Erikson Institute

Technology in Early Childhood Center

Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report

Framework, Child Development Guidelines, and Tips for Implementation

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Executive Summary

The TEC (Technology in Early Childhood) Center at Erikson Institute in partnership with the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) was awarded a grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) in 2018 to host two national forum meetings to discuss media literacy in early childhood with experts and practitioners with the objective of developing materials to support the understanding and teaching of media literacy in early childhood.

This report recognizes and builds upon the extensive media literacy educational materials, books, research, and policies that have been developed to date. The framework builds upon many existing media literacy-focused frameworks including Teaching Tolerance's Digital Literacy Framework (2017) and Project Look Sharp's Process of Media Literacy (2018). The child development and children's media use findings bring together decades of research from various fields in order to understand media literacy in early childhood. The cultural considerations, activities, and tips highlight existing educational materials and concerns raised by practitioners who serve children in a variety of settings. The barriers and solutions to sustaining this work shed light on the challenges practitioners and caregivers face daily.

The intention of this Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report is to utilize media literacy, child development, and early education knowledge to develop educational materials and advocate for support for media literacy education in early childhood. This report provides:

1. an updated definition of media literacy in early childhood;
2. an explanation of developmentally appropriate media literacy education for children under age 8;
3. background on the developmental abilities and expectations of young children with regards to media use and media literacy; and
4. guidelines to support media literacy in early childhood.

Project and Partners

About the Media Literacy in Early Childhood Project

In June 2017, the TEC (Technology in Early Education) Center at Erikson Institute hosted The Media Literacy in Early Childhood: A Critical Conversation pre-conference (NAMLE, 2017) in partnership with the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), to start a conversation about the importance of media literacy in early childhood. In September 2018, the TEC Center at Erikson Institute, in partnership with the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), was awarded a grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS) to host two national forum meetings to discuss media literacy in early childhood with experts and practitioners with the objective of developing materials to support the understanding and teaching of media literacy in early childhood. This report is a direct result of the support provided by IMLS and the lessons learned through these two national forum meetings held in 2019.

National Leadership Forum (January, 2019)

TEC Center, with support from ALSC, ACM, and NAMLE, hosted a one-day National Leadership Forum to discuss the development of a shared, actionable definition of media literacy in early childhood. TEC Center worked with ALSC, ACM, and NAMLE to create a list of invitees who are recognized as media literacy and/or child development leaders. The 20 national leaders who attended the National Leadership Forum represented organizations such as American Academy of Pediatrics, International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), Common Sense Latino, higher education institutions, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), academic institutions

(University of Michigan), and other organizations. At the end of the forum, participants made suggestions on how to develop a definition that was aligned with NAMLE's existing definition. Based on this input, the definition used at the National Practitioners Forum utilized many elements of NAMLE's definition, such as describing media literacy as an "ability to access… evaluate, create", with developmentally appropriate additions such as "engage", "critically question", and "inquire". The key ideas and conversations from the National Leadership Forum guided the planning of the agenda and objectives for the National Practitioners Forum.

National Practitioners Forum (April, 2019)

TEC Center, with support from partners, hosted a two-day National Practitioners Forum, which took place in spring 2019, with approximately 35 practitioners. TEC Center worked with ALSC, ACM, and NAMLE to create a list of invitees who represented a variety of early childhood settings, i.e. libraries, museums, home-based programs; geographic settings i.e. rural, suburban, or urban; as well as demographics including race, ethnicity, gender, and years of experience working in prominent media literacy organizations.

During this forum, national practitioners were assigned working groups to develop a framework that collaborating partners and other stakeholders could use to support family media literacy education and broaden the media literacy ecosystem in communities. National practitioners discussed a framework of media literacy in early childhood, the skills needed to support various media literacy actions (six of which emerged from discussion as being fundamental), activities/lesson plan examples for practitioners and caregivers, as well as recommendations for sustaining the work.

About Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center, Erikson Institute

The **Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute** is dedicated to creating a better world for children's technology use. The TEC Center is dedicated to **research, practice,** and **collaboration** to ensure that families and practitioners are informed and supported in decisions to use technology with their young children. The TEC Center conducts research to scientifically answer critical questions regarding the role of technology on young children's learning and development. Using evidence-based resources and real-world examples, the TEC Center's professional development programs strengthen educators' digital literacy and their ability to intentionally select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology in the classroom and other early childhood settings. Finally, the TEC Center recognizes the necessity of collaboration in this digital world and welcomes researchers, practitioners, educators, and technology developers to communicate and connect through conventions and meetings hosted by the TEC Center.

The TEC Center is housed within Erikson Institute, which is a premier independent institution of higher education committed to ensuring that all children have equitable opportunities to realize their potential. Erikson Institute is recognized for its groundbreaking work in the field of early childhood. Erikson Institute uniquely prepares child development, education, and social work leaders to improve the lives of young children and their families. Erikson's impact and influence is further amplified through its innovative academic programs, applied research, knowledge creation and distribution, direct service, and field-wide advocacy.

About Our Partners

The **Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)** is the world's largest organization dedicated to the support and enhancement of library service to children. Driven by its national membership, 13 member Board of Directors, and eight full-time employees, ALSC is a dynamic force for positive change. From creative programming and best practices to continuing education and professional connections—ALSC members are innovators in the field of children's library service. ALSC's network includes more than 4,000 children's and youth librarians, children's literature experts, publishers, education and library school faculty members, and other adults dedicated to engaging communities to support ALSC's vision to build healthy, successful futures for all children. For this partnership, Aimee Strittmater, Executive Director and Angela Hubbard, Program Officer, Projects and Partnerships led ALSC's work with additional support provided by Alena Rivers, Deputy Director.

The **Association of Children's Museums (ACM)** champions children's museums and supports 450 members in 48 states and 20 countries with professional development programs, publications, and other resources. Children's museums are cultural institutions committed to serving the needs and interests of children by providing exhibits and programs that stimulate curiosity and motivate learning; more than 31 million people annually visit a children's museum. Started in 1962, ACM provides leadership, professional development, advocacy, and resources for its member organizations and individuals. For this partnership, Victoria Garvin, Sr. Director, Professional Development led ACM's work, with additional support provided by Laura Huerta Migus, Executive Director.

The **National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)** is a professional association for educators, academics, activists, and students with a passion for understanding how the media we use and create affects our lives and the lives of others in our communities and in the world. The NAMLE mission is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world by expanding the practice of media literacy education around the country. NAMLE's vision is to see media literacy be highly valued by all and widely practiced as an essential skill for the 21st Century. For this partnership, Michelle Ciulla Lipkin, Executive Director and Tony Streit, NAMLE Board of Directors President led NAMLE's work.

About the Authors

Jenna Herdzina, MS is the Program Manager of the TEC Center at Erikson Institute. Jenna's work focuses on connecting policy and research to practice for the adults in children's lives. She is passionate about understanding how technology and media platforms impact early civic identity development. Jenna served as a Project Manager and Policy to Practice Intern with the TEC Center, advocating for technology use with children and families to be culturally and socio-economically sensitive and inclusive. Previously, Jenna was the Early Childhood Education Policy Intern at Latino Policy Forum where she participated in local, state and national ECE advocate workgroups focusing on state accountability and EL components of ESSA, preschool suspensions and expulsions, Illinois Children's Cabinet project, and ECE Workforce Development. Jenna has worked with children and families for over a decade in a variety of settings including early childhood education centers, a crisis nursery, and a hospital. Jenna earned her Master's in Child Development from Erikson Institute.

Alexis R. Lauricella, PhD is an Associate Professor at Erikson Institute and Director of the Technology in Early Childhood Center at Erikson Institute. Dr. Lauricella earned her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology and her Master's in Public Policy from Georgetown University. Her research focuses on children's learning from media technology and parents' and teachers' attitudes toward and use of media technology with young children. Recent publications include empirical research articles in *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, Journal of Children and Media, Media Psychology, Journal of Early Adolescence, Journal of Infant Behavior and Development, New Media and Society, Computers and Education, Public Health,* and multiple reports for Northwestern University's Center on Media and Human Development, as well as for the Fred Rogers Center and Common Sense Media.

Introduction

Young children are regularly engaging with media in their homes, schools, and outside of school experiences including museums and libraries. All of these environments offer an opportunity to support and develop young children's media literacy skills. However, there is a lack of consensus about what media literacy education for young children means and includes, what media literacy experiences in both informal and formal early childhood settings should look like, and how to empower parents and other adults as media literacy role models and mentors. In order to create this report, we collaborated with partners from the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and hosted two national forum meetings to discuss media literacy in early childhood with experts and practitioners.

The objectives of this Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report are threefold:
1. to provide a clear understanding of developmentally appropriate media literacy education for children under age 8;
2. to provide parents, educators, and other adults with background on the developmental abilities and expectations of young children with regards to media use and media literacy; and
3. to develop a framework with guidelines to support media literacy in early childhood.

We hope that this report we will make media literacy in early childhood a concept that more key stakeholders understand and feel confident in implementing and supporting in their work with young children. We believe these resources will help to expand the number of organizations and individuals committed to integrating media literacy into programs for families, support and enhance outreach and professional development programs for practitioners, and encourage all of those working with young children to recognize the potential to support media literacy at very early ages.

Media and Young Children

Young children have always been key consumers of media, thus media literacy has always been important for them. Media literacy encompasses all media, including print, but most attention and urgency around media literacy today centers on digital media technologies. In recent decades, technological advancements have resulted in digital media devices being even more kid-friendly, such as the touchscreen capabilities of current smartphones and tablets, and even more content being intentionally created for young children, including children's television programming and interactive games. There is consistent evidence that young children (those under age 8) are regular and frequent media users, engaging with a variety of platforms and content for close to two hours per day (Rideout, 2017). Moreover, schools are increasing their use of technology in classrooms with many purchasing one to one (1:1) technology, enabling each student access to their own device. Even informal learning environments, including libraries and museums, are increasing their use and incorporation of digital media into their spaces (Association of Children's Museums, 2015; Clark & Archer Perry, 2015).

