

PHOTOCOPY
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LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 19 STORIES

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BODY:

It is quite rare to find ad criticism anywhere near the medium of television, except in such criticism's natural habitat, the suburban basement TV room, where stoned teenagers have deconstructed Coke campaigns for generations. Sure, Dick Clark includes zany outtakes from commercials on his TV Bloopers and Practical Jokes shows, ABC's Best Commercials You've Never Seen (And Some You Have) won its time slot back in February, and in October, FOX offered a second installment of its Banned in America: The World's Sexiest Commercials. But aside from these occasional, oh-those-crazy-kids celebrations of commercial culture's undeniable capacity to provide laughs and raunchy and raunchy laughs, television gives next to no attention to the ubiquitous spots that make it run. There are all sorts of copyright problems, for one thing, and perhaps a television executive cannot be expected to risk sustained focus on the endless, desperate pitches that pay the bills -- biting the hand that feeds you, and all that.

Recently, though, ad criticism has made it out of the easy chair and onto the screen, available to about a quarter of American televisions, albeit at odd times, with production values only a step or two up from the basement, and on the most marginalized and maligned band of airwaves, public television. The upstart show Mental Engineering, which began on St. Paul Neighborhood Network (public access) in 1997, now airs on the Central Educational Network (CEN) via satellite feed to more than 40 public television stations nationally, including stations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Indianapolis, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C. (Public television stations get some, but not all, of their programming from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS); CEN is one of several smaller, poorer suppliers.) The show, on which four panelists and the high-energy host John Forde watch and critique TV commercials, aims to "irreverently discuss the ways in which TV commercials engineer our perceptions, attitudes, and behavior -- how commercials attempt to engineer us mentally."

It could easily die. For now, Mental Engineering, which was funded mainly out of the pockets of its host (who is also its executive producer) has run out of money. And Forde has not approached PBS for funding, figuring the network is too allied with the corporate underwriters it has had to court as its government support has dwindled. But whether or not this particular effort survives, Forde suggests it is crucial for nonprofit television to examine "the one issue that commercial networks are afraid to discuss." Fear may not be the operating principle. As James Twitchell -- the author of books such as Adcult USA, Lead

Us into Temptation: The Triumph of American Materialism, and the forthcoming Twenty Ads That Shook the World -- puts it, "This system is amoral. They would televise cannibalism if they thought there was an audience." Still, there are excellent reasons to become, as Twitchell says, "more self-conscious about something we are generally used to taking intravenously."

However one evaluates it, advertising is undeniably central to American culture, and American advertising to world culture. Advertising in many ways is American culture; you're soaking in it. "The average American kid sees half a million commercials between birth and age 18," says John Forde. "The free market for deception exists, and it's so much bigger than the free market for truth. We're trying to renew civic faith by talking about these things. We're trying to speak truth to and about power." Terrific ambitions, to be sure. Living in a culture of sales-oriented deception can breed cynicism, and the depoliticizing, self-focused seductions of that culture are many; understanding how advertising does its work on you might, just maybe, inspire you to resist it.

And doing so doesn't have to be flat and sober, either. Mental Engineering, though sometimes awkward and academic, can also be fun and lively in its search for "the truth." Panelists include comedians, professors, writers, psychologists, and advertising professionals. Forde himself is a former bus driver and radio show sidekick with a master's in psychology. On one show, after a Doritos commercial featuring a bunch of college boys opening up umbrellas in the library -- a Dorito-chomping woman walking through (to the tune of "Smoke on the Water") has generated such heat that the sprinklers have gone off -- a discussion ensues about female power, the association of sex and eating, the tacky visual metaphors of sexual climax, strip-club shower dances. Later, the panelists watch an ad for the Buick Century, in which violin music plays as a car drives through a beautiful redwood forest and a voice asks if "rich people" have more friends than the rest of us and if they are more entitled to comfortable car seats and safe brakes; the commercial ends with the confused-populist tag line "A luxury car for everyone." One panelist, a communications professor named Leola Johnson, points out the combination of class envy and class hatred, and a second, comedian Tim Mitchell, argues that it seems unlikely that people are going to be convinced that Buick is somehow against the rich. "Buy the new Buick Commie Mobile!" he jokes. "Get the new Buick Proletariat!" An ad for Sparkle paper towels warning against the "pathogenic organisms" carried by house guests provokes a discussion of advertisers' tendency to alert you to dangers you'd never considered before -- in this case, disease-ridden hand towels -- and then offer to sell you their solution. Corporate greed is revealed; light is shone on shady attempts at persuasion. Such exposures and dissections are never bad.

That said, there's something a bit old-fashioned and Frankfurt School-ish in a show like Mental Engineering. The idea of mental engineering by propaganda artists -- they're messing with your mind, man -- seems, if not exactly wrong, somehow off the mark. No question: Advertising is, in a general sense, propaganda for consumerism and is specifically aimed at influencing consumers' decision making. The premise that Americans are uneducated about advertising and consumer culture, however, and that "media literacy" is what's missing, has a naive ring to it.

It is instructive, for instance, that one of the appeals of Mental

Engineering is the commercials themselves. Sexy or funny or shockingly stupid, made with great care, they're enjoyable. Perhaps that's because commercials are not just about mind control; they are about the shaping of pleasure. "Media literacy would be a lot more effective if advertising worked rationally, which it usually doesn't," argues Carrie McLaren, publisher of the smart, funny, biting zine Stay Free! (named as a "spoof on the maxipads and faux-feminist marketing," and as an anticommercial maxim). "Sane, media-literate, rational adults buy what feels good. You could learn everything there is to know about how De Beers managed to turn diamonds into 'priceless' gems, how it was engineered and calculated to make people think they needed them for getting married, and still reeeallly want one."

