

MEDIA LITERACY IN RHODE ISLAND

A STATEWIDE SURVEY





media education lab

Media Literacy in Rhode Island: A Statewide Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most of Rhode Island's elementary and secondary students do not receive media literacy education, according to findings from a survey and interviews with over 500 educators, parents, and community leaders

In an age awash in misinformation, toxic social media, and deep political and cultural divisions, students need to learn how to critically analyze media messages. But not enough Rhode Island students are getting opportunities for media literacy education either at school or at home.

This report provides an overview of the research findings resulting from a statewide study of the level of media literacy integration in RI schools. The study includes an online survey of over 500 school educators, administrators, parents, elected public officials, and community members, along with interviews with 30 respondents who provided more in-depth information.

After analyzing the findings, we issue letter grades to school districts in Rhode Island to document their efforts in providing media literacy education to all students. Some key findings from the report include:



Rhode Islanders are aware of the importance of media literacy education as they see the clear consequences of fake news, political polarization, and disinformation spread through social media



Survey participants believe that the most important reason for valuing media literacy education is its capacity **to improve people's ability to analyze information and recognize high-quality sources**



Some of the core instructional practices of media literacy are being used with students in Rhode Island's elementary, middle and high schools. For example, 1 in 3 students learn how to comprehend and analyze news media in school



Most RI students do not encounter media literacy learning experiences that help them understand advertising or the economics of media industries



There are significant disparities between school districts, with some communities offering media literacy education to most or all students in elementary, middle-school and high school, while other communities give students fewer opportunities



Parents and guardians do not use a wide range of activities to build media literacy competencies with their children at home

These findings can help educators and school leaders to take steps to increase the use of 16 core instructional practices of media literacy. The Media Literacy in Rhode Island Report Card provides educators, school leaders, and community members a **baseline and a blueprint** upon which they can build transformative media literacy programs for all learners in Rhode Island schools.

Thanks to the Social Science Institute for Research, Education and Policy (SSIREP) at the University of Rhode Island for support of this initiative.

OVERVIEW

Although momentum for media literacy is rising in the United States, only 1 in 5 Rhode Island elementary students learn how advertising affects people's attitudes and behaviors, even as recent research finds that kids watch YouTube more often than television or streaming services and 20% of YouTube videos watched by children have ads that are not age-appropriate.

Only 1 in 3 middle-school students in Rhode Island experience media literacy education activities like learning how to distinguish between information and opinion in the news, thanks to significant efforts by school librarians --in the schools that have them.

Nearly two-thirds of high school students got to develop a research project where they represented their learning through the use of print, images, and multimedia. But only a small proportion of students learned about topics in media literacy that relate to financial literacy, civic education, or health and wellbeing.

Rhode Island educators, school leaders, parents, and community members deeply believe in the value of media literacy education as an important way to help students become college and career ready. Media literacy instructional practices increase comprehension of core subjects for all learners.

People who live or work in Rhode Island understand the value of helping young people evaluate the quality of information sources and the need to strengthen healthy habits of using media as a lifelong learner. They also recognize the importance of protecting against harmful propaganda and disinformation.

Most Rhode Island students did not get media literacy learning experiences during the 2020-2021 school year.

“Media literacy” means the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and communicate using a variety of forms, including print, visual, audio, interactive, and digital texts.

But although support for media literacy is evident among educators and community members, most students in Rhode Island are not likely to encounter the robust instructional practices of media literacy education.

In this report, we gathered information using surveys and interviews with more than 500 Rhode Island school leaders, educators, librarians, parents, elected public officials, and community members to provide a closer look at how students in Rhode Island public, private, and parochial schools may encounter media literacy education.

We asked participants to help us explore how often students in Rhode Island elementary or secondary schools encounter media literacy through its core instructional practices.

In 2017, Rhode Island's General Assembly passed a law that amends Rhode Island's General Laws by instructing the department of elementary and secondary education to consider, in consultation with national or statewide organizations, the incorporation of media literacy education into the board of education's basic education program regulations. To date, the Rhode Island Department of Education has made no progress in meeting this obligation.

CONTEXT MATTERS

MEDIA LITERACY, FAKE NEWS & THE COVID PANDEMIC



Rhode Islanders are aware of media literacy education as they see the clear consequences of fake news, political polarization, and disinformation spread through social media platforms.

How much has “fake news” affected the teaching and learning of media literacy?

NOT AT ALL



A GREAT DEAL

70% of participants rate it 8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale

The coronavirus pandemic caused a major disruption for Rhode Island students, like many of their counterparts across the nation and around the world. But it also helped more educators to discover the power of digital media and technology as a means to support all learners.



How much has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the teaching and learning of media literacy?

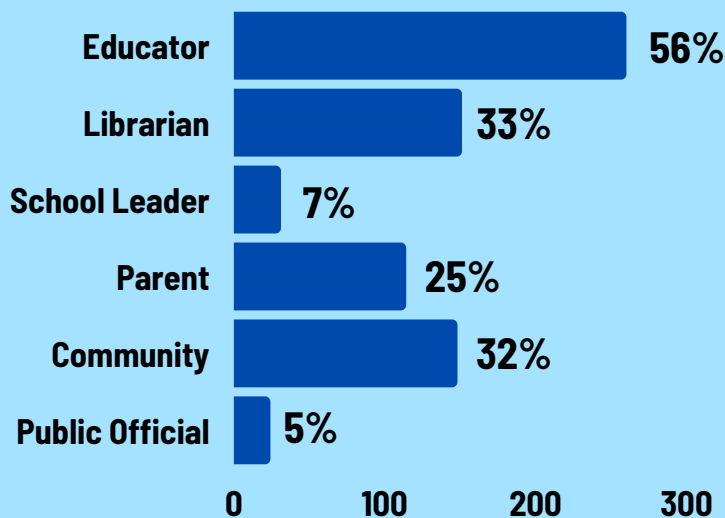
NOT AT ALL



A GREAT DEAL

80% of participants rate it 8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale

SAMPLE & METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF



We used an online survey to gather information from 524 Rhode Island school leaders, educators, librarians, elected public officials, parents, and members of the community.

We also conducted 30 interviews with people who provided additional insight on the practice of media literacy education in local school districts. See details concerning methodology on page 26.

Results do not sum to 100% because participants could check more than 1 box

WHY MEDIA LITERACY MATTERS

FINDING: Rhode Islanders believe that the most important reason for valuing media literacy education is its capacity to improve people's ability to evaluate the quality of information sources



People have different reasons for valuing media literacy education. Please rank order the reasons that are important to you.

Mean scores represent statements that received the highest ranking among participants.

Media Literacy Empowers & Protects Learners

The second most popular statements emphasize media literacy's contribution to both empower learners through the development of healthy habits for life and the need to protect learners from harmful media, including propaganda and disinformation.

Media Literacy is Distinct from the Development of Workforce Technology Skills

Participants value how media literacy builds practical skills, but they see it as distinct from the provision of computer science learning experiences for K-12 students developed by the Computer Science for Rhode Island (CSforRI) initiative, which was a partnership between Rhode Island state government, the Rhode Island Department of Education, private industry, and non-profits across Rhode Island.

