



# Implementing Media Literacy In Your Classroom

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## INTRO: DEFINING MEDIA LITERACY FOR TEACHERS

This guide is for teachers of all levels and all classrooms to incorporate media literacy into their instruction. There are many educators who are interested in teaching media literacy, but may not know where to find assistance. This is where NAMLE and this guidebook come in!

To begin with, media literacy is the ability to **ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, CREATE**, and **ACT** using all forms of communication. The term “media” refers to all electronic or digital means and print or artistic visuals used to transmit messages—you can read it (print media), see it (visual media), hear it (audio media), or change and play with it (interactive media), or some combination of each. Literacy is the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages.

The following guidebook follows four steps that are important to include when teaching media literacy in any classroom.

Step one defines media literacy.

Step two facilitates a conversation to connect teachers with their students and understand their media usage.

Step three provides suggestions of how to analyze media from early childhood to high school.

Step four incorporates hands-on learning by having students create their own media.

### What You’re Already Doing

After reading the definition above, you might be thinking, I’m already doing a lot of that! If you are having students research online, asking them to produce videos, showing film clips, or discussing song lyrics, you are almost there! Or maybe you are...

- Investigating the production of a movie version of a story through analysis of dialogue employed or omitted and camera language.
- Discussing news/magazine articles from various sources or countries of origin to examine opposing viewpoints, similar viewpoints, language used, etc.
- Analyzing political cartoons, advertisements, and social media.
- Investigating social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc. and examining how these constructions are established and perpetuated for whom and by whom.
- Writing articles to illustrate a concept, persuade an audience, convey an original interpretation or idea.
- Creating an advertisement, movie poster, or tagline to convey a message or idea.
- Creating a blog, podcast, or other media piece to share thoughts, ideas, interpretations.
- Developing a Twitter account with sample tweets to represent a literary character, historical person, or event.

If you’re doing these things (and many others), you are certainly using media in your classroom in a very rich way. In order to fully integrate media literacy, we suggest you follow these four steps.

# 4 STEPS TO TEACHING MEDIA LITERACY

## STEP 1: DEFINE

Students may not all know what “media” is, but once they have a definition and some examples, they will likely provide their own ideas, since all students have some experience with different forms of media.

### WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

Media literacy expands how we think about “reading and writing” to other forms of media—not just print media that we read, but media that we see, hear, and interact with. There is no one easy definition of “media,” but most students will know media when they have to give examples. You might spark a conversation about media by asking students to give their examples of media first.

Since it can be so difficult to explain to younger students what media is, after you’ve started from their own examples, you might offer them a very simple definition like this:

**“MEDIA are the ways we share stories, news, or ideas with other people without just talking to them in person. For instance, we can tell stories in books and in movies, we can get news from TV, radio, newspapers, and the internet, and we can share ideas on the phone or through social media. Media allows us to share ideas with lots of people at the same time.”**

Examples of media:

<b>PRINT - READ IT</b> Books, magazines, newspapers	<b>AUDIO - HEAR IT</b> Radio, songs, podcasts
<b>VISUAL - SEE IT</b> Videos, TV, movies, pictures	<b>INTERACTIVE - CHANGE IT OR PLAY WITH IT</b> Cell phones, social media, video games, apps

## STEP 2: CONNECT

Next, meet students where they are. Devote time to asking them about their own media habits. What do they watch, read, listen to? How much time do they spend? What do they love? What do they hate? And most importantly, why did they give the answers they gave? This will make students comfortable discussing their media consumption in a non-judgmental, academic setting.

And remember, talking about media can be very personal for students. Make sure your classroom norms welcome different opinions and do not make students feel “bad” or “wrong,” no matter what they choose to share. This may mean setting ground rules for what is or is not appropriate in your classroom.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	
<b>Early Childhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your favorite TV show? Movie? Song? Video game? Book or story? Why is it your favorite?</li> </ul>
<b>Elementary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you like to do online?</li> <li>• How much time do you think you spend each week: Watching TV and movies? Listening to music? Going online? Reading books?</li> <li>• Do you have rules about TV and internet in your house?</li> </ul>
<b>Middle &amp; High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What social media do you use most? Why?</li> <li>• What media do you hate, if any? Why?</li> <li>• How much time do you spend with a “screen” each day? What do you think is a healthy amount of time?</li> </ul>

## STEP 3: ANALYZE

Before creating their own media, students should have the opportunity to deeply analyze a developmentally appropriate piece of media. Depending on your curriculum, you can choose one or more pieces of media that fit with your content. After viewing the media several times, ask these discussion questions to prompt your students to look beneath the surface.