Even at the cognitive level, media literacy may do less to build resistance to and autonomy from commercial culture than to increase our engagement with it. Analyzing manipulative advertising activities becomes one of the enjoyable ways of coping with the relentless, cloying presence of commercials. Ads are annoying when they are an interruption, but watching them as culture, taking them apart to look at them, even if it's to hate them, can be quite pleasurable. "We're all media deconstructionists," says Twitchell, a supporter of Mental Engineering who nonetheless criticizes its resemblance to other "big-eyed, drop-jawed, 'We've got to tell people about ads!'" efforts. Indeed, much advertising since the 1980s has insulated itself from criticism by assuming an audience literate in the manipulative languages of advertising, addressing the charge of hucksterism by acknowledging it and turning it into an ironic joke and a you're-so-hip pitch. From the lying car salesman with the what-he's-really-saying subtitles to the kitsch-and-camp Old Navy campaign, many ads have become "ads," self-consciously calling attention to their ad-ness. This suggests an ad-conscious, rather than ad-ignorant, public. It suggests a problem that programming geared toward "media literacy" does not address.

Understanding that advertising is filled with creepy half-truths and lovely false promises does little to guard against the jolly spread of commercials into areas where some of us might like the option of being left alone. Athletes have been walking billboards for quite some time; schools have been selling students' eyeballs to Channel One, in exchange for much-needed equipment, for more than a decade. Go see a movie and you get commercials, just like at home, only this time you pay eight dollars to watch them. Automatic teller machines, according to The New York Times, are the next space to be invaded by video advertisements. Once your ATM card is equipped to carry personal data about you, you'll be "microtargeted" by advertisers based on that information, so that even as you're taking out cash, companies can start making a grab for it. If you're male, you're now likely to be looking at an ad when you use a restaurant or bar urinal. Even if you're not a crank, even if you sometimes quite enjoy commercials, even if you recognize that advertisers are often subsidizing important institutions that governments refuse to support, this relentless spread can make you cranky.

Or angry, like the group of vandals in Soho, who have been hurling blood-red paint at Dockers, DKNY, and Banana Republic ads in their neighborhood. "Our city is not the pages of a magazine," the attackers said in a statement released by an intermediary. "Advertisers are decimating the city's landscape," and "the people are responding in anger with paint. We hope it gives inspiration to others who want to reclaim our city." (For his part, the president of a billboard management company pointed out that "these signs are a permanent part

of the area, legal and an expression of free speech" -- not an inaccurate claim, though a scary one in its bland recognition that commercial and political speech have melded into one another, and in its cool confidence that billboards are forever.) It is difficult but necessary to imagine a televised version of that paint-hurling: one that brings to consciousness not so much mental engineering as advertising's tendency to remake in its own image almost everything in its path.

How advertising monopolizes the culture, colonizing public life and public space, is arguably a much more pressing contemporary problem than the widely acknowledged ways it attempts to manage, with decidedly mixed success, attitudes and behaviors. There's next to nowhere in American collective space where ads seem out of place. Perhaps that's the ultimate contribution of a show like *Mental Engineering*. There's a weird, backwards satisfaction in seeing expensive commercials on a cheap public television show, laid out on the table for dissection on the tiny strip of television that remains out of their reach. They look ridiculously gussied up, suddenly out of place, like mink-coated guests at a backyard cookout. That's a good thing, an important juxtaposition, because it serves as an unintentional, jarring reminder of how taken for granted the presence of advertisements has come to be, on television and pretty much everywhere else.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 13, 1999

Should Programs That Teach Kids to View Ads Critically Also Take Advertising?

By DANIEL GOLDEN

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

BILLERICA, Mass. — When the Locke Middle School agreed to air the advertising-sponsored Channel One newscast in return for 30 free TV sets and a satellite dish back in 1993, many parents were outraged that their kids were forced to watch commercials in the classroom.

To calm them, the school mandated a "media literacy" component in its sixth-grade English classes, in part to help students figure out when advertising and other mass-media messages don't tell the truth.

Now Locke and the 12,000 other schools that air the daily Channel One broadcast are about to receive a free media-literacy curriculum that deals with such thorny issues. The benefactor? None other than Channel One, one of several companies that are now offering their own version of media truths to schools.

Such efforts have sparked a new debate about educational commercialism that echoes the fight over Channel One's original introduction to schools a decade ago. Critics liken companies such as Channel One teaching media literacy to beer companies promoting safe drinking.

"This is nothing less than a battle to define what media literacy is, and who should be teaching it," says Andrew Hagelshaw, senior programming director of the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education in Oakland, Calif. "It's Channel One trying to co-opt media literacy."

"Kids are bombarded with 400,000 media images a year," says Paul Folkemer, vice president for education at Channel One, a unit of Primedia Inc.. "It seemed appropriate, when I started to talk about it in the company, to share some strategies with teachers to make kids smarter consumers."

In recent years, a number of Internet compa-

nies have followed Channel One's model: providing free goods or services in return for students' eyeballs. "Our position is that there's always been advertising and there always will be advertising," says James O'Halloran, vice president of marketing for one such company, N2H2 Inc. of Seattle. "The answer is for children to become wiser."

The market-share leader in Internet filters that block out objectionable sites for schools, N2H2 offers its system to school districts free of charge as long as they accept ads on its portal and on the page that gives notice that access to a site has been denied. Since the price otherwise is \$4,000, most schools that use N2H2 prefer the ads—even though some students say they find them distracting.

"I really don't like having the ads there," says seventh-grader James Ghiloni, as he researches a report on soil erosion in the computer lab in South Middle School in Braintree, Mass. "It gets annoying. If you try and print, it prints the ad right in the middle."

N2H2, which went public in July, is developing its own media-literacy curriculum with the Washington state parent-teacher organization. CEO Peter Nickerson says the company plans to fund similar ventures nationally with other PTOs scrambling for media-literacy materials.