Media Literacy Plays a Role in Advancing Social Justice

Exploring the interplay between representation and reality is a core practice of media literacy education, and 10% of participants gave top rank to the idea that media literacy helps people recognize and resist stereotypes, with 38% of participants rating it in 2nd or 3rd place.

Media Literacy's Role in Promoting Creativity Is Largely Unrecognized

Media literacy activates creativity, self-expression, and confidence, but only 7% of participants ranked this learning outcome as the very top value. However, 31% rated it in 2nd or 3rd place.

WHY MEDIA LITERACY MATTERS

What Rhode Islanders Say

SKILLS FOR DAILY LIFE

Media literacy education helps learners develop healthy habits as consumers and creators of information, entertainment, and persuasion. Survey participants noted that with the exponential increase in media use due to the pandemic, many students did not realize the scope of their growing dependence on digital devices. Educators valued opportunities to use dialogue to increase student awareness of how social media sites and games are designed to harness and hold human attention. For some children, teens, and adults, digital media usage can take a toll on relationships, communication, and socialization.

Media literacy learning activities also prepare students for competence in college and careers. Many participants mentioned the value of team-based media production activities, which help students develop confidence in self-expression and the ability to work with others as members of a team. Learning to ask questions, gather and analyze information, and use it to inform or persuade is an important skill throughout life.

ESSENTIAL FOR INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

Respondents were concerned about the potential of students across all grade levels to be manipulated or duped by unreliable information, which they felt stemmed from advertisements, social media, and biased reporting. Many participants believe that Americans are inundated with misinformation and targeted advertising and that it is very important for young people to learn to identify these forms of media early on. Participants are highly aware of the complex media landscape that learners and educators must navigate. Many believe that media literacy activities help build communities of trust and respect, as learners learn to appreciate, rather than fear, people who interpret media messages differently.

Respondents also stressed the potential for media literacy education to develop critical thinking and reflection among students of all grade levels. One participant wrote, "Just as children need to know how consuming sugar affects their health, they also need to know how media messages are affecting their minds."

CIVIC COMPETENCIES FOR DEMOCRACY

Current events have deepened public appreciation for how media literacy makes a contribution to civic education. Several participants explained that media literacy was particularly relevant to the aftermath of the 2020 Presidential election and the January 6th attack on the Capitol. One explained, "The climate of our society is one of conflict and there is a lack of listening to one another and being open to others' views and opinions. This may help future generations mend what is happening now."

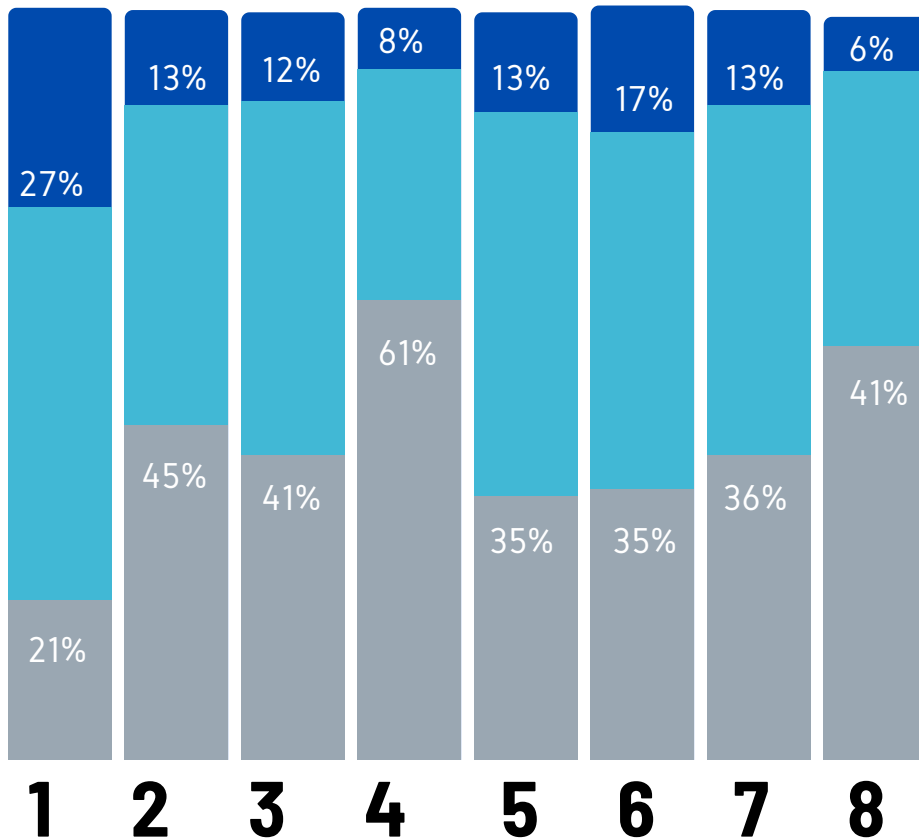
Even with the rise of disinformation and lies that abound in the diverse media ecosystem of social media, Rhode Islanders value the American tradition of free and unfettered speech. For this reason, students need to learn to identify "slick production values, deep fakes, and inaccurately conflated analogies" which may create a "toxic sludge" that threatens democratic values. For many participants, concerns over the contemporary political climate in the country make media literacy education seem even more relevant for learners of all ages.

BRINGING MEDIA LITERACY INTO THE HOME

FINDING: Although they watch and discuss TV shows and movies together, most parents and guardians do not use a wide range of activities to build media literacy competencies with their children at home



How likely is it that children and teens in your community do these activities with their parents or guardians?



To build media literacy competencies at home, consider the 5 A's:

- Be Aware**
- Be Alert**
- Be Awake**
- Be Assertive**
- Be Affirming**

- HIGH** 1. **Discuss movies or videos together**
- MED** 2. Read and discuss books, newspapers or magazines
- LOW** 3. Comment on the pros and cons of life online
- 4. Create videos or other media together
- 5. Balance choices of both online and offline activities
- 6. Discuss decisions about what to share online
- 7. Discuss potential risks and harms of false information online
- 8. Discuss what makes media sources more trustworthy

MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Fundamental media literacy instructional practices for learners in Grades PK - 12 help learners develop cognitive, social, and emotional competencies to prepare them for college and careers

How often do students in Rhode Island elementary or secondary schools encounter media literacy through its core instructional practices? We identified 16 basic activities that are commonly used in elementary and secondary schools. These activities can be used in subject areas including English language arts/literacy, social studies, the sciences, visual arts & design and the performing arts, mathematics, engineering and technology, comprehensive health, and world languages. While each of these instructional practices can be implemented using digital technologies, they do not require it.

Access, Analyze & Evaluate

- Images and Advertising
- Compare and Contrast
- Stereotypes
- Examine the News
- Music & Cultural Values
- The Business of Media

Create & Collaborate

- Tell a Story
- Team-Based Production
- Research Project
- Present a Strong Point of View
- Create a Public Service Announcement

Reflect, Understand & Apply

- How Media Messages Influence
- Balancing Online and Offline Life
- Reflect on Your Interpretations
- The Social Responsibilities of the Communicator
- Media Law and Policy

Instructional practices (or methods) engage all students in meaningful learning. Methods are differentiated to meet student needs and interests, task demands, and the learning environment.