This generation of children growing up with near universal access to newer, digital, interactive and mobile technologies are often referred to as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001) because their entire existence has been in the presence of these technologies. While they may in fact be digital natives, that does not suggest that they are digital media experts, nor that they have the skills for analysis, evaluation, and creation that define literacy

in using media, whether it is digital or analog. These children still need support from adults to develop a foundation of skills that they can build upon as they use technology and become media literate. Older children are increasingly taught media literacy skills in their classroom environments particularly in middle and high school years. It's imperative to begin media literacy education in early childhood years because it lays the foundation for being children media literate throughout life. To date, there has been little explicit recommendation or support for how to teach media literacy to younger children and thus we often see this group of media users lacking the support and education to build their media literacy skills. Published media literacy frameworks, education materials, and professional development for practitioners and caregivers who support children ages birth through age are scarce. Yet with reports of children using technology at high levels earlier than kindergarten, it is imperative that media literacy education begin before entering the K-12 education system and is supported in the K-3 grades.

Media Literacy Defined

Media literacy is focused on helping young children begin to understand the role of media and preparing them to be creative and healthy consumers and creators of media throughout their lives. One of the most widely used definitions of media literacy in much of media literacy research and practice is from NAMLE, who defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (National Association for Media Literacy Education, n,d). For the purposes of this Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report, we utilized aspects of NAMLE's definition in a new definition which highlights unique aspects of media literacy that are relevant and important during early childhood including comprehension, engage, and explore, but are still aligned with NAMLE's definition for older children

in order to provide a continuum. The blue words within the definition represent words that vary from NAMLE's media literacy definition.

> **Media Literacy in Early Childhood** is the emerging ability to access, engage, explore, comprehend, critically inquire, evaluate, and create with developmentally appropriate media.

About this Report

This report recognizes and builds upon the extensive media literacy educational materials, books, research, and policies that have been developed to date. The framework builds upon many existing media literacy-focused frameworks including Teaching Tolerance's Digital Literacy Framework (2017) and Project Look Sharp's Process of Media Literacy (2018). The child development and children's media use findings bring together decades of research from various fields in order to understand media literacy in early childhood. Tips for Adults are included in Child Development 101, to provide age-specific tips, as well as included in the Implementation Plan for action-specific tips. Additionally, there are two printable documents, Tips for Practitioners and Tips for Caregivers, which can be found in the appendix. The cultural considerations, activities and tips highlight existing educational materials and concerns raised by practitioners who serve children in a variety of settings. The barriers and solutions to sustaining this work shed light on the challenges practitioners and caregivers face daily.

The intention of this report is to utilize media literacy, child development, and early education efforts to propel media literacy in early childhood efforts by developing education materials and advocating for support at micro-, meso-, and macro-level impacts of a young child's life.

Media Literacy in Early Childhood Framework

Media literacy must occur and develop in a *developmentally appropriate way.* This means applying a strong child development lens while thinking about how young children engage with media (see **Child Development 101,** pages 10–14). Given our developed definition of media literacy in early childhood:

> **Media Literacy** is the emerging ability to access, engage, explore, comprehend, critically inquire, evaluate, and create with developmentally appropriate media

We break down this definition into the six actions that young children should develop to become media literate. The six fundamental actions include: (1) access, (2) engage and explore, (3) comprehend (4) critically inquire, (5) evaluate, (6) and create. In this framework, definition, and report, we use the term "fundamental actions" because they are overarching and describe a set of "supporting skills" (listed as a.-d. in the framework) children develop to become media literate.

Fundamental Actions of Media Literacy in Early Childhood

To gain media literacy skills, young children need to be given support to:

Access: to effectively locate, use, and select media
Engage and Explore: to intentionally use media for purpose and enjoyment
Comprehend: to understand media messages and practices and transfer that knowledge appropriately
Critically Inquire: to question and analyze media messages
Evaluate: to ask "is this media right for me or my task?"
Create: to make media with intention

A child must be able to access media in order to become media literate. Young children need opportunities to engage and explore media to develop awareness and skills to intentionally and appropriately use media. Children must comprehend media content and media intentions to shift from a consuming media to questioning and creating media. Children must critically inquire to further dissect the intention and purpose of the media messages. Children must evaluate media to determine if it is right for them and for their goals. Finally, children must develop the skills to create and make media with intention. These six fundamental actions and the supporting skills are things children would be expected to do when *supported and guided by caregivers and educators.*

This framework is intended to be used as a reference point to understand media literacy for children ages birth through 8. This framework builds upon existing work including Teaching Tolerance's Digital Literacy Framework (2017) and Project Look Sharp's Process of Media Literacy (2018) and encompasses the necessary actions, abilities, and skills that young children (birth to age 8) must engage in or possess in order to emerge as media literate. There are examples later in this report (see **Child Development 101** and **Implementation Plan**) that demonstrate how the fundamental actions can be supported in developmentally appropriate ways. In the next section, we describe each of the fundamental actions in more detail and describe the skills that may be support these fundamental skills.

Media Literacy in Early Childhood Framework

These six fundamental actions are described in detail below. It is expected that children will be supported and guided by caregivers and educators as they develop the skills necessary to master each action. Each of these fundamental actions are critical to media literacy. See Implementation Plan for examples of how adults can help support these actions and skills in practice.

1. Children will learn to intentionally **access**, select, and manipulate media. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. manipulate the tools effectively and efficiently;
   b. understand the features of a given piece of media or digital tool, including a sense of how it may make them feel or whether it helps them learn and grow;
   c. critically think about why they are choosing media and for what purpose; and
   d. seek help and assistance from caregivers, librarians, and other educators who serve as media mentors, providing access to and use of media, technology, or other digital tools.

2. Children will learn to **engage** and **explore** with media in a way that is supportive of their overall development and learning. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. explore and engage with content of media in ways that gives them a sense of agency and control;
   b. follow curiosities and develop a flexible, growth-mindset while playing with technology through open-ended exploration, embracing opportunities to take risks and fail; and
   c. engage in social play and exploration to learn from and with others when using media or technology tools;

3. Children will learn to **comprehend** media messages and practices. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. interpret content and information gathered while using media;
   b. transfer information gathered from one media source or technology tool to another context or situation; and

c. understand commonly used visual, editorial, and technology design processes to communicate information (e.g., cuts, zooms, weblinks, etc.).

4. Children will learn to **critically inquire** about media and their use of media. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. demonstrate knowledge of the inquiry process which includes posing questions, seeking information from a variety of sources, asking for evidence and providing evidence for their own conclusions, interpreting and analyzing information, and documenting;
   b. decipher the elements that make media accurate, appropriate, reliable, fact/fiction, real and/or pretend;
   c. consider media's point of view and potential bias and critically question the development of media content; and
   d. inquire about media's intended audiences and the impact of media on different people.

5. Children will learn to **evaluate** the content and impact of media in a developmentally appropriate way. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. identify and compare types of media sources;
   b. choose media that matches and supports their goal/task;
   c. understand that a media source that is reliable for one thing is not necessarily reliable for everything; and
   d. reflect on their experiences with media.

6. Children will learn to **create** and express ideas using media. To master this action, children should develop the following skills:
   a. see themselves as creators and active influencers of media;
   b. explore, brainstorm, and convey ideas through creation, hacking, remixing, tinkering, and/or destruction;
   c. explain intention of decisions throughout the creation process and reflect on process after; and
   d. connect media content created to the broader world.

Child Development 101

In order to effectively support media literacy skills in early childhood, it is critical to understand child development and how young children experience media. This section provides a brief background of child development relevant to media use at four selected stages: 0-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-6 years, and 7-8 years. This section seeks to provide a practical overview of child development from birth to age 8 within the context of media use.

Ages 0-2

Between the ages of birth and 2 years old, children are experiencing rapid brain growth, dramatic changes in physical development, and vast improvements in cognitive and language development. Throughout infancy, children are building their understanding of the world around them through their experiences. Prior to age 1, infant physical development is focused on large motor skills like sitting up, crawling and walking, and basic fine motor skills like pointing and pinching objects. Around age 1, children may have produced a few words (e.g., Momma, Dadda). By age 2, children produce 50-200 words and are using two and three word pairs to communicate. Parent interaction between the ages of 0 and 2 is critical for language comprehension and production. Between 18-24 months, children are able to identify images of themselves and familiar people. By this age, they also enjoy solitary play, begin communicating emotions and causes of emotions, and begin to demonstrate an awareness of others' points of view.

Media Use and Effects

While young infants are not initiating digital media use directly, infants are likely encountering a range of media throughout their day starting as early as birth. Ninety-eight percent of families with a child under the age of 8 own a mobile device (Rideout, 2017). Caregivers are regularly using digital cameras, mobile phones, and tablets to capture images and videos of their children and often show the child the resulting image on their digital device. Adults are regularly using media themselves, thereby modeling the use of these tools for children starting at birth.

