise undesirable content, media literacy education helps students make their own reasoned judgments about the value of the media messages they encounter.

The e-books also make clear that such risks present valuable opportunities to apply critical thinking skills to the social implications of the technologies which students use every day. For example, we can quickly identify and find friends and acquaintances, but what does this mean for safety and privacy? In thoroughly exploring the meanings and values which different people ascribe to these technologies, students also learn the ethics of citizenship in as digital age. Worried that students will use their smartphones in class to socialize, sext and bully? They could also forge relationships with local museum educators and help re-invigorate the arts program in your school.   As the e-books and the rest of the materials in the Trilogy demonstrate, working with the philosophy and methods of media literacy can help turn such possibilities into a reality.

Media Literacy and the Diffusion of Innovations

What enables and constrains the progress of media literacy as an educational reform? For some answers to that question, we turned to the body of scholarship on diffusion of innovations. In *Diffusion of Innovations*, a classic text now in its fifth edition, Everett Rogers defines an innovation as an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption (which could be as large as an entire corporation).

In the context of educational reform, change agents and clients are the main actors involved in adoption of innovations. Change agents attempt to influence clients' innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency (such as an educational organization).

Clients perceive—and judge—innovations by five main characteristics:

1) Relative advantage – the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes
2) Compatibility – the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent

with the existing values, past experiences and needs of potential adopters

3) Complexity – the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use
4) Trialability – the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis
5) Observability – the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others

Of these attributes, the framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts excels in terms of trialability and observability. Teachers can use them to create a short activity, a unit, or an entire curriculum; and teachers can observe increased student engagement, as well as evidence that students have demonstrated skills called for in state standards. In addition, educators are likely to discover that they can readily create simple lessons before they move on to crafting something more sophisticated.

Perceived incompatibility is one of the major barriers to adoption of media literacy education in school settings. Rogers' text includes many short case studies, and one of these, the federal Million Solar Roofs initiative, provides insight on the difficulties which media literacy advocates often encounter in schools. Begun in 1997, the goal of the program was to populate one million rooftops across the nation with solar power by 2010. The federal government relied on utility companies to promote their diffusion. However, in 1999 one survey revealed that only 2.5% of utility companies nationwide had adopted the technology. Why was the adoption rate so low? According to the author of the study, most utility company managers perceived solar technologies as potentially disruptive to the centralized operations of their companies. With standard power systems, electricity is transmitted from a central power plant to a series of substations, and then to individual homes. Photovoltaic cells, which are installed on individual homes, are decentralized, modular and easily disconnected from the utility grid.

The centralized system of electrical transmission is similar to the teaching and delivery of curriculum in most K-12 schools. Administrative personnel, who play roles similar to power company managers, are in charge of annual coordination and planning of curricula across the entire school. Teachers are analogous to substations, and students are comparable to individual utility customers. A direct, centralized system of transmission of knowledge is maintained. Moreover, the curricular framework of most schools is generally linear, sequential, and divided strictly by discipline. By comparison, the framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy can be used to create lessons which are integrated across the entire curriculum. In addition, lessons may be combined in a modular fashion to create units based on a particular theme, key question or problem.

One basic principle of the diffusion of innovations is that people who have experience using an innovation are more likely to advocate for its adoption. The great majority of the utility managers surveyed in the study possessed substantial knowledge about photovoltaic cells, but had no experience with incorporating them into the operations of their companies.

Without such experience, they were more likely to perceive PV technologies as a 'misfit' for their organization.   Similarly, some school principals understand the basic principles of media literacy instruction, but few have had experience with the teaching or delivery of media literacy curricula. Unfortunately, that lack of experience often leads them to perceive media literacy as a fragmenting, time-consuming "add-on" to the curriculum.

Rogers posits five stages in the innovation-decision process:

1) Knowledge – when the client is exposed to an innovation's existence and gains an understanding of how it functions
2) Persuasion – when the client forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards the innovation
3) Decision – when the client engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation
4) Implementation – when the client puts a new idea into use
5) Confirmation – when the client seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, though he/she may reverse this decision if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation

According to Rogers, communication, including communication through mass media channels, is often sufficient to bring clients to the knowledge stage. Persuasion is a different matter, however. Diffusion investigations show that most individuals do not evaluate an innovation on the basis of scientific studies. Instead, most people depend upon a subjective evaluation conveyed to them from other individuals like themselves who have already adopted the innovation.