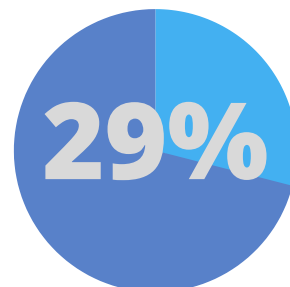
MEDIA LITERACY IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES



FINDING: Instructional practices of media literacy are used with elementary students in Rhode Island only occasionally

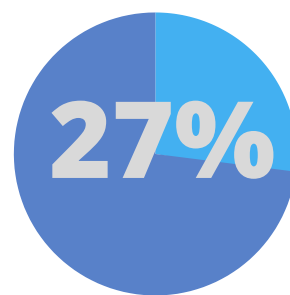
Tell a Story

Students adapt a book into a media genre, including animation, video game, or video, creating a storyboard or a script to depict an imaginary world with characters, conflict, and a sequence of events.



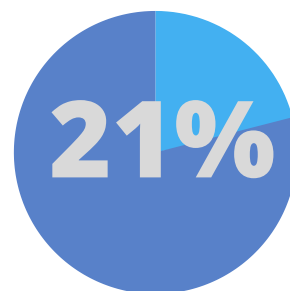
Compare and Contrast

Students compare and contrast two different forms of media to identify similarities and differences in content, format, target audience, and point of view.



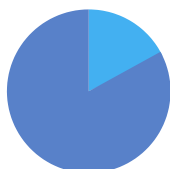
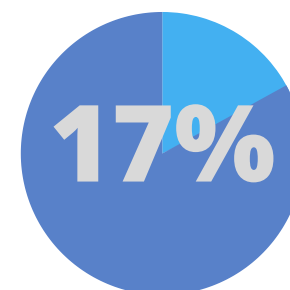
How Media Messages Influence

Students identify the many different choices that creators make and consider how the design of media messages may influence people's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.



Images & Advertising

Students interpret different types of advertising to examine how images can be manipulated and then they reflect on how advertising affects attitudes and behaviors.



Participants were asked to estimate how many of the young learners in their schools or community have encountered any of these instructional practices during the academic year. Pie chart percentages represent those who indicated "most" or "nearly all." N = 524

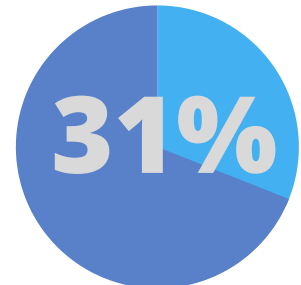
MEDIA LITERACY IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL



FINDING: Fewer than 1 in 3 middle-school students in Rhode Island get exposure to core instructional practices of media literacy

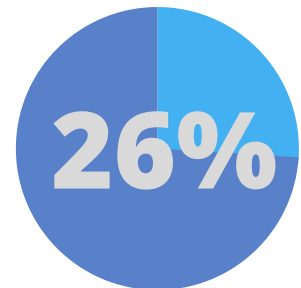
Examine the News

Students determine the difference between a news story and an opinion story in print and broadcast journalism.



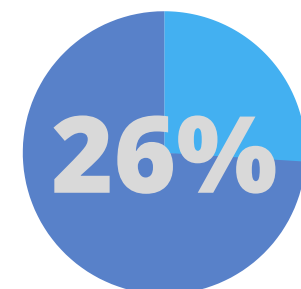
Stereotypes

Students analyze examples of different types of media to spot stereotypes and examine how values and ideologies are embedded in characters and stories.



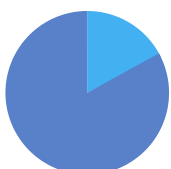
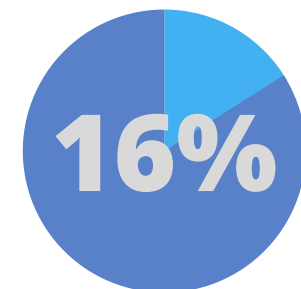
Team-Based Production

A small group of students work collaboratively to create a video and their work is viewed by parents, peers, or the community.



Balancing Online and Offline Life

Students keep track of their media use over a period of time and discuss how media may be beneficial or harmful to their health, identity, and relationships.



Participants estimated how many of the students in their schools or communities have encountered any of these instructional practices during the academic year. Pie chart percentages represent those who indicated "most" or "nearly all" students engaged in these learning activities in 2020-2021. N = 524

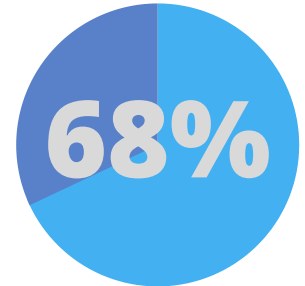


MEDIA LITERACY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

FINDING: High school students in Rhode Island get at least some exposure to a few media literacy instructional practices

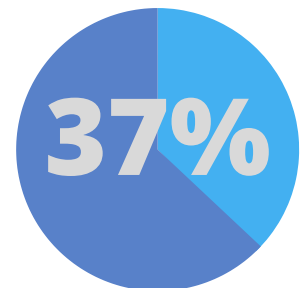
Research Project

Students learn how to generate questions and gather information from multiple sources to learn something new and then summarize what they learned by creating a written work, video, oral presentation, podcast, infographic, or other media project.



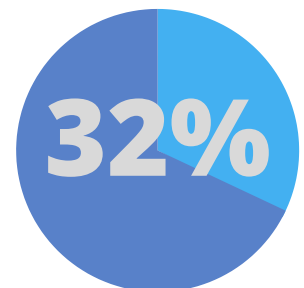
Reflect on Your Own Interpretations

Students examine various information sources and notice how their own opinions and existing beliefs may influence their interpretation of what they see and read.



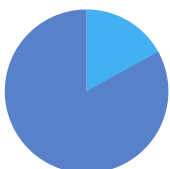
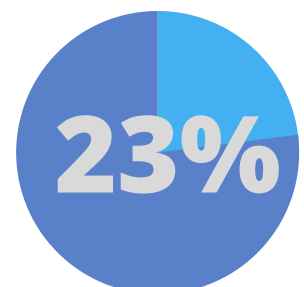
Social Responsibilities of the Communicator

Students reflect on how they use both online and face-to-face expression and communication in their social relationships and learn how to reduce conflict and disrupt hurtful or aggressive talk and actions through dialogue and active listening.



Music & Cultural Values

Students explore music from different time periods to identify how it reflects social values and activates strong emotions in ways that build consensus on controversial political issues.



