

SNAPSHOT 2024: **The State of Media Literacy Education in the U.S.**

NAMLE

National
Association
for Media
Literacy
Education

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the [National Association for Media Literacy Education](#) (NAMLE) launched our inaugural State of Media Literacy Education survey. That survey was conceptualized as a way to better understand who in the United States was teaching media literacy, how they were teaching it, the resources they were using, and what barriers they faced. The 2018 survey was distributed through NAMLE’s network, and 331 people responded. Their responses informed our 2019 publication, “[Media Literacy Snapshot](#)” (Culver & Redmond, 2019), which identified these six recommendations to improve media literacy education:

2019 SNAPSHOT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Expand training and professional development opportunities for media literacy instruction, particularly teacher training for both pre-service and inservice teachers in Colleges of Education, as well as training for teacher education faculty and others coordinating programs, including professional development, after school or out-of-school programs.
- 2** Outreach to diverse populations, specifically communities of color, to support their participation, scholarship, teaching or new program development.
- 3** Support inquiry into practice, such as small scale qualitative case studies and larger, comprehensive ethnographic examinations, in order to understand structures that invite or prevent media literacy practice, and develop a clearer picture of how practices are enacted and evaluated to life in classrooms and other environments.
- 4** Establish an online, central repository for the collection, curation, and aggregation of resources, including not only content materials, but also thoughtful and complete course designs and lessons for a variety of ages, grades, and contexts that include clear learning objectives, aligned assessments, and appropriate, relevant pedagogies.
- 5** Disseminate an annual survey to gauge changes, improvements, and challenges in research, practice, and assessment.
- 6** Advocate for public understanding, such as a visibility campaign, with goals to clarify the purpose and urgency of media literacy.

In response to these recommendations and since 2019, the following NAMLE initiatives and organizational changes emerged:

National Media Literacy Alliance

Launched in 2020, the [Alliance](#) is a NAMLE-convened network of leading teacher membership associations united in an effort to advance media literacy education as a necessary element of a complete 21st-century education in America. The Alliance comprises the following organizations:

- American Association of School Librarians
- International Society for Technology in Education
- Journalism Education Association
- National Association for Education of Young Children
- National Council for the Social Studies
- National Council of Teachers of English
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- National Science Teaching Association
- National Writing Project
- PBS Education
- Young Adult Library Services Association
- National Media Arts Education Initiative (Advising organization)

Annual Virtual Conference

To better serve educators and provide low-cost, inclusive professional development, NAMLE shifted our biennial [conference](#) to an annual virtual conference in 2021.

Updated Core Principles of Media Literacy Education

In 2022, NAMLE began a year-long revision process of our foundational document, the [Core Principles of Media Literacy Education](#). The updated document was published in May of 2023.

Research Project

In 2020, NAMLE supported the first phase of an international research project (with teams in the United States and Australia) designed to identify common practices in media literacy education and map them across different educational settings. In 2022, NAMLE supported the U.S. team with a small phase two grant to conduct focus groups around their findings as part of the [Mapping Impactful Media Literacy Practices](#) research project.

NAMLE Rebranding and Stop Media Monsters Campaign

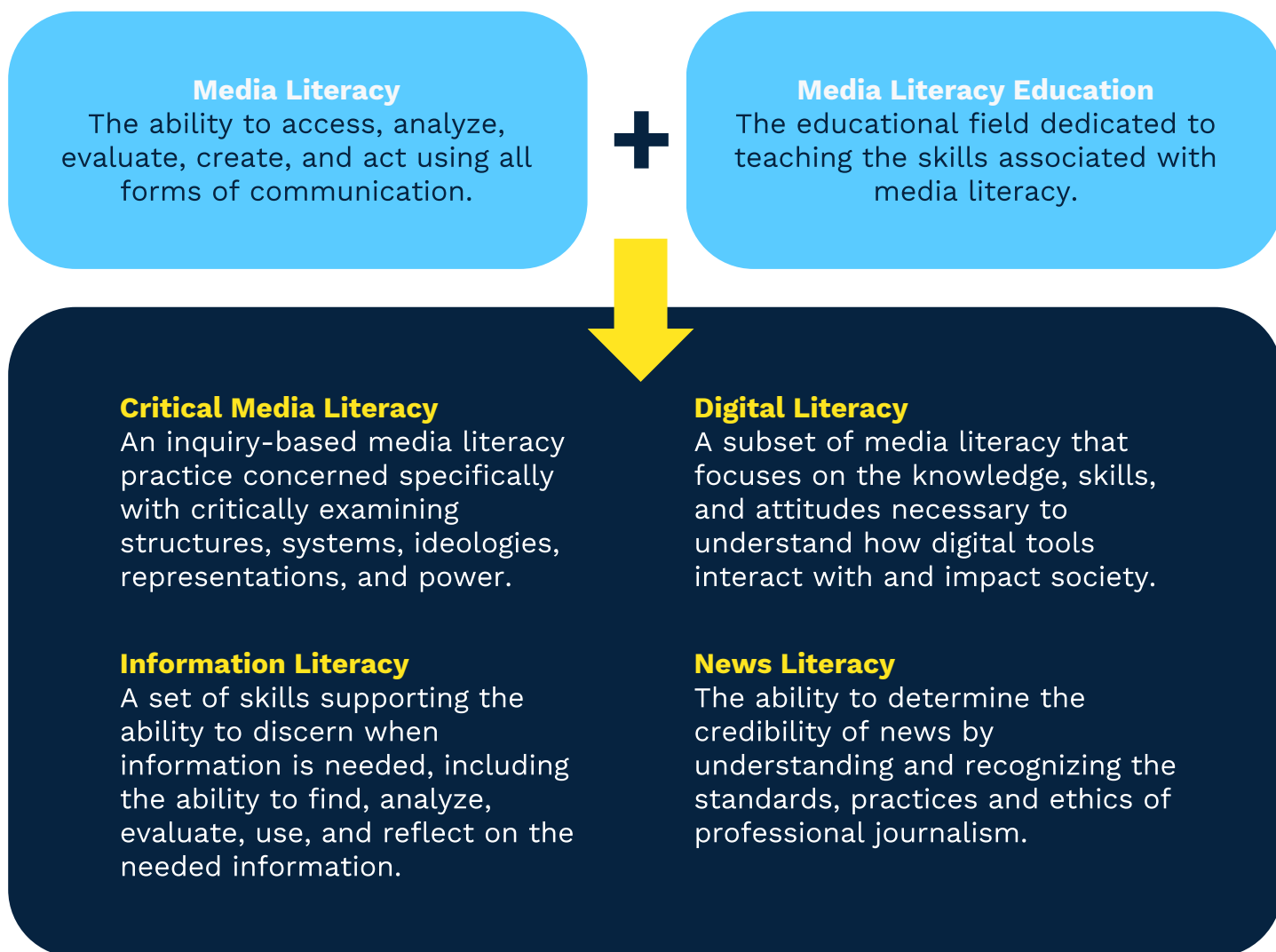
To better support public understanding of media literacy education, NAMLE engaged in an organizational rebranding and developed a [publicity campaign](#) around minimizing online and media habits that are not media literate.

Five years after our original survey, NAMLE launched our 2023 State of Media Literacy Education survey with the hope of assessing developments in media literacy education since 2018, specifically from the perspectives of media literacy educators. The 2023 survey built upon earlier findings by asking educators a set of similar questions (see Appendix for full survey questionnaire). By comparing the data from our original survey to data collected in 2023, and through deep contextual understanding of recent developments in research and policy, education, and public understanding of media literacy, we can begin to better understand:

- What has changed in United States' media literacy education?
- What has improved?
- What has become more challenging?
- Where do we go from here?

Defining Media Literacy & Media Literacy Education

This report explores how media literacy education is being implemented and the current challenges to making media literacy education highly valued and widely practiced in the United States. Building consensus about what media literacy education is and what it should entail is a challenge discussed later in the report (see “Recommendations,” page 29), but to establish a common understanding, NAMLE offers these definitions:



NAMLE understands media literacy to be an umbrella concept that necessarily includes these and other vital contemporary literacies because accessing and understanding media messages is deeply entwined with culture, technological experiences, the information ecosystem, and economic structures.

Core Principles of Media Literacy Education

We frame best practices of media literacy education through our [Core Principles of Media Literacy Education](#) — guideposts that describe what media literacy education does and how it is enacted in the classroom.

Media literacy education: **NAMELE**

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

About This Snapshot

NAMLE's Snapshot 2024: Media Literacy Education in the United States measures media literacy content, standards, and perceptions from a variety of educators.

In 2019, we framed the findings of our first survey as a “snapshot”—an informed perspective on media literacy education that was intended to provide context and update understanding in the field. Just as in 2019, this report is also a snapshot of a moment in time, a window into the world of media literacy, and is not a representative research study. We know that progress in media literacy education is happening in places and through spaces in addition to those captured by this survey.

