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A Media Literacy Curriculum for the Adolescent Learner

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ABSTRACT

A MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM FOR

THE ADOLESCENT LEARNER

by

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The purpose of this project was to develop a media literacy curriculum for teachers of young adolescents. Media literacy is a new, evolving field of study that teaches students to become critical consumers of today's media. Media have often been blamed for the ills of student learning, critical thinking, performance and/or behavior skills. In the review of literature, the author investigated media's impact on the adolescent learner, the need to teach media literacy, and recommended curriculum that would benefit the adolescent learner.

The curriculum unit is designed to be a useful teaching tool for teachers of adolescent and preadolescent learners who have an interest in aiding these learners to understand the impact of media. It is equipped with definitions and research-based facts in how media shapes the lives of these learners. The curriculum will provide the teacher a media source for middle and intermediate school learners.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The impact of media on America's schoolchildren has become a growing concern

in society. Media influence schoolchildren's understanding of American culture, affect

critical thinking skills, and decision making, as well as affecting them as consumers

(Hobbs, 1994). Because of this impact, America's schoolchildren need the skills to

become critical consumers of media by becoming media literate.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a media literacy curriculum to teach

middle school learners to be responsible consumers of media. The author explored the

best practices used to implement a media literacy curriculum into middle level

classrooms. Even though the focus of this project was the middle school learner, it could

be adapted as a tool for any grade level.

As stated by Mazzoli (2001), a media literate person has "the ability to access,

analyze, interpret, and communicate media in a variety of forms" (p. 12). Media literacy

advocates as well as educators have found numerous reasons to use a media literacy

curriculum. Media are real and relevant in the everyday lives of America's

schoolchildren. They spend as much time watching television and using other media as

eating and sleeping. They do this as toddlers and it does not change when they become

teenagers. The average young person spends four times as much time watching television

as doing homework (Riley, 1995). The media are here to stay especially as the

information age progresses. Society can

no longer ignore the significant impact of media on America's schoolchildren, as they become our media future leaders.

Scope

The goal of this project was to design a media literacy curriculum that would best fit the adolescent classroom. It was designed to be about a six-week unit that will incorporate seven major topic areas. These topic areas include (a) advertising, (b) television and violence, and (c) music and music videos. There will be a series of lesson plans addressing each topic as well as resources to be used with each unit.

Definition of Terms

Adolescence. For the purposes of this project, students who are in the ages from 11-14.

Epidemiological. "A branch of medical science that deals with the incidence, distribution, and control of disease in a population." (Mish, 1988, p.418).

Genre. "Specific kinds of media content, e.g., entertainment, information, news, advertising, etc. Each category is defined with traditional conventions, but categories may overlap." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Mass Media. "Any form of communication produced by a few for consumption by many people. Mass media are channels of communication through which messages flow. As the messages go through the channels, they are distorted. When people receive media messages they have no opportunity for immediate feedback with the producers of the messages." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Media. "Any physical object used to communicate. Common media are televisions, radios, telephones, and newspapers. Less common articles are building materials, paint, sculpture, dance and other conventions for communicating ideas. Singular, medium." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Media Agencies. "Agencies who produce media. Also media institutions and businesses." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Media Content. "Messages which are produced by the few for the many and delivered to large audiences simultaneously" (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Media Literacy. "The ability to read, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of media forms (television, print, radio, computers, etc.)." (Mazzoli, 2001)

Media Targets. "Audiences are media targets. Audiences are targeted, sold, and delivered to advertisers by media agencies. Groups are targeted on the basis of demographics, media use patterns, zip codes, and polling by those who wish to sell or persuade." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Media Use. "The way people interact with media. Media use varies from person to person, group to group and at various times during an individual's life." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Medium. "Singular for media. A television is a mass medium. Radios, televisions and newspapers are mass media." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Representation. "The relationship between actual places, people, events, and ideas and media content. Stereotypes are a common form of media representation." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Technology. "Hardware used to create and communicate with media, e.g., radio, computers, telephones, satellites, printing presses, pencils, etc." (Strategies for Media Literacy, 2001)

Overview of the Project

The project consists of five chapters. To begin with chapter one is the introduction of the project. Chapter two of the project is the review of literature, which includes the topics how media impact the adolescent learner, the need to teach media literacy for the adolescent learner, recommendations for media literacy curriculum for the adolescent learner. Chapter three is the procedures used by the author in developing the project. Chapter four is the media literacy curriculum unit. Finally chapter five focuses on the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for the project.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

Overview

Children are growing up in a media-dominated culture (Hansen, 1997). Just as

eating and sleeping are part of young people's daily lives, so are the influences of media.

These influences come from watching television, listening to CDs and radio, renting a

video, reading newspapers, magazines, and billboards, playing video games, or surfing

the Internet. These activities consume a significant part of their daily lives. They start

doing these activities as toddlers and it doesn't stop when they become teenagers or

adults (Riley, 1995).

Today a new adolescent has entered the classroom; one who is consumed by

unlimited media messages. Postman (1985) has argued that "the medium has become the

metaphor in which ideology has been replaced with cosmetics" (p.3). In a 1999 study by

the Kaiser Family Foundation (as cited in Swaim, 2002), the typical American child

spends close to five-and-a-half hours a day consuming media outside of school. This

amounts to over 38 hours a week, almost equal to a full time job of being a media

consumer. For example, Davis/DeGaetano Production (1996) stated that children see

more than 20,000 commercials, which averages to about 55 commercials per day, a year

on television. In addition, Swaim (2001) found that the typical American child watches

15,000 hours of television by the time he or she graduates from high school, compared to

about 11,000 hours spent in school. Clearly, the adolescent needs the savvy analytical

skills to discriminate between reality and fiction.

Furthermore, Walsh (2000) suggested media provide American society with a

common set of experiences and influences that shape its culture. He clarified that never

before has society shared common experiences, the language society hears, and the images

society sees as a result of media's impact. Because of media's impact, America's

schoolchildren need to be media literate in order to understand its impact.

This review of literature is divided into three facets. The first involves the latest

research on how media impact the adolescent learner. Next, the review identifies the need to

teach media literacy. Finally, the author presents recommendations for a media literacy

curriculum for the adolescent learner.

Media's impact on the adolescent learner

The media impact all segments of society regardless of race, gender, and

economic/educational levels. For example, as cited in Hales (2002), a 17-year Columbia

University study tracked the viewing habits of 700 adolescents. The results revealed that 29%

of 14 year-olds engaged in assaults or other forms of aggressive behavior by age 22 from

watching three or more hours of TV. Other studies (as cited in Hales, 2002) suggested that

"elementary aged children who watched less than their peers had fewer weight problems,

better grades, and healthier relationships" (p. 17). The following literature contained studies

that focused on media's content and its impact on the adolescent learner.

Television has been the most frequently researched genre of media since America's

schoolchildren spend the most time with this medium. Nielsen Media Research (1998)

revealed that the average American child spends more than 21 hours per week viewing

television. To put this into perspective, this averages to about three hours a day. During the school year, this would be three hours of television viewing in the evening.

Those who investigated the impact of television sought to identify what types of television content impact adolescents? The first type studied was violence and aggression. The National Television Violence Study (Federman, 1998) examined more than 10,000 hours of programming across a variety of channels, cable and noncable, at all hours of the day in three consecutive years from 1994-1997. This study estimated that young people view 10,000 acts of violence per year, with 61% of shows containing violence of some kind. Included in this estimate, 26% of violent interactions involved the use of weapons; 38% of violent acts were committed by attractive perpetrators; more than 50% of violent incidents showed no apparent pain associated with the violence, and almost 75% of violent acts involved no evidence of remorse, criticism, or penalty for the violence. Humor accompanied the violence in 41% of the incidents.

Centerwall (1992) raised further concerns about television and violence through epidemiological research spanning more than 20 years by examining rates in South Africa, Canada and the United States. She examined the change in homicide rates following the introduction of television into South Africa in 1975. As of 1987, the white South African homicide rate had reached 5.8 per 100,000, a 130% increase from the rate of 2.5 per 100,000 in 1974, the last year before television was introduced. Even though poverty, crime, stress, alcohol, and drug abuse were contributing factors, she hypothesized that if television technology had never been developed, there would be 10,000 fewer homicides in the United States each year, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults.

Another area of television content that impacts adolescents is trauma symptoms. Singer, Anglin, Song, & Lunghofer (1995) examined viewing preferences, symptoms of psychological trauma, and violent behaviors among children who watch television. The data from their survey of 2,245 students, grades three through eight, showed that children who watched more than six hours of television per day reported more trauma symptoms and more violent behaviors. In addition, children who showed a preference for viewing action and fighting shows reported higher levels of violent behaviors.

