

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM REPORT
2011-2012**

PLT Title

This We Believe: Media Literacy Education is Essential for Today's 21st Century Learners

Blurb for PLT Conference Brochure

Today, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes to using entertainment media in a typical day – more than 53 hours a week. **Because of rate at which they consume media**, students must develop the skills necessary to think critically about all forms of media to make sure that they can access, evaluate, and synthesize these media to become educated and productive citizens of the future.

Contact Information (Write * next to facilitator's name.)

Name	School	Grade Level or Subject
Rebecca Bourke	Chenery	6 th Grade ELA/SS
Karen Duff	Chenery	Librarian
Andy MacAulay	Chenery	6 th Grade math/science
Andrew Semuels	Chenery	6 th Grade ELA/SS
*Pete Tausek	Chenery	6 th Grade ELA/SS
Toby Vogel	Chenery	Reading

Guiding Theme

- Differentiated Instruction/RTI
- Integrated, Real-Life Experiences
- X Acquisition of 21st Century Skills**
- Deepening Teacher Content Knowledge
- Improving School Climate/Culture
- Teaching the "Whole Student"
- Other (explain) _____

Inquiry Question

"How do we design lessons (5th & 6th grade), implementing the Media Power Youth curriculum, that will teach students to think critically about media, in all its forms, in order to assure that they have the cognitive, emotional, and technical abilities to actively find, assess, and evaluate information/media in today's world."

Process

Our process began last year when Karen Duff applied for an FBE grant to have a non-profit called Media Power Youth (MPY) provide a media literacy curriculum. In the fall, our PLT attended a training session from MPY in which they presented their program, which has students analyze different forms of media. We revised the MPY curriculum to fit our needs and our students.

During our meetings, we would review and revise each of the curriculum units provided by MPY to solidify the curriculum connections, particularly in English language arts (writing paragraphs, poetry, vocabulary) and guidance (core values, community mindedness, individual and social responsibility).

Karen would then teach the lessons and we would discuss how they went at the beginning of our next meeting.

First, Karen taught students in 5th grade how to “deconstruct” many forms of media messages by analyzing the content using commercials, billboards, and film clips, with an emphasis on violent images and content. Then she had the students create/construct their own media, in the form of a podcast, using NPR’s “This I Believe” program as a model. Students produced written paragraphs, poems, or annotated lists of their beliefs and values as young people. Then they then recorded their written work as sound files, learning how to use the Audacity sound software program. These files will constitute the “This I Believe” Podcast that will reside on the Chenery Website in the near future.

Findings

-Ample research supports both necessity and relevance for teaching media literacy skills in every grade level, K-12 (<http://www.massmedialiteracyconsortium.com/fact-sheet.html>)

-As with any pilot program, scheduling and coordinating technical resources and class time posed some challenges. We can predict further challenges if media literacy curricula and student media production are to be expanded to grades 6, 7 and 8.

-Students exhibited significant interest and excitement in both the writing process and the power of recording and hearing their own voices. For almost every 5th grader, this was the first time such a piece was produced and validated in school. Cooperating 5th grade teachers noted that even the most reluctant writers were fully engaged in this project.

Recommendations / Next Steps

-Media literacy needs to be an interdisciplinary effort district-wide. There is pending legislation in MA (Bill 1956) that schools will have to make room in the curriculum for media literacy. The development of 21st Century Skills has also been included on district-wide goals.

-Media literacy needs to be rolled out in other grades; need a scope and sequence; no S&S currently and any use of media/new technology is done by students or teachers individually.

-Representatives from faculty should meet with IT Dept to suggest more access to programs like Audacity, Photoshop, Google Earth, on teacher and student accounts (Have a conversation with IT about what teachers would like to use in classroom) and discuss the issues that exist on the tech side of this equation.

-Create in-house Professional Development opportunities for teachers who are interested in learning new forms of media and media production/dissemination