The survey window was open from July 2023 through September 2023. Invitations to complete the survey were distributed through NAMLE's membership database, organizational newsletters, and through social media. NAMLE also utilized the teacher organizations in the National Media Literacy Alliance to publicize the survey. The survey comprised 22 questions, which included a mix of yes/no, multiple choice, rank answer, select all that apply, and open-ended response. A total of 310 respondents completed the survey.

Survey At A Glance

- **Survey was open July - September, 2023**
- **22 questions**
- **310 Respondents**

The survey sample is nationally distributed, representing participating members of the media literacy community located throughout the United States.

Since our initial 2019 Snapshot, much has changed in the cultural, political, educational, media, and technological landscapes. Collectively, we experienced the onset of an ongoing global pandemic that accelerated the use of digital technologies in remote education but also revealed digital divides across communities. We weathered a presidential election framed through false narratives and amplified by networked technologies, including bots, trolls, and bad-faith actors. We have seen the continuing decline of journalism and local news along with a rise in news deserts. The education system in the United States is experiencing the highest teacher turnover in recent history (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023). These realities shape not only our survey findings, but undoubtedly the experiences of media literacy educators everywhere.

To put our survey findings in a more specific context, we will first synthesize some recent trends in research and policy, education, and public understanding of the field.

MEDIA LITERACY IN CONTEXT

Research & Policy

The need for media literacy education has been increasingly recognized as an essential life skill and necessary curricular component in modern classrooms. Researchers continue to explore the impacts of youth social media use, and emerging studies highlight potential negative and positive impacts of social media while also making the case for media literacy education. A 2019 study showed teens who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media were more than twice as likely to report adverse mental health issues, such as symptoms of anxiety or depression (Riehm et al., 2019).

The need for media literacy education has been increasingly recognized as an essential life skill and necessary curricular component in modern classrooms.

In light of ongoing concerns, a 2023 U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory emphasized the increased need to “support the development, implementation, and evaluation of digital and media literacy curricula in schools and within academic standards” (2023, p. 15).

Similarly in 2023, the Biden-Harris administration issued a mandate to the Department of Education to provide “resources, model policies and voluntary best practices for school districts” to teach developmentally-appropriate digital literacy and wellness skills for preschool through 12th grade. This attention to the connections between media literacy and other developmental priorities, including social and emotional wellness, reflects students’ own desires to better understand media and their world (Belic, 2020).

Themes in Research & Policy



Impacts of youth social media use



Connections between media use and social-emotional wellness



Smartphone usage in classrooms



Educational technology



Legislative efforts to pass state policy mandates for media literacy education

Educators and technology experts recognize the potential for using media tools and products purposefully in the classroom, yet educators report growing concern for how to inculcate responsible technology use, including smartphones, at school.

A 2023 UNESCO global report stated that “[s]ystematic reviews of the past two decades find a small to medium positive effect of education technology on learning outcomes,” reflecting what educators are anecdotally experiencing—that media technologies in the

Research & Policy (Continued)

classroom can positively impact learning. The report also emphasized that governments should provide more clear support for education institutions to update and revise curriculum in ways that include research-based pedagogy around digital tools in the classroom. More pointedly, the report stated that policymakers and educators should remember that technologies' suitability and value for the classroom must be established through a "human-centered vision of education" (p. 23).

instruction to limited teacher professional development to mandates for creating a coordinator position or curriculum model.

State legislation still varies, and the language used across such policies often uses the terms media literacy, digital literacy, news literacy, and information literacy interchangeably. Policies also vary regarding whether media literacy education will happen across curriculum or through stand-alone

According to Media Literacy Now, 18 states as of 2023 include media literacy language in policy. Even in states with media literacy education policy, proper resources and up-to-date curriculum remains lacking.

Assessing media literacy education is a challenge, but collaborative efforts—such as those between the Rhode Island-based Media Education Lab, Media Literacy Now, and a school district in Massachusetts—exemplify how researchers and educators can work together. Using a Media Literacy Implementation Index developed by Renee Hobbs, the research team was able to estimate to what extent students were exposed to media literacy education instructional practices (Media Education Lab, 2023).

Policy and legislative efforts to mandate media literacy in state curriculum have also expanded. According to Media Literacy Now, 18 states as of 2023 include media literacy language in policy, ranging from required

units. As Bulger et al., (2023) note, "[m]edia literacy is often invoked as a quick fix without considering the layers of engagement occurring between people and media," layers that require intentional curriculum development and scaffolding across the life of a learner, not just through specific grades or classes.

Even in states with media literacy education policy, support for teachers, proper resources and up-to-date curriculum remains lacking. In short, Garcia et al. (2021) found in a review of media literacy legislation across the United States that "media literacy policy remains the exception, rather than the norm, in states across the country. Existing policy included few resources to support existing media literacy curriculum and programs."

Education

National teacher organizations have visibly prioritized media literacy since 2019. In 2022, both the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) published updated statements on the need for media literacy education. NCTE’s statement identified the need for increased teacher professional development in media education, noting that “[b]ecause English teachers have a professional responsibility to prepare students for work, life, and citizenship, media education must be an essential component of the professional identity of teachers” (National Council for Teachers of English, 2022). The statement called for increased and hands-on education for both pre-service and experienced teachers.

Likewise, NCSS called for better teacher preparation for media literacy education, noting that “[r]evolutionary changes in human communications necessitate a shift in our pedagogical orientation from a fixation on teaching and assessing facts to a focus on educating students to habitually analyze and evaluate information, including asking essential questions, weighing competing claims, assessing credibility, and reflecting on one’s own reasoning and values to determine who gains and who loses through the promotion of particular narratives” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2022).

While a national set of media literacy standards has yet to be developed, various new frameworks point to standards that can easily be linked to existing subject-area learning standards across grades. Often called “crosswalks,” these frameworks connect media literacy learning outcomes to education standards that districts or states have already adopted. Additionally, various new discipline-specific frameworks (such as digital

Themes in Education

-  **Increased advocacy for media literacy education from teacher education organizations**
-  **Frameworks to connect media literacy education outcomes to existing education standards**
-  **Emphasis on preK-6 media literacy education**
-  **Curriculum censorship and book bans**
-  **Politicization of education, particularly related to historical and contemporary discussions of racism**

citizenship or social justice frameworks) include elements of media literacy (see U.S. Department of Education, 2024; ISTE, 2018). Because “no single set of standards covers everything that being media literate requires” (Rogow, 2023, p. 5), work in some states, such as New York, is aimed at helping educators and school leaders identify the meaningful habits, skills, and knowledge acquired through media literacy education.

Education (Continued)

Media literacy advocates are increasingly calling for more attention to incorporating media literacy in grades preK-6, with attention to developmentally appropriate materials and educator training. In 2020, the Erikson Institute’s “Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report” (for which NAMLE was a partner) identified the need for community-wide emphasis on media literacy for children under 8 years of age, noting that “[e]arly education includes home-based providers, practitioners in museums, libraries, hospitals, and community-based organizations.” Still, as more parents and caregivers identify the need to facilitate media literacy education in the home, parents and senior citizens remain an overlooked and underserved, yet vital, population (Heywood & Sembiante, 2023).

The critical inquiry required to understand media experiences necessitates learning environments in which difficult conversations (appropriate for the age and stage of the learner) are not taboo.

A distinct challenge since the 2019 Snapshot is the increasing politicization of education. Quality media literacy education “emphasizes critical inquiry about media industries’ roles in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability” (NAMLE, 2023). This emphasis on critical evaluation of systems and messages requires learners to think about issues such as media representation of gender and race, or

censorship of content and ideas, to name a few. In some communities, these educational moments are framed as attempts to promote ideologies when in fact, quality media literacy education is “a process of evidence-based, open-ended exploration” that does not reveal single correct or predetermined answers (NAMLE, 2023).

According to the National Education Association, “[t]he peddling of misinformation has led to a sharp increase in threats aimed at educators and school board officials, many of whom have been intimidated and threatened” (Graham, 2021). As a result of many of these coordinated efforts, more than 36 states in 2021 had adopted or introduced legislation to restrict teaching about race and racism (Stout & Wilburn, 2021).

Media literacy education is not partisan, and the critical inquiry required to understand media experiences necessitates learning environments in which difficult conversations (appropriate for the age and stage of the learner) are not taboo. The weaponization of schools, curriculum and school boards has made these conversations all but impossible in some communities where there are nationally-financed efforts to supplant school boards with party-aligned members, audit curriculum, ban books, and dismantle equity efforts that are seen as “anti-white” (Kingkade et al., 2021).

In understanding the state of media literacy education—which asks learners to think deeply and critically about the messages they receive, whether contemporary or historical, and the systems and institutions which produce those messages—the cumulative impact of these pressures cannot be ignored.

