

Media Literacy

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Issue

Which states have passed legislation about media literacy for high school students?

Summary

We found one state, New Mexico, that allows media literacy course credits to count towards high school graduation. The state's law allows, but does not require, public high schools to offer it as an elective. It also allows the subject to be offered as an elective for grades 6-8. The law does not define "media literacy" ([N.M. Stat. Ann. §§ 22-13-1 & -1.1.G.\(8\)](#)).

Comparatively, Connecticut requires public schools to teach the safe use of social media as part of their health and safety courses, but the state does not limit the subject to certain grade levels. State law defines "social media" as "an electronic medium where users may create and view user-generated content, such as uploaded or downloaded videos or still photographs, blogs, video blogs, podcasts or instant messages" ([CGS §§ 10-16b and 9-601](#)).

Additionally, you may be interested to know that we found other states with media or digital literacy laws for their schools that were not limited to high school instruction. Four states (California, Delaware, Maine, and Washington) require their state agencies to provide resources, materials, or professional development for teaching media literacy. Two states (Hawaii and Washington) require librarians to provide media literacy instruction or programming. Three states (Colorado, Utah, and Washington) have established advisory committees on media literacy curriculum implementation. Two states (New Jersey and Washington) require the state to develop academic standards to add to the K-12 public school curriculum.

Other Media Literacy Laws

California

State law requires California’s Department of Education to make available to school districts an online list of resources and instructional materials on media literacy, including media literacy professional development programs for teachers ([Cal. Educ. Code § 51206.4](#)).

Colorado

Colorado’s legislature established a media literacy advisory committee within the state’s Department of Education to make recommendations for implementing media literacy in elementary and secondary education. It also required the department to create and maintain an online resource bank of materials and resources about media literacy that at least includes the materials and resources recommended by the committee ([Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-2-145](#)).

Delaware

Delaware’s “Digital Citizenship Education Act” requires its Department of Education to develop and maintain evidence-based media literacy standards for use by school districts and charter schools serving students in grades kindergarten through 12. The standards and materials must be age-appropriate and address appropriate, responsible, and healthy online behavior ([Del. Code Ann. tit. 14, § 4146](#)).

Hawaii

State law establishes a digital literacy program, overseen by the Board of Education and implemented by the state librarian. The program promotes digital literacy through programmatic activities, including making digital technology accessible to individuals with disabilities ([Haw. Rev. Stat. § 312-8.5](#)). Additionally, Hawaii has a Digital Learning Center within the Department of Education funded by the state ([Haw. Rev. Stat. § 302A-455](#)).

Maine

Maine requires the commissioner of education to develop a program of technical assistance in digital literacy, including offering professional development and training for educators in using online learning resources effectively ([Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 20-A, § 254\(15\)](#)).

New Jersey

In 2022, New Jersey passed a law requiring its State Board of Education to adopt New Jersey Student Learning Standards in information literacy. The law defines “information literacy” to include

digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. It requires each public school district to incorporate information literacy instruction in an appropriate place in their K-12 curriculum ([SB 588 \(2022\)](#)).

Utah

Utah has created the Digital Wellness, Citizenship, and Safe Technology Commission. Broadly speaking, the commission is tasked with ensuring that students are digital media-literate and able to use technology safely and ethically by (1) identifying best practices for digital citizenship training, (2) compiling and publishing resources and emerging resources about educating students in digital citizenship, and (3) administering state-appropriated funds ([Utah Code Ann. §§ 63C-22-102, -201 & -202](#)).

Washington

Washington includes student instruction in digital citizenship among its teacher-librarian duties, including how to be critical consumers of information and provide guidance about using online resources thoughtfully and strategically ([Wash. Rev. Code § 28A.320.240](#)). The state's law defines "digital citizenship" to include "the norms of appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior related to current technology use, including digital and media literacy, ethics, etiquette, and security," and "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, develop, produce, and interpret media, as well as internet safety and cyberbullying prevention and response" ([Wash. Rev. Code §§ 28A.650.010](#)).

Additionally, in 2016 the state passed [Senate Bill 6273](#), which addresses safe technology use and digital citizenship in public schools. The legislation provides a process for students, parents, teachers, librarians, and others to engage in ongoing discussions about safe technology use, internet use, digital citizenship, and media literacy through an advisory committee. It also requires the state's educational technology learning standards to be revised to include the teaching of digital citizenship ([Wash. Rev. Code §§ 28A.650.010 & 28A.650.045](#)). Furthermore, the state's superintendent of public instruction must post best practices and resources online for the teaching of digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy ([Wash. Rev. Code § 28A.650.050](#)).

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