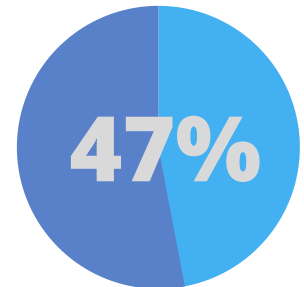
Participants estimated how many of the high school students in their schools or community have encountered any of these instructional practices during the academic year. Pie chart percentages represent those who indicated "most" or "nearly all" students engaged in these learning activities in 2020-2021. N - 524

FINDING: Rhode Island high school students get some learning experiences that help them to develop critical thinking, self-expression, and research skills



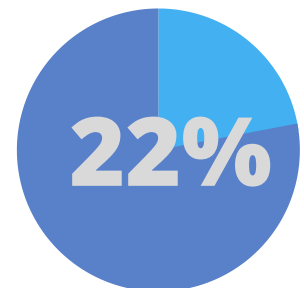
Present a Strong Point of View

Students write an article or create a media presentation that advocates for or against a specific action, using reasoning and evidence to defend their point of view.



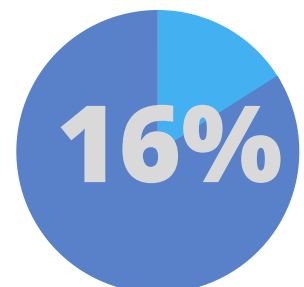
Media Law and Policy

Students learn about the First Amendment and other laws that empower them as citizens in a democracy and apply social responsibility as both creators and consumers of media messages.



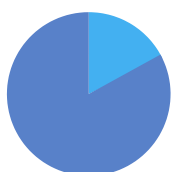
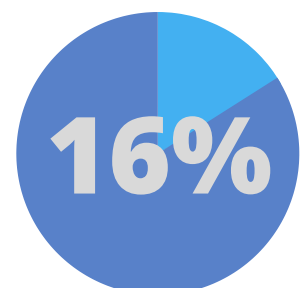
Create a Public Service Announcement -

Students choose a topic and work collaboratively to create a public service campaign designed to raise awareness, promote a cause or an event, or motivate people to take action in the community.



The Business of Media

Students learn about how advertising is targeted to increase its effectiveness and how selling audience attention is the way that media companies make money.

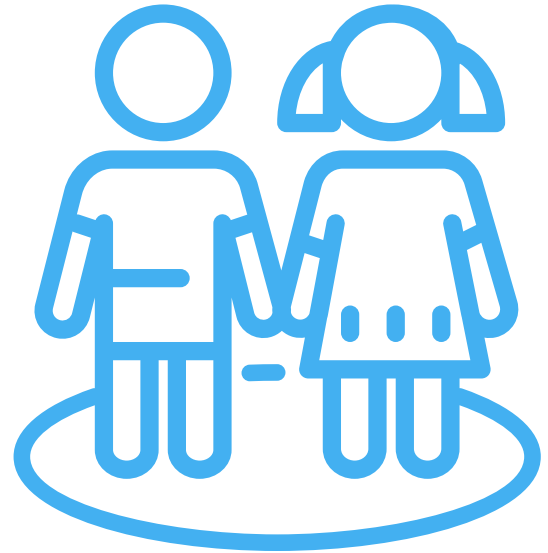


Participants estimated how many of the high school students in their schools or community have encountered any of these instructional practices during the academic year. Pie chart percentages represent those who indicated "most" or "nearly all" students engaged in these learning activities in 2020-2021. N - 524

MEDIA LITERACY STARTS YOUNG

FINDING: Media literacy learning experiences are perceived to be important for children in Rhode Island elementary schools

For some Rhode Island educators, media literacy is understood as part of literacy education. For younger students, understanding the basics of storytelling is an important first step in gaining awareness of media stories in daily life. Reading comprehension skills can be activated through creative opportunities including drawing pictures or taking photos to tell a story. Children discover how meaning is shared through spoken and printed language, images, sound, and multimedia, which are all vital forms of expression and communication. As these participants explained:



Telling a story is an important skill. It is hard to recognize a narrative without understanding how stories are made, the elements of a good story, and if we cannot recognize a story, we cannot tell when we are being fed a narrative.

--survey participant

Building a foundation with joy and creativity is key. Beginning with the creative aspect will inspire students to love and respect media literacy.

--survey participant

Even the youngest children can learn to recognize how media messages are carefully designed to inform, entertain, or persuade. Participants explained:

Students are bombarded with information and the best skill we can teach them is how to evaluate it critically.

--survey participant

Young people are constantly exposed to various forms of media and without the tools to adequately evaluate the messages from this media, they are likely to be manipulated by potentially biased information.

--survey participant

KEY FINDINGS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Good News

FINDING: Rhode Island teachers, parents and community members recognize the importance of learning to comprehend and critically analyze news media in school

41% of participants consider Examining the News to be the single most important learning activity for middle school students. One in 3 Rhode Island students learn how to comprehend and analyze news media in school.

FINDING: Nearly half of Rhode Island educators, librarians, and community members believe that high school students have the chance to create a written or media presentation where they use evidence to defend their point of view for or against a specific policy or action.

Participants recognize that, at the high school level, it's not difficult to integrate the Present a Strong Point of View lesson into various subjects in the core curriculum. In particular, this activity can work well in language arts, social studies, and science, where school librarians can provide meaningful support for both students and staff. Even for educators without any formal training in media literacy education, this assignment can help students to develop media literacy competencies, especially if students have some creative freedom in how to present their strong point of view, using language, image, sound, and multimedia.

Bad News

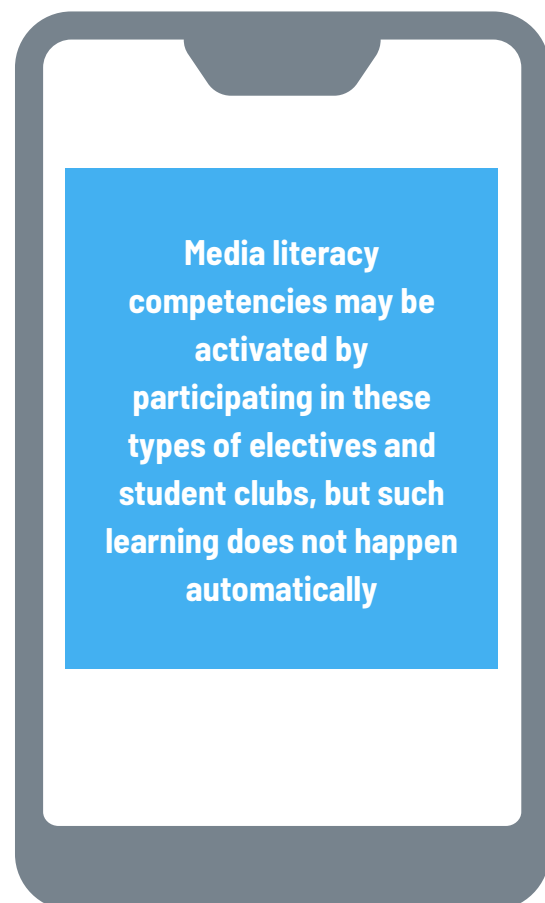
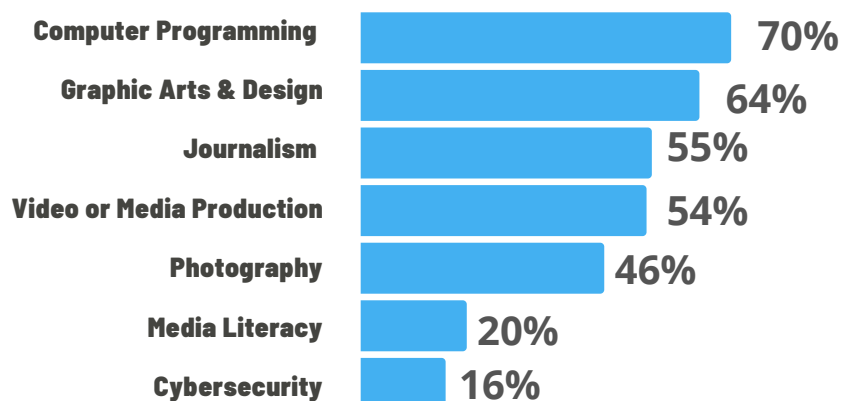
FINDING: Rhode Island teens get few opportunities in school to develop knowledge and skills needed to understand the way digital platforms harness their attention for profit