High-risk behaviors have also been associated with adolescent television viewing. Klein, Brown, Childers, Oliveri, Porter, & Dykers (1993) examined data derived from in-home surveys of 2,760 randomly selected 14 to 16 year-old adolescents in 10 urban areas. Participation in eight potentially risky behaviors (sexual intercourse, drinking, smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana, cheating, stealing, cutting class, and driving a car without permission) increased among adolescents who listened to radio and watched music videos and movies on television more frequently, regardless of race, gender, and parental education level. In addition, research on the portrayal of substance abuse in television programming reported that a viewer could observe more than a dozen drinking episodes in one average evening of television (Grube, 1993).

Furthermore, sexual content, including sexually violent material, has increased over the past decade. A Kaiser Foundation (as cited in Kunkel, Cope, & Calvin, 1996) report indicated family hour of television (8 to 9 P.M.) contained more than eight sexual incidents per hour, a four-fold increase from 1976. In the most recent Kaiser Foundation study (as cited in Kunkel, Cope, Farinola, Biely, Rollin & Donnerstein, 1999) more than 1,300 shows

across ten channels were analyzed. The results showed that more than 50% of shows and 66% of prime time shows contained sexual content while only nine percent contained any reference to the possible risks or responsibilities of sexual activity or any reference to contraception, protection, or safer sex. Survey data revealed that 76% of teenagers indicated that one reason young people have sex were because television shows and movies make it seem normal for teenagers. Finally, content analyses of movies in Comstock and Strzyzewski's (1990) study revealed the fact that one out of every eight Hollywood films depicts a rape.

Skill and Wallace (1990) studied patterns of interpersonal conflict and resolution in families as depicted in prime-time network television shows. Major findings included the following: (a) conflict-resolving acts occurred almost twice as often as conflict-escalating acts, (b) intact families were least likely to engage in conflict escalation and blended families were most likely, and (c) brothers were most likely to escalate conflict and mothers were most likely to engage in conflict-resolving behaviors.

Another area of impact is the genre of music and music videos. Ali (2000) has argued that since young Frank Sinatra crooned to screaming girls in the 1940s, pop music has been used as a counterculture targeted for kids between grade school and graduate school. This genre of media is often designed to enrage their elders. Today's music has become even more explicit in their references to sex and drugs and this is predominantly what is played or shown.

As an example, hip-hop/rap is a popular music genre that today's adolescents listen to. Powell (2000) argued several points about this culture. He stated that "the golden era of

hip-hop has long been dead" (p. 66). He stated that "the MC or 'rapper' has been singled out to be his own man in this very male-centered arena, and the formula for a hit record is simple: fancy yourself a thug, pimp or gangster; rhyme about jewelry, clothing and alcohol; denigrate women in every conceivable way, and party and b.s. ad nauseam" (p. 66). To be sure, Lee (2003) summarized that hip-hop/rap music promoted ignorance.

In the 1980s research focused on the heavy metal music genre because of the belief that it was associated with adolescent turmoil and even suicide. Arnett (1992) surveyed 248 students in 10th and 12th grade in a southern metropolitan area about their musical preferences and reckless behaviors. These behaviors included driving while intoxicated, driving at speeds of greater than 80 miles per hour, drug use, sexual promiscuity, shoplifting, and vandalism. The results demonstrated a clear association between the appeal of heavy metal and hard rock music to adolescents and reckless behavior.

A study by Stack, Gundlach & Reeves (1994) investigated the relationship between the subculture of heavy metal magazine subscriptions and adolescent suicide as examined in all 50 United States. The authors concluded that the greater the extent of heavy metal subculture, the higher the suicide rate. They further asserted that this music, which is marked by themes of despair, alienation, and chaos, "nurtures suicidal tendencies already present in the subculture" (p. 15).

Durant, Rich, Emans, Rome, Allred & Woods (1997) analyzed the content of 518 music videos from MTV, VH1, CMT, and BET. The study revealed that 22% of MTV videos portrayed overt violence, while the other three networks aired programs of which 11% involved violence. In addition, 20% of rap videos portrayed violence, and the carrying of

weapons was the highest in rap and rock videos at approximately 19%. Among the videos with weapons, a child was portrayed as carrying the weapon 15% of the time and an adolescent eight- percent. Similarly, children were engaged in violence 11% of the time and adolescents eight-percent.

Durant, Rome, Rich, Allred, Emans, and Woods (1997) examined the content of tobacco and alcohol use behaviors on television. The results showed that 26% of MTV videos portrayed tobacco use. The percentage of alcohol use on MTV was the highest at 27%, but the differences with the other networks were not statistically significant. In addition, given the influence of modeling and imitation in young people, videos that portrayed alcohol and tobacco use depicted the lead performer as most often the one observed to be smoking and drinking. Sexuality was also portrayed in a higher percentage of videos with drinking. BET contained the highest percentage of videos with sexuality or eroticism.

The genre of advertising is less studied than television, however its impact on adolescents shapes later behaviors. Advertisers view children as buyers themselves, as influences of their parents' purchases, and as future adult consumers. Since 1993 the tobacco industry alone has spent $6 billion on advertising (Report to Congress for 1993 Pursuant to the Federal Cigarette labeling and Advertising Act, 1995). Walsh (2002) analyzed R. J. Reynolds, the maker of Camel cigarettes, and its influence on the adolescent. In 1988, sales were slipping because it was assumed Camel was an old man's cigarette. They knew most smokers began at an early age. A million kids under the age of 18 began smoking and the peak periods were in the sixth and seventh grade. Therefore, they created a cartoon character,

Joe Camel who donned cool clothing and wore sunglasses, to sell their cigarettes to young

adolescents.

According to Walsh (2002), their plan has worked. Sales were up by 8,000% among

teenagers! They spent $40 million on Joe Camel, up 63% from the year before. One out of

four youth 12-17 interviewed said they smoked Camels. The brand recognition of Joe Camel

was highly recognized by 67% of adults. Amongst six-year olds, it was a mind-boggling 91%

bringing Joe Camel equal to Mickey Mouse. Walsh declared that Joe Camel was R. J.

Reynolds' "pimp to lure kids to destruction" (para. 8).

McDonough (2002), who studied beer or ale ads of 2001, declared "young Americans

are exposed to more television commercials for beer than for sneakers, gum, or jeans" (para.

1). The results revealed that twelve to twenty year-olds saw two of these commercials for

every three such commercials aired by programs viewed by adults. The alcohol industry

spent $811 million on TV advertising, which led to a total of 208,809 ads placed on cable

and non-cable outlets. From this total, underage viewers were exposed to a quarter of the

208,809 aired commercials. The study found the following on beer or ale TV advertising:

18,000 ads were for beer, 10,000 for shoes, 16,000 for gum, and 4,000 for jeans.

King (2002) analyzed the alcohol industry's $320 million spent on advertising in

national magazines in 2001. In her article, the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at

Georgetown University reported that 12 to 20 year olds saw 45% more beer ads, 27% more

distilled spirit ads, and 60% more malalternative ads in magazines than adults over 21. In

addition, they spent a third of its dollars in 10 magazines with at least 25% youth readership.

McNeal (as cited in McDonald, 2001) found that children ages 4 to 12 last year spent $29 billion of their own money which led to a direct influence on an estimated $290 billion and another $320 billion of household purchases in family spending of 2000. In addition, Nickelodeon has struck deals with Ford Windstar (Blue's Clues) and Embassy Suites (Rugrats) to further imprint their products to reach kids and parents. Also cited by McDonald (2001), "the Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that the average American child is exposed to 40 hours a week of commercial messages on everything from computer screens to roadside billboards" (p. 33).

Another area of impact is the junk food industry that has raised health concerns about issues such as obesity amongst America's schoolchildren. Spake (2002) asserted the industry spent $11 billion on advertising in 1997, which has made them the second-largest advertisers in the United States economy. Of this total, $1.54 billion went toward advertising prepared, processed, and convenience foods. Fast food and food service companies spent an additional $3.1 billion. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (as cited in Spake, 2002) further reported that U.S. children see about ten food commercials during every hour of TV they watch. Furthermore, CDC studies showed that 73.9% of middle and junior high schools have either vending machines or snack bars where high-calorie foods and soft drinks are sold, and 98.2 percent of senior high schools do. More than 20% of schools serve brand-name fast foods.

Schools need money from the junk food industry to provide students with computers, sports teams, and more. Spake (2002) summarized the financial impact. Soft drink companies have pouring rights contracts in about 50% of school districts. These schools and districts

receive a percentage of sales. These payments are tied directly to a quota of drink sales at 37

percent of schools, which has led to the impact that 56 percent to 85 percent of children drink

sodas every day. Adolescent boys drink, on average, three sugared soft drinks a day.