Throughout infancy and toddlerhood, children are encountering print media (e.g., books), as well as digital media including music players, television/video, smart home voice assistants, tablets, smartphones, and others. Book reading (with adults reading and children responding) is especially important in infancy and toddlerhood (High & Klass, 2014) and has been shown to be associated with better language skills and increased interest in reading in later years (Payne, Whitehurst, & Angell, 1994). For very young children, understanding the content and messages from a screen can be very hard (Anderson & Pempek, 2008). Features like interactivity, familiar characters, verbal language cues, social contingency (such as a conversation with authentic responses that are contingent on each other), and repetition have been shown to support young children's ability to learn from screen media (e.g., Barr, Muentener, Garcia, Fujimoto, & Chávez, 2007; Barr & Wyss, 2008; Howard Gola, Richards, Lauricella, & Calvert, 2013; Lauricella, Howard, & Calvert, 2011; Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2014). Children under 3 years learn more from computers or interactive touchscreens when they receive contingent responses from the devices (Choi & Kirkorian, 2016; Lauricella, Pempek, Barr, & Calvert, 2010; Kirkorian, Choi, & Pempek, 2016).

Tips for Adults

- Recognize that these early interactions and experiences influence children's media literacy skills. In infancy and toddlerhood, co-access, co-engagement, and co-viewing of media with young children is paramount to support young children in their mastery and understanding of basic media literacy skills.

- Encourage exploration of sensory materials and hands-on activities. For example, discuss with and model for children how picture books work by showing the cover, pointing out illustrations and turning the pages to support children's comprehension of the media content and device.
- Play is learning; encourage exploration and discovery.
- Respond to and talk with the child about what you are doing together. Narrate what you're doing when you engage with the child and ask questions out loud. Notice the child's non-verbal communication (e.g., smiles, coos, etc) and use that as a moment to narrate.
- Recognize that toddlers' signs, facial expressions, and the act of pointing are children's ways of saying what they like and don't like; this is the first stage of them engaging with and evaluating media.
- Acknowledge and encourage creations. Use language such as, "You did this! You are a painter."
- Narrate and name the process of creation.
- Enhance social interaction with family members using face-to-face interactions in person and digitally.
- Recognize and reflect on your own media and technology use and how you are modeling use in front of your young children.
- Use media as a tool to support, enhance, and engage in communication, interaction, and inquiry with your very young children. For example, narrate what you are doing when you go to your phone, "Look, sweet baby, I can use the phone to check the weather before we go outside to we know if it is warm or cold so we can wear the correct clothes to stay comfortable. And it will only take a moment!"

Ages 3-4

Between the ages of 3 through 4 years old, children's cognitive development, language, and social emotional learning flourish as they enter preschool years. Preschool children still think very concretely about the world around them and struggle with abstract thought and abstract concepts including reality and fantasy distinctions which can make processing fictional storylines sometimes challenging. By the preschool years, they are understanding themselves and understanding those around them in more complex ways. For example, by 3 years old, children have a concrete sense of self such as name, physical attributes, gender, and abilities. Children around age 3 can identify some basic emotion words such as "happy", "sad", etc. and comprehend that there's a connection between thoughts and emotions. During this time, children are also beginning to understand that other people experience thoughts and emotions that differ from their own. By 4 years old, children begin to understand that others can believe or know something contrary to what they know or understand, this is the beginning of theory of mind development.

Media Use and Effects

Preschoolers are frequent media users and since the creation of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*, preschoolers have been heavily researched with regard to media use and media effects. Parents report that children ages 2 to 4 spend an average of 1 hour and nine minutes watching television, 58 minutes using a mobile device, 30 minutes reading/being read to print media (Rideout, 2017). Teachers are also incorporating digital media for educational purposes (Pila, S., Blackwell, C. K., Lauricella, A. R., & Wartella, E., 2019).

As children enter preschool years, their cognitive ability to process information improves from toddler years, allowing them to process information more efficiently. As a result, preschoolers can and do learn from high quality educational television programs (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, Wright, 2001; Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, & Santomero, 1999; Fisch, Truglio, & Cole, 1999; Friedrich & Stein, 1975) and educational apps (Aladé, Lauricella, Beaudoin-Ryan, & Wartella, 2016; Huber et al., 2016; Schroeder & Kirkorian, 2016). Certain digital media programs, such as *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, have been shown to support social emotional learning such as empathy, ability to recognize emotions, and confidence in social situations, but only when their caregiver talks with them about what's on television (Rasmussen, Shafer, Colwell, White, Punyanunt-Carter, Densley, & Wright, 2016). We are beginning to understand the role of interactive technology and games on preschoolers learning and are finding that while their ability to process information is better than toddler years, there may be some cognitive challenges of learning from a screen and interacting with it at the same time (Alade et al., 2016; Anderson & Davidson, 2019).

Tips for Adults

- Due to children's increase in media use in the preschool years and their cognitive development, children continue to benefit from facilitation and guidance by caregivers while using media.
- Children are beginning to understand their emotions so caregivers may focus on the child's body language and help them become aware of what media content makes them happy, sad, angry, and scared.

- Help children differentiate between reality and fantasy when engaging in media, especially when the media is frightening.
- Children are developing curiosities as they engage in print and digital media so caregivers can utilize media to document and follow their curiosities.
- Children may want to read or engage with media repeatedly. This is because they are processing the content and understanding more each time and their requests and choices to read books (or watching shows) over and over is an instance of them having some agency over their own learning.
- While children at this age are using print and digital media as tools to learn, it's important for adults to support their learning about the media. Help children learn and discover that media is constructed by somebody with an intentional purpose for an audience. This can be as simple as mentioning a book author's name and the fact that there are books for adults and books for children.
- Help guide children in accessing and making selections about what media to use. Provide conversations about the benefits and limitations of different media for different purposes.
- Allow and encourage preschoolers to explore and critically question the media they are using.

Ages 5-6

From 5 through 6 years old, children generally begin formal schooling. This means their weekdays are focused more on academics while being surrounded by peers. During play, they're able to share and take turns most of the time, as well as work together to achieve a common goal such as building a tower. Their play is also more organized; children understand the rules of a game and may even alter the rules. By age 5, children are able to evaluate their own characteristics and accomplishments. Five- and 6-year-olds are beginning to be able to read others' emotions through their actions and facial expressions. Children are also learning new skills such as reading simple picture books on their own and writing simple sentences as well as mastering mathematical concepts.

Media Use and Effects

Children are engaging in media both at home and in the classroom. Children ages 5 to 8 spend a daily average of 2 hours and 56 minutes using screen media (Rideout, 2017), mainly split between television (1 hour and 4 minutes) and mobile device (1 hour and 2 minutes). Children ages 5 to 8 spend a daily average of 26 minutes reading and/or being read to print media (Rideout, 2017). Sixty percent of Kindergarten to 2nd grade teachers report teaching digital citizenship competencies (Vega & Robb, 2019). Children's cognition at these ages enables them to begin to understand more complex aspects of media including correctly labeling the type of message, such as news or a commercial for a product, and comprehending the message content of child-focused commercials and developmentally appropriate educational content (Blosser & Roberts, 1985). Between ages 5 and 6, children should be able to tell short stories and write, creating their own media. Media impacts a child's attitudes regarding gender stereotypes (Signorielli, 2011), which is important to keep in mind as children are increasingly engaging in media as they grow older.

Tips for Adults

The adult's role becomes more focused on supporting children to understand abstract concepts such as narrative elements, media representation, and authorship.

- Provide children opportunities to reflect on and question media using concrete examples such as, "Do the children in this advertisement look like you or your friends? What toys are they playing with? What type of home do they live in?"
- Explain that every story has a teller and all media content has a maker. Discuss how media is created and that media are a portrayal or one view.
- Provide accurately representative media to combat the impact of media stereotypes on children's understanding of themselves and others and talk openly about the representation and lack of representation in media being used.
- Proactively use multiple types of media such as books, advertisements, and apps to foster conversations to explore cultural diversity.
- Ask children about the media they are using and assess their success at comprehending the storyline and messages. Just like reading literacy and reading comprehension can have a mismatch, children's media processing and comprehension may also not line up.

Ages 7-8

From age 7 through age 8, children are becoming increasingly independent as their cognitive abilities become more sophisticated. Children at this age are now aware that others have different thoughts than them. They are experiencing an increase in concentration, which is very helpful for school and participating in afterschool sports and groups. Children are beginning to develop moral rules and behavior, questioning fairness and equality. They are now able to look at situations from multiple perspectives and consider multiple solutions to problems. By age 8, children typically are able to read simple sentences and longer words. Confidence and belonging is critical during this age.

Media Use and Effects

As children develop their independence and cognitive abilities, their media use increases. Fifty-nine percent of children ages 5 to 8 years old have their own tablet and 7% of their own smartphone (Rideout, 2017). Young children from 5 through 8 years old play video games for an average of 42 minutes per day (Rideout, 2017) and 62% of children ages 8 to 12 report watching TV every day (Rideout, 2015). At 8 years old, children typically are reading to learn and for entertainment as they are reading with more ease. Children are not only using media differently but also understanding and being impacted by their increased media use.

During these ages, children are able to differentiate elements of stories such as the plot and the setting. The majority of children ages 7 and 8 years old can describe advertising intent (Carter, Patterson, Donovan, Ewing, & Roberts, 2011). After viewing clips of women in stereotypical careers, girls ages 6 to 9 years old report interest in stereotypical careers and are less likely to draw women as scientists than girls in a comparison group who viewed clips of women in science, technology, engineering, and math careers (Bond, 2016).

Tips for Adults

The adult's role for children ages 7 and 8 years old is as a facilitator and guide, allowing children to have more independence, more responsibilities, and more opportunities to collaborate with their peers. It's essential to support children as they become independent in their media engagement.

- Guide children in learning how to evaluate and decide what is "good" or "just right" media for them.
- Allow children to investigate and compare media.
- Take the time to discuss topics such as media representation and accuracy, privacy, and safety while using digital media sources.
- Give children control by encouraging them to act as media mentors by helping and teaching others how to engage with and choose media.
- Introduce tools that children can use to express themselves and create their own media.
- Support their creation of media by focusing less on the end product and focusing more on the process, effort, and intentions of the child.

