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Improving Media Literacy among Ninth Grade AVID Students

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Improving Media Literacy among Ninth Grade AVID Students

Sierra R. Byrd

California State University, Monterey Bay
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Media literacy is an important skill to learn in an information-saturated environment. Adolescents, who are vulnerable to media messages both online and off-line, would benefit from learning how to find credible sources and information. To address this need I conducted a lesson about media literacy over the course of three sessions with a ninth grade AVID class at Santa Cruz High School. The students acquired media literacy skills and learned how to apply it to their daily lives.

Building on Assets and Needs Statement

Many adolescents do not receive media literacy education and remain susceptible to media messages and fake news. Many adults benefit from learning tips to spot untrustworthy information sources. In a study done after the 2016 United States election by Pew Research Center, it was found that “64% of adults believe fake news stories cause a great deal of confusion and 23% said they shared fabricated political stories themselves” (Anderson & Raine, 2017). Despite there being a need in the United States for media literacy education, it has not been given precedence. In other countries, however, media literacy education is earning recognition. The United Kingdom and Finland have made promoting and studying media literacy a priority (Jolls, 2015). During the 2016 U.S. election, there were 38 million shares of false news stories on social media, translating to 760 million page views (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Early intervention could help decrease the number of people sharing fake news stories and the number of people who take fake news stories as fact. This early intervention could begin in middle and high school, giving students tools to find credible information online.

Adolescents spend a great deal of time using technology and on social media, whether that is through their phone or through their computer. Although this is part of the problem, it is
also a great asset. Media and technology are not inherently evil. They can be used to do many great things, but this is dependent on how they are used. Media literacy education offers students a chance to use skills they have already gained through their frequent use of these platforms in a new, more responsible way. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) recently tested eighth grade students on technology and engineering literacy. They were given scenarios they may come across while dealing with technology in their daily lives. Among the participants, 43% of students scored at or above the proficient level (The Nation’s Report Card, 2016).

Adolescents are skilled in the use of technology, but often have difficulty deciding the trustworthiness of the information they see online (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). According to a report done by the Stanford History Education Group (2016), students have a hard time discerning the difference between news articles and advertisements. This is problematic, given how often companies target the adolescent demographic. Though adolescents spend a lot of time online, they often fall prey to fake news and do not critically analyze the information they find within social media posts, like tweets (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Adolescents struggle identifying photoshopped images (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). This could prove troubling, because many magazines have photoshopped and manipulated images that adolescents could perceive as genuine. Due to these deficiencies, there is a growing field of research in media literacy education. There are organizations, researchers, and educators that are working to find effective practices to teach media literacy across a broad group of age ranges.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations, or UNESCO, sees the importance of media literacy and has dedicated itself to spreading media literacy education around the world (Jolls, 2015). In the United States, it is not yet a priority to bring
media literacy into common curriculum; however, states such as Texas, Washington, and California have proposed, developed, or passed legislation focused on information literacy education (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). Though not part of official curricula, there are resources for educators that aid in creating media literacy and digital citizenship lessons. Common Sense Media provides 76% of all digital citizenship curricula in the United States (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). This source provides free lesson plans tailored to specific age groups about media literacy. With Common Sense Media activities, students learn how to stay safe online, how to find credible sources, how to protect oneself from misinformation, and a myriad of other information literacy skills. Though small, there is a growing movement that seeks to integrate information literacy into curricula across the United States. Introducing media literacy into regular curriculum could address not only the current informational climate, but also prepare a number of different groups for what they may find outside the classroom.

**Literature Review**

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice**

High school students live in a media-saturated environment. In fact, Pew Research Center found that 92% of U.S. adolescents go online daily, with 24% that are “almost always” online (Gretter & Yadav, 2016). When American teenagers begin high school, they may be asked, perhaps for the first time, to do research. This process could prove difficult if these high school students have never been educated in how to find trustworthy sources. Media literacy, as defined by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (2017), “is the ability to encode and decode symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages” (para. 5). Media literacy is a skill in which one is able to look at a form of media, whether that is a website, any form of print, television, or movie, and be able to
understand the messages it is trying to convey. To be media literate is to understand that the messages one sees are not always fact, and that often, especially in the current political climate, opinion is presented as fact. Perhaps most relevant to adolescents, media literacy also seeks to educate people in safe social media practices.