Public Understanding

In our 2019 snapshot, NAMLE recommended increased advocacy for public understanding of media literacy, including deepened awareness of what the term means, how it should be taught, and meaningful outcomes of media literacy education. We noted then that “media literacy education is a hybrid field with roots in many areas, including but not limited to: semiotics, film studies, cultural studies, educational technology, instructional technology, information literacy, and many more” (Culver & Redmond, 2019).

Four years later, the field still lacks shared definitions and terminology. However, the increase in advocacy for media literacy education and policy has revealed a shared sense of purpose that reflects [NAMLE’s goals](#) for media literacy education: 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.

Finding common ground on best practices for media literacy education remains a work in progress, and the breadth and depth of content, skills, and learning outcomes that exemplify media literacy education mean not all media literacy moments are created equal. Some media literacy efforts emphasize identifying rhetorical strategies in advertisements or looking for author bias in news stories, while others emphasize monitoring individual media consumption or engagement. Media literacy education must include these skills and more. “The wide-ranging interpretations of [media literacy] competencies pose challenges in aggregating research on the effectiveness of [media literacy] educational interventions” (Huget, 2019), so continued efforts to develop shared understanding of media literacy education will remain vital.

Themes in Public Understanding



Finding common ground on what media literacy education looks like



Link media literacy to other contemporary literacies



Emphasis on mis- and disinformation



Civic outcomes of media literacy education

News media coverage of emerging and existing state media literacy requirements—and how those requirements are framed—can also act as a tool for both refining and diluting public understanding of media literacy education. NAMLE has often observed a disconnect in how these requirements are described when compared to the actual legislative language, representing a need for advocates to support more comprehensive journalistic understanding of media literacy education. For example, New Jersey’s 2023 bill to support students’ critical thinking and digital technology skills was described as both a “media literacy” and an “information literacy” bill in numerous journalistic headlines (see Burney, 2023; Sitrin, 2023), even when the language of the bill directs the state board of education specifically to “adopt New Jersey Student Learning Standards in information literacy” (New Jersey S588, 2023). In reality,

Public Understanding (Continued)

the requirements of the bill indeed directly support aspects of both media and information literacy education, including “the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information” and “the ethical production of information” (New Jersey S588), but using the terms interchangeably could result in confusion about what kind of requirements states are actually adopting and how these literacies are both unique and complementary.

A key outcome of media literacy education is being able to distinguish accurate information from other messages.

Similarly, news media have also described a recently signed bill in California as a “requirement” (see Gonzalez-Britt, 2023; Najib, 2023) to teach media literacy. In actuality, the language of the bill provides for uncertainty regarding how media literacy education will be implemented in California schools. Specifically, the bill “would require the Instructional Quality Commission to consider incorporating the Model Library Standards into the next revision of the English Language Arts” and “to also consider incorporating media literacy content at each grade level” (“An Act,” 2023). The bill would also “require the commission to consider incorporating media literacy content into the mathematics, science, and history-social science curriculum frameworks when those frameworks are next revised.” In short, the bill asks for curriculum revisions “to consider” adding media literacy content, not “to require.” Without additional clarification and followup, exactly how these changes are considered and what ultimately results could leave communities in confusion about what changes are happening in schools

regarding media literacy education.

In the United States, rising interest in media literacy since 2019 has focused largely on the impacts of mis- and disinformation. A key outcome of media literacy education includes being able to distinguish accurate information from other types of messages. In the wake of a 2020 presidential election where disinformation played a central role, a 2022 Pearson Institute/AP-NORC poll found that 91% of Americans were concerned with the spread of inaccurate information (The Associated Press & NORC, 2022). Almost three-quarters of those who responded to that poll felt misinformation could fuel extreme political views and even hate crimes.

A 2021 RAND report identified media technologies’ part in furthering truth decay —“the diminishing role that facts, data, and analysis play in our political and civic discourse”—and identified media literacy as a key mitigator for such decay. The report offered media literacy learning standards that support curbing truth decay, suggesting learners should “[u]nderstand how modern information sources and tools can limit available facts and perspectives” so they can “[t]ake action rooted in evidence” (RAND, 2021, p. 4).

That major research organizations and nonprofits are frequently identifying the role of media literacy in civic processes is a great step forward. Focusing on civic-oriented outcomes of media literacy has vital implications for our democracy, but effective media literacy education goes beyond sorting fact from fiction. Working to increase public understanding of the wide array of skills and dispositions cultivated through media literacy education is an ongoing challenge.

SNAPSHOT 2024: **Selected Findings**

Who Took The Survey

Of the 310 respondents to our 2023 survey, most were female (72%) and white (82%). This reflects little change from the 2019 Snapshot, which had the same percent of female respondents and in which 85% of respondents were white.

The demographics of survey respondents suggest a continuing need to focus on the 2019 recommendation: “[o]utreach to diverse populations, specifically communities of color, to support their participation, scholarship, teaching or new program development.” Increasing representation from people of color in education is a system-wide issue and not one unique to media literacy education. Indeed, the Pew Research Center

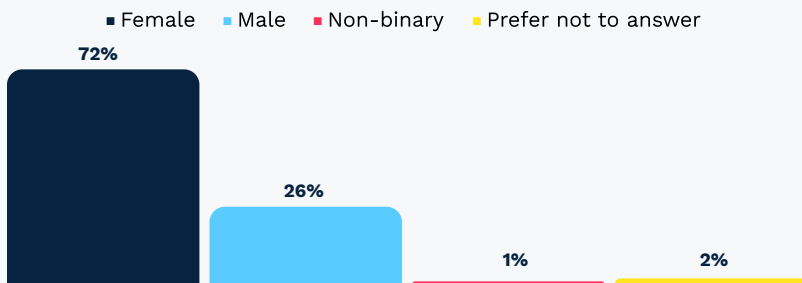
reports that United States public school teachers are far less racially diverse than the students they teach (Schaeffer, 2021).

Among our respondents, 30% identified “library” as their field of work and primary education area, with 14.8% of respondents teaching Language Arts or coming from higher education.

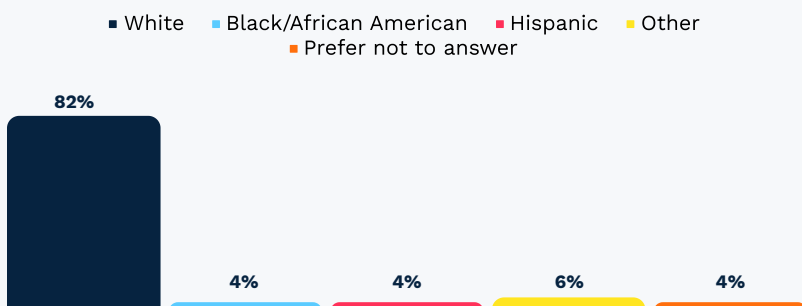
California and New York had the most respondents, making up 18.7% and 14.8% of responses, respectively. Illinois had the next largest contingent of respondents at 6.1%, which could reflect awareness of the state’s 2021 mandate to provide media literacy instruction to every high school student.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

