

Hands-On Media Literacy

Overview

In the Hands-On Media Literacy unit, students work in teams as advertising agencies. Each member of the ad agency is a creative advertising executive for a product company. As executives, students' goals are to create an original product they introduce to the mass market across the United States (in role-playing as an ad agency). The project includes these dimensions:

- ❑ Ad agencies brainstorm a name for their advertising agency, divide responsibilities and keep written day-to-day progress in journals.
- ❑ Agency executives (students) brainstorm, design and create a children's toy or product using various supplies. They are responsible for naming the product as well as packaging it.
- ❑ Agency executives create and design an accompanying product manual with the following:
 - descriptions of the product's features and suggestions for use (creative writing)
 - step-by-step assembly instructions (expository writing)
 - name, quantity and catalog of building pieces included in packaging (technical writing)
 - information about the creators of the product (biographical writing)
 - digital photographs or illustrations to support the above information
- ❑ Agency executives design an advertising campaign detailing the target audience, demographics and form(s) of media they plan to use.
- ❑ Agency executives create a 15- or 30- second television spot.

Ways Hands-On Media Literacy Benefits Students and Teachers:

The main goal of Hands-On Media Literacy is to allow students to become active participants in the marketing, advertising and writing process. Hands-On Media Literacy allows students to produce various types of writing, both as individuals and as team members. Throughout the lesson, students have the opportunity to be technical writers, copywriters, creative writers and biographers. Hands-On Media Literacy invites students to experience the career world by taking on roles of advertising executives.

In contrast to some classroom lessons, students have the opportunity to work hands-on with other team members. Hands-On Media Literacy is a student-centered process that fosters critical thinking and creative, open-ended work. With the integration of Multiple Intelligence theory, the project supports special education students, ELLs (English language learners) and gifted students using group work, peer collaboration, hands-on materials and a variety of texts (written booklets, produced commercials, drawings and photos, live presentations). Hands-On Media Literacy allows the teacher to build on her style of teaching using cooperative learning groups while facilitating the academic needs of students. Moreover, it allows the teacher to maximize creativity in a "real world" application of knowledge. It also supports many district-wide and statewide standards and benchmarks. Finally, it allows the teacher to expand her repertoire of teaching by introducing student-centered projects where students learn new content by applying literacy skills.

Goals of Hands-On Media Literacy

Hands-On Media Literacy offers a number of goals using specific concepts and higher-level thinking skills. Among them are the following:

Students will . . .

- Write in a variety of ways including creative writing, technical writing, expository writing, biographical writing and journal writing.
- Learn and apply advertising terminology.
- Collaborate and problem solve in groups.
- Understand the relationship between advertising and consumerism and how they, as individuals, fit into that relationship.
- Understand how the media influence and manipulate us.
- Understand and apply oral presentation skills.
- Evaluate themselves and others as part of the reflection process.

The following New Mexico State Standards are also addressed:

- Students will apply strategies and skills to comprehend information that is read, heard and viewed.
- Students will communicate effectively through speaking and writing.
- Students will use literature and the media to develop an understanding of people, societies and the self.

Ways of Evaluating Hands-On Media Literacy:

Students and/or the teacher design a rubric which details a range of criteria measurements including quality of work, individual participation and peer collaboration. The process of Hands-On Media Literacy is just as important as the end product; therefore, a suggestion is that students should meet intermittent deadlines throughout the project and should self-evaluate in addition to receiving evaluations from the teacher. Furthermore, success of the project should be measured by teacher-student dialogue at various stages along the way. At the close of the project, students write a reflection highlighting the positive and negative aspects of the project. Finally, as a class, the students and teacher list the pros and cons of the project on the board and have a class discussion around it.

Ways to Share Hands-On Media Literacy in Your Community:

The final portion of this project is group presentations. Students, teachers, friends and parents can be the audience to whom the advertising agencies present their products. If the school holds an open house, the presentation could be done for parents and guests. If there is a class newsletter, the teacher can provide parents with updates of the project on a regular basis. Information can also be disseminated through school mail-home newsletters or on a school website. Additionally, progress of the project can be photographed at various stages using digital camera technology. Digital photographs can be scanned in the newsletter and online school website. Students can be the authors and editors of the online text and captions.

Building Materials Needed:

To begin, you need to have building materials available or have students bring in their own. Building materials include just about anything that is clean and safe. The possibilities are endless—use your imagination! Many schools have die cut materials that come in a variety of shapes to be cut out. Below are suggestions of household materials for building:

2002 Christie McAuley used with permission

- Pipe cleaners
- Styrofoam packing material
- Popsicle sticks
- Toothpicks
- Toilet Tissue/Paper towel rolls
- Modeling clay
- Play-Doh
- Fabric scraps
- Construction paper
- Cardboard boxes/scraps
- Wire
- Yarn
- Aluminum foil
- Lego building blocks
- Egg cartons