The clamor is growing as educators see a need to help students decipher rapidly proliferating media, including cable TV and the Internet. Educational guidelines in 48 states call for some form of media education, usually in English, social studies or health class. Materials include understanding how TV news is edited and produced, reading labels on food packages and studying whether In-

ternet information sources are reliable.

At Locke, in Billerica, students are also told to keep a close eye on disclaimers such as "batteries not included" or "supplies may be limited."

Most of the programs are informal, so media companies are developing materials themselves. In 1995, Discovery Communications Inc., parent company of the Discovery Channel and the Learning Channel, distributed a free curriculum to schools on understanding nonfiction television, in the hope of inducing local cable systems to carry the channels.

Billerica, a blue-collar suburb of Boston, has been a leader in the field, largely because it wanted to placate parents over Channel One. School administrators joined a nearby college in sponsoring a master's degree program in media literacy for teachers, and successfully pressed Massachusetts to include the field in K-12 guidelines and statewide testing. Teachers at the Locke School say they have accumulated so much media literacy material that they don't need Channel One's curriculum; each teacher has the option to use it or not.

Roger Goldsmith, a 53-year-old language arts teacher at the school, already discusses such issues with his sixth-grade class: "How many of you are wearing clothing that advertises a product?"

Ten hands shoot up. "You're walking billboards," the teacher says, and turns to one girl who is wearing a familiar logo. "Renee, how much is Nike paying you to wear that shirt?" he asks.

Renee blushes. "Nothing," she says.

"Nothing," Mr. Goldsmith exclaims.

Behind his mock amazement is a larger point: From scoreboards with Coca Cola logos to ads on book covers, marketers are increasingly targeting kids and many schools are willing partners.

Over the past year, for example, 220 schools have each bought \$90,000 worth of high-tech equipment from Zapme! Corp., of San Ramon, Calif. Six thousand more schools are on a waiting list. Zapme, which went public in October, offers 15 multimedia computers, a network server, a laser printer, software, maintenance and support, all free of charge. But under the contract, the computers, which flash ads continuously on the bottom left-hand corner of the screen, must be used four hours a day. And schools must provide the ages, genders and school ZIP Codes of student users so sponsors can effectively target their ads.

Such aggressive marketing is causing a backlash, particularly in California. In June, the San Francisco school board banned exclusive contracts with beverage and snack companies, and textbooks that mention brand names. The state followed in September by banning electronic advertising in classrooms without a public hearing, and allowing parents to opt out of having their children exposed to commercials. Rep. George Miller (D., Calif.) has introduced a bill in Congress requiring parental consent before companies collect market research information in schools.

Alarmed about the hits they are taking,

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'The answer is for children to become wiser,' says an executive.

the companies are looking for a way to change perceptions. In June, participants at the National Media Education Conference in St. Paul, Minn., were surprised to find that Channel One was one of the gathering's "silver sponsors." The network's \$25,000 contribution almost provoked a boycott of the conference by Canadian educators who oppose a Channel One clone in that country—and stirred debates at conference workshops. "I think it's selling out to Channel One," says John Pungente, president of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations.

Adding to the furor, Channel One's contribution was solicited by a media literacy activist with whom it had a financial relationship. Renee Hobbs was then president of the Partnership for Media Education, the nonprofit group that organized the conference. She was, and remains, a consultant to Channel One, for which she is developing the media literacy curriculum. Ms. Hobbs, who declines to disclose how much she is paid by Channel One, says her dual role was "not too uncomfortable." She

believes that Channel One's involvement benefits the media literacy movement, because it has access to 40% of the nation's secondary school teachers.

"We knew we risked alienating the critics on the left for whom Channel One is the lightning rod for anticapitalism in the classroom," says Ms. Hobbs, an associate professor of communications at Babson College, outside Boston. "If we're trying to build a national movement, and we only let people into the club who agree with one particular formulation, we're going to be a very small club."

The Channel One curriculum, which will be distributed in February, includes a 30-minute video for teachers and suggested classroom activities. Teachers can use it or not, as they choose. Part is devoted to studying news, part to studying advertising.

The latter segment, according to a draft provided by Ms. Hobbs, examines the economics of Channel One as well as the pros and cons of advertising. Advantages cited include keeping mass media inexpensive, helping consumers make choices and helping the economy grow. The course also notes that "advertising is a type of free speech that is protected by the Constitution" and "does not force people to buy things."

Disadvantages of advertising, according to the video, include: "encourages people to buy things they don't really need," "encourages people to make poor choices about how to spend money" and "is intrusive and interrupts the experience of appreciating media."

Back at the Locke School, Mr. Goldsmith is asking his third-period students if they remember the ads on the Channel One newscast this morning. They do: One was for skin cream, another for Donkey Kong 64, a video game, and a third was an anti-smoking public service announcement.

"Why weren't there any ads for new cars?" he asks. "Or chicken dinners?"

"Because we don't buy that stuff," a boy answers. "Kids like video games."

Mr. Goldsmith nods at a lesson learned: "You are what we call a target audience."

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DCI'S MARYLAND MEDIA LITERACY INITIATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic Objective:

To deliver a substantive, meaningful and effective media literacy education program designed to respond to the concerns surrounding the impact of media on children and youth.

Background:

In the aftermath of last year's tragic school shootings, parents and leaders in government and education have struggled to identify measures they can take to ensure that all children are safe in schools. While advocacy groups from all corners have responded with proposals ranging from establishing martial law on school campuses to media censorship, those who work closely with students and schools have continued to search for reasonable, effective and affordable solutions.

While countless studies have explored the link between viewing media violence and violent behavior, nearly everyone concerned agrees that schools must begin to provide instruction that helps young people to critically analyze media's messages about violence. Several states now include some media literacy education in their curriculum standards. Unfortunately, few teachers are trained in how to incorporate media literacy into their classes, and fewer have the tools with which to do it.