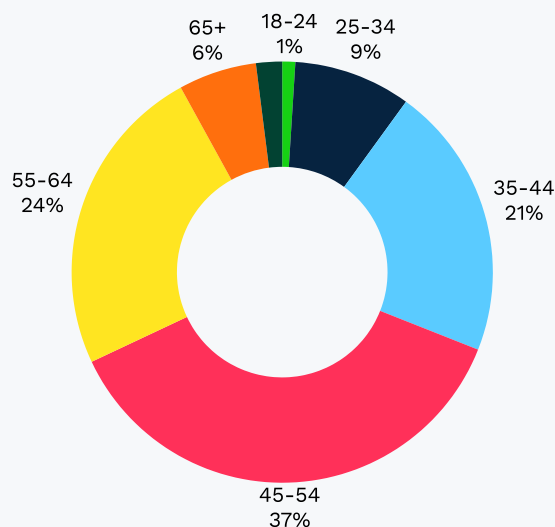
GENDER



RACE/ETHNICITY

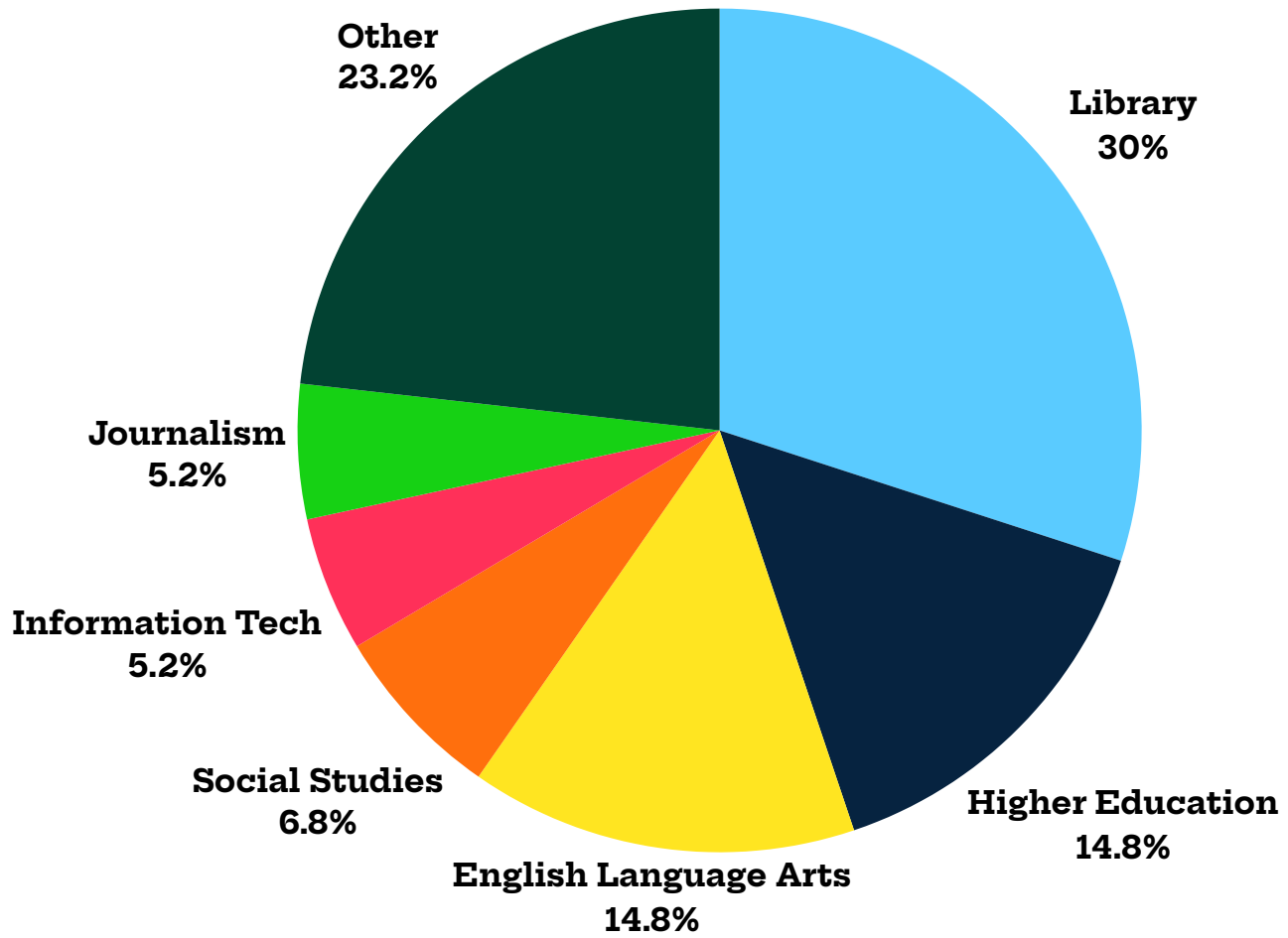


AGE





PRIMARY EDUCATION AREA



AREAS OF EDUCATION

Education areas included in “Other”:

- Science
- Career Technical Education
- Math
- Art
- Early Childhood/Primary
- Health
- Special Education
- World Languages
- Guidance
- Counseling
- Public Relations
- Performance/Fine Arts
- Film Programming/Filmmaking
- Communications



Describe **how media literacy is or has been included** in your organization/institution.

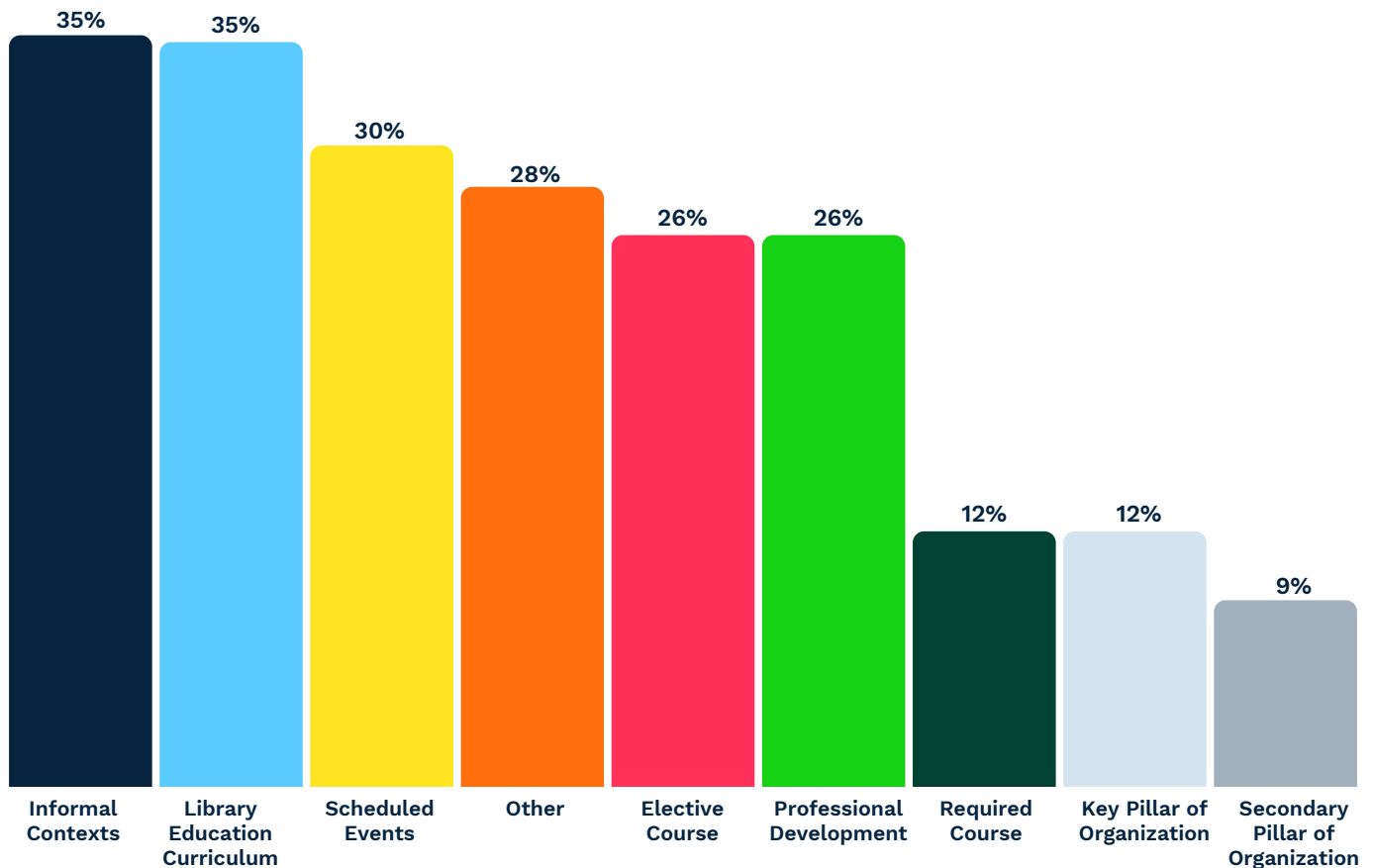
Where & How Media Literacy Is Taught

Overwhelmingly, our respondents reported that media literacy education is happening through informal contexts (35.2%) and within library education curriculum (34.8%).

While this coincides with a high number of responses from educators in library settings (almost 30% of respondents provided a library-related title for their job position), it also demonstrates an opportunity to bring media literacy education into more formal classroom settings.

In this survey, “informal contexts” were characterized as media literacy education happening through homeroom/advisory curriculum, community events, and/or after school programs.

CONTEXTS FOR MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION



What Does This Mean?

More insight is needed to understand exactly how media literacy instruction is occurring, the context in which media literacy educational moments happen, and the impact of those moments. More research would help decipher exactly how educators in different settings conceptualize “informal contexts,” especially given that common educational spaces such as homerooms or advisory periods can vary.

Questions to explore include:

- Are media literacy skills being taught in conjunction with subject-area content standards, as an add-on, or as stand-alone?
- How is learning being assessed on the spot and over time?
- What, specifically, do educators conceptualize as “teaching media literacy,” and how can that be codified to increase understanding and prevalence?

Given that educators in library settings accounted for almost one-third of survey respondents (30% in 2023, up from 24% of respondents in 2019), these findings highlight how important librarians and library media specialists are in ensuring media literacy education is available for all students.