The latest research on the impact of video and computer games genre was from the

Kaiser Family Foundation (2002) research. With projections by 2003 being at $16.9 billion,

the 2002 sales of this industry was $6.35 billion. During the age of two to seventeen, 92%

play video games. Of this age group, more than two-thirds have a video game system in their

home. A third had video game players in their bedrooms.

On average, this same age group played video games between 20-33 minutes a day.

As they became older (8-13), 21% play games for more than an hour a day. Across gender

lines, 44% of boys reported playing video games compared to 17% of girls. From ethnic and

income level, African-American and Hispanic youth play more video games than white

youth. Kids from low and middle-income communities spent more time playing than kids

from high-income areas. Among two to eighteen year olds, video game preferences were the

following: 42% played action or combat, 41% played sports, and 36% played adventure.

The foundation researched video game content as well. It was found that 89% of the

top selling video games contained violence, and in 17% the main aim was violence. Across

gender, 64% were male characters, 19% nonhuman, and 17% were female. Across ethnicity

characters, 56% were white, 22% were African Americans, 9% were Asian/Pacific Islanders,

and fewer were Latinos (.2%). For heroism, 87% were white.

Furthermore the foundation studied the effects of the educational impact of video

games, one in four of America's schoolchildren acknowledged playing video games

interfered with their homework and academic performance. Video game violence behavior also was researched. There was an increase (13% to 22%) in adolescents' violent behavior from playing violent video games. The foundation also found that adolescents who played violent video games were ten times more likely to be involved in fights than others who did not (38% v. 4%). As one masters a game the content becomes more difficult and more violence occurs. Inserting people and places of real images can be customized in certain computer games. For example, with the recent school shooting at Columbine, the video game Doom was created by the shooters to resemble the actual shooting at Columbine.

Frommer (2002) further highlighted the violence of this medium. Purchase policies were reviewed in regards to the video game *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. In this game, participants ramp up their score by having sex with a prostitute, and gain additional points by killing her. The game includes scenes in which blood splatters out of a woman's body as the player beats her to death. Even though the game is rated M for Mature audiences (over age 17), children have no trouble buying it. The article said only 70 percent of retailers have policies preventing children from buying or renting games rated M. That figure is slightly higher, 75 percent, for chain stores.

The genre of computers and the Internet has not been studied using research techniques to date. Despite this, the Princeton Survey Research (1997) showed evidence that 89% of teenagers report using a computer, 61% report surfing the net, and 14% report seeing something that they do not want their parents to know about. McGee and DeBernardo (1999), in their article describing school avengers, noted that almost all of the recent school killers were computer-savvy and frequented sites where they could obtain violent, anarchist-

oriented material. Moreover, children often are more skilled with computers than their parents, which raises a level of concern. Furthermore, the speed and easy access of the internet will clearly have an effect on the growth and development of children and adolescents just as other forms of media have contributed.

Why teach media literacy?

The study of media is a complex, massive, and indefinite field. It extends beyond television, newspapers, and magazines, and now involves popular culture such as fashion, toys, dolls, etc. Shepherd (1993) asserted that the media culture is our culture and it is through media that our culture expresses itself and communicates with itself. He further clarified that we can not hope to own it without understanding it.

Because of media's massiveness today, there are various ways it impacts American society. Kubey (2000) explained that the media bring the world into our homes, and we are dependent upon the media. It physically, socially, economically, and politically connects us to other parts of the United States and the world. He further indicated that we need the media for entertainment and pleasure. It would be a mistake for America's schoolchildren to not become media literate.

Duncan (as cited in Hansen, 1997) of the Canadian Association for Media Literacy listed the following reasons for teaching media literacy:

1. Media dominate our political and cultural lives;

2. Almost all information beyond direct experience is "mediated";

3. Media provide powerful models for values and behavior;

4. Media influence us without our being aware;

5. Media literacy can increase our enjoyment of media;

6. Media literacy can make a passive relationship active. (Para 5)

Other points of view have supported media literacy education in the classroom. Most

notably, Hobbs (1994) stated the following as reasons why educators should introduce media

literacy as part of the curriculum.

1. Some see media literacy as a tool to build relevance into contemporary education,

    building links between the classroom and the culture.

2. Some see media literacy as a citizenship survival skill, necessary to be a

    thoughtful consumer and an effective citizen in a super-highway-driven media

    age.

3. Some see media literacy as a kind of protection for children against the dangers

    and evils engendered by the excesses of television, and they also see media

    literacy as an antidote to manipulation and propaganda.

4. It could be used as a new kind of English education, learning to appreciate and

    analyze ads and sitcoms and films with the same tools used to study poetry, short

    story, and the novel.

5. Some see it as a way to give children the opportunity to tell their own stories and

    better understand the power of those who shape the stories of our culture and our

    times. (K-12 Section, para's 2 & 3)

Shepherd (1993) described reasons for teaching media literacy in the classroom. First, it

was highly motivating and started from the interests and knowledge that students already

had. Teachers reported students were enthusiastic and both the quantity and quality of student

writing went up when they were writing about the media. Because students were more knowledgeable about media than teachers, media study tended to democratize the classroom and turned lessons into exploration. Critical thinking was the real lesson of the media literacy classroom. Finally, media literacy integrated most subject areas of the classroom. Students made extensive use of language arts skills. Comparing media constructions to reality was central to social and environmental studies. Even mathematics could be used in the media literacy classroom either through surveys and demographic studies or through the timing of production work.

The media occupy a central role in this society (Shepherd, 1993). Media literacy can teach America's schoolchildren in many ways how to be a man/woman, to be nonviolent, what families are supposed to be like, and to have better understanding of others.

Recommended Curriculum for the Adolescent Learner

A media literacy curriculum should not be focused to a certain type of student. As stated by author Tyner (1990), media literacy should be called a label-less program, regardless of the student's educational program. Since media are a real and relevant issue in the lives of adolescents (as cited in Irvin 1997), Beane stated an adolescent curriculum, such as media literacy, "ought to encourage young adolescents to adjust to the present society or critically examine the need for social change" (p. 205).

The media are a massive, unlimited field of study. Media exposes adolescents to drug/alcohol use, violence, risky behavior, gender/racial stereotyping and representation, and consumerism. A media literacy curriculum is an opportunity for the classroom to become

health-promoting environments (Irvin, 1997). Shepherd (1992) clarified that the goal for media literacy was to produce good citizens, not good consumers.

A media literacy classroom would involve both written and oral language. Shepherd (1992) defined its framework model be called Text, Audience, and Production (T.A.P.) to deconstruct media. Text would be any form of media (cartoon, music video, and the latest fashion) that would lead to a discussion on the type of text and how it would differ from other texts. Audience would be anyone who receives a media text. The teacher's role would be to develop student skills to negotiate meaning with the ability to recognize biases, values, and choices. Production was the making of media text whether written, taped, or recorded that would involve the relationship of text and audience. "The central concept of this model was the idea that all communication, all discourse was a construction of reality" (Framework section, para 3).

Hobbs (1994) recognized most key concepts of media literacy were adapted from British and Canadian educators. These programs stress the following:

1. Messages are constructed. This process is invisible to the audience. Once the audience recognizes its message construction their behavior would become more critical and questioning.

2. Messages are representations of the world. The audience is dependent upon its understanding of the culture. With America's schoolchildren lack of real-world experiences, they become more vulnerable to media influences. A central concept of media literacy is to "understand messages shape our visions of the world and our sense of our selves."

3. Messages have economic and political purposes and contexts. The audience examines how media texts are produced. They understand that media agencies sell audiences to advertisers.

4. Individuals create meaning in media messages through interpretation. The audience examines their pleasure and satisfaction need for media texts. (Media production and media analysis section, para.6-9).

Conclusion

A media literate classroom could help American schoolchildren understand the many media messages that surround them daily. It would give them the skills to recognize good and bad entertainment and the information they need to make positive life skill decisions. Riley (1995) recognized, "Our young people need to be educated to the highest standard in this information age, and surely this includes a clear awareness of how the media influences, shapes, and defines their lives" (para.6). In addition, America's schoolchildren are the future media leaders of this nation. Hopefully, media literacy will prepare them to raise the quality of media in the future.

It's time to face up to the media culture society has created and consumed, because the media has gone to great lengths to study American society (Worsnop, 1999). Hobbs (1994) summarized:

It's time that parents and teachers begin to help our children to embrace and celebrate the messages worth treasuring, to analyze and understand the economic and political forces which sustain it, and to develop the skills and new habits we all need to think carefully

and wisely about the messages we create ourselves and the abundant messages we

receive. (Conclusion section, para. 1).

Chapter Three

Procedures of the Project

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to develop a media literacy curriculum for use in teaching the adolescent about the impact of media. The review of literature supports the purpose for media literacy.