DCI Commits to Contributing to Solution:

As a parent of school-age children, and a member of the Maryland State Board of Education, Discovery Communications, Inc. (DCI) President Judith McHale recognized that DCI could make a significant contribution to the solution. Last May she announced that DCI would take on the challenge of bringing media literacy education to every school in Maryland. Following up on the highly successful KnowTV media literacy initiative, DCI would create and deliver the media literacy training and materials that would empower Maryland's teachers and schoolchildren with the skills they need to become thoughtful, active consumers of media.

Challenges:

Scope: Maryland's 2,400+ schools range from the western mountains to the tip of the Eastern Shore. Delivering just one training per school during the 1999-2000 school year would require approximately 13 workshops per school day.

Breadth: To reach every school in the state, the curriculum materials must be targeted to elementary, middle-school, and secondary level students differently at each level to reflect the distinctive intellectual needs of children and youth.

Quality Assurance: As with all DCI initiatives, the product must be of the highest quality. The program must be an educationally sound and meaningful experience for children and young people, one that will receive unconditional support from teachers, school leaders, parents and community members.

Cost: Project rollout must be devised creatively to ensure both quality and manageable costs. Budget estimate attached.

Opportunities:

- Contract nation's leading media literacy educator, Dr. Renee Hobbs, creator of KnowTV, to create top-quality content and develop effective and high-impact delivery plan.
- Conduct focus groups among Maryland educators to help guide development of effective and user-friendly workshops and materials.
- Work closely Maryland education leaders to ensure workshops and materials meet their needs.
- Contract with DCI's co-developer of KnowTV, Linda Brown, to ensure quality and to expedite production and rollout of materials and workshops.
- Identify passionate and dedicated Teacher Catalysts who are current teachers in the State of Maryland and provide them with intensive professional training enabling them to implement the instructional program and provide ongoing training and support to other teachers within their districts. This "train the trainer" model of delivery will ensure that the initiative has a long-term impact on children in the State because Maryland teachers will be the primary deliverers of the instruction.
- Support Teacher Catalysts as they bring the instructional program to teachers throughout the state by providing mentoring, coaching and support to ensure quality control of the program throughout the implementation.
- Coordinate with a leading public health scholar at a major research university to develop and implement program evaluation and research to demonstrate the impact of the program on children and youth. Initiate a high-visibility promotion to present the research results to leading educators and government officials.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Phase I: Curriculum Development

- Create three Media Literacy kits-one each for elementary, middle and high school levels-- each composed of six lesson plans and age appropriate video support materials, linked to Maryland state curriculum frameworks.
- Produce enough kits to supply each school in the state (2,400+ schools)

Phase II: Enroll Education Leadership

- Create and deliver high-profile media literacy workshops for education leaders in each of three key districts. By giving these leaders the "aha!" experience of a media literacy workshop, we gain ongoing support for the project and use school leaders to identify the appropriate individuals to select as Catalyst Teachers.

Phase III: Train Maryland Catalyst Teachers

- Work with Maryland's education leaders to identify 90 Catalyst Teachers from all corners of the state who will serve as ongoing experts and support for the teachers within their districts.
- Conduct intensive in-service training for Catalyst Teachers. Three groups of 30 Catalyst Teachers each will participate in weekly three-hour training sessions over the course of six weeks. (Each Catalyst Teacher will receive 18 hours of training.) Teachers will receive professional development credits for this experience.

Phase IV: Ongoing Support to Ensure Lasting Impact

- Create web site and email bulletin boards through which teachers can share ideas and obtain ongoing coaching and support from the Media Literacy Project for 12 months beginning in January 2000
- Provide marketing materials and other resources to Catalyst Teachers to support their process of implementing teacher training in individual schools. Provide coaching, mentoring, quality control oversight and support for Catalyst Teachers for 12 months beginning in January 2000. Monitor the number of teachers who receive training and collect data on how many students receive instruction.
- Report results of program evaluation and research that demonstrates the impact of the program on children and youth. Initiate a high-visibility promotion to present the research results to leading educators and government officials.

MARYLAND MEDIA LITERACY INITIATIVE

DRAFT Outline of Instructional Content September 7, 1999

I. INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

- Letter from Judith Hale
- Letter from Dr. Nancy Grasnick
- Table of Contents
- Overview of the Content
- What is Media Literacy?
- Why Focus on Media Violence?
- Instructional Objectives and Goals
- Connections to Maryland State Frameworks in Language Arts, Social Studies,
and Health Education
- How to Use this Curriculum in the Classroom
- List of Video Sequences
- How to Lead a Staff Development Program on Media Literacy
- Tips for Teachers

II. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. What Types of Media Messages Contain Violence?

Children see violence in many different types of TV programs. Children learn to identify different program genres, including news, advertising, reality TV, movies, situation comedies, dramas, cartoons, documentary, and sports programming. Children also identify four different types of media violence: shouting and yelling, explosions and crashes, hitting and punching, and using a weapon. They look for these types of violence in different program genres to find patterns that may exist.

2. Scary Stuff: Learning about Fear

Fear is the body's defense mechanism. Children describe different fearful experiences and learn about the physiological aspects of fear: increased heart rate, shallow breathing, muscle tension, and alertness. They discuss the different ways people experience fear when watching scary films or TV shows. Finally, they use classroom drama activities to explore some ways to gain control over the fear response through cognitive and communication processes.

3. Peace and Violence in the Real World

Students learn the many different reasons why violence and conflict is part of the local and national news. They watch different kinds of news broadcasts and examine how conflict and violence is represented on television news. 'But what if peace was newsworthy? Using what they have learned about news, students create their own newscast to show how peaceful conflict resolution in action can also make it into the news.