“**It is not considered a “core subject,” does not appear on report cards and is not part of standardized testing for the most part so it is implicitly treated as an “extra” or non-essential topic.**

— Respondent

“**The topic of media literacy is so broad I think it feels overwhelming to classroom teachers.**

— Respondent

Additional support to elevate and train librarians as educator leaders in the media literacy space would capitalize on the collective expertise this group already offers.

EXAMPLE INITIATIVE: MEDIA LITERACY & LIBRARIANS

One initiative elevating librarians is already showing success and could serve as a model (Project Look Sharp, n.d.). [Librarians as Leaders for Media Literacy](#) is a not-for-profit initiative of Project Look Sharp that provides professional development and resources to K-12 librarians in order to support media literacy through question-based media analysis. **Highlights of the initiative:**

- The 19 librarians trained in the initial (NY state) cohort reached more than 3,500 students with critical media decoding lessons that they led or that resulted from collaborations with teachers.
- Project Look Sharp worked with more than half of all NYS BOCES School Library Systems to provide day-long CMD trainings to more than 600 librarians in all regions of the state.

Survey Questions

In your primary role, **how much intentional time is devoted to teaching media literacy?** **What challenges exist to incorporating media literacy education into your classroom, institution, non-profit, or other organization?**

Primary Challenges: Time & Resources

Of the 310 respondents to this question, the average amount of time devoted to media literacy was 11 hours per week, but individual responses were distributed quite widely (with a standard deviation of approximately 9). Given the wide distribution, highlighting the most frequent response to this question—5 hours—might provide a better perspective.

Segmenting responses according to teaching level (elementary, middle, high school, and university) revealed trends in instructional time at different grade levels. Of the elementary teacher respondents, 38.6% reported spending less than 8 hours per week teaching media literacy, and 56.8% of middle school educators also reported spending less than 8 hours per week, with 59.5% of high school educators reporting the same. At the university level, 39.7% of university or college-level educators reported spending less than 8 hours per week teaching media literacy. Among all elementary, middle, high school and university-level respondents, 26 individuals reported spending more than 22 hours per week teaching media literacy.

When asked to rank challenges to incorporating media literacy education into their classrooms, institutions, non-profits, or other organizations, “competing curricular requirements” (31%) and “lack of time” (27%) were the most ranked responses. The 2019 Snapshot also identified these two challenges as most significant, highlighting how little has changed in helping educators to meaningfully incorporate media literacy into existing curriculum. Other top challenges identified in the 2023 survey include “lack of institutional understanding” and “lack of institutional support.”

TIME DEVOTED TO TEACHING MEDIA LITERACY



11 HOURS

on average per week is devoted to teaching media literacy, according to 2023 survey respondents

“**It's a big subject and requires time and dedication to do properly - but the problem is that the existing curricula would largely need to be revamped to make "room". It's an issue of prioritization.**

— Respondent

What Does This Mean?

An ongoing challenge in advocating for media literacy education is how we describe and quantify what’s actually happening in classrooms. In the 2019 report, we didn’t try to quantify “how much” media literacy was happening in educational settings, so adding this question to the 2023 survey helped to provide a baseline of understanding.

“**In my district, it is seen as an isolated lesson and not embedded in the K-8 curriculum. While some lessons (like cyberbullying) are okay as one-offs, many of the skills need to be taught along side actual content/curriculum.**

There is not enough admin support pushing teachers to integrate this, so it is simply not happening.

— Respondent

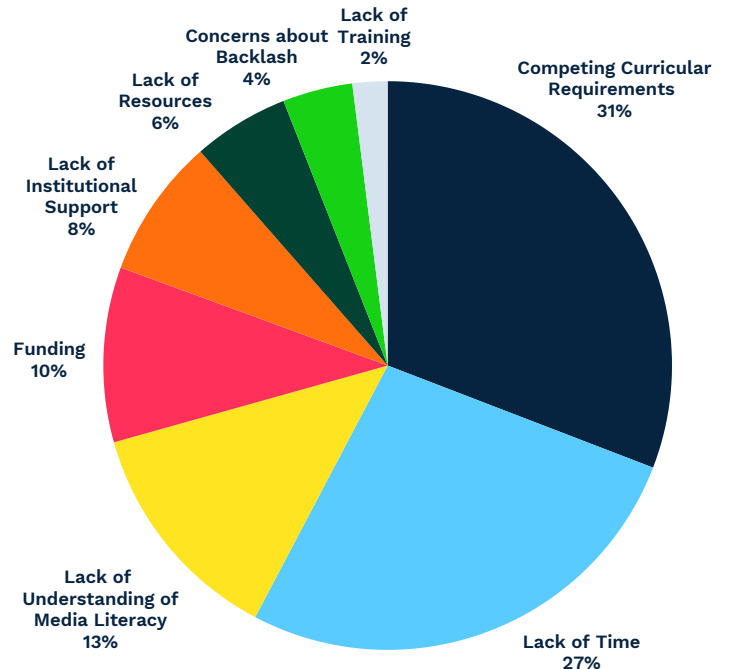
Given the number of hours in the average compulsory school day (6-7 hours), spending between 5-8 hours each week on media literacy instruction could suggest learners are receiving at least an hour of media literacy education per day. Instructional times for different content areas can vary widely across states and grade levels, but this data suggests that among those educators surveyed, media literacy education is a regular part of their classroom routines.

That educators surveyed report teaching media literacy regularly is promising, but



TOP CHALLENGES 2023

*Percentages were calculated based on the number of respondents who assigned a top box rating



TOP CHALLENGES 2019

1. Competing curricular requirements
2. Lack of time
3. Lack of institutional understanding of what media literacy is
4. Lack of content/curricular resources
5. Funding

ongoing challenges related to lack of institutional understanding and support reveal the need to reach administrators and district- and state-level decision makers about the importance of media literacy education and how it can be implemented in a variety of settings without overburdening educators.



How have you received the bulk of your **media literacy educator training**?

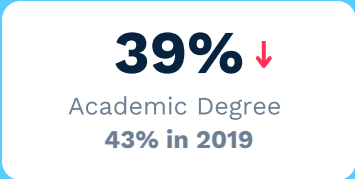
Educators Use Variety of Training & Curriculum

Preparing educators continues to represent an area of opportunity for media literacy advocates. We asked respondents to tell us how they’ve received their media literacy professional development, and respondents could select more than one answer. In 2019, our primary recommendation was to expand teacher professional development, and our 2023 survey findings suggest experts, institutions, and organizations are stepping up to fill this need.

More respondents in 2023 (61.6%) than in 2019 (43%) identified professional development opportunities as an avenue for teacher education, indicating that those teaching media literacy are increasingly seeking more professional development or that more professional development is available. Badging and certificate training opportunities (such as PBS’s Certified Media Literacy Educator program through [KQED Teach](#)) have also become more popular, with almost 13% of respondents in 2023 reporting receiving educator support through such opportunities—up from less than 7% in 2019.

When asked to identify various ways they’ve received training in media literacy education, 77% also selected “self-taught” as a primary method of learning, up from 74% who reported being self-taught in 2019. In their open-ended answers, respondents pointed to a wide array of curriculum and resources used to self-teach media literacy concepts and pedagogy. The open-ended responses show more progress is needed to connect teachers’ needs for professional development to school districts and state education boards so teachers do not have to seek out these opportunities without institutional support.

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATOR TRAINING



Among 2023 respondents, **11% reported receiving training from other sources, including conferences, websites, and mentoring.**

What Does This Mean?

Self-education is a common way for educators to develop more skills, but such professional development can lack standardization about what media literacy education is and how to teach media literacy effectively. Therefore, we must continue to prioritize and fund pre-service and in-service teacher professional development while also creating space in state- and district-mandated curriculum for explicit media literacy instruction.

“**There needs to be a funding source for educators to attend high quality professional development which focuses on media and digital literacy.**”
—Respondent

While a plethora of resources exist, adequate media literacy educator preparation must involve deep reflection on how media literacy education practices can be relevant in various subjects and over time, as technologies change. This will require more funding and efforts to connect existing resources in the field to school districts and individual teachers.

Interestingly, 49% of respondents reported receiving training through nonprofit organizations. This finding requires us to think about funding and capacity issues in the nonprofit media literacy education sector and generates important questions such as:

- Where is nonprofit funding coming from?
- What standards for best practices are considered in these programs?
- How can NAMLE and other field leaders better track and share the work of nonprofit media literacy educator programs in order to maximize the collective impact and dissemination of media literacy education?

With around 70 organizational partners, NAMLE recognizes there is an abundance of groups dedicated to improving media literacy education and to teaching facilitators more about how to create media literacy moments in their formal, informal, and community education spaces. Undoubtedly, some efforts, initiatives, research, and pedagogy that have contributed to the field were not highlighted here.

RESOURCES & CURRICULUM SOURCES*

*The most frequent sources mentioned in open-ended responses.



