Sustaining the Work of Media Literacy Education in Early Childhood

At the Media Literacy in Early Childhood Practitioners Forum, Jan O'Brien, educator in the Chicago area, said **"We all own a piece of this and we can all make great things happen in the future with media literacy and young children."** Caregivers, practitioners, community and organization leaders, researchers, and policy-influencers all have a stake in impacting young children's media literacy. All who serve young children hold an opportunity to challenge and overcome barriers which stand in the way of implementing media literacy education. These barriers are woven throughout a child's ecosystem, from their immediate setting at a museum or library; to the training and education of practitioners, administrators and leaders; and to systemic barriers of policy, research, and societal values and beliefs about media literacy, child development, and early education. While there are many barriers which impact media literacy education everyday, there are also many existing solutions and opportunities to create needed solutions.

The intention of Sustaining the Work is two-fold. First, to name the current barriers and provide existing solutions including further readings, research, and tips. Second, Sustaining the Work provides "Needed Solutions" which serve as solutions to advocate for by caregivers, practitioners, community and organization leaders, researchers, and policy-influencers.

Current Barriers to Media Literacy in Early Childhood

See pages 2-11.

1. Lack of resources and support for practitioners
2. Lack of resources and support for caregivers
3. Disconnected caregiver-practitioner relationship
4. Practitioners not trained or not confident in their media literacy practice
5. Lack of support for administration and leadership
6. Lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement
7. Lack of policies
8. Insufficient funding
9. Lack of research
10. Low value of media literacy, child development, and early education

Current Barrier ❶ Lack of resources and support for practitioners

Practitioners cannot implement media literacy education without access to high quality resources, including frameworks, curriculum, lesson plans, and activities to support them getting started, as well as concrete examples such as how-to videos to model teaching media literacy. Additionally, practitioners need support from colleagues, administration and leadership, as well as from those who are implementing media literacy in different settings.

There are many existing readings, curricula, lesson plans, activities and quick tip sheets to support the implementation of media literacy for practitioners serving children 8 years old and older. Resources for older children often don't meet the developmental needs of young children, so practitioners need resources which are developmentally appropriate for the children they serve. Needed solutions include a physical place, either virtually or in person, where practitioners can see someone else model these practices, as well as a strengthening of support from administration and leadership and colleagues, as well as from those who are implementing media literacy in other settings.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *A Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy:* by Cyndy Scheibe and Faith Rogow • *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for teaching and learning,* edited by Chip Donohue **Standards and policy statements** • NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center joint position statement, *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* • ISTE Student Standards for Digital Citizenship **Curricula, lesson plans, and activities** • Teaching Tolerance (Starts at Kindergarten) • Teaching for Change (Starts at Pre-K) **Quick guides and tip sheets** • Media Literacy is Early Childhood Tips for Practitioners by TEC Center (in Appendix) • *Evaluating Apps and New Media for Young Children: A Rubric,* created by Claudia Haines • *KIDMAP DIG Diversity and Inclusion Checklist,* developed by Claudia Haines and KIDMAP	**A place to see and practice** • A physical space in person for practitioners to model how to implement media literacy, as well as opportunities to recreate the modeled practices • A catalogue of short webinars discussing practice • A catalogue of videos modeling media literacy practices with young children **Support from others** • Support from colleagues, administrators and leadership with open communication • Collaboration with cross-setting practitioners

Current Barrier ❷ Lack of resources and support for caregivers

In order for caregivers to continue media literacy education at home and throughout a child's life, caregivers need a wealth of resources and support. Unlike other subjects taught today, most caregivers did not grow up learning about media literacy, especially digital media literacy. For children to be media literate, their caregivers also need to practice media literacy and that cannot happen without sufficient resources and support.