Given that 73% of adolescents use some form of social media (Nowell, 2014), it is vital that they are educated in how to sort through the innumerable posts they see on a daily basis and recognize what is true and, perhaps more importantly, what is false. Incorporating media literacy into high school curricula could be beneficial step in keeping up with modern technology trends. High school students are rapidly approaching graduation and are deciding whether to go to college or enter the workforce. Being well-versed in media literacy could not only improve their future research papers in college, but also help them navigate news websites, in general, to get the best information. There is also a benefit in teaching those joining the workforce media literacy. Media literacy may not directly relate to a future career path, but susceptibility to media messages affects a multitude of groups. Those who enter the workforce are likely to continue to use social media, go online, watch television and movies, and read magazines. Having a background in media literacy may allow them to think more critically about what they see.

Many high school students are tech-savvy, but it is unfair to assume that they are able to critically think about the media they are consuming without guidance (Kivunja, 2015). High school students are not completely ignorant of what media is and may have insights into how media literacy could benefit them. Furthermore, high school students are shaping who they are and who they want to be. In this stage of development, according to Erikson, they are beginning their journey toward adulthood. Identity versus Role Confusion, a stage which occurs while students are in middle and high school, is a time when adolescents are establishing a sense of self.
separate from their families. Adolescents want independence and are making up their minds on a myriad of issues, including their own personal goals and values. They are trying out different identities, and many are turning to social media to do so, even if they do not necessarily have the skills to cope with what they see and with whom they speak (Long & Chen, 2007).

While adolescents are establishing a sense of identity, having skills in media literacy can give them the tools to analyze the messages they receive and create on social media. During Identity versus Role Confusion, adolescents may use social media and other online resources to learn more about their identity, whether that is their sexual orientation, their gender, their ethnicity, or their culture (Long & Chen, 2007). Media literacy skills could not only help them find websites with credible information about these identity topics, but it could also help them analyze what they find on these websites. Many adolescents also use social media to express opinions about a variety of topics, including politics (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). Adolescents also use social media to vent about personal frustrations and to connect with their peers. Media literacy education could give them the tools to decide how much they want to share on platforms like Twitter. Social media use is widespread among adolescents and because they do not receive information on how to navigate these websites, it is possible they are not being safe. Adolescents, therefore, are in great need of media literacy education.

Teaching adolescents media literacy skills is developmentally appropriate because defining who they are by what they see on the Internet could be problematic and possibly detrimental. With the rise of fake news and hate groups on the platforms adolescents use daily, intervening and giving them tools to combat the vitriol and false stories could help them stay safe online. Lesson plans that incorporate media literacy could help them decide what choices they want to make, such as who they want to speak to online, how to approach covert advertising, and
overall how they want to present themselves online. While the Internet has the capability of being a wonderful resource for adolescents, it is vital to give them the skills to evaluate online information. Adolescents with a background in media literacy can then decide how they want to interact with what they see online and in the media. At this stage in development, adolescents are open to a variety of different experiences, given that they are establishing separate opinions than their family (Long & Chen, 2007). Media literacy education gives adolescents tools to find credible information about different points of view from sources that they might not have been able to find on their own.

**Consideration of Diversity**

Media literacy is a skill that could be utilized across age groups, ethnicities, genders, and beyond. This concept has been in American classrooms since the introduction of radio (Jolls & Wilson, 2014). My project applies across a myriad of diverse groups. Santa Cruz High School is comprised of 1,027 students. There are 290 ninth grade students. Of the ninth grade students at Santa Cruz High School, 76 are reported to be Hispanic or Latino. That is 29% of the ninth grade population (California Department of Education, n.d.). My lesson will occur in an AVID classroom. AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. The AVID program supports students who have been overlooked in classroom settings, such as minority students (AVID, 2018). An average freshman AVID class will be first generation students. Across the United States, 86% of students enrolled in AVID identify as a minority group that has been underrepresented in the pathway to higher education (AVID, 2018).