Need for the Project

Huxley (as cited in Postman, 1985) "feared that what we love will ruin us" (p. viii). The media are teeming with an infinite amount of messages that the young adolescent consumer is unable to understand. Today's media leaders may seem to be innocuous in their content of shaping adolescents' current and later behaviors, but they fail to warn them of the risks and consequences of their content. True we need the media for education, information, pleasure, and entertainment purposes. Yes, they have their rights protected by the first amendment, but where is the adult responsibility of media agencies? Clearly there is a need for a media literacy curriculum, since today's media fails to warn America's schoolchildren of the risks and consequences of media consumption.

James (1989) further clarified the need for media literacy, "If children can learn to evaluate media, they can see how they are often duped and manipulated, instead of informed" (para. 3). To be sure, America's schoolchildren need the media literate skills to distinguish between reality and fiction. The author's review of the literature argued the need for media literacy in today's classroom to guide America's schoolchildren to become analytical consumers of media.

Procedures Used in Project Development

Various research and professional educational resources were used to create a media literacy curriculum for the adolescent learner. A literature review of the latest research led the author to focus on media's impact on the adolescent learner, the need to teach media literacy in today's American classrooms, and a recommended curriculum on media's content. The framework for this project was developed through the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) computer search, research reports, novels, and magazines.

Information and facts from the literature, and the author's experiences as a teacher of adolescents were used to develop a media literacy curriculum. These were developed to create a curriculum focusing on the need for media literacy and developing and awareness on how to be a savvy consumer of media. Leading researchers and gurus in the field of media literacy were chosen. Relevant to the point information was determined for lessons and activities. The curriculum was broken down into four units: advertising techniques of persuasion, tobacco debate, TV violence, and music videos. These units were most relevant to the adolescent learner from literature. Each unit consisted of guided questioning, lessons, and activities to address the need for media literacy for adolescent learners to become savvy consumers and to raise the standard and ideology of media in the future.

Chapter IV

The Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a media literacy curriculum to teach the adolescent learner the skills to analyze media's impact. As our future media leaders the goal of this project is for the adolescent learner to be a responsible consumer in order to raise the standard of media in the future. The project is divided into four units: (a) advertising techniques of persuasion, (b) tobacco debate, (c) TV violence, and (c) music/music videos. These units were most relevant to the adolescent learner.

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A Media Literacy Curriculum

Introduction

The lessons of the project do not need to follow any particular order. However, if you do advertising techniques, it would be best to begin with the advertising techniques of persuasion (bandwagon, testimonial, transfer, card-stacking, and critiquing commercials). All lessons should be taught as they are outlined in order to have the best success possible. The self-reflection lesson may only involve mature students (7th and 8th grades) in order for it to be successful. To sum up, these lessons would be very helpful when the teachable moment of media arises in the classroom.

Advertising

For the Teacher:

1. Before beginning this genre of media, have the students collect mail-order catalogs and advertising flyers from magazines as a reference. If possible, also make videotape of several TV commercials that will use the following techniques to be studied: Bandwagon, testimonial, transfer, and card-stacking. Remind students to use and build the collection as they carry out the activities in this genre.

2. Homework: For one day, have the student keep track of all the advertising messages that they see, including those in more unusual places. What is your total?

3. It would be wise for the teacher to have the student to keep a journal for note taking and reflection and a manila folder for their work.

For the students and their journals:

- Children 4-12 spent $29 billion of their own money which led to a direct influence on an estimated $290 billion and another $320 billion of household purchases in family spending of 2000.

- Children are exposed to 40 hours a week of commercial messages.

- The junk food industry spent $11 billion on advertising in 1997.

- Children see about ten food commercials during every hour of TV they watch.

Band wagon Ad

Time: 45 minutes – 1 hour

Purpose: The student will learn the advertising techniques of the bandwagon ad.

Materials: Handouts one for each student.

Get on the Bandwagon

Writing a Bandwagon Ad

Process:

1. In their learning journals, have students write the meaning of a bandwagon. A highly decorated parade float crowded with enthusiastic participants in an event (for example, clowns, musicians, and political figures).

2. Write the following bandwagon ads on the dry-erase board. (Do not use underlining yet; students will do the work.) Ask students to read the statements aloud and identify the words or phrases that would encourage them to buy the product. Call on students to underline the bandwagon words and phrases that classmates identify.

   - Get into the jeans with the Glow! <u>Up-to-date</u> kids proudly wear that Glow Jeans glow-stripe day and night!

   - <u>Everyone</u> is collecting them! Are you? Buy the latest Fluffy Friend before <u>millions of collectors</u> have bought our entire supply!

   - What's the <u>favorite</u> after-school-snack? <u>Nine out of ten kids</u> rush home to gobble up the all-time, <u>all-around winner</u>, Sniggle Bars.

   - <u>People in-the-know</u> are switching to Pasta-Paste, the toothpaste that <u>hundreds of dentists</u> recommend because it tastes like spaghetti.

3. Guide students to get involved in a lively debate of the issues raised by the words and phrases they've identified:

- How do the words and phrases make the audience feel that they absolutely must buy the product?

- What details—if any—are supplied to show the source of figures such as *everyone, people-in-the-know, nine-out-of-ten and hundreds of dentists?*

- Is a product that's the best seller necessarily better than a product that isn't quite as popular? For example, is Pasta-Paste a better tooth-cleaner than other brands?

- What is a fad? (an interest followed with enthusiasm for a very short time) How do the ads appeal to fads? Ask the class to recall fads they followed and products they wanted or bought in earlier grades, but that are now out-of-date.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of getting on the bandwagon? (Learning journals)

4. Pass out the handouts. As a class, brainstorm for a chalkboard list of generic items. Each student then chooses an item, gives it an original brand name, and writes an ad that uses the bandwagon technique of persuasion.

5. Invite students to share their brand names and read their ads aloud in a "persuasive" voice. As an alternative, the student might draw a bandwagon ad for the product, featuring the persuasive words and phrases.[1]

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[1] Adapted from Scholastic: Persuasive Writing, 1998

Name: _____ Date: _____

Get on the Bandwagon!

Instructions: 1. Choose an item, give it an original name, and write an ad that uses the

bandwagon technique of persuasion.

2. Prepare to read aloud in a persuasive voice your ad.

4. In the box at the bottom of the page, draw a bandwagon billboard for the product,

featuring the persuasive words and phrases. For example, Everybody's Favorite!, 500

Million Sold!, The Greatest Snack of All Time!

Product	My Name for the Product

Name: _____ Date: _____

Writing a Bandwagon Ad

Things to consider as you write a bandwagon ad:

1. Use words or phrases that will make the audience feel that they absolutely must buy the product.

2. <u>Use</u> details to show sources or figures such as—*everyone, people-in-the-know, nine-out-of-ten,* and *hundreds of dentists!*

3. Let the readers know what is the advantage or disadvantage of NOT getting on the bandwagon.

Practice writing bandwagon ads:

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_____

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Testimonials: The Famous-People Technique

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will develop a commercial script using the testimonial technique of advertising.

Process:

1. Ask the class to name some products/services that use a famous spokesperson to testify to the "greatness" of the product or service. List students' examples on the dry-erase board. Then use the following discussion questions:

   - Why do advertisers use famous people in ad campaigns?

   - In which ads might the spokesperson actually be an expert in the kind of product advertised? In which ads is the spokesperson unlikely to know a great deal about the product or service?

   - What's the usual reason that famous people act as spokespersons for a product or service?

   - Ask the students to think of occasions in which famous people donate (don't charge for) their testimony for charitable causes such as raising money for war victims, for feeding hungry children, or for fighting diseases. Ask students to view, listen for, and read ads for testimonies like these. Why might people donate their time for this kind of work?

2. Write! Ask students to write a testimonial for a product or service they want an audience to buy, use, or contribute to. Here are the steps:

   - Choose a product, service, or charity that you want to sell. The product or service can be a real one, or one that you've made up during your bandwagon activity.

- Decide on a real-life superstar to be a spokesperson for your company or cause. Why would this person be especially effective as a persuader?

- Write a short paragraph for the spokesperson to say to the audience. The paragraph might open with an identifying lead-in—for example, "You probably recognize me as the eight-time winner of the All-Star trophy."

- Encourage students to use some bandwagon words and phrases in the testimonial.

3. You may want the students to read their drafts of their advertising paragraphs aloud to a small group of classmates. Set up listening activities:

- Listen to identify the famous spokesperson and the product or service he or she is advertising.

- Listen for persuasive words and phrases.

- Be ready to suggest some ways to strengthen the testimonial, if the writer asks you to do this.

4. Students will put the final draft in their learning journals.

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[2] Adapted from Scholastic: Persuasive Writing, 1998

Transfer: Pictures and Slogans That Persuade

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will design a transfer technique print ad by using the persuasive power of visual symbols and catchwords and catchphrases.

