

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, Porn Literacy... You may have heard these terms in conversation with colleagues, at conferences, and in your professional development sessions over the past few years. In our ever-evolving world, it is important to adjust our instructional strategies to meet the changing needs of our young people. While our students often are up to date on the newest technologies before we are, guiding them through the process of recognizing, understanding, and reflecting on how all this new technology affects their lives is an important role for us as educators.

The American Library Association ([ala.org](http://ala.org)), defines digital literacy as “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.” Digital literacy is a technical skill that all people need in order to navigate the modern world. The [National Health Education Standards](#), (SHAPE America, 2020) refer to this skill as part of Standard 3, “students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.” This skill of digital literacy is really about our young people knowing how to use digital tools in health enhancing ways.

Media Literacy goes a step further, and prompts us to be able to analyze, reflect, and think critically about how a variety of media influences our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Whether it’s social media posts, television and movies, or even music, critical thinking skills are vital in the age of ‘fake-news’, mis-information, and a global society. The [National Sexuality Education Standards](#) (FOSE, 2022) explicitly names performance indicators that include the understanding of “communications platforms, including social media, and the increasing use and impact of technology within relationships.”

Digital and Media Literacy go hand-in-hand. Both skills being imperative as they work together in our lives. Knowing how digital tools work, why analyzing media is important, and reflecting on what the use of digital tools and media means in our everyday lives is a key strategy in health and sexuality education.

The core concepts and questions of Media Literacy, listed below, are an example of how we, as educators, can frame our discussion and lessons around media literacy; this includes media that are sexually explicit. These are from CML, [medialit.org/cml-framework](http://medialit.org/cml-framework).

### **Core Concepts of Media Literacy**

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

### **Key Questions of Media Literacy**

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, points of view are represented or omitted from this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?