Media Literacy in Early Childhood Implementation Plan

This implementation resource consists of supporting skills, tips, and activities for the six actions of media literacy in early childhood with explicit cultural awareness and considerations. The contents within this implementation document have been developed by the attendees at the National Practitioners Forum. During the National Practitioners Forum, over 40 practitioners identified promising practices for the six fundamental actions of media literacy in early childhood. These practitioners represented early childhood learning settings such as libraries, museums, and school-, center-, and home-based programs. The practitioners identified the knowledge and experiences educators need to model and teach media literacy skills to children and their families.

Practitioners should embed media literacy across curricula and in current, daily interactions and practices. Practitioners do not need to squeeze in a new curriculum in order to support media literacy for the children they serve. Librarian and practitioner participant Claudia Haines explained, **"These aren't lesson plans. They're moments."** The majority of these tips and activities may be used in all child settings including: library, museum, and school-, center-, and home-based programs.

Throughout the National Practitioners Forum, participants came up with many practices that should be woven into all of the six fundamental action-related practices. These common practices include prioritizing child development, valuing the adult's role, and realizing that practice is influenced by culture.

Of course, as early childhood practitioners, it is imperative to prioritize child development first. During implementation, this means arranging activities that are developmentally appropriate and that do not expect children to think and act beyond their abilities. This prioritization of child development must be reflected in all practice, regardless of the area of education and pedagogy.

Another practice that is common across all media literacy actions is the valuing of the adults' role, both the caregivers' and practitioners'. The adults' role is to model and provide opportunities to learn, which includes sometimes taking a step back and allowing children to explore without verbal or physical intervening. In media literacy, this can look like adults reflecting on their own media use and how they are modeling appropriate behavior while encouraging children to take the six fundamental actions.

The final practice that should be applied across all media literacy actions is realizing that practice is influenced by culture. Practitioners reflect their culture through their practice, and practitioners must take into consideration the child's culture while engaging with that child. Cultural considerations are included for each of the six actions in this Media Literacy in Early Childhood Implementation Plan.

Six Fundamental Actions of Media Literacy

1 Access

Definition
Access: to effectively locate, use, and select media

Supporting Skills
1a. Manipulate the tools effectively and efficiently

1b. Understand the features of a given piece of media or digital tool, including a sense of how it may make them feel or whether it helps them learn and grow

1c. Critically think about why they are choosing media and for what purpose

1d. Seek help and assistance from caregivers, librarians, and other educators who serve as media mentors, providing access and use of media, technology, or other digital tools

Tips for Adults
- Curate high quality, educational media for children to learn uses of tools and media that nurtures joint media engagement.
- Develop a system such as a loaning library for sharing tools, devices, and materials with other libraries, museums, practitioners, and educators.
- Create a network of media mentors for yourself and for the children you serve. Media mentors are those who help and teach others how to engage with and choose media.
- Provide multiple entry points into a game, activity, or tool. For example, if the activity is to create a book, provide many tools for children to create with such as cameras, voice recording devices, a book creating app, paper and crayons. Providing many tools can support children gaining experience with a variety of tools.
- Encourage children to teach adults how to use media and technology, especially apps and artificial intelligence.

Activities

ACCESS ACTIVITY 1: Create a low-risk environment for children to learn how to use and select technologies such as makerspaces, STEM activities, or a technology "petting zoo." **Allow children to explore** these spaces and materials without requiring a specific product as an outcome.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Museum, Library, School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1a, 1b
ACCESS ACTIVITY 2: Build or make **a physical place for adults and older children to model** how to use, select, critically and thoughtfully question, and manipulate tools and provide opportunities for children to recreate the modeled practices.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Museum, Library, School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1a, 1b, 1d

ACCESS ACTIVITY 3: Discuss common symbols, colors, and images from the media and their culturally relevant meanings. Show pictures of signs from their neighborhoods including transportation, grocery store and park signs. For infants and toddlers, begin this practice by labeling symbols, colors, and images.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Museum, School/Center-Based Program, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1a
ACCESS ACTIVITY 4: When using devices with many choices of content such as tablets, support the learning of the tools by choosing to have one app open/available at a time. This will allow children to focus on mastering one activity at a time. For example, there are many apps which can enable book making. Choose one so that children can master this one app without becoming overwhelmed by choice.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1a
ACCESS ACTIVITY 5: **Assign media mentors** in your class/program. Media mentors could be older children, children who are more experienced with technology and media, or children who are more comfortable taking risks and tinkering with technology and media. Introduce "media mentor" as a job which may change each week. Encourage children to ask the media mentor for help before asking an adult.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1d
ACCESS ACTIVITY 6: Pose questions for children to answer by allowing them to select from available media such as books, information pamphlets, digital media devices, etc. Make sure to include a range of media that has been designed for different ages and levels of comprehension. Discuss which media they used to find information and **how to use each available media to find the information**. For example, for an information pamphlet for adults, point out the type size, word lengths, and images to explain why it is for adults or older children and the need to ask an adult or older child for help to use that media.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTENT:** School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 1b, 1c

Cultural Considerations

There are many cultural considerations which affect the media children have access to, how they access media, and how the adults in their lives perceive the role of media. Practitioners must gain information about the families served, such as media and technology experiences, access, expectations, and typical media practices. Practitioners can obtain this information by creating a survey or hosting family focus groups and interviews with caregivers or by asking some general questions of caregivers.

When implementing access tips and activities, it's important to utilize tools that families already have (e.g., smartphone, Facetime, and the games they play) or tools they can easily access such as tools through an existing loaning library or free wifi. It's also incredibly important to understand the caregivers' values, goals, and perceptions of media access for their children. This should guide the teaching and supporting of media literacy.

2 Engage and Explore

Definition

Engage and Explore: to intentionally use media for purpose and enjoyment

Supporting Skills

2a. Explore and engage with content of media in ways that gives them a sense of agency and control

2b. Follow curiosities and develop a flexible, growth-mindset while playing with technology through open-ended exploration, embracing opportunities to take risks and fail

2c. Engage in social play and exploration to learn from and with others when using media or technology tools

Tips for Adults

- Don't expect children to be media experts or engage and explore with overt purpose right away. Slow down. Pause. Give children space. This is very important.
- Support questioning throughout exploration and engagement. Acknowledge and value children's questioning. Model questioning language while using picture books and stories.
- Recognize intrinsic motivation by avoiding awards and points.
- Try to use some guided discovery teaching techniques, such as modeling student ideas and sharing exploratory work, while designing engagement and exploration.
- Align the materials provided to the learning goals.
- Explore how engagement impacts the experience and use of the tool.
- Encourage the use of media as tools to connect to others. When choosing media to incorporate, assess how collaborative the media type is and what it was designed for.
- Incorporate media into traditional early childhood activities such as sensory stations and dramatic play. Allow children to take apart old technology tools or destroyed books as a sensory experience. In the dramatic play area, incorporate a digital camera for children to take pictures and videos throughout their play.
- Support families too. Create "I wonder" cards which contain open-ended prompts for caregivers to support their children's engagement and exploration.
- Give caregivers an opportunity to learn about "cognitive load", a term in the learning sciences that refers to the total amount of mental activity that the brain can manage at a given time.

Activities

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 1: One way to introduce print or screen media into playtime at early ages is to **verbally label and draw connections.** Point out a familiar concept or element in the media and name it such as "bus", "dog", "Mom", etc. Additionally, vocalize a connection between the 3D world to 2D media for example, a stuffed elephant in the room and an elephant in a book. Labeling and mentioning these connections to a child may be the first step to the child incorporating media elements into their exploration.