	MEDIA TO ANALYZE	QUESTIONS TO ASK
<b>Early Childhood</b>	Brands/Logos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you see first?</li> <li>2. Where are some of the places you would see these?</li> <li>3. Why do you think this was made?</li> <li>4. Do you think it's good? Why?</li> </ol>
<b>Elementary</b>	Advertising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why was this was made?</li> <li>2. Where would you see this?</li> <li>3. What techniques did advertisers use to grab our attention?</li> <li>4. Is it effective?</li> <li>5. Do you think there are certain people that this would attract, and others that it wouldn't?</li> <li>6. Would you buy this product based on the ad? Why?</li> </ol>
<b>Middle</b>	Television, Music	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who created this?</li> <li>2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? (ex: music, bright colors, fast cuts)</li> <li>3. How might different people understand this media differently?</li> <li>4. What points of view are represented in it, or left out of it?</li> <li>5. What is the purpose?</li> <li>6. Did you see any advertising? Was it easy to spot?</li> </ol>
<b>High</b>	Film, Social Media, Political Ads	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who created this message?</li> <li>2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?</li> <li>3. How might different people understand this message differently?</li> <li>4. What values, lifestyles &amp; points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?</li> <li>5. Why is this message being sent?</li> <li>6. Have you ever created or seen messages like this?</li> </ol>

## STEP 4: CREATE

In a complete media literacy unit or lesson, the students will also produce their own media. In some units, the media they create will mirror with the type of media they analyzed. However, that is not always the case. See below for some easy-to-integrate media production project ideas at each level.

	MEDIA TO PRODUCE	KID-FRIENDLY TOOLS
Early Childhood	Logos, Puppet Shows, Dramatic Play with Popular Culture	Construction paper puppets, cell phone or handheld cameras
Elementary	Print Ads, Collages, Digital Artwork	Paper-and-marker, Pages, Keynote, Paint, etc.
Middle	Movies, Music	iMovie, Adobe Voice, Garageband
High	Websites, Games, Apps, Screencasts	Weebly, Wordpress, Scratch, Quicktime screencasting

In early childhood, you don't necessarily need to bring media tools into the classroom. Students may benefit from learning simple techniques on handheld or cell phone-like cameras--the key idea being the existence of the frame. What can they leave in and what can they keep out of their frames, and why? Staging puppet shows or skits using characters from their imagination or popular culture (or some combination of both) can help to teach them about the choices they make as a media producers. You may also want to introduce the concepts of logos, both by looking at logos (as in our analysis activity) and by having students create their own logos for themselves.

In elementary school, magazines, newspapers, and other print media provide an opportunity to explore and remix media through collage, advertising remixes, and digital artwork. Students can learn the basics of putting together a multimedia presentation--using images and spoken word to get across their ideas. They can also begin to explore digital arts with online drawing and photo programs like Paint and Tux Paint.

In middle school, students can begin to explore the creation of short movies, music, and other multimedia productions with free programs like the YouTube video editor and Audacity, built-in computer programs like Windows Media Maker, iMovie, and GarageBand, or licensed programs like Adobe Voice.

In high school, students can begin to pull together their knowledge of print, video, and audio formats in interactive ways, by putting together simple websites using sites like Weebly and Wix, making video games using free programs like Scratch, or recording multimedia presentations and media analysis with screencasting software like Quicktime, Camtasia, or Screencast-O-Matic.

Don't be afraid to "push" your students if they show interest in media production, or to revisit simpler forms of media creation even in later grades.

## CONCLUSION

We hope this guide has given you a starting point for bringing media literacy into your classroom. The world of media literacy is vast--nearly as vast as any other subject area-- and there are so many ways to integrate it.

Here are some additional resources to deepen your understanding of Media Literacy: [NAMLE's Resource Hub](#) and the [Media Literacy Week resource page](#). We also highly recommend getting [The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy](#) if you want to bring media literacy into your classroom regularly. You can also [join NAMLE today](#)--for free!--to become an official part of the community and stay connected with the world of media literacy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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