In order to overcome this barrier, quick guides and tip sheets must be created so caregivers can learn about media literacy and how to support their children's media literacy. In addition to the quick guides and tip sheets, caregivers must have opportunities to become and grow as a media mentor.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *Building Healthy Relationships with Media: A Parent's Guide to Media Literacy* by NAMLE • NAEYC.org Play resources which includes tips on supporting young children's play **Quick guides and tip sheets** • Media Literacy in Early Childhood Tip Sheet for Caregivers by TEC Center (in Appendix) • *Evaluating Apps and New Media for Young Children: A Rubric,* created by Claudia Haines • *KIDMAP DIG Diversity and Inclusion Checklist,* developed by Claudia Haines and KIDMAP at joinkidmap.org/digchecklist	**Quick guides and tip sheets** • Quick guides and tips sheets printed as well as available online which includes tips, activities, open-ended prompts and language for caregivers to use **Opportunities to become a media mentor** • A series of media literacy 101 videos or short webinars intended for caregivers • An increase in programs, similar to Tech Goes Home, which supports caregivers' identity as a strong media mentor • Increase opportunities for caregivers to be included in creating media

Current Barrier ③ Disconnected caregiver-practitioner relationship

Practitioners and caregivers must work together to ensure media literacy is not only being implemented in the "educational" setting such as in schools, museums, libraries, child care centers, etc., but is also being implemented at home. Practitioners and caregivers both play important roles in the child's development and learning so they must work together, collaboratively, valuing each other's experiences and knowledge, in order to support the child fully.

There are many communication opportunities for practitioners and caregivers. However, the key to a connected and attuned relationship is respect and value for the other's culture, beliefs, experience, knowledge, and availability, among others. Both practitioners and caregivers need support and resources to create opportunities for best-fit communication.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Communication opportunities • Tip: Practitioners, include media literacy into existing "getting to know you" materials such as a questionnaire or family handbook. • Practitioners, host a caregiver night to talk about various media types, including digital media.	**Best-fit communication opportunities** • Culturally responsive education for practitioners and caregivers • A quick guide or tip sheet explaining how to find the best method of communication which supports availability of both parties and values both parties' experience and knowledge

Current Barrier ④ Practitioners not trained or not confident in their media literacy practice

Most practitioners who are trained to work with young children have never formally been trained for media literacy education and may not feel confident as a media mentor. Practitioners need support during pre-service and in-service professional development, as well as resources they could use in the moment in order to build their identity as a strong media mentor for young children.

There are a minimal number of professional development programs focused on media literacy. The programs that do exist either focus on general technology implementation, media literacy in a specific setting such as libraries or in K-12 education at school, or do not focus on media literacy for children younger than 8 years old. Practitioners need an increase in professional development opportunities.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Professional development programs • TEC Center's professional development program, TEC Mentors • Peer Coaching Media Mentorship Toolkit, led in development by Conni Strittmatter, formerly of Harford County Public Library in Maryland • Media Literacy Educator Certification by KQED **Readings** • *Becoming a Media Mentor: A guide for working with children and families,* by Claudia Haines, Cen Campbell, and ALSC • *Media Education: Make It Happen!* by Media Smarts	**Increase professional development opportunities** • Include media literacy education in pre-service education • Scale up existing in-service programs using implementation science to reach more practitioners • Increase the amount of programs which focus on informal learning and practitioners serving children ages 0-8 • Increase the amount of programs which focus on practitioners creating their identity as strong media mentor • Feature media literacy sessions, keynotes, or workshops at early childhood conferences

Current Barrier ⑤ Lack of support for administration and leadership

Highly trained practitioners are only as strong as the administration and leadership that support them. Administration and leadership are often overlooked as an integral part of media literacy efforts. However, without their support, the implementation of media literacy practices is incredibly challenging.

An increase of support for administration and leadership is a step towards sustaining the work of media literacy in early childhood. Administration and leadership must value media literacy education and understand their role in sustaining these efforts. They must have a plethora of readings and learning opportunities to value and advocate for media literacy education.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • *Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for teaching and learning,* edited by Chip Donohue • *Digital Play for Global Citizens: A guide from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop* by Jordan Shapiro • *Becoming a Media Mentor: A guide for working with children and families,* by Claudia Haines, Cen Campbell, and ALSC	**Quick guides and tip sheets** • Administration and leadership guide to media literacy • Administration and leadership guide and tips to advocate for media literacy education **Professional development opportunities** • Professional development program for administration and leadership • Opportunities to collaborate with practitioners, other administrators, and leaders

Current Barrier ⑥ Lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement

While there are many existing resources and support for practitioners, caregivers, administration and leadership, there is a lack of inclusivity and reach in the media literacy movement. There is a lack of representation in all areas of the media literacy movement, which affects who ultimately has access to the resources and support and which cultures and experiences are represented in the making of resources and support.