AGES: 0-2
CONTEXT: School/Center-Based, Home
SUPPORTING SKILLS: 2a, 2c

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 2: Enable **video chats** during a whole group time. Libraries, School/Center-Based, and Home-Based Programs can use video chat to connect with professional experts, authors and illustrators, and partake in virtual tours in zoos and museums. Learn how Brooklyn Public Library's TeleStory program utilizes televisiting, or video conferencing, to connect incarcerated caregivers with children.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Library, School/Center-Based Program, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2c
ACTIVITY 3: Allow children to **take apart** old technology tools or destroyed books as a **sensory play experience**. For infants and toddlers, this can be destroyed books of various materials or broken keyboards. For preschool-age children, this can be technologies such as VCR tapes, broken digital cameras or broken robotics. For school-age children, this can be technologies such as broken computers or music players. For all ages, provide examples of the tool not destroyed or taken apart so children can see that the tool can be made as well as taken apart. The Huntington Branch Library's (Shelton, Connecticut) Computer Part Art Program Model is one specific model for libraries and museums.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based Program, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2b
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 4: Incorporate child-led coding activities with and without technology. With technology may include coding with programmable robotics such as Code-a-Pillar and Ozobots or coding with apps such as Scratch Jr. Learn about Gombert Elementary School Library's (Aurora, Illinois) Maker Monsters program where children create and program their own robotic monsters. Without technology, children can code an adult to dance or to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Museum, Library, School/Center-Based, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2b, 2c
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 5: Combine digital and non-digital media throughout storytime. Utilizing e-books, apps such as Book Creator, DoodleCast, and reading e-books created by the children and their families can diversify storytime while exposing children to more ways to read, hear, and create stories. For School/Center-Based Programs, and reoccuring storytime programs such as Prime Time Family Reading Time, ask children and their families to create a book using multiple types of media, and share their book at storytime with other children and families. Want to try something new? Films, videos, and podcasts are also ways to tell read, hear, and create stories.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, School/Center-Based Program, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 6: Scaffold mixed media exploration opportunities by having children **solve a challenge using many types of media.** Provide books, magazines, tablets which contain apps, printed photographs, and field guides for children to find and use information in their exploration. Challenge children to use media to create a boat that floats or a ball that rolls down a ramp. Encourage children to take risks and recognize that failing is part of learning.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2b
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 7: Add **stop motion animation** to playtime. Stop motion animation includes using props such as clay, puppets, or blocks and combining pictures taken of the props to form a movie such as the famous films, *Coraline, Chicken Run,* and *James and The Giant Peach*. Children can learn about stop motion animation while playing with various apps and props and take on roles and responsibilities while playing with other children. Read about Evansville (Ind.) Vanderburgh Public Library's Pixilation Animation Technique program model.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2b, 2c
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 8: **Host a family night** for families to explore together. Include intergenerational activities such as creating family photo albums, books, and oral histories using various types of media. Encourage families to share, play, and learn together. Learn about PBS KIDS' Family Creative Learning program as a model for creating engaging family exploration experiences.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2a, 2c
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 9: Build children's sense of agency by giving them more control over their exploration time. Provide media materials to be used but **allow children to create their own rules.** Encourage children to work together to negotiate throughout the rule-making process. For example, if there are tablets, allow children to discuss the turn-taking and sharing rules. Should each child be allowed to explore one app for five minutes? If two children are exploring with an app together, should they be allowed to explore for 10 minutes?	**AGES:** 7-8 **CONTEXT:** School/Center-Based Program **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2c
ENGAGE AND EXPLORE ACTIVITY 10: Use media engagement to **sustain communication and relationships.** In ongoing programs such as School/Center-Based Programs, use activities such as Flat Stanley and postcards from pen pals to support collaboration and engagement across distance.	**AGES:** 7-8 **CONTEXT:** School/Center-Based Programs **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 2c

Cultural Considerations

Early childhood practitioners must consider cultural aspects of young children's engagement and exploration with media. Ensure that there are diverse media mentors who can model and support media engagement and exploration with young children. Include diverse print and digital collections that reflect culturally pluralistic society. Additionally, ensure caregivers are valued and seen as partners by not only considering the school/library/museum/center-to-home connection, but also thinking about the home-to- school/library/museum/center connection. How do the child's family's values, beliefs, and experiences impact the child's engagement and exploration with media in this context? Cultural aspects such as gender roles and stereotypes impact how families engage and explore with media together. Include families in the implementation of media engagement and exploration through various activities, such as games that are nostalgic and familiar to caregivers.

③ Comprehend

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Definition

Comprehend: to understand media messages and practices and transfer that knowledge appropriately

Supporting Skills

3a. Interpret content and utilize information gathered while using media

3b. Transfer information gathered from one media source or technology tool to another

3c. Understand commonly used visual, editorial, and technology design processes to communicate information (e.g., cuts, zooms, weblinks, etc.)

Tips for Adults

- Remember that processing and understanding media is hard for children and takes cognitive effort and while it may look like children are understanding what they are engaging with, often times they are not fully grasping the content.
- Slow the media use down and explain what is happening in terms of storyline and content but also what is being done with regard to the development of the media (e.g, special effects, etc.) to help the child better understand the content.
- Allow and encourage repetition, letting the child use the same media a few times to help them process and understand the content.
- Talk about the content with the children in the way you would when joint book reading.
- Talk about the ways the media was created and what parts of what they are using/seeing is realistic and what is pretend or fake.
- Explain why you are choosing a certain type of media and when children choose media ask them why they are choosing that type.
- Encourage children to integrate their favorite media characters into their play by providing them books, music, and toys that are related to that character (i.e. MANGA comics, Disney characters, etc.).

Activities

COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 1: Incorporate books into free play and dramatic play spaces. Allow children to use information such as storylines, images, and characters from the books into their play. Provide blocks, costumes, and/or dolls which relate to those books. Ask questions about the book children are reading and allow them time to engage with the book many times in order to notice more details.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3a, 3b

COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 2: Encourage children to reenact parts of a book or a video clip. **Discuss what it means when a book or video clip switch between scenes.** For instance, if a book shows a queen in a room, and then standing outside of a castle, discuss how they could reenact that by having two scenes such as the inside of the castle, and a door that leads to the outside of the castle. In a museum, an exhibit that relates to media such as a popular children's author or story, could have a book or video clip, as well as the life-size scenes. For the youngest children, having an adult connect the life-size scene to the media may serve as the first step to understanding cuts in digital media. Allow time for the children to absorb the concept.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Museum, School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3c
COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 3: **Introduce the idea of "types of media"** by showing children examples of media they may engage with regularly such as a news segment on television, a nature documentary, or a commercial that targets children. Ask children questions to build their awareness of the different types of media such as what each type of media is, where they see it, and who watches or engages with that type of media. In a library or museum setting, provide prompts around the space which encourages these questions and labeling for caregivers and practitioners.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3a
COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 4: Provide a space for children to experience the construction of commonly used visual, editorial, and technology design processes such as cuts and zooms. Have children create a video, and they can **use technology tools to create cuts and zooms in their video.** Show them examples of a video that also has a "behind the scenes" or uncut edit.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3c
COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 5: Divide children into groups, teams, or pairs for a **group research project.** For example, if children are interested in trucks, they can divide into groups and research different aspects of trucks such as truck-related jobs, types of trucks, etc. Children can document their findings using various types of media such as crayons and paper, voice recording, hand-writing, or typing notes using a tablet. Groups can present their findings and bring their findings together to create one culminating understanding of trucks. Lead a conversation discussing the choices they made while creating media.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3a, 3b

COMPREHEND ACTIVITY 6: **Create a place for children to ask questions and document the answer.** This may be an area on the wall titled something similar to "What we've learned and where we learned it from". In a museum setting, create a place for children and families to search for answers to questions the museum may have not addressed. This is an opportunity for children to not only document their findings from multiple sources, but is also an opportunity for children to contribute to the knowledge and content of the library, museum, or school/center.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 3a, 3b

Cultural Considerations

For the action of comprehension, there are many cultural aspects an early childhood practitioner must consider. Much of media content being developed is being created by non-diverse creators and often times does not reflect the lives of diverse populations. This can be seen in the lack of representation of diverse characters as well as the focus on western standards of educational content. As a result, we must recognize that not all children are approaching media with the same background experiences, expectations, and knowledge base, which may influence their comprehension of the content. Adults must make an effort to support their understanding and application of that content in the context of each individual child's life experience.

4 Critically Inquire

Definition

Critically Inquire: to question and analyze media messages

Supporting Skills

4a. Demonstrate knowledge of the inquiry process which includes posing questions, seeking information from a variety of sources, asking for evidence and providing evidence for their own conclusions, interpreting and analyzing information, and documenting

4b. Decipher the elements that make media accurate, appropriate, reliable, fact/fiction, real, and/or pretend

4c. Consider media's point of view and potential bias and critically question the development of media content

4d. Inquire about media's intended audiences and the impact of media on different people

Tips for Adults

- Create an environment of respect and safety to question the representations of media including the questioning of media creators as well as the assumptions, beliefs, norms, and stereotypes portrayed by the media.
- Document and showcase children's process of questioning, seeking, and being curious.
- Model that a reliable answer may not be available.
- While engaging in the inquiry process, remain present to the child. Explain what you are doing when using media.
- Provide a variety of media, including print and digital, for children to use to search for answers.
- Children need a safe place to find answers. Take the time to weigh the pros and cons of limiting children's access to search engines and certain media.
- Know that it's okay to not find the answer and for adults to not have all the answers. The inquiry process is about exploring many possible answers and not about finding the one right answer.
- For specific questions to ask during inquiry, See Chapter 7, Media Literacy in Early Childhood Education: Inquiry-Based Technology Integration in *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years* (Rogow, 2015, p. 97).

Activities

CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 1: Model identifying sources. Use prompts such as "I wonder about… We have a book/device to search for that answer." Model comparing sources for children. Discuss how certain sources such as a search engine on the Internet or a voice assistant such as Apple Siri, Amazon Alexa, or Google Assistant, could be useful while looking up very broad, open-ended questions, while if you're searching for specific information that you know is in a book, the book may be a better choice to search first.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4b

CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 2: **Guide investigation** by facilitating the brainstorm of how and where to find answers. Encourage the use of multiple types of media. Utilize the following questions to guide investigation: What are your observations? Are there multiple answers? What's similar in all these answers? Where can we get more information? What other questions could we ask? Who else has researched this? In museums and libraries, provide caregivers the questions prompts to share with their child.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4a, 4b, 4c
CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 3: Support children's questioning by providing a systematic way to develop questions such as the **Question Formulation Technique.** Provide children with a topic they have expressed interest in and allow them a specific amount of time such as five or ten minutes to ask and record as many questions as possible. Children can work as groups or with family members to ask and record questions. Stimulate thoughtful questions by explaining the differences between open- and closed-ended questions as well as the affordances of the two types of questions. Facilitate discussion about the priorities and complexities of the questions, as well as the possible next steps for using the questions.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4a
CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 4: Showcase children's questioning and seeking by **documenting their questions** throughout the day and designating a time of day, or part of routine when the questions can be revisited and next steps discussed. **Create a "Question Time"** after a meal or snack. In libraries, schools and center-based programs, families can document children's questions at home and submit the questions during the program. Caregivers often become overwhelmed by all the questions children ask so encourage caregivers to capture the questions to show that the questions are valued.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** Library, School/Center-Based, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4a
CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 5: Utilize the media already used with young children. **Discuss what elements make media accurate** and how to check if the information is accurate. With younger children, provide them with cues such as "books in this one section of the bookshelf are fantasy" and for older children, the cue may be about trusting certain well known websites, government resources, or trusted authors, as well as checking multiple sources. Facilitate questioning of media sources by discussing the intended purposes. In museums, this could be set up as a station challenging families to discuss and question if sources are accurate or not.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4b

CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 6: Lead a discussion exploring the **messages of media** children see everyday such as ads visible during neighborhood walks, children's media including commercials, ads in apps, and even on children's apparel. Facilitate discussion using open-ended questions such as: What is this media telling me? How do you know? Should I believe it? Why? Is some piece of information missing? Should it tell me more or less information? Why?	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4b, 4c
CRITICALLY INQUIRE ACTIVITY 7: Throughout the use of children's media, mention the presence of stereotypes and biases. Create a conversation first by providing many accurate representations of people, places, and experiences in media for young children. As children grow, start a conversation about representation accuracy, stereotypes, and biases. Encourage children to **form the habit of questioning representation,** the viewpoint of the creators(s) and the implications. Additionally, ask children how the representations make them feel when media does and doesn't represent them, their family, their experiences, and their friends accurately.	**AGES**: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 4b, 4c

Cultural Considerations

Throughout the inquiry process, there are many cultural implications that early childhood practitioners must consider. The action and habit of questioning authority and media is not universal for all cultures. Families from across the United States, as well as across the world have their own experiences with authority and media. Thus, for many children and families, to encourage the questioning of authority and media, specifically the questioning of media representations and those creating the representations, may be counter to the child and family's experiences and beliefs. Support families while they compare their values and beliefs to those portrayed by various media sources. Support families' awareness of stereotypes portrayed by the media and how they could continue the conversation with their children. Additionally, in some cultures, children are not seen as the expert, but through the inquiry process, it is possible that children may know more than adults about a topic such as boats or dinosaurs. Caregivers may need extra support while navigating the inquiry process if they believe they should always be the expert. It's okay to not know the answer and to see this experience as an opportunity for children to lead the investigation.

⑤ Evaluate

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Definition

Evaluate: to ask "is this media right for me or my task?"

Supporting Skills

5a. Identify and compare types of media sources

5b. Choose media that matches and supports their goal/task

5c. Understand that a media source is reliable for one thing is not necessarily reliable for everything

5d. Reflect on their experiences with media

Tips for Adults

- Prioritize learning about children and family privacy rights. Children's safety and privacy are incredibly important. When caregivers have an understanding of privacy rights and the importance of data privacy to a child's security, they can take steps to inquire about how their child's data is being used and change settings on various games and apps so that data is only used with a caregivers' permission.
- Support evaluation of many types of media including books, magazines, ads intended for children, as well as apps, television programs, and other screen-based media.
- Show caregivers how to use the device prior to expecting them to evaluate the content. Create and provide caregivers documents and information which support their evaluation of media including indicators of high quality and developmental appropriateness, and information about in-app purchases and children and family privacy rights. Additionally, discuss with caregivers what it means to share information about their child and the uncertainty of what and how technology companies use that data.

Activities

EVALUATE ACTIVITY 1: In order for children to be able to evaluate media, they must have exposure to different types of media. Provide many types and types of media for children, but also **identify and compare types of media.** Label "print media", "television", "video game", "music", etc. Notice and discuss how print media and digital media are similar and different. Compare visual-only (print ads) and auditory-only (music) media. In museums, libraries, and school/center-based programs, add labels including symbols and words indicating the type of media on technology devices, shelves or bins.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5a
EVALUATE ACTIVITY 2: **Evaluate books during storytime.** Allow children to choose a book to read and invite adults to discuss why the book choice is or isn't developmentally appropriate. Facilitate discussion about what children like about books and don't enjoy about certain books. What makes a book "just right" for one child and not for another child? What elements in a book support discussion and engagement? You could repeat similar discussions for other media, like apps, games, movies, or short videos.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT**: Library, School/Center-Based, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5b, 5d

EVALUATE ACTIVITY 3: Help children **pinpoint and label what feelings they have** surrounding an experience with a piece of media. Children could take pictures of themselves with different facial expressions to represent emotions such as joy, sad, scared, mad, etc. Practitioners could also provide images of emojis which represent emotions. Children can utilize these images to support the labeling of their feelings during media use. Engage in discussion with your child as to why they may or may not enjoy the media content. Encourage and empower children to form a habit of labeling their feelings throughout viewing, playing, and engaging with media.	**AGES**: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5d
EVALUATE ACTIVITY 4: While engaging in ads intended for children, **facilitate children's understanding of the ad.** Ask questions such as, "What are the main messages? How do we know this? What is real and what is fantasy? Do the people in the ad look like you and your family? Why might that matter? Who is missing in the ad?"	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS**: 5c
EVALUATE ACTIVITY 5: With children, **create a checklist of what is high quality and "just right for me"** digital media. Facilitate discussion about reading level, adult-only words and images, and the pace of the media. Provide guidance for what children should do when the media is not appropriate such as closing the app, talking to an adult, or closing their eyes and covering their ears.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5b, 5d
EVALUATE ACTIVITY 6: **Model comparing sources and possible varying answers of sources.** Challenge children to see how many different answers there are to questions they pose. Analyze how each answer is similar or different and connect this to the reliability of the source. For an example, while learning about planets, an older book may say that Pluto is a planet, while another source may not mention Pluto. Discuss how the age of the source impacts the accuracy of the information and the reliability of the source.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5a, 5b, 5c

EVALUATE ACTIVITY 7: Understanding that the makers of media have perspectives other than the child is an essential part of media literacy. **Support children beginning to understand perspective-taking with a concrete example.** Ask each child to write or voice record one part of the day when everyone (in the program or class) was together, a time of the day that you chose ahead of time. This could be snack, circle time, or storytime. Have each child share what they wrote or recorded. Compare and contrast the stories. There are elements missing and differences in each story but does that mean the story is not true? Discuss this with the children. Each story, each representation has a perspective. The perspective may not see or tell everything. Then be sure to help them connect what they've learned to the media they use.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, School/ Center-Based, Home **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5c
EVALUATE ACTIVITY 8: During any media use around young children, **explain why that particular media was chosen.** For example, explain the benefits of choosing a large book during circle time compared to using a small tablet, or when to use an online search engine compared to the local print newspaper. When children are using media, point out the benefits and challenges of the media they are using. For older children, challenge them to ask and reflect on these decisions themselves.	**AGES**: 5-6, 7-8 **CONTENT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 5b

Cultural Considerations

The ability, knowledge, and the practice of evaluating media is culturally dependent. Each family has their own priorities, values, and beliefs. One family may believe that the media is more knowledgeable than them about child rearing while another family may believe that children should have time to use a certain type of media, even a book, as a distraction. Families and their children will evaluate media based on what they believe the purpose of media is as well as their beliefs about how children should be using, consuming, and producing media. Practitioners must take this into consideration while supporting the evaluation of media by children as well as their families.

6 Create

Definition

Create: to make media with intention

Supporting Skills

6a. See themselves as creators and active influencers of media

6b. Explore, brainstorm, and convey ideas through creation, hacking, remixing, tinkering, and/or destruction

6c. Explain intention of decisions throughout the creation process and reflect on the process after

6d. Connect media content created to the broader world

Tips for Adults

- Create an environment which supports emotional safety, allows space for boredom, as well as provides freedom to create "mess".
- Talk with children about the production choices they make. Use the conversation to help them see that all media are "constructed" (i.e., people make decisions about what to leave out, what to include, and how to include it).
- Include opportunities for collaboration during the creation process.
- Focus on valuing the creation process and effort rather than a final product.
- Foster a connection between the media they create and the media they consume.
- Help children understand how various platforms may restrict creation such as provided avatars that may not have options that represent the wide range of diversity of children/people.
- Encourage children to respect others by asking for permission before taking a photo or video of someone.

Activities

CREATE ACTIVITY 1: Children must have familiarity with various tools before they can use them to create. Allow children physical and mental space and time for **free play and exploration of media creation tools.** For the youngest children, creating media may look like finger painting, while older children may be drawing with a stylus on a tablet to create books or voice recording to create podcasts. At first, provide children with the materials so that they can explore and see themselves as the one deciding what to do with the materials.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6a, 6b

CREATE ACTIVITY 2: Provide children connections to media creators. **Educate children about producers of media,** specifically those who represent the races, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, religions, socioeconomic statuses, languages, etc. of the children you serve. Show children the media produced by that specific person and try to find information in biographies, children's books, and other media sources. Introduce children to the title of the media producers and creators. If available and able, ask the creator to join virtually during a video interview! Children can ask them questions and engage in conversation about media creation.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6a, 6d
CREATE ACTIVITY 3: Provide opportunities to **make creation more relevant** by asking children to draw connections to their experiences at home or with their family. This could include creating a book about a routine with family at home or including voice recording of family members. For younger children, caregivers may help the child voice record talking about a routine or toy from home.	**AGES:** All **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6b
CREATE ACTIVITY 4: Ask children to **create a new character** from a familiar book, television program, app, etc. Children can explore and create what that character would sound like, look like, and act like. Children can use green screen and props to create a scene with their new character. Support reflection by **asking about their decision-making process.** Why did they make the new character an animal, a human, an alien? Is the character friends with the other characters? Why or why not? What does the character's voice (low or high pitched) or their accent or the language they speak tell others about their character?	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** Library, Museum, School/Center-Based Programs **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6b, 6c
CREATE ACTIVITY 5: Support authorship. Encourage children to **include an authorship piece** to their creation. Children can add an author page to their book, or a creator piece to their video, ad, piece of re-mixed music, etc. Use the accurate titles such as "author," "publisher," "illustrator," etc. The ownership/authorship piece could include an explanation of decisions throughout the creation process and artistic direction.	**AGES:** 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6a, 6c