Although 40% of participants believe that the most important learning activity for young teens is Balancing Online and Offline Life, which helps students reflect upon their own media use choices, only 16% of participants say that middle-school students get this learning opportunity in school.

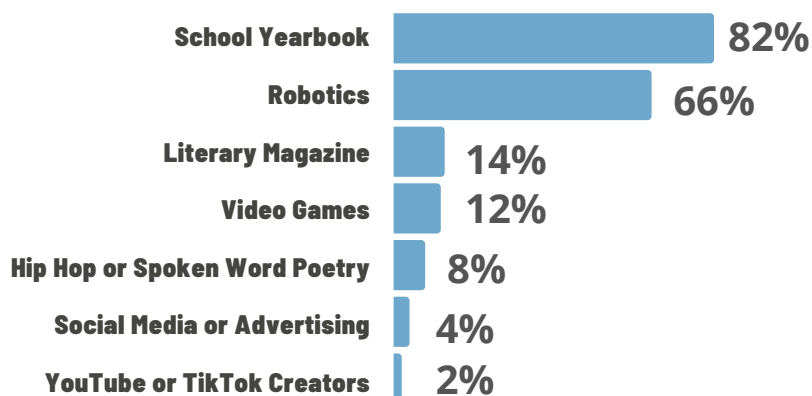
Despite their extensive exposure to advertising in daily life, only 15% of Rhode Island high school students are likely to learn about how advertising is targeted to consumers and how selling audience attention is the way the media companies make money.

ELECTIVE COURSES

FINDING: In some Rhode Island communities, elective courses and student clubs are available to students to develop media literacy competencies, but only a small number of students generally participate in these programs



STUDENT CLUBS



Participants were asked to indicate which electives or student clubs were available to students in their schools or community. N = 272

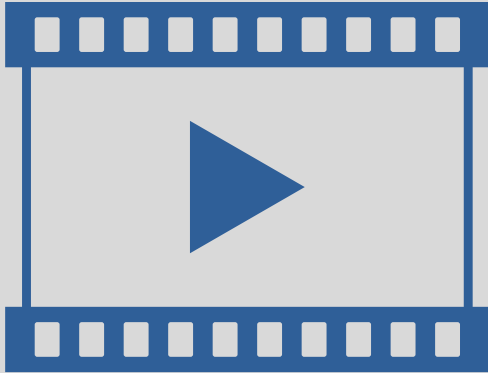
Media Literacy Education

- requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create
- expands the concept of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media
- builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.
- affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages
- recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization
- develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society

Core Principles of Media Literacy Education, National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)

BRINGING MEDIA LITERACY INTO THE COMMUNITY

FINDING: *There are educational and cultural resources in Rhode Island that could help parents implement media literacy practices in the home and at school*

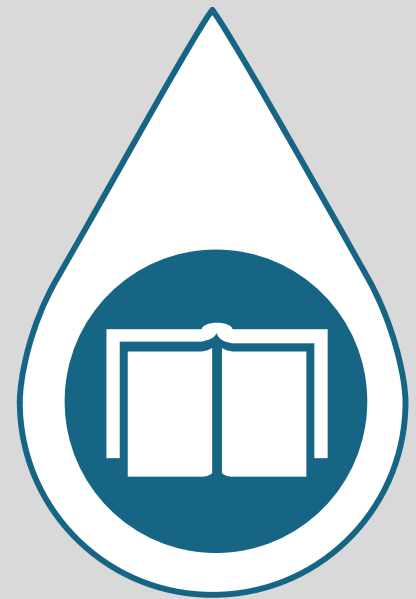


The **Providence Children's Film Festival** offers parents, families, and the community opportunities to access delightful, challenging films and the skills to be their own creative media makers. They sponsor film screenings, hands-on workshops, summer media literacy programs, community jury events and the "Be a Cinema Detective" media literacy program.

Many public libraries across the state of Rhode Island offer media literacy programs that address topics including fake news and disinformation.

- The **Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services** and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) have supported statewide training programs in media literacy for school and public librarians.
- The **Providence Public Library** supports the Digital Literacy Corps, whose members offer digital literacy classes to the community. They also offer opportunities for people to use data visualization and programming in a program called Data For Good.
- The C-Lab is **Cranston Public Library's** space for learning, exploring, and experimenting with technology. The C-Lab offers structured classes, innovative programs, and one-on-one technology assistance.

The **Media Education Lab** offers weekly webinars, free curriculum resources, and professional development programs for educators and librarians. The University of Rhode Island offers a 12-credit graduate certificate program in digital literacy, which was recognized for excellence by the U.S. Department of Education.



Are you supporting media literacy in a Rhode Island city or town? Let us know about it on the **Media Literacy Now RI Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/medialitri>

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY CONTEXT CHALLENGES & OBSTACLES

FINDING: Access to digital devices is an obstacle to media literacy education, but the extreme focus on standardized testing also limits opportunities to implement programs

For each category, participants were asked to indicate which of these challenges were most relevant to their schools and communities

N = 272

Technology

- **wireless connectivity in the home 67%**
- **access to digital devices 55%**
- wireless connectivity in the school 36%
- school policies regarding mobile phones 31%
- limitations of space in the school 28%
- school policies on film and video 19%



Student Readiness

- **students lack basic skills and knowledge 52%**
- **lack of interest in the community 40%**
- students lack interest 34%
- students are too young 28%
- resistance from the community 23%
- students not emotionally ready 21%



School Culture

- **focus on test scores in reading and math 60%**
- **other priorities are more urgent 58%**
- **limits in educator knowledge, experience, or know-how 43%**
- not sure where it fits in school curriculum 39%
- concerns about controversy in community response 25%
- no perceived need to change the curriculum 20%
- educators and teaching staff are reluctant 15%



CHALLENGES & OBSTACLES

What Participants Say

Finding a "home" for media literacy within the curriculum

I have been able to work media literacy in as a unit and also utilize aspects in certain lessons ... but with the way of the world, the speed of consumption, and the distrust of information, I think we need a whole class focused on this topic.
-survey participant

Since it's not often included in a "core" class, it is often seen as less important.
-survey participant

School leaders do not see the need

Some have seen media literacy as an educational 'extra,' almost like an extracurricular activity in nature, something not essential to creating a well-rounded education, which is a mistake
-survey participant