Materials: Handouts one *Pictures, Symbols, and Slogans* for each student.

Transfer Techniques per group.

Process:

1. The class will discuss what *transfer* means in advertising. In their learning journals, the students will write the meaning: using a strong pictorial symbol or general phrase that arouses the audience's emotions so that they'll connect—transfer—the emotion to the product being sold. Point out that transfer techniques appeal to universal feelings—for example, happiness, fear, patriotism, urgency, wanting to be rich, love of animals.

2. Show the reproducible *Pictures, Symbols, and Slogans* on the overhead. Ask students to quickly brainstorm what comes to mind when they see the symbols or read the catchwords and catchphrases in column one. Write students' responses in the second column.

3. Distribute the reproducible *Transfer Techniques*. Divide the class into four or five groups. Each group studies the classroom collection of persuasive ads and commercials. For column two, each group enters at least one example of a picture or catchphrase that appeals to the emotion. For column three, the group enters the product or service that the advertiser is selling. Have a group scribe write or draw the

groups' best examples on a copy of the chart to show to the whole class on the overhead projector. Discuss the entries and what's persuasive about them.

4. Write! Ask students to work independently or with a partner to write/design an ad that might appear in print or that might be the script for a Web site or for a famous person's TV-commercial testimonial.

5. Establish guidelines through a pre-writing discussion:

   - Decide on the goods or service you want to persuade your audience to buy.

   - Appeal to audience emotions:

     - Design a visual symbol: a picture or design that arouses the audience's feelings and needs.

     - Use a beginning catchphrase: a phrase or sentence also designed to capture audience attention.

   - Supply details to tell the audience how your product or service may answer their needs.

   - The teacher may want to present an example on the dry-erase board or overhead projector.

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[3] Adapted from Scholastic: Persuasive Writing, 1998

Name: _____

Pictures, Symbols, and Slogans

Pictures and Slogans	What I Think Of
LIMITED SUPPLY!	
You Are a Winner!	
Open Immediately!	
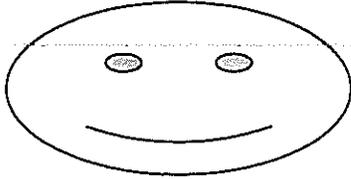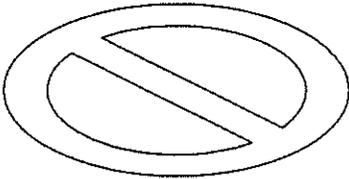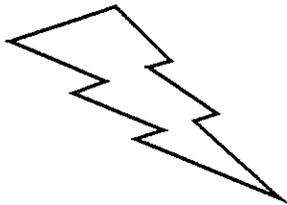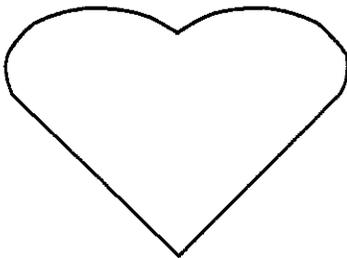
Name: _____

TRANSFER TECHNIQUES

Feeling, Emotion	Picture or Catchphrase	What the Advertiser Is Selling
1. Wanting to be Healthy		
2. Loving your pets		
3. Wanting to be popular and up-to-date		
4. Caring about your family		
5. Wanting to save money		
6. Wanting to do well in school		

Card-Stacking

Time:

Purpose:

Process:

1. In their learning journals, have students write down the definition of card-stacking. It means giving the positive side for your own point of view but none of the positive points for your opponent's position. Card-stacking is not only a common advertising strategy but also one that young people themselves use frequently as they argue for something they want.

2. Before class begins, write the following paragraph on the dry-erase board or overhead projector.

   - Residents of big apartment projects should not be allowed to have dogs. Dogs that are unfriendly or vicious may attack and hurt other people who live in the project and use the open spaces around it. Dogs are also a health-hazard because they dirty the grass, playgrounds, and sidewalks. In addition, dogs that bark and whine a lot make it difficult for people in neighboring apartments to sleep and work.

3. Have student read the paragraph aloud. Then ask:

   - What is the writer's opinion about apartment residents having dogs as pets?

   - How many reasons does the writer provide to support the opinion?

   - How many reasons does the writer give for the opposite point of view, that residents should be allowed to own dogs?

4. Explain to students the term card-stacking: giving the supporting reasons for your own point of view, and few or none of the reasons that support the opposite point of view.

5. Ask groups of five or six students to use the reference collection to find at least two ads or commercials that use the card-stacking technique. Groups then present the examples to the class for discussion and analysis.

6. Write! Return to the paragraph above. Ask the class to work together to write a paragraph in which the cards are stacked in favor of being allowed to keep dogs. Invite partners to read their completed paragraphs aloud to the class. Are both arguments equally persuasive? Why or why not?

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[4] Adapted from Scholastic: Persuasive Writing, 1998

Critiquing Commercials

Time: Homework

Purpose:

Materials: Handout *Critiquing Commercials*

Process:

1. As an activity to carry out at home, students and their families can view three TV commercials to analyze advertising techniques.

2. Give students copies of the reproducible *Critiquing Commercials* and preview the data they are to provide. Suggest to students that they preview the prompts and questions with their families.

3. In the classroom, have students share and compare their data. You could ask students:

   - What were you able to teach your family about persuasive techniques?

   - What details and observations did your family pick up that added to your knowledge of persuasive techniques?

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[5] Adapted from Scholastic: Persuasive Writing, 1998

Name: _____

CRITIQUING

COMMERCIALS

	Techniques Used	Channel / Date / Time
Commercial #1 **PRODUCT OR SERVICE:**		
Commercial #2 **PRODUCT OR SERVICE:**		
Commercial #3 **PRODUCT OR SERVICE:**		

A Lesson in Junk Food Advertising

Time:

Purpose: To familiarize students with the marketing techniques used in television and magazine snack food ads.

Materials:

1. Each student is to select and bring in 3 or 4 food advertisements from magazines.

2. Prior to class, photocopy and distribute 3 copies of the handout: *Food Commercial Log* to each of your students. Using these sheets, students are to identify their three favorite food ads on TV. They are only to answer the first two sections of their logs: the written description of the products that are being advertised, and the step-by-step outline of what happens in each commercial. Explain that the Advertising Strategies section will be completed in class.

3. For class, photocopy student handouts *You've Gotta Have a Gimmick, Rules for Advertising for Kids*, and *Food Advertising Strategies*.

4. A video camera (optional).

Process:

Guided Discussion

Begin by asking your students:

- What is advertising? Why do manufacturers put large amounts of money into it?

- Why is there advertising in TV programs, magazines and newspapers? (To pay for TV programming and magazine and newspaper publications and distribution).

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- Who pays for it? (Eventually the consumer).

- How many different types of advertising can they think of? (Television, magazines, billboards, sponsorships, radio, licensing of logos).

Discuss how advertising is big business, that many times, the advertisements that kids see on TV cost more to produce than the shows that they are watching. For example, the cost of advertising during the 2000 Superbowl was $73,333 a second! Advertisers spend a lot of time and money creating profiles of the people who they want to sell their products to (the target audience). They also research and test different methods to sell their products to their customers.

Distribute and discuss the three handouts. *You Gotta Have a Gimmick*! Deals with the fairly straightforward marketing techniques of premiums, sweepstakes, and kids clubs. Have the students discuss their own experiences with these gimmicks:

- What products were they featured with?

- How satisfied were they with their experiences?

- Did these activities encourage them to buy a certain product?

Rules for Advertising to Kids outlines the rules those manufacturers must follow when advertising to children.

- Ask students if they can think of examples of advertisements that don't follow these rules. As these are Canadian guidelines, they may have seen advertisements on American channels that break the rules.

Food Advertising Strategies looks at the more devious side of advertising, sometimes called 'hidden persuaders'—the selling of lifestyles or images as a way to convince consumers to buy products.

- Ask students about their favorite commercials. What is it they like best about them? What makes a good commercial?

Review the techniques on the Food Advertising Strategies handout with students to make certain they understand the concepts.

- How are these strategies related to the advertising rules that we have just discussed? (Even though they are sneaky, they fit within the guidelines. Kids have to be on their guard, even when advertisers are playing within the rules!)

Activity 1

Ask students to look at their food advertisements. As a class, brainstorm the strategies that have been used in a few of these advertisements (use the techniques in the other handouts as a reference). Have each student choose one or two of the commercials that they have described and complete the third section of their logs by identifying the food advertising strategies used to sell the product, why they think each strategy was used, and how successful they think the strategy has been in this particular ad. (To be handed in.) Divide the class into groups. Have students within each group identify the strategies used in the magazine advertisements that they have brought in and discuss their reactions to each of these ads.

