



## CIC Survey Shows Media Literacy a Vital and Underserved Need in Schools

### MEDIA LITERACY REPORT

Educator Survey

November 2006

Media literacy is an urgent – and largely unmet – priority among educators in schools today.

That's what over a thousand teachers and library-media specialists from across the country told Cable in the Classroom in an exclusive survey conducted earlier this year.

Media literacy is the ability to find, analyze, evaluate and create information in a variety of media. Educators believe these skills are not addressed with sufficient emphasis in their schools. Although the majority of teachers recognize that they have some responsibility for teaching media literacy, they also report that they don't have – or don't know about – appropriate media literacy resources. This likely fuels their belief that media literacy is not getting the attention it deserves.

In today's media-saturated world, students spend a large part of their lives in front of, interacting with, and even creating digital images and words. The media children consume and interact with may have the potential to greatly influence their beliefs and behaviors. Educators, therefore, want to ensure that their students use media responsibly and well.

This report looks at the state of media literacy as seen by educators from all levels – elementary, middle, and senior high – and points to some of Cable in the Classroom's timely and useful resources. These tools can help schools empower students to become thoughtful users of media for learning and for their lives.



## Media Literacy Needs More Attention

Sixty percent of educators report that their schools place less emphasis on media literacy than they should (see Chart 1). That response holds true across teaching levels and job descriptions. Not surprisingly, library-media specialists, given their role as media brokers for their schools, are more likely than teachers (66 versus 56 percent) to believe their schools need to pay more attention to media literacy.

The survey opens a window on educators' sense of urgency by allowing us to examine their perceptions of their students' technology and media usage outside of schools – whether or not that use is connected to classroom activities. Educators estimate that their students spend about half of their waking time outside of school using some form of media and/or technology (see Table 1). Overall, elementary educators estimate their students' media-tech usage at just under four hours a day, while middle and senior high educators estimate their students' usage at about five hours daily. Of note, these estimates may even be on the low side when compared to research studies that attempt to directly measure children's media usage.

According to survey respondents, teaching media literacy is a task that is shared across the school (see Table 2), with teachers reporting having a bit more responsibility than library-media specialists and technology coordinators. This cross-faculty distribution is promising, suggesting an opportunity to infuse more media literacy instruction across the curriculum and in every grade.

Unfortunately, even if most educators take some responsibility for teaching media literacy, they also report that they struggle when it comes to finding appropriate resources (see Table 3). The vast majority of teachers (78 percent) and library-media

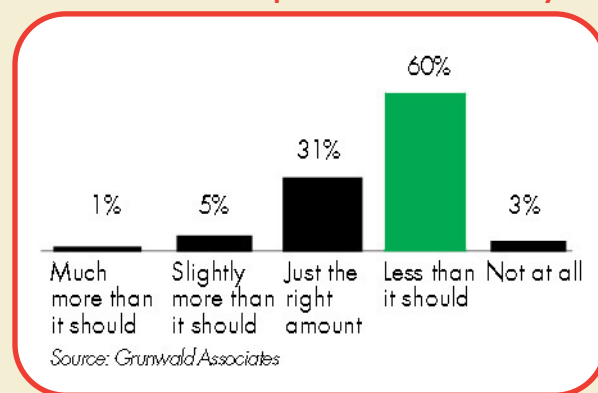
**Table 1: Educators' Perceptions of Students' Time Spent Using Technology and Media\* Outside of School**

	Elementary	Middle	Senior
Mean hours/day	3.8 hours	4.9 hours	5.1 hours
<i>*Includes TV, radio, iPods, video games, computers, and the Internet</i>			
<i>Source: Grunwald Associates</i>			

specialists (80 percent) say that they learn about media and information literacy on their own. Colleagues are an important source of information, particularly for teachers (58 percent), while library-media specialists also report learning about the subject from workshops (78 percent).

Educators report using a variety of information resources to learn about media literacy – everything from Google to the Discovery Channel to *School Library Journal*. One of the most popular resources with educators is *Cable in the Classroom Magazine*. This is particularly true among library-media specialists, 64 percent of whom report reading the magazine on at least a monthly basis.