4. Violent Heroes and Villains in Fiction and Non-fiction

Stories for children and adults are full of "good guys" and "bad guys." What makes clearly identifiable heroes and villains so enduring a tradition in storytelling? How do we feel when "good guys" do bad things? Students learn about how people identify with characters in a drama. They examine a montage of heroes and villains from children's film and TV shows, describing their characteristics in a list. Students learn that certain typical qualities of heroes and villains are found throughout history. Using examples from children's films that feature characters from American history (e.g. *Pocahontas*), students learn that in the real world, people are more complex than in fictional stories.

5. What's Dangerous? Identifying Safe and Risky Behavior

What are some realistic risks that children face in their daily life? What are the realistic and unrealistic risks that children face as they are depicted in the media? Students identify some real-world behaviors that are safe, healthy and responsible and some behaviors that are risky, including smoking cigarettes, name calling, pushing and fighting, and hanging out with people who are using illegal drugs. Using one of the *Three Ninjas* or *Home Alone* films, children practice identifying realistic and unrealistic safe and risky behaviors.

6. Addicted to Videogames

Kids view a fictional case study videotape about a 5th grade boy who is addicted to videogames. He started by playing with his older brother and his dad, but now he loves to play alone. Often, he neglects his homework to play. He enjoys playing with friends from school but sometimes he gets annoyed with his friends when they get tired of playing and want to do something else. He starts wanting the videogames that are more realistic and violent because to him, these games seem exciting. Only his grandmother notices that he becomes agitated and irritable when he can't get in his time with the machine. After viewing, children learn about the definitions of "addiction" and discuss: is this boy addicted to videogames? What are the consequences of addiction? What steps could he take to break the addiction?

III. MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. The Art of Slapstick

For thousands of years, slapstick (or physical humor) has been a part of the theatre. But recently, live action films for children have been making greater use of slapstick, with more and more outrageous physical stunts involving people getting hurt in weird and horrible ways. Students look at different examples of slapstick in theatre, film, television and advertising. They discuss: What makes slapstick funny? Why is slapstick considered "lower" than verbal humor? Does this type of comedy desensitize people to feeling empathy for others? Or is it just a unique form of humor? Students write a persuasive letter about their opinions on the subject.

2. Four Effects of Media Violence

We learn about the four effects of media violence: imitation, increased fearfulness, desensitization, and increased appetite for violence. Students explore how different types of people are impacted differently by media violence. They write interview questions and interview their siblings, parents and relatives to discover how these different effects of media violence are perceived by people of different ages.

3. Violence in Sports

We view a segment from ESPN on the marketing of violence. Do people enjoy sports more when they become more violent? Why do violent athletes attract our attention? Is it ethical for people to make money by selling violence to others? Students conduct research on the changes in sports over the past 100 years and engage in a panel debate to explore how sports violence has become normalized recently. Students discuss how this has impacted their attitudes and behaviors.

4. What's Real and What's Reel?

Using a game show format, students practice the skill of evaluating the realism of different kinds of film and television programs. They see a short video clip of a specific program, then judge its realism on a continuum ranging from "realistic" to "unrealistic." We see how different students may judge the realism of a media message differently, based on their prior experience, knowledge and backgrounds. Students identify a list of criteria that we may unconsciously use to judge the realism of a message, and reflect on how perceived realism may affect our attitudes and responses to a media message.

5. Arousal: Why People Like Media Violence

Students learn about the physiological components of the "flight or fight" syndrome and learn about the historical origins of this important defense mechanism. They learn that arousal is perceived differently by different individuals, and they see how a wide range of different techniques in film and television can cause viewers to experience arousal. Students keep a log of the media experiences that create arousal and log a sample of television program to identify the "jolts per minute" that are offered by various production techniques.

6. Addicted to Videogames (2)

Students view a fictional case study videotape about a 10th grade boy who is addicted to videogames. He started by playing with his older brother and his dad, but now he loves to play alone or with a buddy. Often, he neglects his homework to play games on the internet. Sometimes he gets annoyed with his friends when they get tired of playing and want to do something else. He is especially proud of mastering the high resolution videogames that are more realistic and more violent. His friends notice that he is often easily frustrated and sometimes makes bad judgments about people and relationships because he is easily angered. After viewing, students learn about the definitions of "addiction" and discuss: is this boy addicted to videogames? What are the consequences of addiction? What steps could he take to break the addiction?

IV. HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. The Argument Culture

So much of our culture is based on opposition and conflict. Students view a video where people talk about the “battle of the sexes” when they explain relationship between men and women. They see journalists who like to say there are “two sides” to every issue and believe that conflict makes an event more newsworthy. They witness how the legal system is built around conflict between prosecutor and defendant. They see examples of how politics can be a battleground between political candidates who seek to win elections by “destroying” the opponent. These ways seem natural to us and are deeply rooted in Western culture. Students play a game called “Doubting and Believing.” In the game, “doubters” criticize and disagree with everything and “believers” accept everything as true. When the game has concluded, students reflect on the experience and discuss the positive and negative consequences of doubting and believing in different aspects of their personal and professional lives.

2. Gender, Violence and Power in Wrestling

We discuss the stereotypes of “face” and “heel” as they can be found in professional wrestling. What do viewers find attractive and unattractive about these different stereotypes? In what ways are women represented in professional wrestling? Students learn about Roman circuses in ancient times and read about how Roman writers and philosophers debated the value and the drawbacks of taking pleasure in violent entertainment, comparing and contrasting to contemporary times.

3. How we Judge Media Violence in the Real World

Students learn about research on how different sequences of violent crime are presented on television news and in newspapers. Some crime news emphasizes the victim, while other news focuses on the perpetrator, the violent action, or the context or situation. Research shows that people may judge the morality of crime news differently depending on the order in which information is presented. Students replicate this research by creating a variety of differently ordered sequences for a TV news story and seeing how viewers and readers respond differently when information about a crime is re-ordered.