There is a lack of appreciation for what we are really teaching, how to evaluate and interpret the words and images, whether in a book, social media, or the news. [Media literacy education includes] how to listen [and understand] how others are interpreting the same information. How to determine fact from opinion, stereotypes, prejudice, racism, ... how to be good citizens in person and online.
-survey participant



Fitting media literacy into a curriculum that focuses on reading and math to improve test scores

Time, time, time, time, time. There are so many initiatives & priorities being thrust upon teachers and students that media literacy gets pushed to the bottom of the list.
-survey participant

"Teaching to the test" and time spent preparing students for standardized tests takes precedence.
-survey participant

There are substantial inequalities in educator knowledge

Limits in educator knowledge coupled with limited professional development time
-survey participant

As a library media specialist in an urban elementary school, my supervisor and colleagues do not see my role to make a difference in student learning or faculty development.
--survey participant

MEDIA LITERACY IN RI DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

Rhode Island school districts use different strategies for advancing the media literacy competencies of their learners. Among the 524 survey responses, 376 participants included identifiable information about the location of their workplace or community, enabling the creation of school district report cards that include evidence from educators, librarians, school leaders, parents, community members, and elected public officials. Survey data was used to evaluate each school district's level of engagement in implementing media literacy education.



Exemplary

In these Rhode Island school districts, educators are currently implementing media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools. High levels of support are available for the use of digital media and technology. The community and students are seen as ready to learn and the school climate is supportive of media literacy education. To earn this grade, schools need to have media literacy instructional practices happening with most students at 2 or more grade levels. A+ is awarded when all school and community context variables are high. A- is awarded when all school and community context variables are low.



Above Average

In these Rhode Island school districts, educators are currently implementing media literacy education and a variety of community stakeholders are supportive. While there are perceived obstacles and challenges, they are not seen as insurmountable. To earn this grade, schools need to have media literacy instructional practices happening with most students at 1 or more grade levels. B+ is awarded when all school and community context variables are high. B- is awarded when all school and community context variables are low.



Average

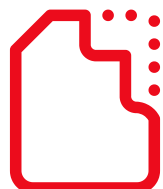
Participants from these Rhode Island school districts identify a number of obstacles and challenges, such as an extreme focus on standardized testing and attention to other educational priorities that are deemed more important. Lack of know-how among educational staff about how to integrate media literacy into existing instructional programs limits innovation. To earn this grade, schools have media literacy instructional practices happening with some students at 1 or more grade levels. C+ is awarded when all school and community context variables are high. C- is awarded when all school and community context variables are low.



Not Meeting Expectations

Participants from these Rhode Island school districts also identify a variety of obstacles and challenges. Many do not believe the students in their schools and communities are ready for media literacy. They report that only a very small number of students are getting opportunities to engage in the 16 core learning practices of media literacy education. To earn this grade, schools have few media literacy instructional practices happening at 1 or more grade levels.

Incomplete



In these Rhode Island school districts, we could not evaluate the implementation of media literacy education because there were 5 or fewer respondents to the survey:

Block Island
Wakefield

Little Compton

Jamestown

Middletown

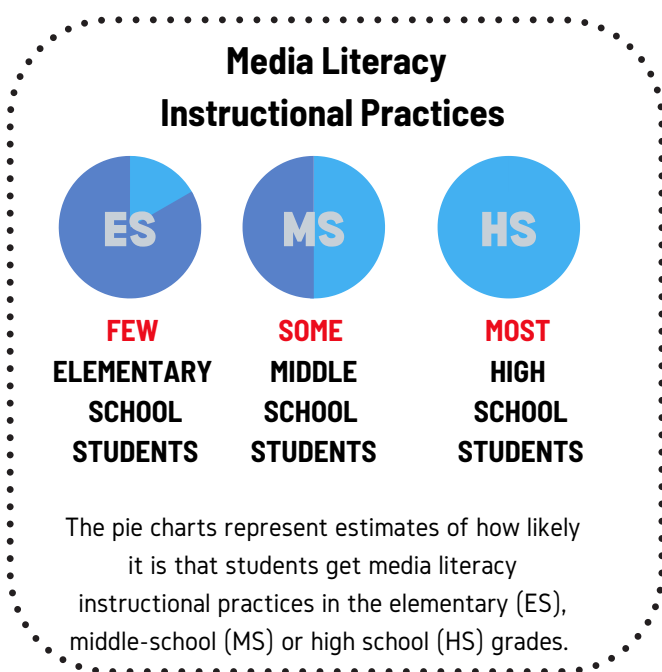
MEDIA LITERACY IN RI DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

Do students in Rhode Island elementary or secondary schools encounter media literacy through its core instructional practices?

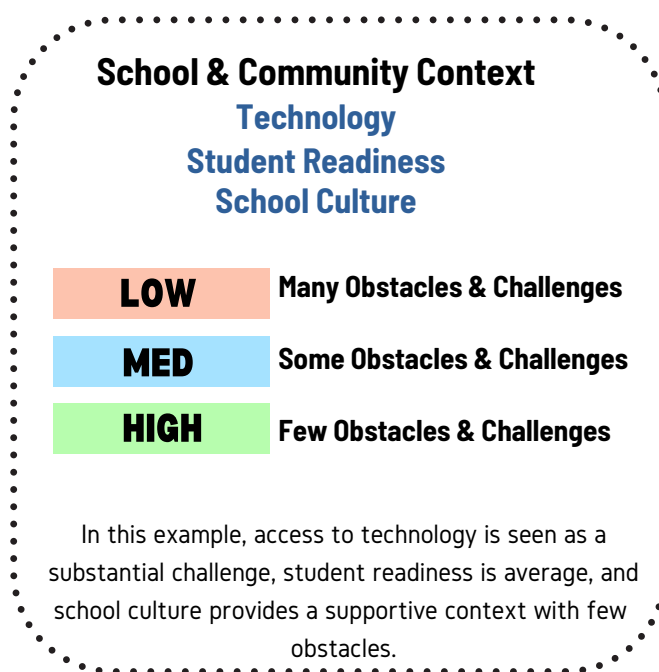
This chart offers a synthesis of the data to depict the differing levels of implementation of media literacy education in school districts across Rhode Island.

HOW TO READ THE CHART

School District Name



Participants estimated how many of the learners in their own schools or community encountered **16 ML instructional practices**, as shown on pages 8 - 11. Responses were averaged by grade level and cutoffs (few, some, most) were identified based on mean scores.



Participants estimated the presence or absence of **19 different types of obstacles and challenges**, as shown on page 16. Fewer obstacles are considered evidence of high functioning. Responses were averaged and cutoffs (high, medium, low) were identified based on mean scores.



Help us Develop More Accurate Report Cards

Please help us make the survey more accurate by sharing information about your school and community if you have not yet completed the survey:

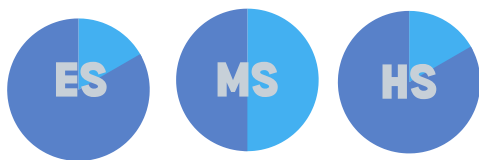
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MLRI>

MEDIA LITERACY IN RI DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

FINDING: There are substantial inequalities in the implementation of media literacy education across Rhode Island school districts.