**Chart 1: School Emphasis on Media Literacy**



**When asked how much emphasis their schools put on media literacy, the majority of educators reported that the subject is not receiving the attention it deserves.**

**Table 2: Who Is Responsible for Teaching Media Literacy in Schools?**

	Total	Elementary	Middle	Senior High
Individual teacher	59%	<b>63%</b>	53%	<b>61%</b>
Library-media specialist	48%	49%	47%	48%
Technology Coordinator	31%	<b>34%</b>	<b>33%</b>	25%
Everyone	27%	22%	<b>33%</b>	26%
No one	6%	5%	7%	7%

**BOLD** indicates statistical significance in row.

Source: Grunwald Associates

But the survey shows that educators are not as aware of other Cable in the Classroom resources, particularly those focused on media literacy. These resources, as we shall see in the following pages, can provide educators with a wealth of information and curriculum ideas for helping students – and parents – become better and more responsible users of media and information technologies.

#### How the Survey Was Conducted

In March 2006 Cable in the Classroom contracted with market research firm Grunwald Associates to conduct online interviews with 1,045 educators on classroom media use. The survey was completed by 801 classroom teachers and 244 library-media specialists stratified by region, district size, and metro status. This public report for educators was produced by Grunwald Associates.

**Table 3: How Educators Learn About Media Literacy in Schools**

Response	Teachers	Library-Media Specialists
On my own	78%	80%
Workshops	56%	78%
Other teachers	58%	43%
District personnel or resources	33%	55%
School library-media specialist	38%	33%
Other organizations	14%	41%

Source: Grunwald Associates

# CIC Supports Media Literacy in the Classroom and at Home

## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION

Media Literacy

November 2006

Working with and on behalf of the cable industry, *Cable in the Classroom* advocates for “visionary, sensible, and effective use of media in schools, homes, and communities.” To that end, CIC and its cable company partners offer educators and parents a wide and rich variety of resources to help children and their families find, analyze, evaluate and create information in a media-infused world. These resources, and how they are used in education, are discussed in some detail below. For more information on CIC’s media literacy offerings, readers can also visit [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org).

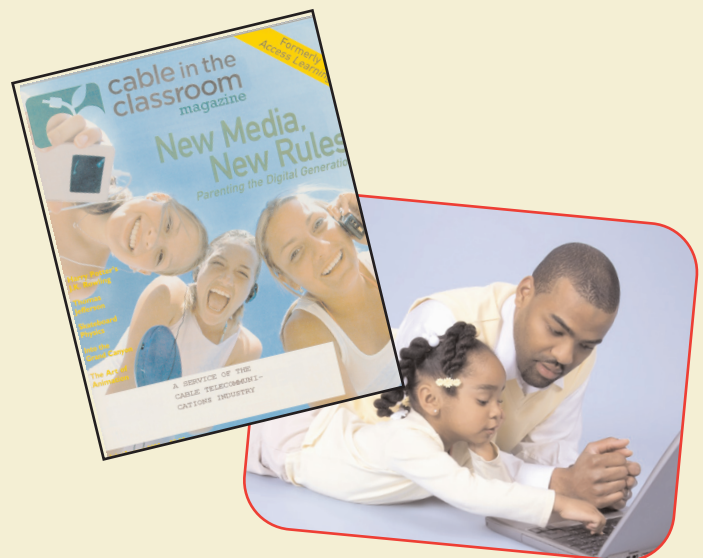
## Cable in the Classroom Magazine

At the center of CIC’s educational resources is their flagship publication, *Cable in the Classroom Magazine* (formerly *Access Learning*) which provides readers invaluable media literacy information and tools on a monthly basis.

*Cable in the Classroom Magazine* presents media literacy as an integral part of teaching and learning. For example, in the October 2006 issue, media literacy expert Sue Lockwood Summers shows how media literacy spurs critical thinking and helps teachers prepare students for state assessments. “The concept of media literacy — critical thinking applied to media messages — initiates new and compelling reasons for collaboration between the media specialist and the teachers at any school,” she writes. “Over the years, my students have been involved in media literacy lessons that caused them to transfer their thinking beyond the school’s walls to the culture in which they lived. They were indeed being prepared for the state assessment, but more important, for life.”