4. Understanding the TV and Film Ratings Systems

Students learn about how children of different ages interpret media messages differently by viewing a videotape which shows children’s different reactions to a film. They learn about the TV and film ratings system, including its historical context. They write questions and interview people at a multiplex about their perceptions of the ratings system. They write a persuasive letter to parents in their community, TV or film producers, or the FCC about their opinion regarding the effectiveness and value of the ratings systems now in place.

5. Violence in History, Literature and the Mass Media

Students learn about the short novel by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, and learn about the real world history behind the fictional story. They see a variety of different authors comment on how literature and film are forms where creative people can express their complex and often paradoxical reactions to different kinds of violence in the real world. Students research other examples of fiction writing that has a connection to real world violence. Looking at contemporary music and films that comment on violence, students discuss the role of artists in society and learn about how different creative people see themselves as contributing to solving the problem.

6. The Representation of Prison Life in Print and Visual Media

What does it mean to lose your freedom? Students look at how a variety of journalists, poets, novelists, fiction filmmakers, documentary producers and visual and performing artists have represented the loss of freedom that occurs when people are incarcerated. Students learn how metaphors and other forms of symbolism are used by creative people to communicate the pain of being imprisoned and removed from society. On video, students see how prisoners themselves describe the experience of imprisonment and we compare and contrast their stories to the different versions provided by journalists, fiction filmmakers and other message makers.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Readings on Media Literacy Pedagogy
- Readings on Media Violence
- References and Annotated Bibliography
- Feedback and Evaluation Form
- About the Author
- About Discovery Communications, Inc.

Dr. Renee Hobbs

Media Literacy Outreach

Renee Hobbs is one of the nation's leading authorities on media education. She directs the Media Literacy Project at Babson College and is the President of the Partnership for Media Education, a non-profit organization which hosts the National Media Education Conference, to be held June 27-30, 1999 in St.

Paul, Minnesota. She is actively involved in teacher education, curriculum development and research on the impact of media literacy instruction on K-12 students.

A tenured professor of communication at Babson College, Hobbs created the Harvard Institute in Media Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1993 and 1994, which was the first national-level teacher initiative for media education the United States.

She has worked with thousands of K-12 teachers over a ten-year period, in school districts in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts. She is a frequent speaker and workshop presenter at educational and public health conferences.

Hobbs developed KNOW TV, a media literacy curriculum for analyzing non-fiction television in collaboration with The Discovery Channel. KNOW TV won the 1995 Golden Cable Ace Award for Public Service Programming. She also developed "Getting a Grip on Media Violence," a media literacy education program for parents, sponsored by the National Cable Television Association and the National Parent-Teacher Association. Nearly 100,000 parents have participated in this workshop since its inception.

In 1998, she directed the national teacher education program, "Teaching Humanities in a Media Age" at Clark University's Hiatt Center on Urban Education, in a project supported by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and the AT&T Foundation.

Her scholarly research explores strategies for measuring media literacy skills in adolescents, understanding teacher-student interaction in the classroom, and identifying how teacher attitudes and knowledge shape classroom practice around the uses and misuses of media and technology in schools. Her work has been published in the Journal of Communication.

She has two school-aged children and is a member of the School Committee in Harvard, Massachusetts. She received a Ed.D. from Harvard Graduate School of Education, an M.A. in Communication Studies from the University of Michigan and a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Michigan.

October 5, 1999

CULTURE
Media Literacy

MEMORANDUM FOR ERIC LIU

FROM: Anna Richter

RE: The Debates of Media Literacy

In the Spring of 1998, an article by Dr. Renee Hobbs was published in the Journal of Communication entitled "The Seven Great Debates In The Media Literacy Movement", which outlines seven questions that she claims define media literacy research, and guide the various approaches to media literacy curriculum. These seven questions also foster the controversies that prohibit a more collaborative effort in providing media literacy education to children nationwide. The seven "foundational" questions and the debates of each are as follows:

1. **Should Media Literacy Education Aim To Protect Children And Young People From Negative Media Influences?** The "protectionist" stance identifies media as a "risk factor" and therefore media literacy is a "protective factor". This position most often generates media literacy curriculum around specific issues such as violence, or racial, gender or class stereotyping. The opposition to this approach argues that by focusing on specific problems, students are less receptive, and tend to learn the concepts for an exam rather than for the application to everyday encounters with media messages. Additionally, this approach identifies the students as victims of the media's manipulations, which has proven to create a barrier between the instructor and the students, resulting in a less effective experience.
2. **Should Media Production Be An Essential Feature Of Media Literacy Education?** One view holds that experience in media production is fundamental in the process of teaching children how to filter the messages of the mass media. This approach generally falls in one of two categories: expressive or vocational. The expressive practice develops the creative side of media production, the voice behind the message, whereas the vocational techniques develop the skills of editing and the media as an industry. The opposition to this method of instruction stems from the theory that media production-based curriculum develops a narrow range of skills and decreases the importance of reading and writing by diverting attention away from the analytical academic aspect of the media literacy skills.
3. **Should Media Literacy Focus On Popular Culture Texts?** This debate is most prevalent in elementary and secondary schools. Some argue that because children are more frequently exposed to media in the forms of television advertisements, television programs, Hollywood movies and music videos than national newspapers and classic films, that deconstructing contemporary texts teach critical thinks skills that are applicable to everyday life. But, because this field of instruction is still building its foundation, other educators worry about the prestige of a curriculum based upon pop-culture. In support of this opposing argument, educators claim that

because information is socially constructed, the analysis of classic works is just as applicable and effective as the analysis of contemporary or modern day works.

