

# CORE PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

The National Association for Media Literacy Education aims to make media literacy highly valued and widely practiced as an essential life skill. In a mediated world, all people are media creators and consumers who deserve guidance on how to cultivate mindful, empowering relationships with media.

We view media literacy—the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication—as an essential literacy. Media literacy education is the ongoing development of habits of inquiry and skills of expression necessary for people to be critical thinkers, thoughtful and effective communicators, and informed and responsible members of society. Developing these habits and skills is vital to civic life.

These core principles articulate NAMLE's position on media literacy education and illuminate the complex dynamics between individuals, media experiences, media institutions, and the systems and structures that shape our world. The additional Implications for Practice document highlights distinguishing features of effective media literacy education. Our intent is for these Core Principles and Implications for Practice to build greater awareness and help scale media literacy education in all facets of life in the U.S.

National Association for Media Literacy Education

[www.NAMLE.net](http://www.NAMLE.net)

# NAMLE

## Media literacy education:

- 1** **Expands** the concept of literacy to include all forms of media and integrates multiple literacies in developing mindful media consumers and creators.
- 2** **Envisions** all individuals as capable learners who use their background, knowledge, skills, and beliefs to create meaning from media experiences.
- 3** **Promotes** teaching practices that prioritize curious, open-minded, and self-reflective inquiry while emphasizing reason, logic, and evidence.
- 4** **Encourages** learners to practice active inquiry, reflection, and critical thinking about the messages they experience, create, and share across the ever-evolving media landscape.
- 5** **Necessitates** ongoing skill-building opportunities for learners that are integrated, cross-curricular, interactive, and appropriate for age and developmental stage.
- 6** **Supports** the development of a participatory media culture in which individuals navigate myriad ethical responsibilities as they create and share media.
- 7** **Recognizes** that media institutions are cultural and commercial entities that function as agents of socialization, commerce, and change.
- 8** **Affirms** that a healthy media landscape for the public good is a shared responsibility among media and technology companies, governments, and citizens.
- 9** **Emphasizes** critical inquiry about media industries' roles in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability.
- 10** **Empowers** individuals to be informed, reflective, engaged, and socially responsible participants in a democratic society.

# CORE PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

## Implications for Practice

Implications for practice serve as guideposts for media literacy educators, highlighting attitudes, values, teaching techniques, and classroom strategies that support each core principle.

### **1** **Expands** the concept of literacy to include all forms of media and integrates multiple literacies in developing mindful media consumers and creators.

- 1.1 Like print literacy, which requires both reading and writing, MLE encompasses both analysis and expression.
- 1.2 MLE intersects with other literacies, such as information, digital, and social-emotional literacies.
- 1.3 MLE guides learners to participate in a broad range of media experiences—both in person and online—and across print, visual, audio, and digital media.
- 1.4 MLE values inquiry of contemporary media experiences that are culturally relevant in both the learning environment and the everyday lives of learners.

### **2** **Envisions** all individuals as capable learners who use their background, knowledge, skills, and beliefs to create meaning from media experiences.

- 2.1 MLE teaches that all media experiences are constructed and prepares people to engage in critical analysis and reflection of these experiences.
- 2.2 MLE acknowledges that people use their individual skills, beliefs, and backgrounds to construct personal meaning from media experiences.
- 2.3 MLE helps learners identify biases within their own and others' media experiences.
- 2.4 MLE helps learners become aware of and reflect on the meaning they make from media experiences, including how those meanings relate to their own values and beliefs.
- 2.5 MLE views media analysis as a process of evidence-based, open-ended exploration, rather than one through which single “correct” or pre-determined media interpretations are revealed.

### **3** **Promotes** teaching practices that prioritize curious, open-minded, and self-reflective inquiry while emphasizing reason, logic, and evidence.

- 3.1 MLE recognizes that how we teach matters as much as what we teach.
- 3.2 MLE uses co-learning and constructivist pedagogies in which teachers learn from learners and vice versa.
- 3.3 MLE asks learners to consider how emotions evoked through media experiences can be examined within frameworks of reason, evidence, logic, and metacognition.
- 3.4 MLE uses group discussion and analysis of media experiences to help learners understand and appreciate different perspectives and points of view.
- 3.5 MLE prioritizes media creation as an essential learning practice in building media literacy skills.