Issues of *Cable in the Classroom Magazine* are archived on CIC’s web site, [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org), which enables educators to retrieve past articles that hold their relevance to today’s teaching, such as Kasia Anderson’s “Five Key Questions” (December 2005), which helps teachers integrate media literacy into their instruction, or Heidi Whitus’ “New Media Literacy” (March 2005), offering six tips to help teachers and students become more media literate with new digital technology.

Frank W. Baker, a media literacy expert and creator of the Media Literacy Clearinghouse, is an avid user of *Cable in the Classroom Magazine*’s articles both for his own edification and in his speaking engagements around the country. “I frequently copy CIC media literacy articles and use them for hand-outs in my talks,” he says. “Those articles are timely, written by practicing teachers and media specialists who see the relevance and value in media literacy education as an important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill.”



For more information, visit [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org)

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## Threshold Magazine

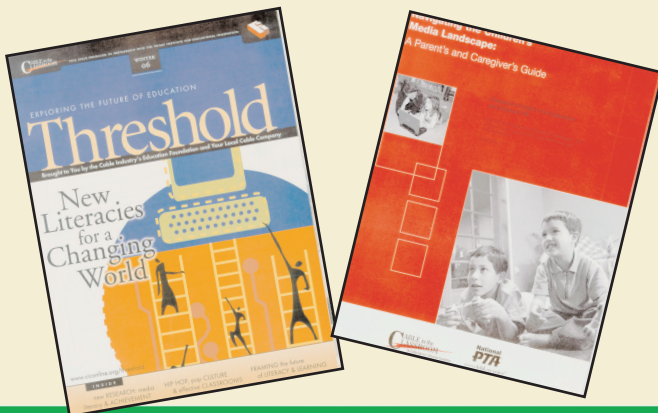
Published quarterly, the print and online pages of *Threshold* contain a range of ideas and opinions on a common goal: putting the best human and technological resources to work for learners. Each issue of *Threshold* is published in partnership with a leading national organization that provides unique expertise, perspective and diverse opinions. Partners include NASA, PTA, the National School Boards Association, the American Library Association, the National Education Association, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the Council for Exceptional Children.

Each issue contains articles for administrators and teachers that explore a single topic in depth, including such media literacy topics as “New Literacies for a Changing World” (Winter 2006) and “Beyond the Textbook” (Fall 2005). Issues are archived on Cable in the Classroom’s website.

## Media Literacy Resources for Parents

In helping students learn to analyze and think critically about media, it’s useful to educate parents as well, so that students are encouraged to apply the same thoughtful approach to using media at home.

CIC recognizes this dual challenge by offering a number of tools and resources for parents on media literacy in the home. Teachers can direct parents and caregivers to [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org) where they will find invaluable guidance in the Media Smart for Parents area, including “Internet Safety: Parenting the MySpace Generation,” a collection of research and strategies on Internet safety.



Other ciconline.org parent resources include:

- *Media Smart*, a monthly e-newsletter jointly put out by CIC and the National PTA that includes tips for parents and caregivers and recommendations of family-friendly TV shows and web sites
- *Parenting in the Media World*, an archived article from *Cable in the Classroom Magazine* offering strategies for parents and caregivers to use at home to help their children use today’s media wisely
- *Navigating the Children’s Media Landscape*, a parent and caregiver’s guide to help families develop a comprehensive media plan that allows them to better manage their family’s TV viewing, Internet use and other media activities (also available in Spanish).

Teachers often distribute these parent resources directly to parents and caregivers – and even use them in the classroom. Kara Clayton, a media teacher in Michigan, explains that “any credible media literacy resource is of value to me because it is important to stay as current as possible (with technology, media trends) when teaching media literacy classes. This is the value of all media literacy resources, but in particular *Media Smart E-News*.”

## Media Literacy 101

Many parents and even some teachers need to gain a more solid understanding of what media literacy is and why it is important. Media Literacy 101 is an online self-paced primer on the key concepts of media literacy, including chapters on:

- What Is Media Literacy?
- Living in an Image Culture
- Five Things Everyone Should Know About Media
- Media in the Classroom and the Family Room

Each section is written in accessible, informative prose, punctuated with video clips and websites that illustrate the concept. For example, in the section

"Media have commercial interests," viewers are invited to watch clips of television ads and look for the ways that the advertiser uses lifestyle and attitude to sell the product itself.