Activity 2

Each group is now an advertising agency. They have been hired to create a commercial for a new food product. (Students can be as creative as they want regarding their new snack, but it must be edible!) They must decide:

- What food product they are selling?

- Who are they selling the product to? (Target Market)

- What advertising strategy(s) will they be using, keeping in mind their target market.

Above all, they must remember that they want to convince their customers to buy their product.

Each group will produce:

1. A product profile, identifying the food product to be sold, the target market, and advertising strategies.

2. A script for their commercial.

3. The commercial itself.

Each group will perform or screen their videotaped commercial for the class. Members of the audience will try to identify the strategies that are used to sell the product.

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My Food Commercial Log

Product

Name and describe the product:

Summary

What happens in this commercial?

Advertising Strategies

What advertising strategies are used in this commercial? Do you think that they are

successful?

You Gotta Have A Gimmick

Three popular methods of marketing foods are "Premiums", Sweepstakes", and "Kids Clubs".

1. **Premiums** are "free gifts" that you get when you buy the product. They might be stickers or candy in a box of cereal, or bigger gifts that you can get when you collect and send in a specific number of "proofs of purchase" from a product.

2. **Sweepstakes** are contests that you can enter to win great prizes. Many advertisers put the contest details on the inside of the package, so that you have to buy the package first, in order to enter.

3. **Kids Clubs** encourage kids to join a club that is connected to a food product. They usually offer membership cards, and special offers to club members.

Ask yourself, "How are these effective in marketing products?"[7]

Source: Adapted with permission from *A Practical Guide for Parents: Advertising, Nutrition and Kids*, a guide created by The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) and The International Food Council (IFIC)

Rules for Advertising to Kids

In Canada, there are rules that advertisers must follow when advertising to children.

Here they are:

1. **Advertisers must not use words like "new," "introducing" and "introduces" to describe a product for more than one year!**

   - New products always seem more exciting, so advertisers are only allowed to promote a product as "new" for a year.

2. **Advertisers are not allowed to exaggerate!**

   - Some advertisers want to make you believe that their product is bigger or faster or better than it really is.

3. **Advertisers may not promote craft and building toys that the average kid can't put together!**

   - When you get a kit that is supposed to be for kids, you should be able to make it yourself.

   - Also, your finished project should look like the picture of the finished product that appears on the box.

4. **Advertisers are not allowed to sell products that aren't meant for kids!**

   - For example, a commercial that sells vitamins or drugs should be aimed at adults, not kids. Check out some ads for adult products-do they use cartoon characters, jingles or images that would attract kids?

5. **Advertisers are not allowed to recommend that you have to buy their product, or that you should make your parents buy it for you!**

- In commercials, advertisers can't say things like: "Hey kids, tell mom and dad to run down to the store and get you one now!" or "You must have our product, or you won't be cool!" But they are still going to try to make you want to do these things, so watch commercials closely to see how they make you feel this way without telling you directly.

6. **Advertisers may not use well-known kids' entertainers (including cartoon characters) to promote or endorse a product!**

- Although advertisers can create their own characters for kids, like "Tony the Tiger" or the "Nestle Quick Bunny," they can't use performers or characters from kids' shows in their TV commercials. This rule does not apply to packaging, so you might find cartoon characters or famous people on the front of your favorite cereal box.

7. **Advertisers can't make you believe that you're getting everything that's shown in the commercial!**

In their ads advertisers have to tell you exactly what you are getting when you buy the toy, and what it will cost. Advertisers are supposed to clearly state:

- The complete price of *every part* of the toy they are showing, whenever the price is mentioned in an ad.

- Any parts of the toy shown in the commercial that *cost extra*.

- Any other toys in the commercials that are sold *separately*.

Next time you watch a toy commercial, see how the advertiser obeys the rule, while still giving a false impression. Look for really small writing on the screen at the end of the ad saying "Batteries not included," or an announcer's voice talking very fast.

8. **Advertisers are not allowed to show kids or adults doing unsafe things with the product!**

   - Unless it's part of a safety message about what not to do, advertisements can't show kids or adults doing dangerous things that children might try to copy.

9. **Advertisers can't suggest that using their product will make you better than other kids!**

   - They also can't make kids think that people will make fun of them if they *don't* use their product.

10. **Advertisers cannot show more than one commercial for the same product in a half-hour period!**

   - In other words, No Brainwashing Allowed![8]

Source: The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) *Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children* (1993)

Advertising Strategies

Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a lifestyle, or an image, rather than the product. Here are some tricks of the trade.

Ideal Kids (or families)- always seem perfect. The kids are really hip looking, with the hottest fashions and haircuts, and toys. Ideal families are all attractive and pleasant looking –and everyone seems to get along! Ideal kids and families represent the types of people that kids watching the ad would like themselves or their families to be.

Family Fun – a product is shown as something that brings families together, or helps them have fun together, all it takes is for Mom or Dad to bring home the "right" food, and a ho-hum dinner turns into a family party.

Excitement – who could ever have imagined that food could be so much fun? One bite of a snack food and you're surfing in California, or soaring on your skateboard!

Star Power – your favorite sports star or celebrity is telling you that their product is best! Kids listen, not realizing that the star is being paid to promote the product.

Bandwagon – join the crowd! Don't be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren't you?

Scale – is when advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it actually is.

Put-Downs – are when you put down your competition's product to make your own product seem better.

Facts and Figures – are when you use facts and statistics to enhance your product's credibility.

Repetition – advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear its name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same commercial will be repeated over and over again.

Heart Strings – are ads that draw you into a story and make you feel good. (McDonalds Commercials)

Sounds Good – music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials, especially commercials aimed at kids. Those little Jingles, that you just can't get out of your head, are another type of music used to make you think of the product. Have you ever noticed that the volume of commercials is higher than the sound of the program that follows?

Cartoon Characters – Tony the Tiger sells cereal and the Nestle Quick Bunny sells chocolate milk. Cartoons like these make kids identify with products.

Weasel Words – by law advertisers have to tell the truth, but sometimes, they use words that can mislead viewers. Look for words in commercials like: "Part of..." "The taste of real..." "Natural..." "New better tasting..." "Because we care..." There are hundreds of these deceptive sayings – how many more can you think of?

Omission – is where advertisers don't give you the full story about their product. For example, when a Pop Tart claims to be "part" of a healthy breakfast, it doesn't mention that the breakfast might still be healthy whether this product is there or not.

Are You Cool Enough? – this is when advertisers try to convince you that if you don't use their products, you are a nerd. Usually advertisers do this by showing people that look uncool trying a product and then suddenly becoming hip looking and doing cool things.

Self Reflection

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will deconstruct his/her favorite TV advertisement.

Materials: Handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*

Process: The student will choose a favorite TV advertisement. He/she will answer the *industry and audience* questions from the handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*. After answering the questions, the student will share with a classmate on what he/she analyzed. The teacher may have to use his/her favorite advertisement for guided practice.

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Process: The student will choose a favorite TV advertisement. He/she will answer the *industry and audience* questions from the handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask.* After answering the questions, the student will share with a classmate on what he/she analyzed. The teacher may have to use his/her favorite advertisement for guided practice.

Teacher Note: This is only appropriate for this grade level or higher. However, as they appear, the teacher might wish to use the material to simplify the questions and length.

Media Image/Questions to Ask

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Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

Tobacco and Alcohol Facts

For the students and their journals:

- Since 1993 the tobacco industry alone has spent $6 billion on advertising.

- In 2001, Joe Camel has spent $40 million on advertising.

- One out of four youth 12-17 say they smoke Camels.

- Amongst six-year-olds, 91% recognized who Joe Camel was.

- 26% of MTV videos portrayed tobacco use.

- Young Americans are exposed to more TV commercials for beer than for sneakers, gum, or jeans.

- 12-28-year-olds saw two beer or ale commercials for every three such commercials.

- The alcohol industry spent $811 million on TV advertising.

- Underage viewers were exposed to a quarter of the 208,809 aired alcohol commercials.

- 27% of MTV videos involved alcohol use.

- $320 million was spent on magazine advertising.

- The alcohol industry spent a third of its dollars in 10 magazines with at least 25% youth readership.

The Tobacco Debate

Time: 3 hours

Purpose: Students analyze and answer questions about the validity of information on tobacco on various pro-smoking and anti-smoking websites, and then research and deliver arguments for and against smoking in a role-play debate.

Materials: Internet access

Process: Class session 1

Begin by explaining that tobacco use has sparked a vigorous debate in this country and abroad. Conflicting claims are made about the health effects of tobacco use, and about efforts to restrict smoking.