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### **4** Encourages learners to practice active inquiry, reflection, and critical thinking about the messages they experience, create, and share across the ever-evolving media landscape.

- 4.1 MLE teaches that all media experiences are constructed and uses foundational media analysis concepts to help learners effectively analyze those constructions.
- 4.2 MLE teaches learners that each medium has unique language codes, conventions, and constructions used to convey meaning.
- 4.3 MLE teaches learners to ask questions that will enable them to gain a deeper and/or more sophisticated understanding of media experiences.
- 4.4 MLE encourages learners to question and reflect on all media experiences, regardless of personal preferences, values, and biases.

### **5** Necessitates ongoing skill-building opportunities for learners that are integrated, cross-curricular, interactive, and appropriate for age and developmental stage.

- 5.1 MLE takes place in a variety of digital and physical settings, including but not limited to schools, afterschool programs, universities and colleges, libraries, community-based organizations, and the home.
- 5.2 MLE involves an ever-evolving continuum of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and actions.
- 5.3 MLE provides learners with numerous and diverse opportunities to develop and practice skills of analysis and expression.
- 5.4 MLE supports the selection of age- and developmentally-appropriate teaching methods and materials across educational settings.

### **6** Supports the development of a participatory media culture in which individuals navigate myriad ethical responsibilities as they create and share media.

- 6.1 MLE helps learners to express their ideas through multiple forms of media and encourages learners to continually reflect on the impact of their own and others' creations.
- 6.2 MLE helps learners make connections between comprehension and inference-making skills as they analyze and create media experiences.
- 6.3 MLE helps learners develop mindful and healthy media habits in a media-saturated world.
- 6.4 MLE empowers personal media management in a way that helps learners make informed decisions about which media they choose to use as well as time spent consuming and creating media.

### **7** Recognizes that media institutions are cultural and commercial entities that function as agents of socialization, commerce, and change.

- 7.1 MLE acknowledges that all media experiences have a particular perspective, context, and purpose and helps learners to ask questions about the substance, source, form, and significance of these aspects.
- 7.2 MLE acknowledges that all media messages contain values and points of view.
- 7.3 MLE facilitates learner understanding and appreciation of media experiences through personal examination of tastes, choices, and preferences.
- 7.4 MLE supports the development of skeptical—not cynical—approaches to helping people navigate media experiences.

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### **8** Affirms that a healthy media landscape for the public good is a shared responsibility among media and technology companies, governments, and citizens.

- 8.1 MLE empowers individuals to hold media makers and distributors accountable for their shared responsibility in creating and maintaining a healthy media landscape.
- 8.2 MLE calls for educational institutions to facilitate educators' efforts by actively supporting critical thinking across learning experiences.
- 8.3 MLE educates individuals about their rights as creators, consumers, and human beings in a media context and empowers them to use media and technology tools to be actively engaged in their communities.
- 8.4 MLE includes examination of how technological developments and media production impact living systems and the physical environment.

### **9** Emphasizes critical inquiry about media industries' roles in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability.

- 9.1 MLE teaches learners to examine how media institutions and societal structures, such as audience, ownership and distribution, influence how media experiences are constructed and how people make meaning from those media experiences.
- 9.2 MLE exposes learners to media that present diverse voices, perspectives, and communities.
- 9.3 MLE amplifies historically marginalized voices by including opportunities to examine cross-cultural media and international perspectives.
- 9.4 MLE explores issues of representation such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and socioeconomic status.

### **10** Empowers individuals to be informed, reflective, engaged, and socially responsible participants in a democratic society.

- 10.1 MLE benefits all people and is not partisan.
- 10.2 MLE acknowledges that media institutions and media experiences influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and the democratic process.
- 10.3 MLE promotes interest in news and current events as a dimension of citizenship and should enhance learner understanding of First Amendment rights and responsibilities.
- 10.4 MLE incorporates specific approaches for helping individuals to identify quality, reliable, and accurate information.
- 10.5 MLE opposes censorship and supports learners' rights to access media experiences from diverse sources that are inclusive and appropriate for age and stage of development.