Some Rhode Island school districts have media literacy instructional practices fully in place for learning in elementary, middle, and high school. In other school districts, media literacy instructional practices are less likely to occur, due in part to perceived challenges and obstacles that include technology, student readiness, and school culture.

Barrington



Technology	HIGH
Student Readiness	HIGH
School Culture	HIGH



Bristol Warren



Technology	MED
Student Readiness	HIGH
School Culture	HIGH



Burrillville



Technology	MED
Student Readiness	HIGH
School Culture	HIGH



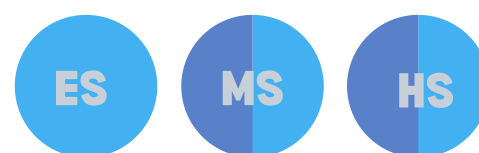
Central Falls



Technology	LOW
Student Readiness	LOW
School Culture	HIGH



Chariho

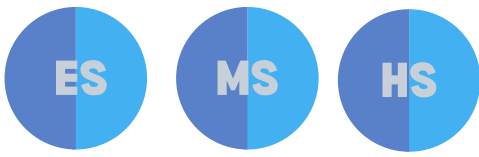


Technology	MED
Student Readiness	MED
School Culture	MED

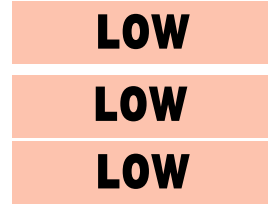


DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

Coventry



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Cranston



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Cumberland



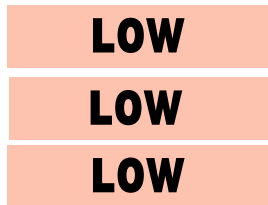
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



East Greenwich



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



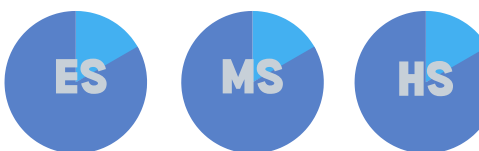
East Providence



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Exeter West Greenwich



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Foster Gloucester

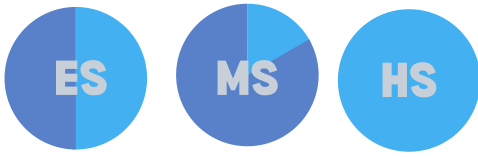


Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture

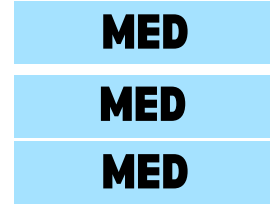


DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

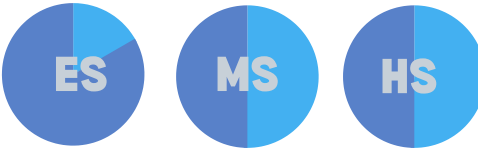
Johnston



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



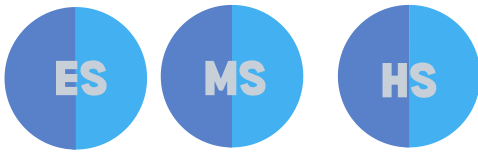
Lincoln



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



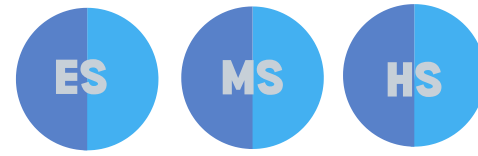
Narragansett



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



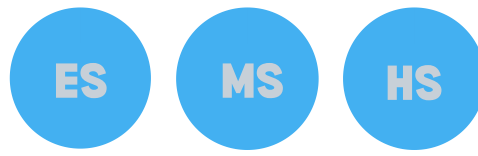
Newport



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



North Kingstown



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



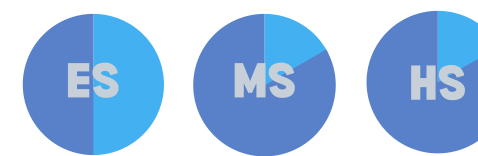
North Providence



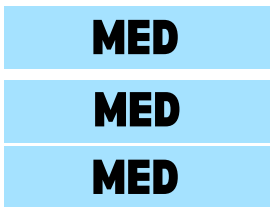
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Pawtucket



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture

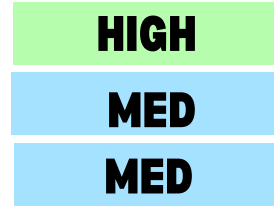


DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

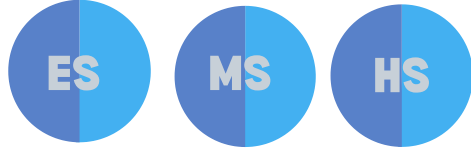
Portsmouth



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Providence



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Scituate



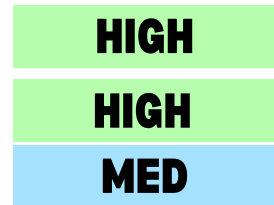
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Smithfield



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



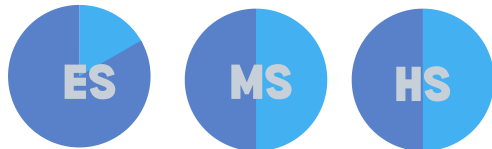
South Kingstown



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



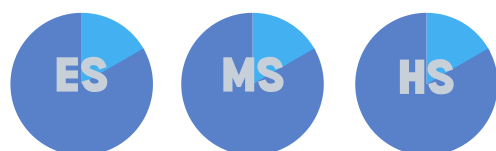
Tiverton



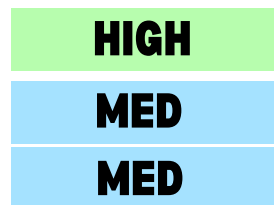
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Warwick



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

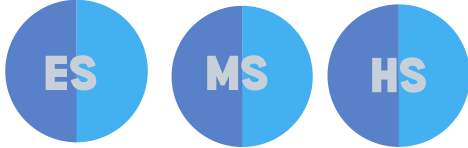
West Warwick



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



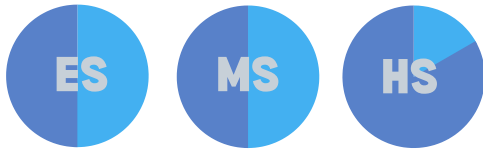
Westerly



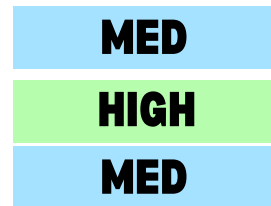
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



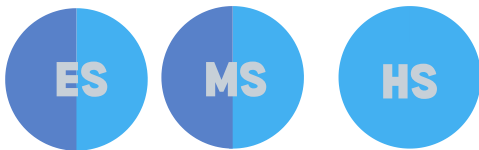
Woonsocket



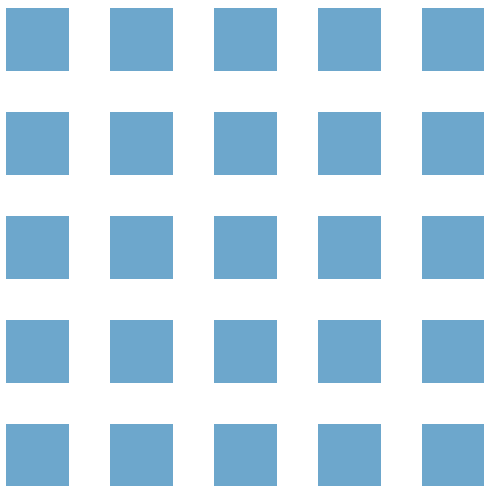
Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Private & Independent Schools



Technology
Student Readiness
School Culture



Media literacy could be woven into most classes but the successful implementation would be most effective through teacher buy-in. Only if teachers feel this is valuable and work to educate themselves will they be able to transmit their knowledge to their students.

