

# A MEDIA LITERACY CHECKLIST

According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), the purpose of media literacy education is to develop the **habits of inquiry** and **skills of expression** needed by critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world. A lesson, activity, curriculum, or initiative is likely to meet this goal if it:

- Goes beyond merely using media to teach; uses media to help students acquire new or improved critical thinking skills.
- Teaches students to ask their own questions about media rather than just responding to questions that the teacher asks.\***
- Teaches students to ask questions of *all* media (not just the things that they find suspicious or objectionable, and not just electronic or digital media but also printed media like books).
- Teaches students to ask questions when they are *making*, as well as using, media.**
- Encourages students to use multiple means of expression (using image, sound, and word) and helps them determine which ones will best achieve their goal(s).
- Encourages students to seek multiple sources of information and helps them learn to determine which sources are most appropriate or reliable for any given task.**
- Respects that students interpret media through the lens of their own experiences, so different people might interpret a media document or message in different ways (e.g., a student might disagree with a teacher without being wrong).
- Requires students to justify opinions or interpretations with specific, document-based evidence.**
- Does not *replace* the investigative process with declarations about what a teacher or a cultural critic believes to be true.
- Seeks rich readings of texts, rather than asking students to arrive at a pre-determined "true" or "correct" meaning.**
- Incorporates into analysis (including semiotic or aesthetic analysis) an examination of how media structures (e.g., ownership, sponsorship, or distribution) influence how students make meaning of media messages.
- Focuses on a media document's significance (including who benefits and who is disadvantaged) or what students might learn from it rather than trying to determine whether a particular piece of media is "good" or "bad."**
- Includes media representing diverse points of view (e.g., does not reduce complex debates to only two sides and/or actively seeks alternative media sources).
- Helps students move through anger and cynicism to skepticism, reflection, and action.**
- Provides for assessment of media literacy skills, as well as outcomes related to other subject area content or skills.

\* For more guidelines or examples of media analysis questions, visit [www.NAMLE.net/core-principles](http://www.NAMLE.net/core-principles)

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