Which **topics** are reflected most prominently in your course and/or program content?

Top Concern: Discerning High Quality Information

Compared to the 2019 Snapshot, respondents in 2023 reported a slight shift in the topics they most focused on during their media literacy courses or programs. In asking respondents to rank how prominently they featured different topics in their media literacy courses or programs, we retained all the topic choices from 2019, combining a few choices into similar categories and adding a few new ones.

New topics choices for 2023 included media law and ethics (including the First Amendment), personal bias, misinformation/disinformation, and artificial intelligence. “Media law and ethics” was added as a topic this year to reflect the increase in discussions around book bans and educational curriculum, which relate to free speech and First Amendment issues—both areas at the heart of understanding media systems and personal media creation. We separated the topic of bias into two choices in this year’s survey (“media agenda/media bias” and “personal bias”) to better emphasize that not only do media products contain bias, but also that we bring bias to our media experiences. “Digital literacy” was also added as a new topic choice in 2023 to reflect the language used in many state bills and department of education policies. The addition of “misinformation/disinformation” and “artificial intelligence” reflect notable changes in media technologies since 2019.

Content related to “media agenda and media bias” were ranked as having less prominence by the 2023 respondent group than in 2019, and a new topic added to this year’s survey, “misinformation/disinformation,” was reported by more than half of all respondents (54%) as being a prominent topic in their media literacy course or program. Information literacy remains a top-level concern for 2023’s respondent group, with 56% reporting it as a prominent topic in their work (almost 30% of respondents provided a library-related title for their job position, which could account for some of this focus on information literacy).

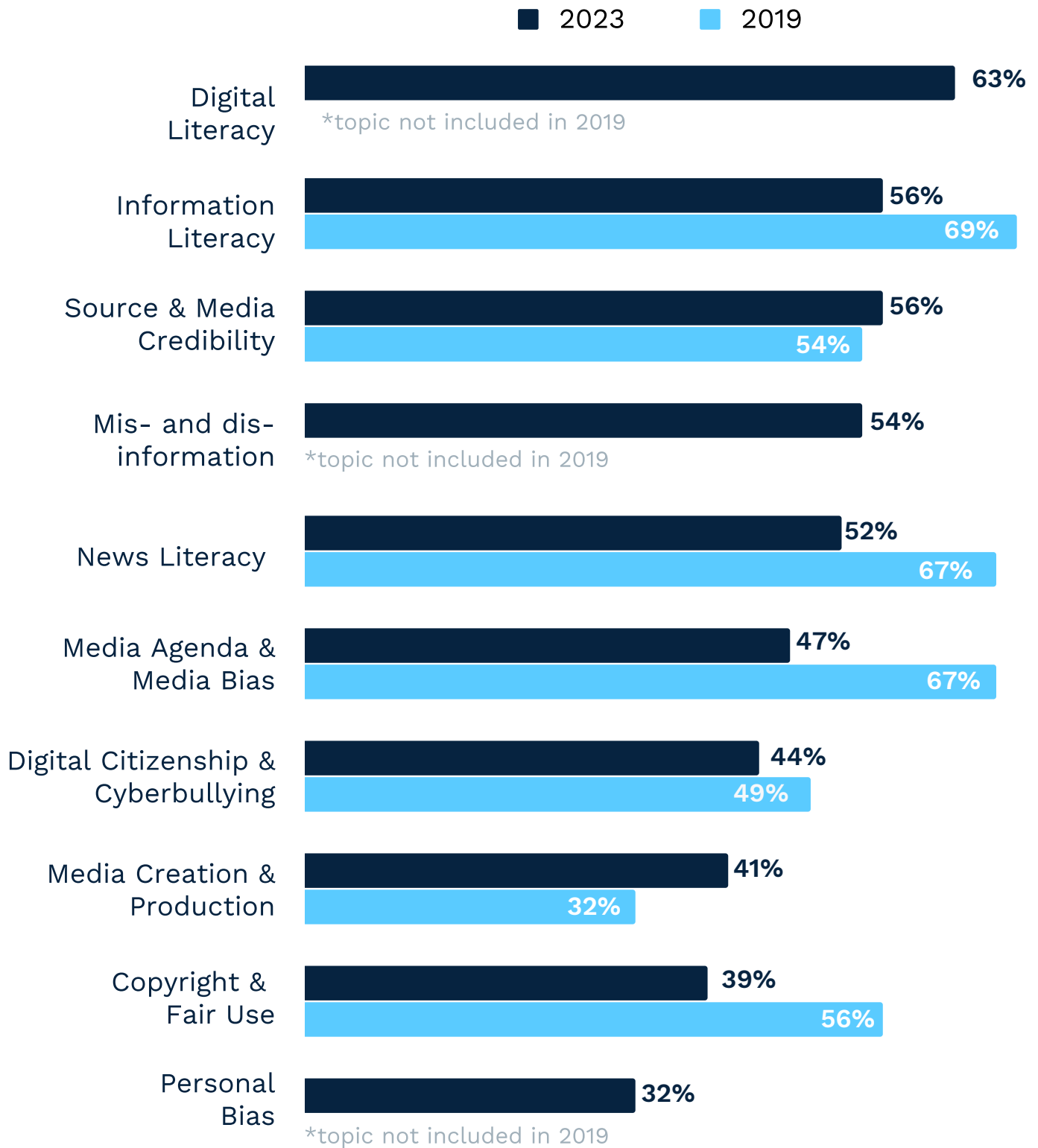
MOST PROMINENT TOPICS IN MEDIA LITERACY COURSES & PROGRAMS



1. **Digital Literacy (63%)**
2. **Information Literacy (56%)**
3. **Source & Media Credibility (56%)**
4. **Misinformation/Disinformation (54%)**
5. **News Literacy (52%)**
6. **Media Agenda & Media Bias (47%)**



TOP CONTENT AREAS



What Does This Mean?

These findings likely represent an ongoing challenge in media literacy education — building consensus on terminology and a shared conceptual understanding of the breadth of the field. Many respondents noted a lack of agreed-upon definitions for media literacy and its subsequent learning domains (a challenge also identified in the 2019 Snapshot).

“
Students want to develop a skillset with which to approach this complex world, and media literacy provides that background.
— Respondent”

Similarly, conflation of some of these topics has happened not just in classrooms, but in policy and in media coverage. Terms such as “digital literacy,” “information literacy,” and “media literacy” are often used interchangeably or synonymously. While these concepts certainly share some foundational knowledge and habits, they are distinct areas of focus that point to unique learning objectives and classroom practices.

Timing of the 2023 survey may also impact what topics were top-of-mind for educators in their media literacy programming and courses. The survey window closed in August 2023, just before the fall 2023 school year began and as teachers and policymakers began shifting their attention to the emergence of sophisticated generative artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT. Artificial intelligence wasn’t among the top 5 topics for survey respondents. We suspect

that had the survey window shifted later by even three months, this snapshot could reveal different perspectives and priorities around what topics to focus on in media literacy education.

Further research is needed into how these topics are presented and the associated learning outcomes, since understanding of a relevant media literacy topic does not necessarily equate to understanding media literacy learning objectives.

As a field, media literacy practitioners, advocates, and researchers should work toward identifying a set of must-have learning outcomes that meet a baseline competency for media literacy education. Knowing that media literacy must evolve over time and as society and technologies change, we must more clearly articulate the basic skills, habits, and points of knowledge that form the starting point for today and future media literacies.

Survey Question

Does your **state or district** have a requirement to teach media literacy (that you are aware of)?