Introduce some of the organizations involved in the tobacco debate. Examples include:

Anti-smoking:

- American Cancer Society www.cancer.org/tobacco

- Quit Net www.quitnet.org

- National Center for Tobacco Free Kids www.tobaccofreekids.org

- National Center Institute www.nci.nih.gov

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention http://cdc.gov/health/smoking.htm

- Surgeon General Reports http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/sg4kids/smoke.htm

- Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights www.no-smoke.org

Pro-Smoking:

- National Smoker's Alliance www.speakup.org

- American Smokers Alliance www.smokers.org

- Phillip Morris www.phillipmorris.com

- RJ Reynolds www.rjrt.com

- Brown and Williamson Tobacco www.bw.com

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Allow time for the groups to visit at least two of the websites from each list. Each group should answer the following questions about each website:

- What techniques are used on this website to catch attention?

- What issues about tobacco are raised?

- What health concerns about tobacco are discussed?

- What sources are quoted when information is given?

- Can you detect any bias?

Discuss the results of this research with the entire class.

Class session 2:

Students will research information about tobacco and tobacco use, and then role-play opposing positions in the tobacco debate.

In the scenario, the teacher is thinking about starting to smoke. Half of the students will try to convince you not to smoke.

Divide the students into groups of four. Two students will represent each side of the tobacco debate. Although each side will visit websites to find information that supports their position, they will also need to visit some of the websites opposing their position to figure out what the other side might say. They then will need to find information to refute these statements.

Areas of research should include the health effects of smoking, the cost of smoking, smoker's rights, and laws and regulations about smoking. Students should also pay close attention to the sources of information.

Have each team of two plan their research strategy and visit the appropriate websites. They can talk with the opposing team if they wish. Each team should rehearse its presentation and practice rebutting opposing arguments outside class.

Class session 3:

For each group, begin the role-play with the two "pro-smoking" students. They will have 2 minutes to persuade you to start smoking. The two "anti-smoking" students will then have 2 minutes to persuade you not to smoke. Each side will have two 1-minute periods to rebut the arguments made by the other side. Ask questions or make comments as necessary to keep the debate going.

After each role-play, the class should quickly assess the effectiveness of each team.

- What techniques were used by each side to make their point?

- What arguments did each side raise?

- Were these arguments rebutted effectively?

- Did the teams cite reliable sources of information?

- Did either team seem unreasonably biased?

- Which team was more convincing? Why?

Repeat the role-play with the next group until all students have had a chance to debate. Afterward, discuss the information the students discovered in their research. Ask them what information would be most useful in convincing teens not to smoke.

Assessment:

1. Students analyze and answer questions about the validity of information on tobacco on various pro-smoking and anti-smoking websites.

2. Students research and deliver arguments for and against smoking in role-play debate.

3. Students evaluate the effectiveness of the debating teams.

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[10] Adapted from the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, 2001

Self Reflection

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will analyze his/her favorite TV alcohol advertisement.

Materials: Handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*

Process: The student will choose a favorite TV alcohol advertisement. He/she will answer the *industry, audience, values, perception, and skills* questions from the handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*. After answering the questions, the student will share with a classmate on what he/she analyzed. The teacher may have to use his/her favorite commercial for guided practice.

Media Image/Questions to Ask

Name: _____   Date: _____

Favorite alcohol or tobacco advertisement:

_____

Questions to answer:

INDUSTRY

- **Who's in charge?** _____

- **What do they want of me; Why?** _____

_____

- **What else do they want?** _____

_____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

_____

PRODUCT

- **What kind of text is this?** _____

- **Are conventions followed or broken?** _____

- **How is this message constructed?** _____

_____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

_____

AUDIENCE

- Who is this intended for? _____

- What assumptions does the text make about the audience? _____

_____

- Who am I supposed to be in relation to this text? _____

_____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

VALUES

- How real is this text? _____

_____

- How/where do I find the meaning? _____

_____

- What values are presented? _____

_____

- What is the commercial message? _____

_____

- What is the ideology of this text? _____

_____

- What social/artistic/political messages does the text contain? _____

_____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PREDISPOSITION

- Do I agree with this text's message? _____

- Do I disagree with this text's message? _____

- Do I argue/negotiate with the message with this text? _____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PERCEPTION

- How does the text fit my personal values/beliefs/ideology? _____

_____

- How does the text relate to my personal needs/hopes/fears? _____

_____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

SKILLS

- What skills do I need to apply to this text? _____

_____

- How do I deconstruct/reconstruct this text? _____

_____

- What new skills does this text demand of me? _____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

RECEIVER

- **What does this all mean at the end?** _____

_____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

_____

TV Violence Facts

For the students and their journals:

- Young people view 10,000 acts of violence per year.

- 61% contain violence of some kind.

- 26% involved the use of weapons.

- 38% of violent acts were committed by attractive perpetrators.

- 50% showed no apparent pain associated with the violence.

- 75% involved no evidence of remorse, criticism, or penalty for the violence.

- Humor accompanied the violence in 41% of the incidents.

- Family hour of television (8-9 P.M.) contained more than eight sexual incidents.

- 50% of shows & 60% of prime time contained sexual content.

- 9% contained any reference to the possible risks or responsibilities of sexual activity.

- One out of eight Hollywood films depicts a rape.

TV VIOLENCE

Time:

Purpose: To make students more aware of the types and amounts of violence in children's programming, and how media violence influences young viewers.

Materials: Photocopy handouts-

> *How Old Should You Be to Watch Violent TV Shows?*
>
> *The Rules*
>
> *Physical Violence Worksheet*
>
> *Emotional Violence Worksheet*

Arrange for classroom time in primary classes for students to interview younger children.

Process: Discussion – Brainstorm with your students:

- What is violence? (Make sure to include physical and emotional acts of violence)

- How many types of violent acts can you think of? (Physical and emotional)

- Is emotional violence just as bad as physical violence?

- How do you think TV violence affects children?

Our attitudes towards TV violence have changed over time. At one time or another, each of the following have been considered violent acts. Which ones do you think are violent, and which do you think are not violent?

- The Three Stooges poking each other in the eye.

- Scenes of war on the 6:00 news.

- A food fight.

- Someone being threatened with a gun.

- A cartoon character shooting another character.

Thinking about the issue: Not only have our attitudes changed over time, but also each of us has our own standards in judging what is acceptable.

- Distribute *How Old Should You Be To Watch Violent TV Shows?* Handout.

- Review your students' responses to the questions. Is there a general consensus regarding the appropriate ages, or do responses differ?

- Remind students to think about these questions when they are looking at children's programs later in the unit.

Today, other countries have guidelines to control violence in kids' TV shows. Distribute *The Rules* handout and review with students. *The Rules* are adapted from the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Voluntary Code on Violence.

- Do they think that these are good rules?

- Can they think of other rules that they would like to add?

- How well do they think children's shows follow these rules?

Discuss the concept of rating media productions according to violent content. In Canada, broadcasters are presently designing a rating system that will work in conjunction with the V-chip, a device attached to the TV that can be set to block out television programs containing violence or other content considered inappropriate for children. In the United States, a television rating system has been created that features ratings such as **TV-G**, suitable for all ages; **TV-7**, unsuitable for kids under seven; **TV-PG**, parental guidance suggested; **TV-14**, unsuitable for kids under 14; and **TV-M**, for mature audiences only.

Activity 1 Design a Rating System

Children's shows all fall under the **TV-7** category, but there is still a wide range of violence appearing in these programs, especially in cartoons. Referring to the different types of violence that the class has brainstormed, and the rules for children's programs, ask your students to come up with their own rating system, based on violence in children's programs.

For example, they might decide to rate programs on a scale of 1 to 5, according to the amounts and types of violence shown. Programs with very little content (like *Sesame Street* or *Little Bear*) would be rated **TV-1**; programs that feature some name-calling or put-downs would be rated **TV-2**; programs that feature small amounts of milder physical violence such as pushing and violence would be rated **TV-3**; programs that feature moderate amounts of physical and emotional violence (many cartoons fall into this category) would be rated **TV-4**; and programs featuring a great deal of physical and emotional violence (super-hero television shows such as *Power Rangers* and *Buzz Lightyear*) would be rated **TV-5**.

Activity 2 Rate the Programs!

- Once students have created their rating system, they will interview children in the primary grades to determine their favorite television shows.

- From these interviews, students will compile a master list of the most popular television shows watched by primary students in their school.

- Divide your students into groups and distribute the favorite shows among each group.

- Using their *Physical Violence* and *Emotional Violence* worksheets, each group member will watch these shows and track the types and amounts of violent acts in them.

- As a group, students will compile their statistics and rate their assigned programs according to violent content.

- For each of their assigned programs, students will create a summary that includes:

  1. The name of the program.

  2. The day of the week and time that the program is aired.

  3. The program's rating.

  4. A brief description of the types of violence that appear in the program.

  [11]

[11] Adapted from the Media Awareness Network, 1997

How Old Should You Be

To Watch Violent TV?