CREATE ACTIVITY 6: **All media is constructed. Children need to be explicitly told this.** They are participants in a larger media ecosystem. Help children articulate and identify the choices they make and reflect upon the process. Ask children questions such as, How does the picture you took help you do that? Are there other pictures you could include that would help you communicate your message?" What do you want to communicate?" Compare the media children create to similar media produced for the mass public. Discuss the similarities and differences in the construction and decisions made by the creators.	**AGES:** 5-6. 7-8 **CONTEXT:** All **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6c, 6d
CREATE ACTIVITY 7: **Assign classroom jobs such as camera-person, videographer, documentarian, and journalist.** Each week, different children can have the opportunity to contribute to the weekly or monthly e-newsletter for caregivers. The camera-person can take photos, the videographer or documentarian can record videos, while the journalist can voice-record the classroom events, schedule, or interview classmates. Include a conversation with children about their media-making choices. Extend learning by discussing and comparing these jobs to related adult careers and their impact on media.	**AGES:** 5-6, 7-8 **CONTEXT:** School/Center-Based **SUPPORTING SKILLS:** 6a, 6d

Cultural Considerations

Practitioners must take into consideration the cultural value of child-created media. Children creating media is not just playing with paint for enjoyment, but is an opportunity for children to view themselves as an agent influencing how others act and feel as a result of something they create. Every piece of media should be valued as an artifact and a product of free speech.

Sustaining the Work of Media Literacy Education in Early Childhood

At the Media Literacy in Early Childhood Practitioners Forum, Jan O'Brien, educator in the Chicago area, said **"We all own a piece of this and we can all make great things happen in the future with media literacy and young children."** Caregivers, practitioners, community and organization leaders, researchers, and policy-influencers all have a stake in impacting young children's media literacy. All who serve young children hold an opportunity to challenge and overcome barriers which stand in the way of implementing media literacy education. These barriers are woven throughout a child's ecosystem, from their immediate setting at a museum or library; to the training and education of practitioners, administrators and leaders; and to systemic barriers of policy, research, and societal values and beliefs about media literacy, child development, and early education. While there are many barriers which impact media literacy education everyday, there are also many existing solutions and opportunities to create needed solutions.

The intention of Sustaining the Work is two-fold. First, to name the current barriers and provide existing solutions including further readings, research, and tips. Second, Sustaining the Work provides "Needed Solutions" which serve as solutions to advocate for by caregivers, practitioners, community and organization leaders, researchers, and policy-influencers.

Current Barriers to Media Literacy in Early Childhood

See pages 35-44.

1. Lack of resources and support for practitioners
2. Lack of resources and support for caregivers
3. Disconnected caregiver-practitioner relationship
4. Practitioners not trained or not confident in their media literacy practice
5. Lack of support for administration and leadership
6. Lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement
7. Lack of policies
8. Insufficient funding
9. Lack of research
10. Low value of media literacy, child development, and early education

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Current Barrier **1** Lack of resources and support for practitioners

Practitioners cannot implement media literacy education without access to high quality resources, including frameworks, curriculum, lesson plans, and activities to support them getting started, as well as concrete examples such as how-to videos to model teaching media literacy. Additionally, practitioners need support from colleagues, administration and leadership, as well as from those who are implementing media literacy in different settings.

There are many existing readings, curricula, lesson plans, activities and quick tip sheets to support the implementation of media literacy for practitioners serving children 8 years old and older. Resources for older children often don't meet the developmental needs of young children, so practitioners need resources which are developmentally appropriate for the children they serve. Needed solutions include a physical place, either virtually or in person, where practitioners can see someone else model these practices, as well as a strengthening of support from administration and leadership and colleagues, as well as from those who are implementing media literacy in other settings.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *A Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy:* by Cyndy Scheibe and Faith Rogow • *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for teaching and learning,* edited by Chip Donohue **Standards and policy statements** • NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center joint position statement, *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* • ISTE Student Standards for Digital Citizenship **Curricula, lesson plans, and activities** • Teaching Tolerance (Starts at Kindergarten) • Teaching for Change (Starts at Pre-K) **Quick guides and tip sheets** • Media Literacy is Early Childhood Tips for Practitioners by TEC Center (in Appendix) • *Evaluating Apps and New Media for Young Children: A Rubric,* created by Claudia Haines • *KIDMAP DIG Diversity and Inclusion Checklist,* developed by Claudia Haines and KIDMAP	**A place to see and practice** • A physical space in person for practitioners to model how to implement media literacy, as well as opportunities to recreate the modeled practices • A catalogue of short webinars discussing practice • A catalogue of videos modeling media literacy practices with young children **Support from others** • Support from colleagues, administrators and leadership with open communication • Collaboration with cross-setting practitioners

Current Barrier ❷ Lack of resources and support for caregivers

In order for caregivers to continue media literacy education at home and throughout a child's life, caregivers need a wealth of resources and support. Unlike other subjects taught today, most caregivers did not grow up learning about media literacy, especially digital media literacy. For children to be media literate, their caregivers also need to practice media literacy and that cannot happen without sufficient resources and support.

In order to overcome this barrier, quick guides and tip sheets must be created so caregivers can learn about media literacy and how to support their children's media literacy. In addition to the quick guides and tip sheets, caregivers must have opportunities to become and grow as a media mentor.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *Building Healthy Relationships with Media: A Parent's Guide to Media Literacy* by NAMLE • NAEYC.org Play resources which includes tips on supporting young children's play **Quick guides and tip sheets** • Media Literacy in Early Childhood Tip Sheet for Caregivers by TEC Center (in Appendix) • *Evaluating Apps and New Media for Young Children: A Rubric,* created by Claudia Haines • *KIDMAP DIG Diversity and Inclusion Checklist,* developed by Claudia Haines and KIDMAP at joinkidmap.org/digchecklist	**Quick guides and tip sheets** • Quick guides and tips sheets printed as well as available online which includes tips, activities, open-ended prompts and language for caregivers to use **Opportunities to become a media mentor** • A series of media literacy 101 videos or short webinars intended for caregivers • An increase in programs, similar to Tech Goes Home, which supports caregivers' identity as a strong media mentor • Increase opportunities for caregivers to be included in creating media

Current Barrier ③ Disconnected caregiver-practitioner relationship

Practitioners and caregivers must work together to ensure media literacy is not only being implemented in the "educational" setting such as in schools, museums, libraries, child care centers, etc., but is also being implemented at home. Practitioners and caregivers both play important roles in the child's development and learning so they must work together, collaboratively, valuing each other's experiences and knowledge, in order to support the child fully.

There are many communication opportunities for practitioners and caregivers. However, the key to a connected and attuned relationship is respect and value for the other's culture, beliefs, experience, knowledge, and availability, among others. Both practitioners and caregivers need support and resources to create opportunities for best-fit communication.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Communication opportunities • Tip: Practitioners, include media literacy into existing "getting to know you" materials such as a questionnaire or family handbook. • Practitioners, host a caregiver night to talk about various media types, including digital media.	**Best-fit communication opportunities** • Culturally responsive education for practitioners and caregivers • A quick guide or tip sheet explaining how to find the best method of communication which supports availability of both parties and values both parties' experience and knowledge

Current Barrier ④ Practitioners not trained or not confident in their media literacy practice

Most practitioners who are trained to work with young children have never formally been trained for media literacy education and may not feel confident as a media mentor. Practitioners need support during pre-service and in-service professional development, as well as resources they could use in the moment in order to build their identity as a strong media mentor for young children.

There are a minimal number of professional development programs focused on media literacy. The programs that do exist either focus on general technology implementation, media literacy in a specific setting such as libraries or in K-12 education at school, or do not focus on media literacy for children younger than 8 years old. Practitioners need an increase in professional development opportunities.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Professional development programs • TEC Center's professional development program, TEC Mentors • Peer Coaching Media Mentorship Toolkit, led in development by Conni Strittmatter, formerly of Harford County Public Library in Maryland • Media Literacy Educator Certification by KQED **Readings** • *Becoming a Media Mentor: A guide for working with children and families,* by Claudia Haines, Cen Campbell, and ALSC • *Media Education: Make It Happen!* by Media Smarts	**Increase professional development opportunities** • Include media literacy education in pre-service education • Scale up existing in-service programs using implementation science to reach more practitioners • Increase the amount of programs which focus on informal learning and practitioners serving children ages 0-8 • Increase the amount of programs which focus on practitioners creating their identity as strong media mentor • Feature media literacy sessions, keynotes, or workshops at early childhood conferences

Current Barrier ⑤ Lack of support for administration and leadership

Highly trained practitioners are only as strong as the administration and leadership that support them. Administration and leadership are often overlooked as an integral part of media literacy efforts. However, without their support, the implementation of media literacy practices is incredibly challenging.

An increase of support for administration and leadership is a step towards sustaining the work of media literacy in early childhood. Administration and leadership must value media literacy education and understand their role in sustaining these efforts. They must have a plethora of readings and learning opportunities to value and advocate for media literacy education.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for teaching and learning,* edited by Chip Donohue • *Digital Play for Global Citizens: A guide from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop* by Jordan Shapiro • *Becoming a Media Mentor: A guide for working with children and families,* by Claudia Haines, Cen Campbell, and ALSC	**Quick guides and tip sheets** • Administration and leadership guide to media literacy • Administration and leadership guide and tips to advocate for media literacy education **Professional development opportunities** • Professional development program for administration and leadership • Opportunities to collaborate with practitioners, other administrators, and leaders

Current Barrier ⑥ Lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement

While there are many existing resources and support for practitioners, caregivers, administration and leadership, there is a lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement. There is a lack of representation in all areas of the media literacy movement, which affects who ultimately has access to the resources and support and which cultures and experiences are represented in the making of resources and support.

