

MEDIA LITERACY IS ESSENTIAL

Media messages shape our ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. In today's media environment, there are huge opportunities, as well as major consequences. Our children and the fabric of our society are at risk. Although the attention to bias in the news and misinformation has grown, it's just a part of the issue. The rapid advancement of communications technology is allowing greater access to sophisticated tools that are cheap and easy to use. For example, the accessibility of artificial intelligence tools allows ordinary people to create so-called deep-fake videos, imitate real voices, and to generate human-like text in any style in seconds. Manipulative messages and information of all kinds, created by individuals, governments, and other groups, represent a great challenge. More than ever, schools must help young people learn to make sound judgments about what they see, hear, or read.

Social media is changing us as individuals and as a society. Research shows the online social media tools we use today can have harmful effects that can be life-changing, and deadly, for children. Cyberbullying, online radicalization through gaming, and sextortion, are among the many online harms. In addition, there are physiological and neurological effects we are only beginning to understand.



“Disinformation is a serious problem, but it’s only the tip of the iceberg. We have so much more work to do in equipping our young people with media literacy skills to gain more control over how they’re influenced by their experiences with media.”

– Juma Inniss, Founder & Director, The Message

It's important to continue to raise awareness of the problem, and also to raise awareness of how to respond. Media Literacy Now takes the view that teaching the set of skills we refer to as media literacy – across grade levels and subjects in U.S. schools – is an essential part of the solution for supporting young digital citizens to engage in a global media environment, and for protecting our children against manipulative information.