AVID seeks to prepare students for college and to support them throughout their high school career in order to help them succeed in an academic environment. Most of these students will also already have experience with technology and media, and this lesson will help to add to
what they already have. Though my project will take place in a high school AVID classroom full of freshman, it is important to also study why media literacy matters no matter the age group or gender. For example, the ways in which individuals experience media is different and that can be incorporated in media literacy education. This issue can also be applied across racial and ethnic groups, given that, as discussed, it is seen throughout the world. There is a lack of peer-reviewed research articles in ethnic differences regarding susceptibility to media messages; however, there is beginning to be research on how media literacy can be beneficial in breaking down racial and ethnic stereotypes in the media (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015).

Through media literacy, students may begin to think critically of how their racial and ethnic identity is portrayed on screen, especially if it is negative. After a media literacy program was implemented directed at Hispanic adolescents focused on how their ethnic identity was portrayed in the media, it was found through in-depth interviews that students began to critique what they saw (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). These adolescents were able to think critically about what they saw in these portrayals and observe a difference in what they experienced compared to media depictions through the use of media literacy. AVID students may need extra support in school (AVID, 2018). Teaching this group of students media literacy not only distinguishes them from many of their peers, but it also prepares them for potentially in-depth projects they may receive in their last year of high school. AVID helps these students achieve, and I want to be part of that journey. I also think getting diverse opinions on what media literacy is adds to the conversation and makes for a richer experience for everyone involved.

**Learning Outcomes**

My project focuses on media literacy, defined earlier in this paper. I will be teaching freshman in a high school AVID class about this subject in order to give them the skills to find
reliable sources during research and sort through possibly fake news stories they may come across. The first learning outcome is that students are able to define media literacy. This will be assessed through the survey at the end of the lesson. The survey will ask them to define, in their own words, what the definition of media literacy is. Second, students will be able to identify “red flags” for fake news detection. That is, they are able to name several markers that could help them detect when a news story is fabricated. This will be measured through a question at the end of the lesson, a class activity focused on determining whether or not a given source is credible, and through class discussion. The third learning outcome is that after the lessons students are able to identify credible sources. This will be measured through a survey that would ask students components of reliable sources and what they need to look out for when researching sources. At the end of the lesson, I want students to walk away feeling more confident in their ability to find reliable information online and critically think about media as well as understand when a news story may not have the most accurate information.

**Method**

**Day 1**

I will first introduce myself. I will give the students a brief background of who I am and then I will tell them why I am there. I will then ask them what media is and we will brainstorm together. I will write down their ideas on the board. I will then ask them what literacy means and write down their ideas on the board. Through these brainstormed ideas, we will come up with a definition of media literacy together. I will then use the PowerPoint I created (Appendix A) to define media, the term literacy, and media literacy in order to ensure students remember the material. This activity will give them an idea of what media literacy is and will fulfill my first learning outcome, which is students being able defining media literacy at the end of the lesson.
After I introduce the basics of media literacy, we will talk about why they should care. I will ask students why they think companies target them and why political entities may try to relate to them, even before they can vote. This will connect what they experience outside the classroom to the lesson. I will use the PowerPoint to show them examples of this targeting and marketing strategy (Appendix A). After this, we will discuss fake news through the use of a Common Sense Media activity. Using http://digitalbytes.commonsensemedia.org/, we will go to the thinker option and then “Can You Believe the News?” Though we won’t go through every activity, the questions will guide our discussion. This will introduce my second learning outcome, which is that students will be able to identify red flags for fake news detection. At the end of the lesson, I will discuss what they should expect to do the next time we meet. I will leave five minutes for any further questions they might have.

**Day 2**

In the beginning of the second day, I will give a brief review of what we discussed the lesson before. I will then split the nineteen students into six groups and ask them what some “red flags” may be for fake news detection. After we discuss their findings as a class, I will give them a few more “red flags” using: http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/sites/default/files/GO-TenQuestionsForFakeNewsFINAL.pdf. I will display these “red flags” on a PowerPoint slide (Appendix A). This activity will help the students with my second learning outcome, identifying “red flags” for fake news detection. After we discuss “red flags” I will use the E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News Lesson Plan to help give the students tools to evaluate information (Appendix B). I will split the students up into six groups and give each group a worksheet with one corresponding letter of the E.S.C.A.P.E. acronym (Appendix C). We will use this local news story: http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/business/20180319/santa-cruz-beach-boardwalk-dismantles-
ferris-wheel for the activity. Once each group has finished the worksheet, we will decide if the news story and the source is trustworthy and credible. At the end of the lesson, I will introduce the subject of reliable websites, which we will discuss on the last day.

