

Preface

It was a stunning finding: more than a third of the 112,000 respondents to the initial Knight Foundation *Future of the First Amendment* (Yalof & Dautrich, 2005) survey of high school students said the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees. These students didn't believe "that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions or newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories" (p. 1). Such results indicate a profound lack of understanding of the role of media in a democracy. They suggest a preference for avoiding opinions that challenge one's worldview and an inclination to rely on others to serve as gatekeepers of information rather than a willingness to question others or learn how to discern credibility for oneself. This is a wakeup call: we as educators need to do a better job of teaching about media, free speech, and democracy. And media literacy education can help.

As long-term media literacy educators who bring to the task a combined thirty-five years of staff and curriculum development experience, we have drawn from the growing body of theory and practice from a range of countries, perspectives, and disciplines to develop an educational approach that specifically applies to the United States.¹ But what most distinguishes *The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy* from these works is that while they focus on *how to teach media literacy*, we focus on *using media literacy to teach*.

As a result, we pay a lot of attention to how people learn. We look at how practices and theories familiar to educators—but often missing from media literacy texts—apply to media literacy education. In addition, this is the first book to be based specifically on the *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States* developed in 2007 by the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). As two of that document's co-authors, we are able to link theory to practice with dozens of activity ideas and lesson plans based on our own experiences and those of the many teachers with whom we have worked.

Media literacy has been identified as one of the key 21st-century skills by an amazingly wide range of organizations from the Catholic Church, the United Nations, and the American Academy of Pediatrics to professional education organizations like National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). In *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World* (Jacobs, 2010), ASCD includes media literacy as one of the key areas for transforming schools and education. Support for media literacy has

also come from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and other business groups, as well as other government agencies. Joining the groundswell in acknowledging that media literacy overlaps with other critical literacies necessary for successfully navigating today's world, a growing number of states specifically require aspects of media literacy education in assessments for graduation.

In classroom after classroom, media literacy has demonstrated a power to reach all kinds of students, even those who have been uninterested in school. It is much more than a response to changing technologies; it is a vital and effective way to create a culture of inquiry in US schools and meet today's most pressing educational needs. We offer these pages as a springboard for educators who are ready to jump into the media literacy pond. We think you will find, as we have, that the waters are invigorating.