Media literacy activity ideas

A group of ideas through which students can develop critical literacies within science, technology and mathematics by engaging with the media.

1. **Purpose of the resource**
   Engaging with media texts
   Development of critical literacies

2. **How is it used? Who with?**
   These ideas are useful as starters for teachers to create contextualised learning opportunties and ways to engage students in developing critical literacy. They may also work to support students to co-construct their own contexts for learning.

3. **Context/setting for use**
   Suitable for any grouping of students including across year levels and / or curriculum areas

4. **Link to Ako: Critical Contexts for Learning (3 circles)**
   The ideas presented here open the possibilities to work across and beyond the classroom, providing opportunities for learning focussed relationships of reciporocity between teachers, Māori students, whānau and community members.

   These ideas also offer the opportunity to specifically and authenically legitimate and value multi-worldviews and the cultural toolkit of each individual involved. The decisions made by teachers, alongside students, around the scope of the learning - how it will be undertaken and by whom, how it will be shared and assessed will determine the extent to which the principles of culturally responsive and relational pedagogies are present.

   This will mean that teachers are able to draw on both their curricular and pedgaogical expertise to ensure the strategies chosen met the specific needs of their learners.

5. **Questions for users to consider**
   In what ways do these activity ideas offer opportunties to create *critical* contexts for learning?

   How might you work to include students, whānau and the wider community in the development of the learning opportunities? How might this extend to the sharing and assessment of the work?

   What opportunities do such contexts for learning create for senior students to achieve NCEA literacy and / or numeracy credits?

   How might the activity ideas be extended to authenically incorporate matauranga Māori?

Media literacy activity ideas:

science & technology

- Invite students to **conduct experiments to see if advertised claims made by various products are true**. For example, do certain cleaning products work better than others? Students should document their experiments on video or with a photo storyboard and share their findings.

- Use media examples that include **unrealistic claims or portrayals** and ask students to apply scientific laws to explain why something could or could not happen the way it is shown. Examples might come from stunts in an action sequence, scenes showing unusual physical abilities, "miraculous" rescues, special effects applications, etc.

- Investigate how **new medical treatments or research results** are covered in the popular press. Who's giving the fullest coverage? Does one medium do a better job than another? What basic scientific knowledge or vocabulary would someone need to understand the content? Does the reporter provide suggestions if viewers want to know where to go for more information?

- Explore **how scientists are portrayed** in popular movies and television shows. Taking an historical approach, students might look at the image of the "mad scientist" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What alternative portrayals of scientists do students see today (e.g., crime scene investigators)? Students might create an online exhibition, or use [an online platform] to work with students in another country to compare results.

- Connect language arts and earth science by studying how **natural disasters** are covered in the news. After an introduction to "connotation" and "denotation," examine the word choice in natural disaster news stories. Ask students to pick out words with particularly strong connotations, and discuss. How accurate is the coverage? Why do the authors choose specific words? Introduce the idea of anthropomorphism: to what extent does news coverage of natural disasters anthropomorphize nature?

- Discuss **how media assists in the study of science**. For example, are some concepts best explained using video? Explore this idea by asking students to create a media product (e.g., Web site, audio recording, animation, video, brochure) that teaches a specific science topic. How did the student's chosen medium limit or empower the presentation of material?

math
- **Use media to develop categorization skills**. Based on students' interests and grade levels, provide a number of media examples, such as advertised products, news stories, etc. Ask students to develop categories for these items and then explain their rationale for grouping things together in a particular way.

- Help students discover how the same set of **data can be represented differently in order to emphasize a particular message**. Use a political poll or a research study for a data source and instruct students to manipulate scale and otherwise alter the visual message of tables and graphs of the report's data in order to favor a certain point of view. Discuss the potential consequences of presenting data with a particular bias.

- Study percentages and fractions by investigating the **ratio of advertisement to news** in newspapers and Web sites, or commercials to content in television broadcasts. Students might also look at the type of ads connected to particular sections of the newspaper or Web site, or to particular TV programs, creating spreadsheets or graphs to demonstrate their findings.

- Reinforce problem-solving skills by investigating **syllogisms and hypothetical reasoning** through advertising. Can students find examples of different types of reasoning in print, radio or television advertising? Can they create their own examples of ads using these techniques? How do these methods relate to solving "textbook math" problems?

Note:
webpage also includes ideas for media literacy within: The Arts; Reading & Language Arts; Social Studies; Health & Fitness; Early Childhood Education

Source:
Public Broadcasting Service. (February, 2007). *Media Literacy.* Retrieved 2016, February 3rd from
http://www.pbs.org/teachers/media_lit/getting_started.html