The makers of TV shows follow guidelines that protect kids under twelve from too much TV violence. These guidelines are based on research gathered by experts who have studied children. According to the experts, a child can't tell the difference between real and make-believe until they're around five years old. By the time a kid is eight years old, however, they no longer believe everything they see and hear. If you were in charge of deciding what a kid could watch on TV, what would you do if:

- A newscast with pictures of a real person being shot was on TV?

  I would let the kid watch if they were:
  a. five years old
  b. eight years old
  c. twelve years old
  d. any age

- A horror movie was on TV?

  I would let the kid watch if they were:
  a. five years old
  b. eight years old
  c. twelve years old
  d. any age

- A show that features a group of high-kicking superheroes that fight evil monsters was on TV?

  I would let the kid watch if they were:
  a. five years old
  b. eight years old
  c. twelve years old
  d. any age

- A cartoon, starring a character that tries to capture another character, despite repeatedly blowing himself up and being injured, was on TV?

  I would let the kid watch if they were:
  a. five years old
  b. eight years old
  c. twelve years old
  d. any age

The Rules for Violence on Kids' TV?

- Only a small amount of physical or emotional violence is allowed in kids' shows.

- Real-life characters can only use violence when it is needed to develop the story.

- Cartoons can contain some non-realistic violence, but not actions that kids might try to imitate.

- TV shows must not make kids feel threatened. They have to be sensitive when they are dealing with issues that kids might be experiencing themselves, like domestic conflict, the death of parents or close relatives, the death of a pet, street crime or the use of drugs.

- Producers of TV shows must be careful about how they portray dangerous acts that kids might try to imitate, like using plastic bags as toys, using matches, playing with dangerous household products, or climbing apartment buildings or going on rooftops.

- Violence can't be shown as the only way to handle problems between people.

- Kids' TV shows can only contain frightening special effects if they are necessary for the story.

- Adult shows and advertisements that contain scenes of violence can't be shown before 9 p.m.

- Because older kids might still be watching TV after 9 p.m., broadcasters have to include a warning for parents at the beginning of programs that contain violence.

Source: Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television, 1993

Physical Violence

Name: _____

Date: _____

Name of Program: _____

Length: _____

Examples of Physical Violence

Hitting, Punching, kicking:

Pushing, Shoving:

Shooting, knifing:

Destroying Property:

Write your comments about the violent acts you observed:

Emotional Violence

Name: _____

Date: _____

Name of Program: _____

Length: _____

Examples of Emotional Violence

Put-downs:

Name-calling:

Yelling:

Emotional Dumping:

Write your comments about the violent acts you observed:

Self Reflection

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will analyze his/her favorite TV sitcom.

Materials: Handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*

Process: The student will choose a favorite TV sitcom. He/she will answer the *values, predisposition, perception, and receiver* questions from the handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask.* After answering the questions, the student will share with a classmate on what he/she analyzed. The teacher may have to use his/her favorite TV sitcom for guided practice.

Media Image/Questions to Ask

Name: _____   Date: _____

Favorite TV sitcom:

_____

Questions to answer:

INDUSTRY

- Who's in charge? _____

- What do they want of me; Why? _____

  _____

- What else do they want? _____

  _____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

  _____

PRODUCT

- What kind of text is this? _____

- Are conventions followed or broken? _____

- How is this message constructed? _____

  _____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

  _____

AUDIENCE

- Who is this intended for? _____

- What assumptions does the text make about the audience? _____

_____

- Who am I supposed to be in relation to this text? _____

_____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

VALUES

- How real is this text? _____

_____

- How/where do I find the meaning? _____

_____

- What values are presented? _____

_____

- What is the commercial message? _____

_____

- What is the ideology of this text? _____

_____

- What social/artistic/political messages does the text contain? _____

_____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PREDISPOSITION

- Do I agree with this text's message? _____

- Do I disagree with this text's message? _____

- Do I argue/negotiate with the message with this text? _____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PERCEPTION

- How does the text fit my personal values/beliefs/ideology? _____

_____

- How does the text relate to my personal needs/hopes/fears? _____

_____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

SKILLS

- What skills do I need to apply to this text? _____

_____

- How do I deconstruct/reconstruct this text? _____

_____

- What new skills does this text demand of me? _____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

RECEIVER

- **What does this all mean at the end?** _____

_____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

_____

Music Video Facts

For the students and journals:

- 22% of MTV videos portrayed overt violence.

- VH1, CMT, and BET 11% portrayed violence.

- 20% of rap videos portrayed violence.

- Approximately 19% of rap and rock videos involved carrying weapons. A child was portrayed as carrying the weapon 15% of the time and an adolescent 8%.

- Videos that portrayed alcohol use depicted the lead performer as often the one observed to be smoking and drinking.

- BET contained the highest percentage of videos with sexuality or eroticism.

Music Videos

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will analyze the content of hip-hop videos through personal opinion, views, and classroom discussion.

Materials: Television with cable.

Process: In their journals students are to answer the following questions below. For discussion, the teacher will use these questions to answer as a class and encourage classroom participation.

- What kinds of images do you see over and over again in hip-hop videos? (Girls in bikinis, alcohol, fancy cars, guns)

- What is the relationship between men and women in these videos? (Women are possessions, objects)

- Why do artists and record companies use these images in music videos? (These images sell albums)

- How are the images of violence glorified in music videos?

- Do these images affect the attitude and behavior of viewers? (Attitudes towards girls, violence, the need for expensive possessions)

- If you are upset about the images in music videos what can you do? (Don't purchase the albums, write letters to the record label, call radio stations and complain)

Activity: Take a look at music videos of all genres and compare the images; i.e.: how do heavy metal videos differ from country music videos, etc. To be discussed the next day.

Self Reflection

Time: 1 hour

Purpose: The student will analyze his/her favorite music video.

Materials: Handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask*

Process: The student will choose a favorite TV advertisement. He/she will answer the *audience, values, perception, and skills* questions from the handout *Media Image/Questions to Ask.* After answering the questions, the student will share with a classmate on what he/she analyzed. The teacher may have to pick a video from the TV music channels for guided practice.

Media Image/Questions to Ask

Name: _____   Date: _____

Favorite music video or song:

_____

Questions to answer:

INDUSTRY

- Who's in charge? _____

- What do they want of me; Why? _____

  _____

- What else do they want? _____

  _____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

  _____

PRODUCT

- What kind of text is this? _____

- Are conventions followed or broken? _____

- How is this message constructed? _____

  _____

- **HOW DO I KNOW?** _____

  _____

AUDIENCE

- Who is this intended for? _____

- What assumptions does the text make about the audience? _____

  _____

- Who am I supposed to be in relation to this text? _____

  _____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

  _____

VALUES

- How real is this text? _____

  _____

- How/where do I find the meaning? _____

  _____

- What values are presented? _____

  _____

- What is the commercial message? _____

  _____

- What is the ideology of this text? _____

  _____

- What social/artistic/political messages does the text contain? _____

  _____

  _____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PREDISPOSITION

- Do I agree with this text's message? _____

- Do I disagree with this text's message? _____

- Do I argue/negotiate with the message with this text? _____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

PERCEPTION

- How does the text fit my personal values/beliefs/ideology? _____

_____

- How does the text relate to my personal needs/hopes/fears? _____

_____

- HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

SKILLS

- What skills do I need to apply to this text? _____

_____

- How do I deconstruct/reconstruct this text? _____

_____

- What new skills does this text demand of me? _____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

RECEIVER

- **What does this all mean at the end?** _____

_____

_____

HOW DO I KNOW? _____

_____

_____

RESOURCES

Media Awareness Network

Scholastic: Persuasive Writing

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

University of Oregon Media Literacy Online Project

Chris Worsnop: Ideas for Media Education

Chapter Five

Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop a media literacy curriculum for the adolescent learner. Through the review of literature and other selected resources, a curriculum was developed that contained lessons and activities addressing media's impact on the adolescent learner. The lessons and activities were designed to provide a resource or tool to teach about media's content and consequences.

Conclusions

Since media is real and relevant in American society, teachers need to be aware and educated of media's impact among America's schoolchildren. Teachers need to encourage student participation, investigation, and questioning of media by exploring a variety of points of view.

Recommendations

Teachers need to know that most media literacy resources are from foreign countries such as Canada. Next, teachers need to promote an environment where each and every student can explore a variety of points of view. Remember, let the student be the teacher. Also, teachers need to understand how media is shaping the behavior of America's schoolchildren by watching and hearing the media texts that the adolescent consumes. Since the study of media is massive and unlimited, it would be difficult to incorporate all genre's of media into one's lesson planning. Finally, the media literacy curriculum was developed for the adolescent learner; however, many of the lessons could be used and adapted for age appropriateness.

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