

## **Tips for Teachers**

### **What is Media Literacy?**

*Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages. As communication technologies transform society, they impact our understanding of ourselves, our communities and our diverse cultures, making media literacy an essential life skill for the 21st Century.*

*--Alliance for a Media Literate America*

Media literacy goes beyond the idea of reading and writing. It requires media consumers to effectively analyze and evaluate the numerous media messages we encounter.

Media education can facilitate students' reflections on their media experiences and help them develop critical thinking skills. The classroom exercises proposed in this guide may support many different subject areas, including arts and language, mathematics, health and nutrition.

### **Tips for Using the Teacher's Guides**

- Television is a compelling medium. When showing program or commercial clips to students, keep the segments very short — one or two minutes — so that students stay with the task at hand. Tell students that they will be seeing only short clips, and play with the media to keep attention from wandering.
  - To concentrate on images, turn off the sound.
  - To concentrate on sound, put a towel over the screen. Use the "pause" button on the remote and the "closed-captioning" function.
- Throughout many of the guides, there are suggested open-ended questions to encourage students to think critically and problem solve. Provide students with information and allow them to build the skills to interpret these messages for themselves.
- Keep in mind that people understand and interpret media messages differently. Students may gather different messages than you or other students. There is not necessarily a "right" way to interpret a given message, as we all filter messages through our own lenses.

## **Additional Resources**

Alliance for a Media Literate America

<http://www.amlainfo.org/>

The AMLA promotes media literacy education that is focused on critical inquiry, learning and skill building rather than on media bashing and blame.

Affluenza Teacher's Guide

<http://www.pbs.org/affluenza>

For grades 5–12, this guide exposes students to the problem of overconsumption and its effects on society and the environment. It supports the one-hour PBS program of the same name. The program takes a hard, sometimes humorous look at the American passion for shopping.

Center for Media Literacy

<http://www.medialit.org>

The Center for Media Literacy is the largest producer and distributor of media literacy resources in the U.S. This site features media literacy resources, workshop information and relevant articles.

Media Awareness Network

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

A Canadian Web site that promotes and supports media education. The educator's section includes teaching units, student handouts, reports and background materials.

Media Literacy Clearinghouse

<http://www.med.sc.edu/medialit>

This Web site is designed for teachers of grades K–12 who want to learn more about media literacy and integrate it into classroom instruction.

National Institute on Media and the Family

<http://www.mediafamily.org>

The National Institute on Media and the Family is a national resource for teachers, parents, community leaders and other caring adults who are interested in the influence of electronic media on early childhood education, child development, academic performance, culture and violence.