News Literacy

Course

The Case for Digital Literacy [6:28]

https://players.brightcove.net/2566261579001/HyuWsfFhb_default/index.html?videoId=6217633977001

About

- Learn ways to approach the amount of information at our fingertips.
- Learn about contextualizing fake news and critically consuming news.
- Learn why digital citizenship and media literacy are connected.

Transcript

Jackie: Last episode we were talking about some pretty important ideas that we were exposed to in 2016. I think we're kicking this episode off with another important event from 2016, aren't we?

Michelle: It was definitely a big year for information.

Jackie: It was. Can you talk to us a little bit about the SHEG report and who the SHEG group is?

Michelle: Sure. The Stanford History Education Group has been a guide for history teachers for a very long time. They put together a research study that involved three separate basically cohorts or age groups of students—middle school students, high school students and college students. They wanted to measure their ability to negotiate what they were reading online and interpret it and really be thoughtful and critical and skeptical readers. The initial instrument that they put together in order to survey these students was, they had to scrap it because the students were performing so far below their expectations that they actually had to redesign their instrument for making these assessments.

Jackie: They even say in their report how horrified they were to find how unprepared the students were to deal with the first instrument.

Michelle: Exactly. They scaled it back, they redesigned it, they went back to their cohorts, and they continued their assessment. In their executive summary, they really have a sentence that really spoke to me, in particular, is that, "never have we had so much information at our fingertips and whether this bounty will make us smarter and better informed or more ignorant and narrow-minded will depend on our awareness of this problem and our educational response to it." That's really sort of a call to action to us, as educators, to really think about how we're approaching this in our classrooms and in our schools and with our learning communities whether they are in the earlier education years or farther along all the way in college. This is still a responsibility that we need to be aware of even at that far late in the game.

Jackie: Yes. It starts by contextualizing for educators and then educators contextualizing for students, really what fake news and disinformation are all about. They're not new phenomenon. Fake news dates back to the days of Hearst and Pulitzer and their newspapers during the era of Yellow Journalism and the Spanish-American War. We fought a war because of what newspapers were publishing at the time. You can fast forward to today and Stephen Colbert, 12 years ago, talking about "truthiness." As humorous as it is to have him suggest that he would feel the news at us, he really was striking at something really important; are we critically consuming the news, or are we consuming news and information with our gut? Are we worse informed because we aren't critically considering that? Of course, he followed that up with Wikiality and the idea that we're now crowdsourcing our information.

Michelle: Right. If more people believe it then it must be true.

Jackie: Exactly.

Michelle: What does it mean to be digitally literate?

Jackie: That's a great question and I think that there are multiple elements of digital literacy. There is certainly the ability to understand graphically information that you're

receiving and be able to break down the kinds of things that are conveyed visually and in charts and in maps and in diagrams. Today, that kind of information is being paired with images, with photographs, with video, with text and so information today comes in a true multimedia simultaneous delivery. To me, being digitally literate is being able to dissect all of those different pieces and then respond appropriately.

Michelle: Right. The connection between media literacy and digital citizenship, let's talk about that for just a minute.

Jackie: I think that the connection is really quite tight, I don't think that they can be separated from one another. You and I attended the Google Digital Citizenship Summit back in December of 2017 in New York City. One of the groups that participated in presenting to us there was Connect Safely, and you and I both continued to talk for quite some time afterwards about their comparison of student rights with student responsibilities. That students have the right to create and share online the product of their creative ability, they have the right to freely express their ideas, they have the right to access information online. I think that all educators would support that and with that--

Michelle: But of course, there is a responsibility to do the homework before sharing, to understand that rights are not limited, to use rights to not disrupt basic rights of others or harm them in any way.

Jackie: Exactly. So I don't think those two things can be separated.

Michelle: I agree. What is our call to action, Jackie?

Jackie: Well, the SHEG report has been followed up with more information and more suggestions by Sam Wineburg and his group. They have said to educators that maybe it's time to put aside the checklist verifying of content and information, what many of us would refer to as the CRAP test, and begin to think laterally with information. Do a quick skim of a source, and then begin to search other places for the information that source is trying to convey. That equips a reader, it equips an information consumer with some background and some ability to question and verify as they read a source, the content that the source is providing. I think that our call to action should be for educators, for librarians and classroom teachers, to help students think like fact-checkers by verifying information in this new way.

Michelle: And in the process, they'll build some great research skills too.

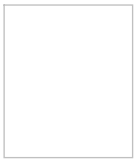
Jackie: Absolutely.

Activities

Think Like a Fact Checker

"Never have we had so much information at our fingertips." This sentence speaks to many educators as they venture into teaching students how to critically look at the news they are reading. How do you work with your students to make sure they understand how to spot fake news or disinformation? Are you teaching them laterally read information? Read the SLC article and complete the Reflect & Practice activity below.

RESOURCES:



Handout

REFLECT & PRACTICE:

In order to think like a fact checker, we must be able to see why that is important. What are some of the things we should be thinking when we see a photo in an article? How do I see the same article with several different titles or outcomes? Working with your students, pick a few topics to research and find articles on that topic and note their differences. What audiences are intended on each site and how does that affect the article?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional Resources.

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