## Digital Ethics

Another self-paced online tutorial on [ciconline.org](http://ciconline.org), Digital Ethics steps educators through teaching students ethical, courteous, safe, and productive behavior while using digital media. Topics include:

- What Is Digital Ethics?
- New Media, New Problems
- Teaching Digital Ethics
- Internet Safety
- Courteous Online Behavior
- Using Digital Resources Productively

The tutorial covers such important issues as plagiarism, copyright, the "10 commandments of computer ethics," and "netiquette."



## Thinking Critically About Media

CIC teamed up again with the National PTA to create this report for both educators and families that makes the case for teaching media literacy at school and at home. National experts on children's media and media literacy contributed the thought-provoking articles, which include such topics as:

- How Media Education Promotes Critical Thinking, Democracy, Health, and Aesthetic Appreciation
- Parents and Teachers: Team Teaching Media Literacy
- Media Literacy Across the Curriculum
- Media Literacy and Prevention: Going Beyond "Just Say No"
- Empowered Parents: Role Models for Taking Charge of TV Viewing

## Internet Safety: What Do Parents Say?

In the summer of 2006, Cable in the Classroom commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a telephone survey about Internet safety among a nationwide cross section of 374 U.S. parents or legal guardians of children ages 8 – 18. Some of the notable findings include:

- Most parents (90%) think that a lot of the burden for ensuring children's safety on the Internet belongs to parents or guardians.
- At the same time, seven in ten parents (71%) feel that a lot of the responsibility should fall to schools.
- Only one in three parents (34%) feel they are very knowledgeable when it comes to educating their children about how to use the Internet safely and responsibly.
- One in ten parents (10%) report being not at all knowledgeable about how to educate their children to use the Internet safely and responsibly.
- Four in ten parents (42%) have sought advice from their child's school on how to ensure that their children use the Internet safely and responsibly.

"Cable in the Classroom provides an anchor for everything I do," says Belinha DeAbreu, Media Literacy Educator for grades 5-8 at Walsh Intermediate School in Branford, Conn. "There are so many resources – the magazine, the web site, the TV schedule – they all provide me with the tools and information I need for my media literacy lesson plans. To me, CIC is a lifeline. I don't know how I could have designed my media literacy program without them."



## Cable's Leaders in Learning™ 2006 Media Literacy Award Winners

What does a media literacy leader look like?

She could look like Sue Lockwood Summers, a parent and library-media specialist from Lakewood, Colo., who, twenty years ago, looked at the way her students and her children watched television and saw a challenge that she wanted to take on.



"Kids were imitating what they saw," she explains. "They were willing to accept without further discussion or investigation the attitudes, language, and behavior they were watching. I began to realize that television had a greater influence than we were giving it credit for, and decided I wanted to learn more about that."

That initial curiosity led her to her involvement and leadership with PRIME TIME TODAY (Parents Responsibly Involved in Media Excellence and Teens Involved in Media Excellence), a nonprofit designed to help parents, teachers, and kids become more media savvy. Her work with PTT and Turner Educational Services (now Turner Learning), has helped spread the media literacy message beyond the borders of Colorado to students and parents around the country.

"Media literacy is my passion," says Summers. "Through this program I feel that I have been able to touch the lives of literally thousands of children, teenagers, parents, and teachers."



Or a media literacy leader could look like Sister Elizabeth Thoman, CHM, a member of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in Iowa, who saw the information literacy revolution coming in the late nineteen-seventies and wondered, "Who is preparing teachers for this?" she recalls.

That question led her to found *Media & Values* magazine, whose mission was, Thoman explains, "to create a conversation between the education world and the people who knew about the new technology." In 1989, *Media & Values* evolved into the Center for Media Literacy, a combination think tank, publisher, and training center to create innovative teaching resources and encourage new ways of thinking about media. Thoman continues to be a driving force at CML, currently serving as the executive editor and director of programs.

For her most recent project, Thoman has co-written and edited the CML MediaLit Kit™: A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age, a guide to help districts and schools to learn how to implement media literacy education, theories, and practices across K-12 curriculum.