The interpersonal nature of persuasion raises the bar for the change agent. She will need to establish an "information exchange relationship" (p. 369) with her potential clientele. She will need to convince them that she is credible, competent and trustworthy, and she must show understanding and empathy for clients' needs and problems.

If the client is an organization, like a school, the change agent may also pursue strategies which can bring the organization to critical mass, the point at which enough members have decided to adopt the innovation that it becomes self-sustaining. In addition to seeking champions of the innovation among organization leaders, she may recruit change 'aides' from the organization's rank-and-file members. Rogers writes, "The innovation should be introduced to intact groups in the system whose members are likely to be relatively more innovative" (p.361). Rogers points to corporate research and development units as such a group. In the school setting, venturesome, innovative teachers are very likely to play this role.

Implementations conducted by CML which follow a train-the-trainer format are intended to build such a critical mass. If school leaders have developed a rapport with CML staff, demonstrate an understanding of the philosophy of media literacy education, and have

indicated interest in a trial implementation, CML staff train a volunteer corps of teachers in the use of the framework. If this group is confident that the framework can be used to enhance instruction, they move the school towards critical mass by sharing their knowledge and expertise with other teachers.

For schools that have undertaken a trial implementation of media literacy instruction, re-invention may become a powerful force in favor of adoption. According to Rogers, whenever an organization begins to implement an innovation, it enters a stage of redefining and re-structuring, ". . .when the innovation is re-invented so as to accommodate the organization's needs and structure more closely. . . ." (422). Earlier, we discussed the problem of the perceived incompatibility of media literacy instruction with centralized school curricula. In the re-defining/restructuring stage of implementation, however, the flexibility and adaptability of the framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts is likely to become evident to school leaders. They are also likely to feel that they have an ownership stake in this new idea.

Through re-invention, what once appeared incompatible to some members of the school community now appears to be an excellent match.   And the thing that some media literacy advocates perceive as one of the greatest liabilities of the movement may be recognized as one of its greatest assets.

The Voices of Media Literacy

As part of The Voices of Media Literacy project, we are pleased to announce that the interview with media literacy pioneer Jean-Pierre Golay is now available!

Jean-Pierre Golay, former director of the Centre d'Initiation aux Communications de Masse (CIC), Lausanne, Switzerland, pioneered media literacy programs during the Nazi era, uncovering the power of propaganda and introducing the first educational television programs in Switzerland. He is now retired and living in Madison, Wisconsin.

Find this interview and many others by going to:
Voices of Media Literacy

Just Released: CML Trilogy for *AnyTime, AnyWhere* Media Literacy Learning

Media Literacy: A System for Learning *AnyTime, AnyWhere*.

This just released Trilogy offers everything you need for applying CML's framework for media literacy to all curricular subjects – *any time, any where!* The Trilogy includes: Change Management, Deconstruction, and Construction. Each part of the Trilogy is introduced in an e-book written by CML President Tessa Jolls, and includes a Professional Development module featuring the Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions for media literacy, and a comprehensive section on Tools for Implementation and curriculum planning. This complete package, which expands on the earlier work, *A System for Change*, is an ideal resource for administrators and staff who want to implement a comprehensive and systematic media literacy program in their district or school with a research-based framework. Read the e-books here: Change Management and Deconstruction/Construction (free). All Trilogy materials including Professional Development modules and Tools for Implementation will be available for purchase through CML's online store.

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.

www.consortiumformedialiteracy.org

Resources for Media Literacy

Teaching Tip: Involve the parents of your students in media literacy education by encouraging the continued practice of the 5 Key Questions and Core Concepts at home. Just like establishing good nutritional habits, parents play an important role in developing their child's media diet**.**

Obama Administration Issues Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights

On February 22nd, the White House released its new report "Consumer Data Piracy in a Networked World: A Framework for Protecting Privacy and Promoting Innovation in the Global Digital Economy." Noting that federal data privacy statutes have been enacted for specific sectors, such as healthcare, education, and financial services, the Obama Administration intends the report to act as a spur to legislation which would 1) address data privacy issues for the public as a whole; and 2) articulate a consistent set of privacy policies to reduce uncertainty for businesses and inspire trust among consumers.

The report builds on a December 2010 "Privacy and Innovation Green Paper" written by a Department of Commerce Internet Policy Task Force. In drafting its recommendations, the task force consulted with multiple stakeholders, including companies, trade groups, privacy advocates, academics, State Attorneys General, and Federal civil and criminal law enforcement representatives. The Administration hopes to coordinate a similar process in which stakeholders will apply the seven-point Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights contained within the White House report to specific business contexts.