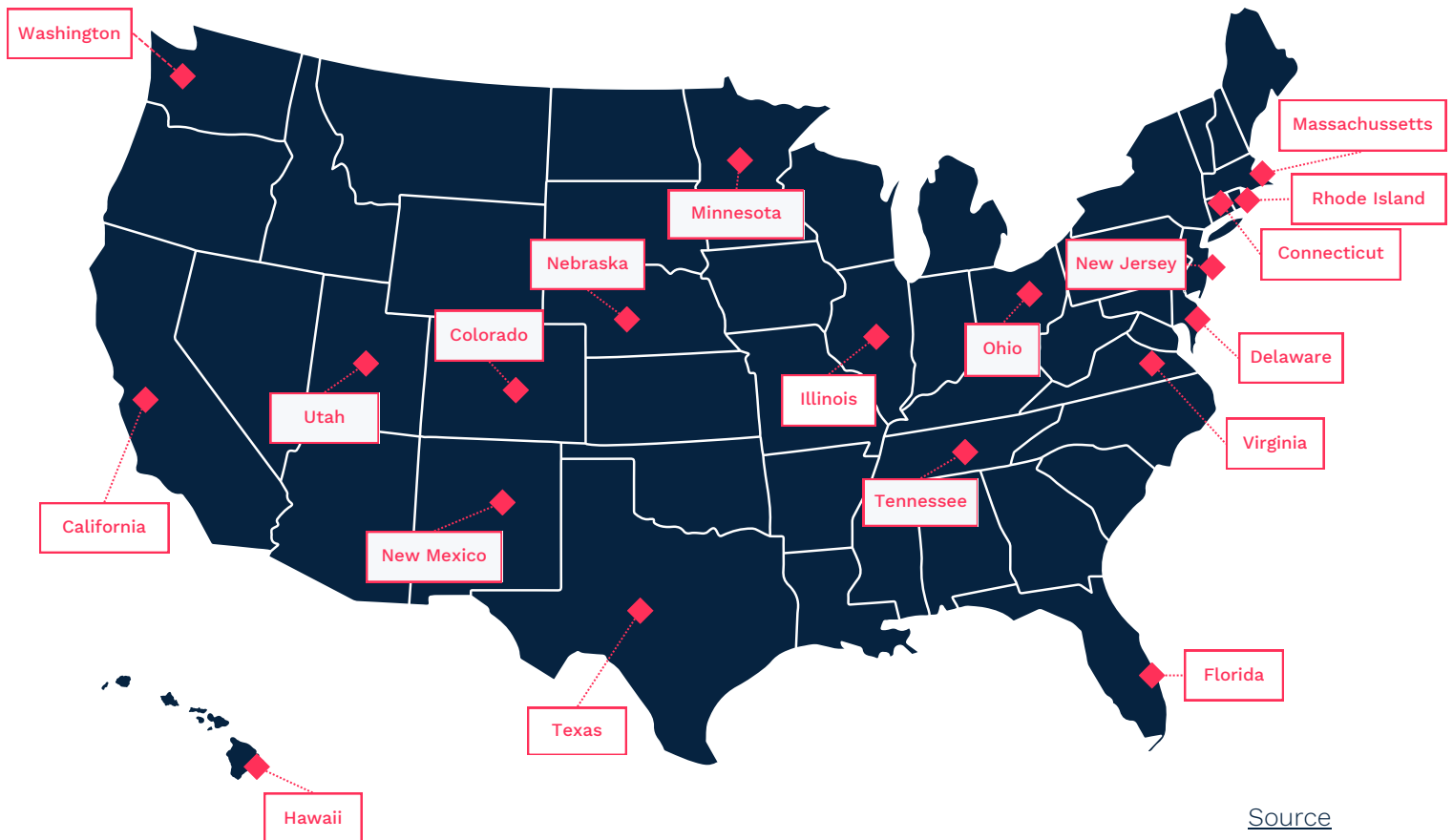
State Policies & Educator Awareness Differ

New to our 2023 survey, we asked respondents to reflect on their awareness of district or state mandates to teach media literacy. We wanted to better understand how educators perceived initiatives to mandate media literacy education, including how unique district- or state-level requirements might be adjacent to media literacy or a related literacy, such as digital literacy, news literacy and information literacy.

Additionally, as state bills and policies have been introduced and passed, there is often ambiguity around how legislation will be enacted, what funding might follow, and who will have a seat at the table to inform curriculum and classroom practices around media literacy education. While almost half of respondents (45%) said they were not aware of any district or state mandates, the open-ended responses revealed various approaches beyond legislation or mandates that districts and states are taking to address the need for media literacy education.

STATES WITH MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION LEGISLATION*

*Legislation varies from mandates to teach media literacy units of instruction to requirements to convene exploratory committees.



Source

What Does This Mean?

The survey revealed a disconnect in a handful of states where media literacy legislation is in place—some respondents from those states reported being unaware of media literacy legislation or mandates. As a whole, responses to this question from some respondents in states where media literacy education has been prioritized (through legislation, mandates, or instructional resources) reflected confusion about what state requirements actually exist, how policy or mandates will roll out, and how teachers will be trained for or should implement any changes in standards or curriculum. We also suspect some of this disconnect is attributable to lack of consensus over what constitutes media literacy.

Confusion About State Requirements

- Three respondents from Texas reported being unaware of any mandates, but according to Media Literacy Now’s 2022 policy report, “In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed – by a wide margin on a strong bipartisan vote – a law instructing the state Board of Education to require each school district to incorporate instruction in digital citizenship. In the Texas definition, that includes media literacy” (p. 6).
- Four respondents from Illinois reported being unaware of any mandates or legislation, but a 2021 law requires Illinois high schools to teach a unit of media literacy instruction beginning with the 2022–2023 school year (Media Literacy Now, 2022).

That some state legislation around media literacy has centered on resources or standards (without explicitly requiring a

mandate to teach) likely also creates some confusion in what must be taught and how. In Colorado, there is no mandate to teach media literacy education, but a bill passed in 2021 requires the department of education to revise reading, writing, and civics standards in order to “identify the knowledge and skills that an elementary through secondary education student should acquire relating to media literacy” (“Media Literacy Implementation,” 2021).

Similarly, both Florida and Ohio have legislation in place requiring their state boards of education to develop standards integrating media literacy education across all grade levels (Media Literacy Now, 2022), yet the legislation is not written specifically as a mandate to teach media literacy. Since educators are responsible for teaching to learning standards developed by state and district boards, we expect that some survey respondents may interpret these bills in Colorado, Florida, and Ohio—and others like them—as a mandate to teach media literacy.

Open-ended responses revealed frustration from some educators working diligently to create momentum for media literacy education. One respondent from CA noted they had pushed for media literacy to be included at the district level but said “it was not seen as necessary.” In November 2022, California’s governor signed a bill supporting media literacy education across core subject areas. At the time this report was published, no plan for implementation of media literacy education in California was in place.

The open-ended responses also showed how some educators are working to interpret current state standards through the lens and spirit of media literacy education.

What Does This Mean? (Continued)

PERSPECTIVES ON STATE REQUIREMENTS

“

Media Literacy education is mandated in South Carolina, but it is mandated under Arts, not under language or ELA. So, it is only required as something to be ADDRESSED in the standards, not something to be taught.

— South Carolina respondent

[Virginia Standards of Learning] require certain media related topics to be taught and mastered in each grade. For example, in addition to being able to responsibly use the internet for assignments and research where they need to validate resources [...] 6 graders also have to be able to identify the purpose behind and then create a PSA.

— Virginia respondent

“

Schools are not required to have librarians BUT if a school has a librarian 25% of instructional content should be media literacy encompassing access to media, analysis and evaluation, create, share and collaborate requirements, and act standards.

— Ohio respondent

While "media literacy" is not specifically mentioned by the standards, understanding the bias and audience of primary and secondary sources is. Therefore, I can make a strong argument it is necessary.

— Wisconsin respondent

“

It's a state mandate to teach basic media literacy instruction.

— Pennsylvania respondent

SNAPSHOT 2024:

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Momentum in the field is building, and growth related to NAMLE initiatives shows attention to the need for media literacy education is high:

- NAMLE membership has grown from around 5,000 members in 2019 to more than 8,000 members in 2023.
- Participation in key community events continues to grow. [United States Media Literacy Week](#) participation has increased more than 185% since 2019.
- As of January 2024, the [Journal of Media Literacy Education](#) had received more than 125,000 downloads since January 2023.

Considering the responses to our survey and to accelerate this progress, NAMLE offers the following three recommendations to continue making media literacy education a national priority: clarify and collaborate around media literacy’s purpose and outcomes, scale media literacy education across all grades, and invest to meet demand for media literacy education.

NAMLE RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Clarify and collaborate

Work together on shared messaging and outcomes

2

Scale media literacy across all grades

Strengthen K-12 education efforts

3

Invest to meet demand

Commit funding to local, state, and national media literacy efforts

This section explores these recommendations in detail and provides ideas for possible tactics to bring these recommendations to life.



Clarify and Collaborate

The breadth of the media literacy field is as much a strength as it can be a weakness. While we understand that too narrowly defining our work could limit understanding, growth, and innovation, we believe two immediate opportunities for field-wide collaboration exist:



Develop a coordinated effort for understanding

Much like our recommendation in 2019, we believe the field still needs a coordinated visibility campaign to increase understanding about what media literacy education truly requires—that it includes news, digital, and information literacy, and so much more. We must clarify connections between these fields to better support all the ways in which learners will need to fortify their critical thinking skills around what they know, the technologies they use to experience the world, how those experiences impact their world views, and ways they can use skilled media creation to be civic participants instead of onlookers.

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Establish a coalition of media literacy organizations and associations that agree to use shared terminology to increase public awareness and understanding
- Engage funders to support a national media literacy public awareness campaign
- Raise the profile of media literacy successes and efforts through a coordinated press strategy, including a push for regular national press coverage



Identify shared competencies for media literacy education

We recommend increased collaboration among educators, researchers, experts, and media literacy advocates to identify the most important knowledge and skills developed through media literacy education at all grade levels. Learning or content area standards typically must be adopted and approved on a state-by-state or district-by-district level, but robust, field-wide media literacy learning outcomes can be identified with existing standards in mind. We must ask and answer: In the course of a learner's compulsory education, what essential media literacy education must occur?