**Day 3**

The third day will focus on reliable websites and other news sources. I will physically bring in local examples, like the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. We will pass the newspaper around. This will connect to the article from the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* website we read the lesson before. I will ask the students why they think they can trust this source, using what we learned in the previous lesson. We will brainstorm characteristics of credible sources. I will give further examples of credible websites with a slide in the PowerPoint (Appendix A). I will then use the PowerPoint to introduce several websites that students can trust, including using the Santa Cruz Public Library website and their own school library website. These will be displayed on a PowerPoint slide (Appendix A). This will accomplish my third learning outcome: that students will be able to identify credible websites. Once we have finished with the new material, we will transition into Kahoot!, which will help students review the information from the last three lessons. On the third day, I will hand out my review sheet (Appendix D). I will use the data I gather from this review to determine whether I met my learning outcomes. At the end of the lesson, I will tell them how much I enjoyed being with them and give them candy as a thank you.

**Results**

Learning outcome 1 was that students would be able to define media literacy by the end of the lesson. On the review sheet (Appendix D), students were asked to define media literacy in question 1. Table 1 shows the results of the review sheet. Of the 16 students who participated in the review, nine students (56.25%) correctly defined media literacy. Of the correct answers,
phrases such as: “encode and decode media messages”; “analyze sources”; and “think critically about media” were used. One student wrote: “The ability to think critically about a media source and know if [it’s] a good source of [information].” Partially correct answers were defined by omission of “media” from the definition of media literacy but including an understanding of what media literacy entails. Of the review sheets, five students (31.25%) were partially correct. These answers may have been too vague to be fully correct but were not incorrect. One partially correct answer stated: “Ability to access, analyze, and evaluate.” There were two incorrect answers. One student simply wrote that media literacy was “social media” - this was not considered a sufficient answer. Given that a majority of students were correct or partially correct in their definition of media literacy, I believe that the learning outcome was met.

Learning outcome 2 was that students could recognize red flags for fake news detection. This variable was measured through review question 2 (Appendix D). All students were able to name one or more red flags. There were no incorrect answers or questions that were left blank. More than one red flag was required for the student to get the answer correct. With 11 correct answers out of 16 (Table 1), the majority of students were able to name more than two red flags. For example, one student wrote: “No author, no date, no editor, no credible sources.” Most students wrote variations of having no author or date. Students who wrote one red flag were considered partially correct. This group totaled to five students (Table 1). Students who gave one example described red flags that other students did not, such as photoshopped images and the presence of a great deal of exclamation marks in the title. With all students being able to name at least one red flag for fake news detection, I would consider this learning outcome as achieved.

Learning outcome 3 was that students could identify credible sources. This variable was measured with a review at the end of the lesson through question 3 and 4 (Appendix D). The
identification of reliable websites involved both knowing characteristics of credible websites and also being able to give examples of websites. Students who were able to give two examples for each question were considered correct, while one example was considered partially correct. Table 1 shows that seven students gave two or more characteristics of credible websites. Examples of characteristics given included sites that end in .edu or .gov and being from a well-known news source or website. For example, one student wrote, “A reliable or credible [source] is that other reliable links are on the website or news source.” While a majority of students did not name two characteristics, eight were able to give at least one (Table 1), which were similar to the above examples. Despite having difficulty with the characteristics of credible sources, 14 students out of 16 (87.5%) students were able to name two or more specific credible sources (Table 1), which is well above a majority of students. Examples students gave were Santa Cruz Sentinel, the New York Times, the Washington Post, BBC, CNN, and the Santa Cruz Public Library. This learning outcome was met because students were able to identify what makes a credible source and name specific trustworthy sources.

