

## Basic Principles for Incorporating Media Literacy & Critical Thinking<sup>i</sup>

- **Use media to practice general observation, critical thinking, analysis, perspective-taking, and production skills**
  - point out ways in which media messages might be interpreted differently by people from different backgrounds or groups.
  - encourage students to think critically about information presented in any media message
- **Use media to stimulate interest in a new topic**
  - have students work in small groups to read, analyze, and discuss a controversial magazine, newspaper, or online article about the topic
  - encourage students to plan and design a media product (a montage of pictures, a video, a newspaper or magazine report, or a Web page)
- **Identify ways in which students may be already familiar with a topic through media**
  - draw links between the way a topic is typically treated academically and how it might be used in popular media (e.g., written poetry versus song lyrics or advertising jingles)
  - give examples from popular media content to illustrate what students might already know about a topic or things they might be familiar with that relate to the topic.
- **Use media as a standard pedagogical tool**
  - provide information about the topic through a variety of media sources (books, newspaper/magazine articles, instructional videos, websites).
  - compare the usefulness of different media, and address conflicting information that may come from different sources.
- **Identify erroneous beliefs about a topic fostered by media content**
  - analyze media content that misrepresents a topic or presents false or misleading information about a topic
  - identify misleading ways in which data are presented in the media (citing statistics incorrectly, drawing false conclusions from misleading data, presenting unclear figures and tables, etc.)
- **Develop an awareness of issues of credibility and bias in the media**
  - clarify the distinction between fact and fiction in different types of media reporting on a specific topic
  - identify ways to decide what are credible sources about this topic within different types of media (e.g., books, magazines/journals, the Internet)
  - emphasize the importance of getting information from many different sources and how to give weight to different pieces of information (e.g., if the information is based on research or other evidence versus personal opinion)

- **Compare the ways different media present information about a topic**
  - compare the amount of time/space devoted to a topic in different media from the same time period (discuss why the difference occurs)
  - analyze different conclusions that might be drawn by people exposed to information presented in one medium versus another
- **Analyze the effect that specific media have had on a particular issue or topic historically and/or across different cultures**
  - discuss the role that the media have played (if any) in the history of this topic (i.e., ways in which the media have changed the nature of this issue or topic)
  - explore the level of knowledge about a topic in different cultures and how that knowledge is influenced by the media available
  - identify media forms that are dominant or available in other cultures that may be seldom used in the United States, and vice versa
- **Use media to build and practice specific curricular skills**
  - use media production to practice specific skills (e.g., grammar, poetry, math used in timing and proportions of media messages, scientific principles involved in calculating size, distance, and lighting)
  - prepare examples for practicing skills that include media literacy information (e.g., comparing the lengths of news stories about different topics, computing the Nielsen ratings for different shows, analyzing the ways in which two products are described in advertisements)
- **Use media to express students' opinions and illustrate their understanding of the world**
  - encourage students to analyze media messages for distortions and bias issues of particular interest to them (e.g., messages about sex and gender, messages promoting harmful behaviors, race and age distortions in the "media world" compared with the real world, and advertising targeted to people their age)
  - promote discussion of different points of view about popular media articles and productions
- **Use media as an assessment tool**
  - encourage students to work in groups to illustrate their understanding of a topic by creating mock media productions (e.g., newspapers, advertisements, news reports, live or videotaped skits)
  - present, at the end of a unit, a media message (e.g., from a newspaper, magazine, or video) that contains false information about the topic and seeing if students can identify what is correct and what is incorrect in the message
- **Use media to connect students to the community and work toward positive change**
  - use media forums (e.g., local community access TV, newspapers, and magazines) to communicate messages or share research projects about the topic
  - find collaborative possibilities for projects with community institutions (e.g., museums, libraries, galleries) that may involve students analyzing or creating media messages

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Scheibe, C. & Rogow, F. "Basic Principles for Incorporating Media Literacy and Critical Thinking into Any Curriculum."  
<http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/12principles.pdf>