Finally, the Administration intends to generate:
1) Congressional legislation
2) Industry codes of conduct
3) Strong enforcement mechanisms (enforced by the Federal Trade Commission)
4) Engagement with international partners to arrive at a framework of globally recognized fair information practice principles

The Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights includes the following:
- Individual Control – Consumers have a right to exercise control over what personal data companies collect from them and how they use it.
- Transparency – Consumers have a right to easily understandable and accessible information about privacy and security practices.
- Respect for Context – Consumers have a right to expect that companies will collect, use and disclose personal data in ways that are consistent with the context in which consumers provide the data.
- Security – Consumers have a right to secure and responsible handling of personal data.
- Access and Accuracy – Consumers have a right to access and correct personal data in

usable formats, in a manner that is appropriate to the sensitivity of the data and the risk of adverse consequences to consumers if the data is inaccurate.

- Focused Collection – Consumers have a right to reasonable limits on the personal data that companies collect and retain.
- Accountability – Consumers have a right to have personal data handled by companies with appropriate measures in place to assure they adhere to the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights.

The report also makes recommendations and comments on important secondary issues covered by these rights. For example, data brokers have no direct contact with consumers, so consumer control of data may be impractical. To address this problem, the Administration recommends that brokers provide abundant and transparent information on their data sharing practices. In its commentary on the Accountability principle, the report suggests that companies train employees in fair information practice principles, conduct full information audits as appropriate, and ensure that third parties are under enforceable contractual obligations to the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights.

For more information, and to access this report, point your web browser to:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/privacy-final.pdf

Med!aLit Moments

How to Edit a Candidate

In 1960, Richard Nixon didn't think about the possibility that his unshaven, haggard appearance could influence viewer responses to him during his debate with John F. Kennedy. Fifty years later, tens of millions of dollars are spent each election cycle for televised political advertisements. According to a recent story in the *Washington* Post, expenditures on television advertisements for the 2012 presidential campaign are already approaching $70 million ("Tracking TV ads in the presidential campaign," 15 February, 2012).

Between 1960 and 2012, it has practically become a tradition for producers of television ads for one candidate to use heavily edited excerpts of appearances by opposing candidates to evoke highly unfavorable impressions of both them and their policies. In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the opportunity to examine the edited 'gaffe,' both as media technique and rhetorical strategy for re-framing the representation of candidates. Along the way, your students may be motivated to articulate what they see as the rules of fair play for campaign advertising.

Have students compare a televised interview of a political candidate with a political advertisement which contains an excerpt of the interview

AHA!: The political ad turned the candidate I saw in the interview into a very different person!

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power

Grade Level: 8-10

Materials: high speed internet connection, computer, data projector, screen

Activity: Introduce students to the topic by asking them if they've seen any of the political ads for the 2012 campaign season, and ask them if there are any they really liked or disliked. Explain that in this lesson, they'll get to see the difference between a political ad and a news interview.

Lest your students believe you're teaching from a partisan point of view, you may want to visit FlackCheck.org for critiques of ads by both Democratic and Republican candidates. This particular ad was chosen for no other reason than to facilitate the lesson and generate discussion.

Begin by playing an ad posted online by the Democratic National Committee on February 1st which takes Mitt Romney to task for his tax policies:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T34KR02E7O8

How persuasive is this ad? Why or why not?

Next, play the CNN interview between Soledad O'Brien and Mitt Romney which was excerpted in the political ad:

http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/01/mitt-romney-middle-income-americans-are-focus-not-very-poor/

What did the producers of the DNC ad keep from this interview, and what did they edit out?

What's the message that most people would 'take away' from the interview excerpt in the DNC ad? From Romney's interview? What's the effect of the editing?

Keeping Key Question and Core Concept #5 in mind, ask students why they think the DNC edited Romney's interview in this way.

Feel free to show the ad again.

FactCheck.org, a project of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, rated the DNC ad as one of the worst ads of the 2012 campaign season (The rating actually comes from FlackCheck.org, a sister site to FactCheck). Do they agree? Why or why not? If they agree, what's wrong about the way that DNC producers edited Romney's interview?

Extended Activity:
For a humorous (if labored) comparison between attack ads and 'trash talk' on social media sites, you might want to screen and discuss "Attack Ads Ain't Pretty"

http://www.flackcheck.org/taking-down-the-worst/2012/attack-ads-aint-pretty/

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, © 2002-2012, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com