**Discussion**

This project was successful. The participants met all of the learning outcomes. Students were able to name at least one indicator of reliable sources or “red flags” for fake news detection, which showed that they may have retained some information for the future. Partial answers were still considered correct in the context of the results. Before I began the lesson, I discussed the meaning of media literacy with students. None of the students had heard of media literacy and had not had media literacy education prior to this lesson. Many were able to name examples of media but could not define literacy. After the lesson, most students were able to correctly define media literacy. The Stanford History Education Group (2016) released a report detailing
adolescents shortcomings when it comes critically thinking about the information they see online. I had students raise their hands at the beginning of the lesson to indicate if they had any form of social media. All students raised their hands. As discussed, students often do not analyze the information they read online, therefore, they may take false information as fact (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). With an overwhelming majority of students in the classroom with no prior media literacy training, the lesson combined with the activities addressed this issue and gave students an introduction into analyzing what they see on social media and online.

Adolescents often have difficulty identifying advertisements on the Internet. They also struggle finding where information within a news source originated (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Through the discussion with the students, it was clear that, while students were aware companies place advertisements within the media the students consume, they often did not notice when product placements occurred. In my lesson, I asked students why they think companies and political entities target them. I made sure throughout my lessons to connect what was discussed to what they might see in their daily lives, and I believe this is one of the reasons students retained the information that made the project successful. Giving students information about advertisements on the Internet was important because, as aforementioned, 92% adolescents go online daily (Gretter & Yadav, 2016). Adolescents are exposed to media regularly and are susceptible to its messages yet receive no media literacy education to evaluate the information they receive from media. The lesson I conducted with the students filled the need for media literacy education. Though the lesson was small, the impact I made was potentially larger.

If I were to do this project again, there are several improvements I would make to the lesson plan. All students except two in the classroom were Latino, and if I were to do this lesson again, I would add more information that could be culturally relevant to them. I would add more
information about how “fake news” and misinformation affects minorities, but there was not enough research on the topic as of the project implementation date. Despite the lack of research-based studies, I would add in information focused on how companies and organizations could target their ethnicity. A subject I did not discuss during the lesson was how media literacy could relate to what the students see in Spanish-language media. This would further connect what Latino students see in the lesson to what they experience in their daily lives. Additionally, I felt rushed to get through the lecture sections in order to get to the activities. This rushing may have resulted in less time focused on giving students strategies in order to ultimately avoid untrustworthy websites. In the future, I would direct students through specific sources and give them all a list of dependable websites they can use for research papers. While students understood media literacy and were able to name what made a source credible, I feel that they did not leave with enough credible resources to visit in the future.

I feel that my lesson made a difference. Media literacy today is an important skill not only for adolescents but for everyone. With the rising use of technology in classrooms, it is important that students have the skills to analyze what they see. Students were eager to learn about this subject, and the content could easily be adapted to fit within the curricula of many school environments. Though I would improve my lessons in a few minor ways, I accomplished what I set out to do. I taught a class of students about media literacy, gave them the tools to find credible sources in their future academic careers, and gave them a solid foundation to do more research on their own. Media literacy education can help bridge the gap between what students experience online and what they learn in the classroom.

In this phase of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, Identity versus Role Confusion, adolescents are good candidates to receive media literacy education. Not only are
students in this phase establishing their own views and goals, they are also figuring out who they want to be (Long & Chen, 2007). Media literacy education allows students to analyze what they see on social media using the analytical tools they will need to use in their educational future. Media literacy is a small but growing field of research. Technology and media will continue to advance and education must adapt to these changes. Adolescents, who already live in a media- and technology-saturated environment, have the most to gain from receiving media literacy education.
References


Kivunja, C. (2015). Unpacking the information, media, and technology skills domain of the new


Table 1

Media Literacy Review Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Partial</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is media literacy?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some “red flags” for fake news detection?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name two things that make a news source reliable or credible.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name two credible sources.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why wouldn’t social media posts have credible information?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Media Literacy
Serra Byrd

Who Am I?

What is Media?
● All electronic or digital means and print or artistic visuals used to transmit messages:
  1. Television
  2. Movies/Cinema
  3. Internet
  4. Blogs, podcasts, digital news, social media, websites
  5. Radio
  6. Recordings
  7. Print
  8. Newspapers, books, magazines

What is Literacy?
- Literacy is the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages.

