

## **Before it's too late: media literacy education must start early**

Less than half of America knows how to interpret the news they read.<sup>1</sup> In a country where over 200 million citizens are registered to vote for the people governing the United States, that number is quite disconcerting.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning statistics like these can be partially attributed to media often misrepresenting opinions as facts. While politicians argue fiercely in the legislature, some news outlets also divide along partisan lines, further polarizing society.

Within this chaos, those consuming such media are left to make sense of the thousands of opinions they are exposed to, many of which are factually inaccurate. With immediate access to social media and online news, Americans today have an unprecedented awareness of local and national politics— but like generations before, they struggle to interpret the news reported to them. Given today's constant flow of information, the line between fact and opinion is sometimes blurred in this reporting, ultimately making it even harder for people to form informed opinions—unless media literacy becomes more widespread.

Media literacy, like algebra, must become a state-mandated high school graduation requirement.<sup>3</sup> Being able to tell the difference between information and entertainment is just as vital as the logical thinking skills developed through algebra, and going forward, we must emphasize it as such. Through a thorough curriculum curated by journalists, educators, and media literacy specialists, this nation should teach future voters how to make educated decisions regarding candidates, think critically of how national and global news is presented, and identify

---

<sup>1</sup> Media Literacy Now. “National Survey Finds Most U.S. Adults Have Not Had Media Literacy Education in High School.” *Medialiteracynow.org*, 7 Sept. 2022, [medialiteracynow.org/nationalsurvey2022/](https://medialiteracynow.org/nationalsurvey2022/).

<sup>2</sup> “Registered Voters by Party 2023.” *Worldpopulationreview.com*, [worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/registered-voters-by-party](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/registered-voters-by-party).

<sup>3</sup> Zinth, Jennifer. *Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver*. 2012.

and analyze bias in media. Additionally, they should warn students of their own cognitive biases and how algorithms manipulate them to only show one side of every issue.<sup>4</sup>

While cautioning against fake news, high school media literacy programs would also promote ways to seek out reputable, factual information while not promoting any one media organization over another. Students would also be taught ways to double-check questionable information using the internet, public records, and other resources. Proficiency in these skills must be proven the same way mastery of every subject is academically shown: through an examination or other approved method. This way, American youth are able to hold media organizations accountable for biased reporting, or at least have a basic understanding of how to find accurate information.

As for older Americans, encouraging use of platforms such as Ground News, a media bias site presenting an opposing viewpoint to every story, is crucial to reestablishing credibility in the media.<sup>5</sup> Actively seeking out both sides prevents creation of an echo chamber, and enables readers to easily double-check information that may seem dubious online. More than anything else, reengaging Americans with the media requires empowerment, not protection.<sup>6</sup> While Americans may not be able to shelter themselves from present bias in media, they will develop sharper critical thinking skills if given the opportunities and tools to do so. Instruction on what how to spot media bias, as well as reading from a wide variety of news outlets, are essential to preserving and rebuilding what remains of trust in the news.

---

<sup>4</sup> Adisa, Dorcas. "Everything You Need to Know about Social Media Algorithms." *Sprout Social*, 30 Oct. 2023, [sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/](https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/).

<sup>5</sup> "Ground News." *Ground News*, [web.ground.news](https://web.ground.news). Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Ciucci, Carolina. "What Is Media Literacy and How Can You Increase Your Own?" *BOOK RIOT*, 2 Oct. 2023, [bookriot.com/media-literacy/](https://bookriot.com/media-literacy/).

## Works Cited

- Adisa, Dorcas. "Everything You Need to Know about Social Media Algorithms." *Sprout Social*, 30 Oct. 2023, [sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/](https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/).
- Ciucci, Carolina. "What Is Media Literacy and How Can You Increase Your Own?" *BOOK RIOT*, 2 Oct. 2023, [bookriot.com/media-literacy/](https://bookriot.com/media-literacy/).
- "Ground News." *Ground News*, [web.ground.news](https://web.ground.news). Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.
- Media Literacy Now. "National Survey Finds Most U.S. Adults Have Not Had Media Literacy Education in High School." *Medialiteracynow.org*, 7 Sept. 2022, [medialiteracynow.org/nationalsurvey2022/](https://medialiteracynow.org/nationalsurvey2022/).
- "Registered Voters by Party 2023." *Worldpopulationreview.com*, [worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/registered-voters-by-party](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/registered-voters-by-party).
- Zinth, Jennifer. *Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver*. 2012.