4. **Should Media Literacy Have A More Explicit Political And/Or Ideological Agenda?** Media literacy can serve as a “means to achieve a range of progressive political ends” (14, Hobbs), and expand opportunities for political/social actions through the exploration of media literacy practices in students’ attitudes toward social constructions. However, the connection between media literacy and political/social activism can be counter effective because students may follow the traditional pattern of learning and memorize the “political correct” terms and images, but not develop the skills to apply in a real-life situation.
5. **Should Media Literacy Be Focused On School-Based K-12 Educational Environments?** The diversity among media literacy academics creates a barrier for effective and unified media literacy education to be implemented into public school curriculum, and many in favor of media literacy education believe the responsibility falls upon parents, not the schools. When programs have been integrated into school curriculums, the efforts have been collaborated among parents, teachers, students and others in the community. One alternative is to establish media literacy activities in after-school programs, summer camps and summer schools. Despite the resistance that does exist in many communities, there are currently 15 states that include media literacy in their formal school curriculum, and the educational and health professional interest is also growing, including the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
6. **Should Media Literacy Be Taught As A Specialist Subject Or Integrated Within The Context of Existing Subjects?** If done well, this method is an effective way to develop some media literacy skills while teaching formal coursework. An example referenced in the article is of a ninth grade teacher who showed her class two contrasting documentaries about the Exxon -Valdez oil spill; one was produced by Jacques Cousteau and another by Exxon. This comparison allowed the students to learn about both the environmental effects of the spill while developing a more critical eye when filtering news and other media transmitted information. If conducted effectively, this integration is a productive option for media literacy education.
7. **Should Media Literacy Initiatives Be Supported Financially By Media Organizations?** One argument is that the media has a responsibility to assist the public develop critical thinking skills, and that "good" media organizations can do so without jeopardizing their potential profit. Critics of this position argue that when the media does initiate efforts with educators to develop media literacy curriculum, that the act is targeted toward underfunded and underprivileged communities and educators who are "desperate" for materials. This effort is therefore motivated by further acts of manipulation and the industry is simply taking advantage of a vulnerable population.

October 5, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR ERIC LIU

FROM: Anna Richter

RE: Renee Hobbs and Media Literacy Developments

Dr. Renee Hobbs is an Associate Professor at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, the director for the Media Literacy Project at Clark University, and the President of the non-profit organization Partnership for Media Education, which hosts an annual conference for media literacy academics. Dr. Hobbs focuses on media education for school children grades K-12 and her research explores television editing techniques, viewer comprehension, the effects of “blurring” information and entertainment on viewer attitudes, and regulatory policy for cable television and new media technologies. One development that has received honorable recognition is called “Know TV”. Renee has also had numerous articles published in the Journal of Communication on the concepts and theories that support media education and the debates behind the varying methods of media literacy curriculums, and has a critical role in the development of the Maryland Media Literacy Initiative with the Discovery Communications Incorporated. Below are several brief descriptions of some of the media literacy developments and projects that Dr. Hobbs has participated in and the plan for her latest project, the Maryland Media Literacy Initiative.

Television Programs. Developed in collaboration with the Discovery Channel in 1995, Dr. Hobbs won the Golden Cable ACE Award for Public Service Programming for “Know TV”, which is a staff development program for high school teachers on the critical analysis of documentary and nonfiction television. She also created a media literacy education program for parents, which was sponsored by the National Cable Television Association and the National Parent-Teacher Association called “Getting a Grip on Media Violence”.

Workshops for Educators. Dr. Renee Hobbs is the faculty director for the “Re-Visioning Project: Teaching Humanities In A Media Age”, a week-long summer conference for high school teachers that examines how media literacy connects to literature, history, social studies, health education and the fine and performing arts. The objective is to help teachers develop strategies to enhance their students’ critical thinking skills when consuming the everyday messages transmitted through various media forms. This summer institute takes place at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and is funded through a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and the AT&T Foundation. Dr. Hobbs is also the creator of the Harvard Institute in Media Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, which was established in 1993 and was the first national-level teacher initiative for media education in the United States.

The Discovery Communications Incorporated (DCI) Maryland Media Literacy Initiative. This initiative was announced last May by DCI's president Judith McHale, who is also a member of the Maryland State Board of Education. The initiative sets out to provide media literacy education to every school in Maryland (over 2400) and to provide age-specific curriculum to grades K through 12. In order to target every school age child in Maryland, the project plans to contract Dr. Hobbs to assist in the development and delivery of the plan, work with Maryland educators to meet workshop and material needs, and create a Support Teacher Catalyst to help promote quality implementation, instruction and supervision of the program. The initiative has four components:

- I. Curriculum Development:
 - Media Literacy Kits: one developed for elementary schools, one for middle schools and one for high schools, and enough to equip all schools in the state of Maryland.
- II. Enroll Education Leadership:
 - Host workshops for education leaders to ensure effective implementation of the programs.
- III. Train Maryland Catalyst Teachers:
 - Select 90 Catalyst Teachers, under the guidance of state education leaders, to serve as supports and liaisons for the teachers in their districts and the program developers.
 - An 18-hour training session over six weeks will be required for all Catalyst Teachers. The teachers will receive professional development credit for this training.
- IV. Ongoing Support to Ensure Lasting Impact:
 - Websites, bulletin boards and other support devices from the Media Literacy Project will be provided to enhance quality instruction.
 - The Catalyst Teachers will be provided with marketing materials in order to implement quality teacher training, coaching, mentoring and monitoring.
 - Establish an evaluation system to demonstrate the effects of the program to other schools and the public.

September 12, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR ERIC LIU

From: Anna Richter

Re: Additional Information on Media Literacy

Just Think Foundation:

The Just Think Foundation has created a comprehensive ten-week media literacy curriculum called "Developing Minds" which serves as a tool for teachers to help students explore the role and impact of the media in our everyday lives. The Developing Minds curriculum consists of four types of programs, each of which provides the students with analytical and technical exercises, small group activities and hands-on experiments with various media tools so that the students can in turn make reasonable and informed interpretations of media in any form. The four programs include Developing Minds in:

1. Media Arts, Technology and Communication Classes;
2. English, Language Arts and Social Studies Classes;
3. Social Issues; and
4. Professional Development.