The media literacy movement, including policy-influencers, researchers, administration and leadership, practitioners and caregivers who advocate for media literacy education in early childhood, is experiencing a lack of inclusivity and reach. To challenge and overcome this barrier, there must be a systemic change in policy, research, and practice to increase the inclusivity and reach of the movement.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize resources from entities which prioritize inclusivity and equity • Teaching Tolerance (Starts at Kindergarten) • Teaching for Change (Starts at Pre-K) **Become involved with leading media literacy organizations** • NAMLE	**Develop professional development for practitioners who:** • Teach in formal and informal education settings • Teach in rural, suburban, and urban settings • Serve racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, linguistically diverse populations • Serve children with special needs and developmental delays **At events such as conferences, symposia, forums, etc.:** • Event hosts should ensure speakers and invitees are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, experience, beliefs, and abilities

Current Barrier **7** Lack of policies

While there have been decades of valuing print media literacy in American education, governing bodies have been slow to acknowledge the impact and prevalence of digital media in a young child's life and the necessity of media literacy education. Today, there are many policies dictating what children should be learning in early childhood. These policies reflect what society believes to be important to a foundation of academic achievement and development. Currently, many policies including rating and assessment systems limit digital media use by placing restrictions on technology in early child care and education settings. Such policies confuse educators as they navigate an understanding of the importance to teach healthy and appropriate digital media use within a physical space where technology and digital media use is restricted.

Policies focusing on media literacy would be a reflection of the necessity of media literacy education in early childhood. In order to establish and sustain media literacy efforts, there must be changes to existing policies for informal and formal education. Utilizing other countries' media literacy policies and existing resources to inform policymakers is the existing solution. However, in order to overcome the barrier to a lack of policies focused on media literacy, existing policies must be updated and/or new policies must be created.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • Media Literacy Now's Legislative Action Toolkit, Model Bill, and more resources • *Creating Access to Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy Education* by Common Sense Kids Action, Media Literacy Now, NAMLE, and SETDA • *Mapping Digital Literacy Policy and Practice in the Canadan Education Landscape*, by Michael Hoechsmann and Helen Dewaard • *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe: Cross-country comparisons*, edited by Divina Frau-Meigs, Irma Velez, and Julieta Flores Michel **Inform elected officials about media literacy** • Call US representatives at 202-225-3121 and US senators at 202-224-3121 • Become involved in local, state, and federal government	**Updating existing policies** • Update rating and assessment systems such as the Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-3, FCCERS-3, and ITERS-3), which impact and/or limit digital media use • Update practitioner licensing and certification requirements to include media literacy education **Create new policies** • Create a policy or standard requiring media literacy education in education and child care settings, as well as integration throughout the entire grade span • Address the limited capacity of staff including time working, compensation, and benefits

Current Barrier **8** Insufficient funding

There is insufficient funding for caregivers and practitioners to implement media literacy with young children daily. Additionally, there is a lack of funding to increase administration and leadership level changes. The efforts of implementing media literacy education in early childhood relies on the funding for research, training, and educational materials.

The barrier is a lack of funding for media literacy education for young children. Current funding streams must be altered to be more inclusive of media literacy as a related subject of literacy, STEM, civic education, social justice, art, and media and journalism, to name a few. Expanding these current funding streams to include media literacy would open opportunities up to fund practitioner and caregiver education, provide learning materials for libraries, child care centers, and museums, as well as fund research of media literacy education.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize free, accessible resources which are included in Existing Solutions for Barriers 1 through 5 **Utilize the sources which fund media literacy education** • MacArthur Foundation • McCormick Foundation • The Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation • Annenberg Foundation • Technology developers and media creators such as Google Education, Nickelodeon, Facebook, Twitter	**Adjust current funding streams from foundations, government, etc. which support** • Literacy • Technology • STEM • Civics and Social Studies • Media and Journalism to include media literacy education into description of these specific subject-focused grants because media literacy impacts these areas of education.

Current Barrier (9) Lack of research

A lack of research often stalls implementation of new practices and policy change. Practitioners and caregivers want research showing why media literacy is important, which teaching strategies are most effective, and how media literacy education impacts a child's development and academic achievements. Leaders, administrators and policymakers want research showing effective and scalable media literacy education. There is a lack of research on media literacy, especially digital media literacy for children ages birth through 8.

In order to overcome this barrier, there must be more research studies focused on media literacy of young children from birth through age 8. There must be an expansion of the body of research to shed light on many less-understood areas of media literacy for young children.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize the current body of research which includes many literature reviews • *The Challenges of Assessing Media Literacy Education* by Evelien Schilder, Barbara Lockee, and D. Patrick Saxon (2016) • *What a Difference Ten Years can Make: Research Possibilities for the Future of Media Literacy Education* by Renee Hobbs (2011) • Also see relevant articles in NAMLE's *Journal of Media Literacy Education*	**Expand the body of research to understand the following areas of media literacy** • Long term effects of media literacy education • Effective implementation of media literacy education in formal and informal education settings • Developmentally appropriate media literacy topics and practices with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers • Effective and scalable professional development programs for early childhood practitioners, leaders, and administrators

Current Barrier ⑩ Low value of media literacy, child development, and early education

The low value of media literacy, child development, and early education is a barrier for Barriers 1 through 9. Without high value placed on media literacy, child development, and early education, practitioners, caregivers, leadership and administrators, as well as policymakers and researchers, will not prioritize advancing media literacy efforts for young children.

Information regarding the importance of these areas must be spread utilizing media and social networks. Fortunately, in recent years there has been noticeable mass media attention on the implications of early childhood experiences, which includes an increased exposure to digital, interactive, and mobile media devices. Media literacy practitioners and leaders can utilize current movements and trends by incorporating media literacy into conversations such as early childhood education, appropriate technology use, and STEM. However, an increase of focus on media literacy in mass media, social media, and public education may increase the public's understanding of the importance of media literacy in early childhood.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize current movements and trends by incorporating media literacy into the following topics • Early childhood education • Appropriate technology use in early childhood • STEM implementation in libraries, museums, and other early childhood education settings • Civic engagement and digital citizenship • Social emotional learning	**Increase public's understanding of importance** • Mass media tell a more nuanced narrative of digital media consumption • Early education includes home-based providers, practitioners in museums, libraries, hospitals, and community-based organizations • Social media campaigns share media literacy strategies • Human development, specifically, child development is incorporated into public education for grades K-12, including learning theories

Conclusion

In order to elevate and sustain media literacy education for young children, support systems and resources must be developed, questions must be researched, and policies must change to reflect a prioritization of media literacy, child development, and early education. Fortunately, these efforts have already begun, particularly to support older youth. There is a vast amount of resources and advocates which have worked to lay the foundation of media literacy efforts today. At both the National Leadership Forum and the National Practitioners Forum media literacy expert, Faith Rogow, asked leaders and practitioners, **"Is the goal to help children become media literate or is the goal to help children become literate in a digital and media-rich world?"** At both forums, the overwhelming reply was "to help children become literate in a digital and media-rich world," with an understanding that to meet today's challenges, "literate" means much more than reading and writing printed words.

This goal will guide leaders and practitioners to forge ahead and sustain media literacy education for young children so they—and we—can lead the way to a literate society in a digital and media-rich world.

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Additional Resources

Organizations

Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute

National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)

Association of Children's Museums (ACM)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

Center for Media Literacy (CML)

Project Look Sharp

MediaSmarts

Common Sense Media

Teaching Tolerance

Local libraries and children's museums

PBS KIDS

Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media

Readings + more

"Media Literacy in Early Childhood: A Critical Conversation" by The Technology in Early Childhood Center at Erikson Institute at TECcenter.erikson.edu/publications/medialitecreport/

Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens by Lisa Guernsey and Michael H. Levine

Literacy Playshop: New Literacies, Popular Media, and Play in the Early Childhood Classroom by Karen E. Wohlwend

"Digital Play for Global Citizens" by Jordan Shapiro at joanganzcooneycenter.org/publication/digital-play-for-global-citizens/

ISTE Standards for Students and ISTE Standards for Educators at ISTE.org

NAMLE Parent Guide at NAMLE.net/a-parents-guide/

Digital Literacy Framework at MediaSmarts.ca

Teach and Transform at teachandtransform.org

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Appendix 1

Media Literacy in Early Childhood

Tips for Practitioners

1. Always be a lifelong learner

2. Collaborate with colleagues and others who are implementing media literacy

3. Don't be afraid to experiment and give yourself permission to fail and try again

4. Know that it is impossible to master every new media technology
(and that you don't need to in order to be a great media literacy practitioner)

5. Plan, implement, revisit

6. Know that stuff will go wrong

7. Utilize open-ended questions and follow the child's lead

8. Value caregivers

9. Support the needs of all children

10. Learn with your students

Appendix 2

Media Literacy in Early Childhood
Tips for Caregivers

1. Always be a lifelong learner

2. Acknowledge and value your own strengths, experiences, and knowledge

3. Don't be afraid to experiment and give yourself permission to fail and try again

4. Know that it is impossible to master every new media technology
   (and that you don't need to in order to be a great caregiver)

5. Plan, implement, revisit

6. Know that stuff will go wrong

7. Utilize open-ended questions and follow the child's lead

8. Value practitioners

9. Support the strengths and needs of your child

10. Be a co-learner with your child

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To view the full report online, visit:

teccenter.erikson.edu/publications/media-literacy-report

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