--survey participant

RECOMMENDATIONS

It will take a community working together to develop media literacy competencies for all Rhode Island learners, in and out of schools

School Leaders

- Create policies at the state level that ensure that all learners get equitable access to digital media learning experiences that advance academic achievement, support college and career readiness, and increase wellbeing and safety
- Prioritize student media literacy competencies in district strategic goals and school improvement plans
- Increase professional development for faculty/staff and support release time for planning, coordination, implementation, and assessment
- Update technology infrastructure to support student use of digital devices in schools
- Develop media literacy instructional practices in elective courses and after-school student clubs
- Increase parent awareness of media literacy through an annual family survey and offer programming about media literacy activities in the home

Educators and Librarians

- Create a district-wide cross-curricular map to develop a scope and sequence for embedding the 16 core instructional practices into PK-12 education
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities in media literacy education
- Explore how social/emotional learning, civic education, financial literacy, and school library standards can be aligned with media literacy instructional practices
- Curate ML curriculum resources for educators through a collaborative process that includes members of the School Librarians of Rhode Island (SLRI)
- Gain knowledge about your students' uses of media at home for information, schoolwork, and daily life at the beginning of each school year

Parents and Community Members

- Use a wider range of media literacy activities in the home
- Take advantage of online resources to learn more about bringing media literacy education into the home
- Explore how media literacy competencies apply to college and career readiness
- Reach out to schools to share your expertise or interests in digital media, technology, and communication
- Promote coordination between public libraries and schools to develop media literacy programs

Public Officials and Philanthropic Leaders

- Offer town hall conversations/presentations to increase communication between school and home and leverage community expertise in this area
- Expand fiscal resources to enable schools to develop a leadership cadre in the school district to advance media literacy learning opportunities for all students
- Provide financial support through community grants dedicated to media literacy education and support an annual statewide survey

Media Professionals

- Create media to increase local public knowledge about contemporary mass and digital media, including media influence on children and youth, stereotypes, disinformation, data privacy, and media economics
- Showcase examples of young people, educators, and librarians who are demonstrating their media literacy competencies through creative media production
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with educators and youth in your local school and community

METHODOLOGY

This is a groundbreaking study that uses survey and interview data to examine the implementation of media literacy instructional practices, reporting findings at both the state and district level.

The study is designed to help schools and communities document and monitor the implementation of media literacy education locally. As a result, it intentionally examines the variations that exist across communities in the types of learning experiences that students receive. It also explores how differences in access to technology, perceptions of student readiness, and school culture may affect implementation.

Survey Research

After reviewing the scholarly literature in the field, we identified 16 core instructional practices of media literacy education and 19 challenges and obstacles that may be present and created an online survey. We developed a research proposal and received approval from the University of Rhode Island Institutional Research Board. We tested items with a small sample of teachers and used think-aloud protocols to check comprehension of survey items.

Sample

We reached out to Rhode Island superintendents for help in recruiting participants for the online survey during the spring of 2021. We also used Facebook and email marketing to recruit participants. To qualify to take the online survey, participants certified that they were over the age of 18 and that they lived or worked in Rhode Island. After cleaning the data, there were a total of 524 participants, including school leaders, educators, librarians, elected public officials, parents, and members of the community.

Data Analysis

We analyzed survey data by performing statistical analysis and coded open-ended responses for themes. We used data analysis techniques to depict research findings visually. In the final stage, we sorted results by the participant's workplace or residence and produced a report card to represent each school district in the state. Private, parochial, and independent schools were analyzed as a single group. We created summary variables to synthesize evidence and present findings visually.

Interviews

The foundational goals of the interview were to assess when, where, and how students were being exposed to media literacy concepts and instructional practices within the contexts of different districts, school types, and modes of instruction. We translated this complex question into three specific areas of inquiry for the participants, including pedagogy, access, and training. Questions about pedagogy asked participants to describe curriculum, classroom activities, and teaching strategies utilized by educators to teach media literacy. Access questions focused on the technological capabilities of various schools and districts, as media literacy education often involves the use of digital media. These questions were directly tied into the issue of socioeconomic disparities, something that can have a detrimental effect on media literacy efforts if not properly addressed. The training portion of the interview questions was included to evaluate the levels of familiarity and formal training in media literacy that our various stakeholders were bringing to the table, and whether or not there was any connection between training and increased media literacy teaching and activities. Because we wanted to hear from various stakeholders in education such as teachers, librarians, administrators, government officials, parents, and community members, we created a few versions of the questionnaire so that it could be adapted to each interviewee depending on their role/occupation. For example, parents and community members may have limited knowledge about media literacy lessons and even access within their district, but we felt they could share opinions on media literacy efforts and student media consumption outside of the classroom to paint a more complete picture of MLE in a district.

Interview Protocol Development

Before utilizing the questionnaire for data collection with educators, the team carried out beta testing of the interview survey with educators outside of the scope of research. This enabled us to identify potentially misleading questions or confusing prompts. After completing this stage, research assistants carried out practice interviews with one another. Additionally, research supervisors observed initial interviews to make and give notes on the process.

Interview Recruiting and Data Collection

Participants indicated their interest in being interviewed when they completed the research survey. We conducted 30 interviews with participants who provided additional insight on the practice of media literacy education in local school districts. We also compiled lists of Rhode Island administrators, school leaders, and educators. Once the interviewing process had begun, researchers utilized snowball sampling to encourage participants to suggest other people who might be interested in participating. Researchers also tapped into their own personal contact lists for interview recruiting. Team members also worked with school superintendents and government officials to reach out to various educational committees and community organizations for more expansive participation. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes and were conducted via Zoom. Transcripts were reviewed and researchers produced a synthesis/profile for each interview subject. We recognized that the sample of interview participants was not representative of all school districts in the state. We used NVivo for qualitative analysis of cross-cutting themes across all 30 interviews and we did not use interview data to make inferences about the scope of district-wide implementation.

Research Team. Renee Hobbs, Pam Steager and Mary Moen collaborated on all aspects of the project. Special thanks are offered to student researchers Tessa Mediano, Jenny Sullivan and Rongwei Tang.