In an effort to provide these programs to children from "under-resourced" communities, the Just Think Foundation has launched a portable outreach initiative called "The Media Mobile". The Media Mobile is a portable classroom housed in a 1978 yellow school bus and is equipped with computers, video decks, digital cameras and an animation stand and aims to both heighten student understanding of the media as well as educate students on how to use the tools of the media.

The tour is sponsored in part by Adobe, American Online, Best Buy and Microsoft and is in partnership with local educators in underprivileged communities to deliver the foundation's media literacy curriculum and provide students with the opportunity to create broadcast quality public service announcements, CD-ROMS, online sites, professionally recorded music, documentaries and short films. In collaboration with the non-profit organization BayKids, the Media Mobile kicked off its one-year nationwide tour in San Francisco on August 17th and each stop will range from one day to 17 weeks.

The New Mexico Media Literary Project (NMMLP):

The New Mexico Media Literary Project was founded six years ago by Hugh Downs and his daughter Deirdre to educate teachers on how to be catalysts for media literacy in their communities and develop media literacy curriculum in the schools. Programs have been implemented at Santa Fe High School, Ortiz Middle School and other Santa Fe public schools. The Project's director Bob McCannon trains teachers and professionals through seminars and a multimedia presentation called *Understanding Media*.

Most recently, the Project has received several new grants, which the project's director Bob McCannon has used to launch two initiatives. The first is a substance abuse prevention strategy program led by Dr. Peter DeBenedittis, who has developed a series of multi-media demonstrations that he will present to middle schools and other professionals in the media literacy field. A second initiative funded by these new grants is a multidisciplinary K-12 curriculum developed by the Project's curriculum director Bob Williams. The goal for the curriculum's publication is somewhere between July and December of 1999. The grants have also enabled the Project to hire media literacy graduate student and NMMLP catalyst Heidi Carr to produce the curriculum.

Other ongoing efforts of the NMMLP include workshops, a video CD-ROM of Bob William's presentation database, which is used by the American Academy of Pediatrics to train pediatricians nationwide, a website, which contains links to other relevant websites and resources, as well as a free newsletter that can be distributed via e-mail. The website is sponsored by Albuquerque Academy Outreach and supported by the New Mexico State Department of Education, Health and other public and private sectors.

August 25, 1999

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eric Liu

FROM: Anna Richter

RE: **Media Literacy**

*Content -
Media Literacy*

As the means of communication has expanded, the media and the Internet have become dominant information tools in our society. An American Medical Association study in 1996 reported that children "spend more than twice as much time learning from media as they do from the combined time with parents and teachers each year" (Technology & Learning, 01/98). The interest in media literacy has been heightened as a result of the increased acts of violence in schools across the nation, as well as the accessibility of uncensored information to children for whom the content may be inappropriate. Media literacy programs aim to promote awareness about the effects of the media's underlying messages, and to provide students with the necessary tools to become critical consumers of information, as messages from the media come into play in almost every aspect of our society.

Consumerism is another factor in the influx of media literacy awareness. Every person in America is a potential consumer regardless of one's gender, age, ethnicity or race, and as this population of consumers has grown, the target audience of the media has no boundaries. This growth has in turn triggered a response growth in media literacy organizations, which work to educate our children, and their parents, about how to filter through the media sources and decipher the relevance and credibility of the information that is fed to them. Some organizations include:

- The National Institute of Media and the Family.
www.mediaandthefamily.org
- The Center for Media Literacy
www.medialit.org
- The Media Literacy Online Project
(College of Education, University of Oregon)
<http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit>
- Just Think Foundation
www.justthink.org
- Autodesk Foundation
www.autodesk.com/foundation

This is by no means an exhausted list, and there are also several organizations that provide evaluation guidelines specific to Internet web sites. These guidelines assist teachers in providing their students with the skills necessary to distinguish valid information from invalid information, as well as techniques for using the Internet as a credible research tool.

Some examples of initiatives currently being launched by several media literacy organizations include:

- The 1998 Video and Computer Game Report Card: Each year the National Institute on Media and the Family issues its annual video and computer game report card in cooperation with Senators Lieberman and Herb Ko (who successfully urged for the video and computer game industry to establish a voluntary rating system in 1994). This report card evaluates Internet game sites; on-line gaming; marketing techniques; and parental supervision. Results of a study conducted by NIMF showed that nearly all retail stores displayed the video game ratings, yet the enforcement of the ratings, such as an age requirement, were not enforced most of the time. This result was the same for rental stores. The most problematic result was the on-line games, for which the report card gave a rating of "F" for providing ratings or warnings. This accessibility to virtually any on-line video game appears to be a great concern for several organizations.
- Links to Organization Web Sites and other Media Literacy Resources: The Media Online Project provides visitors of the website with links to other media literacy group web sites, discussion groups for professionals and educators, media literacy event information, guidance for parents regarding media literacy, and other relevant references. The Online Project also has an archive of articles, bibliographies and other resources that are related to the influence of media in the lives of children, youth and adults.
- Pilot Programs: The Just Think Foundation has developed a ten-unit media literacy curriculum entitled "Developing Minds". Just Think collaborates with educators in analyzing students' media intake and determining how to tailor the Just Think curriculum into the class. The Just Think activities are centered around issues that cover media in relationship to:
 - community, society and democracy;
 - the power of images;
 - behavior and social consequences (violence, language);
 - health issues (tobacco, alcohol, drugs); and
 - real people (role models, heroes, celebrities).

Another aspect of the curriculum has the students apply theories learned from the activities and incorporate them into student projects and messages for the Internet, broadcast media, or other media sources.

This program has received positive community support and the Sausalito School Board has incorporated "Developing Minds" into their school curriculum.