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Strategies to Teach Students to Be Media Literate

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Today's media landscape is nothing short of challenging, with a relentless barrage of news and information on the global pandemic, disputed elections, social and political conflict, remote and hybrid learning, deep fakes, dangerous conspiracies, and the real-world consequences of misinformation and disinformation. States across the country have adopted standards focused on computer science over the last few years to prepare students for this technologically savvy society of algorithms, coding, system design, networking, and security. But recent events have highlighted the need for media standards and digital citizenship practices.

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Donna Mignardi, a school librarian from Calvert High School in Prince Frederick, Maryland, explains how to ensure students graduate with the skills necessary to be media literate in her article "Graduating Information- and Media-Literate Students." She offers tips that include teacher training with micro-credentials, constant modeling, bias awareness, and a robust curriculum. She

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writes, "The critical thinking competencies needed for information and media literacy have to be integrated into daily learning."

In "The Social-Emotional Underpinnings of Our Information Literacy," Jacquelyn Whiting, an instructional coach and technology integrator at Brookfield Public Schools, writes how disinformation works by preying on our emotional vulnerabilities. The pandemic heightened our feelings of isolation and anxiousness, so "as we sought ways out of our isolation each distorted factoid was designed to lead us incrementally toward both extremism and belonging." Whiting asserts effective information literacy instruction hinges on the concomitant teaching of socio-emotional skills and development with our students.

Jim Belair and Nicole Waskie-Laura, two New York State School Library System Directors, explain how the New York State Computer Science and Digital Fluency Standards (CS/DF), in alignment with the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners*, "can serve as a useful tool to shift mindsets and promote the perception of school librarians as cutting-edge instructional leaders." They identify six alignments between the CS/DF standards (impacts of computing, computational thinking, networks and system design, cybersecurity, and digital citizenship) and school libraries (makerspaces, digital citizenship, inquiry, curation, literacy collaborations, and career readiness). The CS/DF standards help educators define the necessary skills students require to be successful and agile in a world of continuous change. The article gives samples of how leading school librarians can teach students these skills.

GRADE BAND	CS/DF STANDARD	LIBRARY APPLICATION
Elementary	*K–1 Network & Systems Designs: Hardware & Software* Identify ways people provide input and get output from computing devices.	The school librarian can help students investigate the ways individuals input information into a computing device, like a barcode, that results in output, like a student account or book record, to understand networks and system design.
Secondary	*7–8 Critical Thinking: Algorithms and Programming* Design, compare, and refine algorithms for a specific task or within a program.	The school librarian can instruct students in the use of Boolean algorithms to create powerful search strategies and to compare/contrast search results.

Table 1. Example alignment between CS/DF standards and school library lessons.

Of particular interest to school librarians are the position statements that define the intersection of media literacy within the various subject areas and education fields that identify ways to integrate media literacy education practices into existing curricula and lessons.

In "Gatekeeping Misinformation with Media Literacy Education," Belinha De Abreu, PhD, details how educators help students understand social media's role in the rise and spread of disinformation and the challenges societies face when relying on global companies to police themselves. She examines how media literacy allows students to understand how media works to "influence our thinking" and outlines practices to combat these influences from lateral reading to source evaluation. She cites the Center for Media Literacy's "5 Key Questions of Media Literacy" as a foundational source to guide students' thinking about information and recommends sites to combat misinformation from Poynter.org to Opensecrets.org.

Finally, Michelle Ciulla Lipkin, the executive director of the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), writes about the core principles of media literacy education and how NAMLE works to promote those principles through curated resources and Media Literacy Week. Of particular interest to school librarians are the position statements that define the intersection of media literacy within the various subject areas and education fields that identify ways to integrate media literacy education practices into existing curricula and lessons. These subject areas include early childhood education, science, social studies, math, English, journalism, and technology.

As you can see, the scope of these articles clarifies the school librarian's vital role in ensuring students learn how to be critical consumers, producers, and communicators of information and knowledge as part of a democratic and dynamic society filled with possibility and opportunity.

Let's get started!

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