What is Media Literacy?
National Association of Media Literacy Education:
“Media literacy is the ability to encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and the ability to synthesize, analyze and produce mediated messages.”

Brands Target You
- Think about the commercials you see and the ads that show up on your timelines. Do you feel they targeted your age group specifically?
  1. Think: The Truth Campaign (anti-tobacco)
  2. “Be the generation that ends smoking.”
- Deregulation in 1998 made it okay to create an entire children’s program just to sell products.
- Media literacy can help you identify when you are being targeted. You can decide whether or not to listen to the message they are trying to send.
Brands and Memes

"Fake News"
- Fake News:
  - Fabricated stories that have no basis in fact
  - Reported as factual
  - May take elements of true stories or events
- During the 2016 U.S. election, there were 38 million shares of false news stories on social media, translating to 760 million page views
- Social Media
  - Posts on social media do not have editors
  - Does not have anyone fact checking the information
  - Updates are immediate, but it is hard to verify the information

Digital Bites and News Literacy

Common Sense Media: Thinker Activity

Questions
1. What is the purpose of journalism?
2. Were you ever tricked by a fake news story?
3. What is the purpose of websites like The Onion? Do you think there are benefits?
4. How can you protect yourself from being tricked by a false story?
Media Literacy...

- Empowers people to think critically!
- Creates effective communicators!
- Helps us all become more active citizens!

When in doubt, check Snopes!

End of Day 1

What Are Red Flags for Fake News Detection?

- Headline
  - Unusual use of punctuation
- Claims about containing something the "media" doesn't want you to know about
- Not a well-known source
- No author
- The site describes itself as a "satirical" or "fantasy news" site
- No editorial standards
- Contact information that doesn't match the domain (like Gmail or Yahoo)
- No date
- No sources given or cited
- No hyperlinks to other quality sources
- Reverse image searches on images provided turn up inauthentic

E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News Activity
Visit This Website


Is This Source Trustworthy?

1. From one E.S.C.A.P.E. concept alone, could you make a determination about the reliability of this story? Why or why not?
2. Which of these concepts do you think is the most helpful in figuring out whether information is reliable? Why?
3. Which of these concepts do you think is the most difficult to understand or apply? Why?
4. Did you feel you had enough time to apply your concept to this story? In real life, how could you speed up the process of evaluating information that crosses your path?

End of Day 2
Quick Review!

Characteristics of Credible Sources
- The more information available, the more credible the website
- Links to other credible sources
- Author
  - The author is qualified to write the piece
- If it's an article or research article, there is a date provided
- The organization is not funded by a corporation
  - Ex. a research article about cigarettes, funded by a tobacco company
- Material is recent, published within the last ten years
- No clear bias
- Look for websites with .edu or .gov or .org
- When in doubt, ask for help!

Thank You!

Sources of Credible Information
- Newspapers, ex. Santa Cruz Sentinel, New York Times, etc.
- Websites for organizations, government websites, and college websites
  - Ex. US Census Bureau, Princeton, etc.
- Public library websites
- Google Scholar
- iBooks, ask your librarian for help with research!
- Go with names you know: Google the name of a source if you aren’t sure.
- Academic Journals
Appendix B

E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News Lesson Plan

E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News
Appendix C

E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News Worksheets

Name:          
Date:          

E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News

E → Evidence
Do the facts hold up?

Your news story (title):

Choose three important facts from this story. The facts could be the names and roles of key individuals involved, a specific event that took place, a quote, a photograph or any other type of evidence that backs up the story.

Example fact: Fire Station 106 was closed because of a gas leak in the kitchen.

Example fact: Jennifer Smith was the firefighter who first noticed the problem.

Fact 1:  
Fact 2:  
Fact 3:  

Verify these facts. In other words, find another source that independently reported the same fact (not a story that references the story you already have). List the second source that either confirms or contradicts each fact.

Fact 1:  Confirmed? YES / NO  
Source:  

Fact 2:  Confirmed? YES / NO  
Source:  

Fact 3:  Confirmed? YES / NO  
Source:  

Based on this quick investigation, do you think the facts in this story hold up? YES / NO

Explain:  

Washington, D.C., area school groups are sponsored by WTOP 103.5 FM.
E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News

Source
Who made this, and can I trust them?