"Critical thinking in a visual age is much more complex than in a print age," says Thoman. "Everybody recognizes that kids no longer need to just accumulate data, they need to know how to make sense of the information that is coming at them, how to analyze, interpret, and decide what's important and what's trivial. What's really important is the process of interpreting it, of making meaning out of it."

For more information on Cable's Leaders in Learning™ Media Literacy Awards, visit [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org).

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## Media Literacy Resources

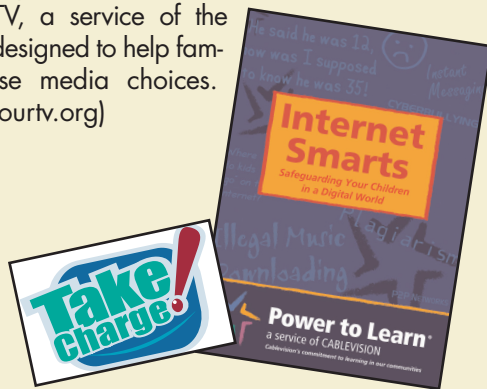
### From Cable in the Classroom

All of the following resources are available through Cable in the Classroom's award-winning web site, [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org):

- *Cable in the Classroom Magazine*, monthly news, information, resources, and teaching ideas on using media in the classroom, as well as on media literacy
- *Threshold Magazine*, a quarterly journal on educational issues facing education in an information age
- *Media Smart*, a monthly e-newsletter co-sponsored by the National PTA to help parents and caregivers help their children use media responsibly at home; also used by teachers
- *Navigating the Children's Media Landscape*, a parent and caregiver's guide to media literacy
- *Media Literacy 101*, an online, self-paced primer on media literacy
- *Digital Ethics*, an online, self-paced tutorial for teachers to help students understand appropriate, courteous and ethical behavior when using new media
- *Thinking Critically About Media*, a report jointly published with the National PTA to help parents and educators team together to create media literate schools and homes

### Other Cable Industry Resources

- Cox Communications *Take Charge*, a web site sponsored by Cox Communications that offers parents tips to help their children use the Internet safely. ([www.cox.com/takecharge](http://www.cox.com/takecharge))
- Cablevision's *Internet Smarts* encourages parents and teachers to work with children to examine issues arising from the use of digital media and provides Internet tools and resources that encourage not just safe online practices, but ethical ones on issues as wide-ranging as copyright and cyberbullying. ([www.powertolearn.com](http://www.powertolearn.com))
- Control Your TV, a service of the cable industry designed to help families make wise media choices. ([www.controlyourtv.org](http://www.controlyourtv.org))



### Recommended Organizations

- Alliance for a Media Literate America ([www.AMLAinfo.org](http://www.AMLAinfo.org)) – A membership organization of media education practitioners whose mission is to stimulate growth in media literacy education in the United States by providing national leadership, advocacy, networking, and information exchange.
- Center for Media Literacy ([www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)) – The largest producer and distributor of media literacy resources in the U.S, their site features a comprehensive online catalog of media literacy books and products, along with workshop information and a “reading room” of articles.
- Common Sense Media ([www.common SenseMedia.org](http://www.common SenseMedia.org)) – Provides specific content information and age recommendations for all the media children consume, tips for creating a family media diet, and research and news about the media's impact on children.
- Internet Keep Safe Coalition ([www.ikeepsafe.org](http://www.ikeepsafe.org)) – Teaches basic rules of Internet safety to children and adults through an animated character, Faux Paws the techno cat, in online stories and in books. Teacher materials, including worksheets and lesson ideas are available online
- i-Safe ([www.isafe.org](http://www.isafe.org)) – Offers dynamic, standards-based K-12 curriculum free of charge to educate students on how to avoid dangerous or unlawful behavior, as well as community outreach programs to extend Internet safety beyond the classroom.
- Media Literacy Clearinghouse ([www.frankwbaker.com](http://www.frankwbaker.com)) – A rich source of links for media literacy information and activities. The site contains articles, lesson plans, activities, and research findings.
- National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)) – Click on Parent Resources, then Media and Technology for resources to help parents control children's exposure to electronic media and to promote their media literacy.
- Net Smartz ([www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org)) – Initiative from National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Boys & Girls Clubs that teaches children how to stay safer online through interactive, educational games and activities. ■