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Convene media literacy educators, scholars, and experts in curriculum and instruction in a working group to identify essential learning outcomes for media literacy education in grades preK-12
- Create a network of experts who can speak to these outcomes as policy and legislation decisions are made
- Utilize the National Media Literacy Alliance to disseminate shared essential learning outcomes

2

Scale Across All Grades

While media literacy education is needed for all ages, we must continue to invest in scaling the integration of media literacy within compulsory grades in the United States through the following efforts:



Strengthen preK-6 media literacy education

Out of 310 respondents, less than 3% reported being elementary or primary educators. Yet, we know that media literacy education must include instruction for all children who are increasingly using devices and experiencing media at younger and younger ages. Compared to educational strategies for higher grades, less research and resources are available for understanding what media literacy education looks like for young children. A concerted focus on media literacy education at the lower grades will strengthen the pipeline of media literacy education in secondary and higher education, promoting the development of lifelong media literacy practices.

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Fund research of media literacy education in grades preK-6, focusing on implementation and assessment, to develop models of developmentally appropriate instruction
- Map existing K-12 school-based media literacy education and teacher education programs, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement
- Create a practical guide for K-12 classroom implementation to assist educators in integrating media literacy into their teaching



Streamline curricular integration

We must seek ways to streamline integration into curriculum at the district and state levels and expand teacher resources. This will require investing time, resources, and funding into curriculum revisions and standards crosswalks across all states, making it easier for educators to fold media literacy moments into what they already teach. Respondents in both the 2019 and 2023 snapshot pointed to ways existing standards and frameworks can support and legitimize more explicit media literacy education, and we should focus resources and efforts to make these connections evident and feasible.

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Convene state-specific working groups to draft model curricular frameworks for incorporating media literacy education into existing state requirements
- Identify and amplify successful models of media literacy education led by library media specialists, helping to provide a road map for schools to better utilize these personnel resources
- Develop a framework for integrating media literacy education into media-focused career readiness programs, preparing students for future success

3

Invest To Meet Demand

From foundations and governments to organizations and companies, those who fund educational efforts should consider two specific areas for committed and increased funding:



Prioritize professional development

We recommend repositioning efforts to focus specifically on increased funding and amplification of pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities. Successful professional development infrastructure already exists across various non-profit and educational institutions. Now we need to better support the many formal professional development structures, grassroots initiatives, workshops, institutes and conferences that aim to expertly provide these opportunities. This includes working with schools of education and their accrediting organizations.

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Develop a national professional development strategy and implementation plan for teachers, enhancing their skills in delivering effective media literacy education
- Identify and evaluate existing pre-service teacher education programs that include media literacy education to develop a model for pre-service professional development
- Create local and regional plans to connect community organizations with local educators



Support state mandates

Even as more states continue to approve such legislation, significant gaps in funding and support for effective implementation exist. Put simply, state legislators must be held accountable for funding the initiatives they pass and for putting together smart implementation processes and practices. Otherwise, the fight to include media literacy education as a state mandate is only partially won. If policy and legislation are to be a means of achieving media literacy education for all, funding must be allocated with any new state initiative.

POSSIBLE TACTICS

- Fund implementation of policy and develop a public information database that tracks state educational funding allocated to media literacy education
- Support research and evaluation regarding the implementation of existing and new state policies around media literacy education to better understand the needs and costs associated with these policies
- Provide Congressional education through briefings, presentations, and conversations, ensuring policymakers are well-informed about the critical role of media literacy in education

FINAL THOUGHTS

We must be unequivocally, unapologetically for media literacy education—and not just the kind that examines bias in a source or assesses credibility of an author, but the kind that meaningfully critiques media and technology products, systems, institutions and experiences with an eye toward disproportionate impacts across various groups. While some fear the politicization of media literacy, we cannot be afraid as a field to articulate the basic principles that shape media literacy education—that censorship is antithetical to quality education, that understanding media’s role in fraught historical and contemporary issues around representation and diversity are crucial to nurturing well-rounded thinkers, and that experiences with quality, accurate information are the backbone of a functioning democratic society. Open-minded, non-censorial learning conditions are required for media literacy education to thrive. As goes public education, so goes media literacy.

What are the **conditions required for media literacy education to **thrive**?**

Additionally, these recommendations should be considered within the context of two crucial, ongoing needs in media literacy education: robust industry and academic research, and a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ongoing academic inquiry to study various media literacy interventions and to establish more instruments for assessing media literacy education and impact are crucial. Each of our recommendations provides a space in which further research would help us to refine our understanding of how media literacy education is taking place and what is needed. Accessible venues for research such as the [Journal for Media Literacy Education](#) will continue to be crucial for furthering our understanding of best practices and creating shared metrics for assessment and implementation. Metastudies of media literacy practices across journals in other academic areas, such as education curriculum and instruction, psychology, and media studies, would also enhance our understanding.

Implicit in our understanding of media literacy is that education must continue to strive to serve all learners, and that educational systems, policies, and practices must adapt and improve to ensure education opportunities are equitable. NAMLE’s ninth core principle states that media literacy education “[e]mphasizes critical inquiry about media industries’ roles in society, including how these industries influence, and are influenced by, systems of power, with implications for equity, inclusion, social justice, and sustainability” (NAMLE, 2023). In this way, media literacy advocacy, and the work we undertake to grow and sustain this field, must also focus on supporting the structures and approaches that will facilitate such critical inquiry. These survey findings remind us that, much like education as a whole, media literacy

education in the United States lacks racial and ethnic diversity, and our field must continue to seek out and amplify voices not currently at the table.

We know through our work supporting myriad types of media literacy facilitators that many people who are teaching some form of media literacy often do not identify it as such, or they feel like they haven't reached a "critical mass" of media literacy offerings to consider themselves a media literacy educator. At NAMLE, we know that everyone can be a media literacy educator, and we hope future iterations of this survey can continue to reach even more people doing this important work.

Momentum and expertise already exist in favor of robust media literacy education in the United States, so targeted funding to build capacity and a critical mass is the next, most crucial need in this field.

We wrote in 2019: "Working with educators, organizations, media and technology companies, elected officials, and others interested in media literacy, we seek to intentionally advance the value, purpose, and pedagogies of media literacy education in order to best prepare today's students and citizens for a successful future" (Culver & Redmond, 2019). Four years later, our mission remains the same.

We acknowledge the steadfast work of our community and the meaningful strides made in media literacy education since 2019—work that is already addressing some of these recommendations—and we look forward to continuing to do our part. These efforts, however, must be supported by intentional funding efforts from foundations, governments, corporations, and organizations. Momentum and expertise already exist in favor of robust media literacy education in the United States, so targeted funding to build capacity and a critical mass is the next, most crucial need in this field.



Survey Questions

1. Please provide your contact information (name, organization/institution, city, state, zip code, country, email).
2. What is your job position/title?
3. What is your primary education area?
4. What is your highest education level?
5. Please select your age.
6. What is your gender?
7. What is your race/ethnicity?
8. If you have a website or a blog you'd like us to be aware of, please provide the URL.
9. What is your primary role?
10. In your primary role, how much intentional time is devoted to media literacy (each week)?
11. Describe how media literacy is or had been included in your organization/institution.
12. Which of the topics below are reflected most prominently in your course and/or program content?
13. What materials (websites, textbooks, curriculum resources, etc.) are you using to teach media literacy?
14. If applicable, please share a link to your curriculum, syllabus, or primary website for your work.
15. Please rank from 1-8 the following challenges to incorporating media literacy education into your classroom, institution, non-profit, or other organization, with 1 being the most significant challenge and 8 being the least significant.
16. Please elaborate on the primary challenges you face incorporating media literacy education.
17. How have you received the bulk of your media literacy educator training? Select all that apply.
18. Through what organizations or institutions have you received training?
19. Does your state or district have a requirement to teach media literacy (that you are aware of)?
20. If relevant, please briefly describe your state or district mandate.
21. Is there any other information you feel would be important to add about your experience in media literacy education?
22. Would you be open to a follow-up email about your work in media literacy education?

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About NAMLE

As the leading voice, convener, and resource for media literacy education, NAMLE aims to make media literacy highly valued and widely practiced as an essential life skill.

NAMLE envisions a day when everyone, in our nation and around the world, possesses the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. Media literacy education refers to the practices necessary to foster these skills.

We define both education and media broadly. Education includes both formal and informal settings, classrooms, and living rooms, in school, and after school, anywhere that lifelong learners can be reached. Media includes digital media, computers, video games, radio, television, mobile media, print, and communication technologies that we haven't even dreamed of yet.

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