Your news story (title):

Track down the following information for your news story:

1. The publisher (The site or organization that provided a space for this story; for example, The Washington Times)

2. The author(s) (The name(s) and profession(s) of the person or people who wrote it; for example, Sally Hawk, technology reporter)

3. One source of information within the story (A person, document or other source for the facts used in the story; for example, Juan Ortiz, a computer science professor, or Tech Times magazine survey on app usage)

For each element identified above, answer the following based on your overall impression. Using a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is very strongly, how much do you trust these sources to provide accurate information about the topic of your news story?

1. The publisher 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating. (For example: I have never heard of this source and the website looks cheap)

2. The author(s) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating.

3. The source within the story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating.

Overall, do you think the story is a reliable source of information? YES / NO
Explain:
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**C - Context**

Your news story (title):

What is the main issue or event in this story?

Find and read two other stories about the same issue or event.

**Story 1**

Title:
Publication or website:

**Story 2**

Title:
Publication or website:

For each additional story, answer the following question: Did this story provide any new or different information about the event/issue?

**Story 1** YES / NO
Explain:

**Story 2** YES / NO
Explain:

Based on this quick investigation, do you think this story presents the big picture, or just a piece of the story?

BIG PICTURE / ONLY A PIECE
Explain:

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A □ Audience
Who is the intended audience?

Your news story (title):

Publication/website:

Look closely at your news story and its publication/website and answer the following questions:

1. What does the publication/website name tell you about the intended audience? (For example, The Washington Post is intended in part for people living or interested in Washington, D.C.)

2. What does the text of the story tell you about the intended audience? (For example, difficult vocabulary or unusual terms might indicate that an article is intended for a well-educated audience.)

3. What does the other content on the publication/website tell you about the intended audience? (For example, is there a theme in the stories they publish? Do they often write about specific groups or interests?)

4. Based on your answers above, describe the type or types of individuals that make up the audience for this story:

5. Do you think the intended audience shaped the content of this story? In other words, did the writer or publisher change, omit or twist anything in the story to appeal to a certain group? YES / NO

Explain:
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P — Purpose
Why was this made?

Your news story (title):

Look for the following possible purposes in your news story and explain why you think each one is or is not applicable.

1. Was this story made to educate or inform people about an event/issue? (Possible clues: detailed facts and clear sources, complete information about the topic) YES / NO
   Explain:

2. Was this story made to earn money for the author or publisher? (Possible clues: ads around the story, appeals for money/support) YES / NO
   Explain:

3. Was this story made to influence how someone feels about this event/issue? (Possible clues: labeled as opinion or perspective, highly emotional language that "tugs the heartstrings," extreme praise or criticism for key individuals or groups involved in the event or issue) YES / NO
   Explain:

Of the three purposes listed above, which do you think is the main purpose of this story, and why? (Or, if you think the purpose is something other than the three listed above, explain.)

Based on your answers above about this story's purpose, do you think the story is credible? YES / NO
   Explain:

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Execution
How is this information presented?

Your news story (title):

On a scale of 1 to 10, where a 1 is very sloppy/poorly done and a 10 is very professional/well done, rate each of the following elements of your story:

1. Clarity (the writer's ability to clearly present information)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating. (For example: I found this story very confusing.)

2. Style (the writer's tone and ability to engage a reader)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating. (For example: I found this story very boring.)

3. Grammar, typos and spelling (the writer's technical abilities)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating. (For example: I found lots of incomplete sentences.)

4. Layout/format (the way the story appears)
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Explain your rating. (For example: The page is well-organized and easy to read.)

Based on this quick evaluation of the execution, do you think this information is reliable? YES / NO

Explain:

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Appendix D

Media Literacy Review

This review is completely anonymous. Answer the questions to the best of your ability.

1. What is media literacy?

2. What are some “red flags” for fake news detection?

3. Name two things that make a website or news source reliable or credible.

4. Name two credible sources.

5. Why wouldn’t social media posts have credible information?

6. Name at least one thing you learned from this lesson.