The media literacy movement, including policy-influencers, researchers, administration and leadership, practitioners and caregivers who advocate for media literacy education in early childhood, is experiencing a lack of inclusivity and reach. To challenge and overcome this barrier, there must be a systemic change in policy, research, and practice to increase the inclusivity and reach of the movement.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize resources from entities which prioritize inclusivity and equity • Teaching Tolerance (Starts at Kindergarten) • Teaching for Change (Starts at Pre-K) **Become involved with leading media literacy organizations** • NAMLE	**Develop professional development for practitioners who:** • Teach in formal and informal education settings • Teach in rural, suburban, and urban settings • Serve racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, linguistically diverse populations • Serve children with special needs and developmental delays **At events such as conferences, symposia, forums, etc.:** • Event hosts should ensure speakers and invitees are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, experience, beliefs, and abilities

Current Barrier ❼ Lack of policies

While there have been decades of valuing print media literacy in American education, governing bodies have been slow to acknowledge the impact and prevalence of digital media in a young child's life and the necessity of media literacy education. Today, there are many policies dictating what children should be learning in early childhood. These policies reflect what society believes to be important to a foundation of academic achievement and development. Currently, many policies including rating and assessment systems limit digital media use by placing restrictions on technology in early child care and education settings. Such policies confuse educators as they navigate an understanding of the importance to teach healthy and appropriate digital media use within a physical space where technology and digital media use is restricted.

Policies focusing on media literacy would be a reflection of the necessity of media literacy education in early childhood. In order to establish and sustain media literacy efforts, there must be changes to existing policies for informal and formal education. Utilizing other countries' media literacy policies and existing resources to inform policymakers is the existing solution. However, in order to overcome the barrier to a lack of policies focused on media literacy, existing policies must be updated and/or new policies must be created.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Readings • Media Literacy Now's Legislative Action Toolkit, Model Bill, and more resources • *Creating Access to Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy Education* by Common Sense Kids Action, Media Literacy Now, NAMLE, and SETDA • *Mapping Digital Literacy Policy and Practice in the Canadan Education Landscape*, by Michael Hoechsmann and Helen Dewaard • *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe: Cross-country comparisons*, edited by Divina Frau-Meigs, Irma Velez, and Julieta Flores Michel **Inform elected officials about media literacy** • Call US representatives at 202-225-3121 and US senators at 202-224-3121 • Become involved in local, state, and federal government	**Updating existing policies** • Update rating and assessment systems such as the Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-3, FCCERS-3, and ITERS-3), which impact and/or limit digital media use • Update practitioner licensing and certification requirements to include media literacy education **Create new policies** • Create a policy or standard requiring media literacy education in education and child care settings, as well as integration throughout the entire grade span • Address the limited capacity of staff including time working, compensation, and benefits

Current Barrier ⑧ Insufficient funding

There is insufficient funding for caregivers and practitioners to implement media literacy with young children daily. Additionally, there is a lack of funding to increase administration and leadership level changes. The efforts of implementing media literacy education in early childhood relies on the funding for research, training, and educational materials.

The barrier is a lack of funding for media literacy education for young children. Current funding streams must be altered to be more inclusive of media literacy as a related subject of literacy, STEM, civic education, social justice, art, and media and journalism, to name a few. Expanding these current funding streams to include media literacy would open opportunities up to fund practitioner and caregiver education, provide learning materials for libraries, child care centers, and museums, as well as fund research of media literacy education.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize free, accessible resources which are included in Existing Solutions for Barriers 1 through 5	**Adjust current funding streams from foundations, government, etc. which support**
Utilize the sources which fund media literacy education	• Literacy
• MacArthur Foundation	• Technology
• McCormick Foundation	• STEM
• The Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation	• Civics and Social Studies
• Annenberg Foundation	• Media and Journalism
• Technology developers and media creators such as Google Education, Nickelodeon, Facebook, Twitter	to include media literacy education into description of these specific subject-focused grants because media literacy impacts these areas of education.

Current Barrier ⑨ Lack of research

A lack of research often stalls implementation of new practices and policy change. Practitioners and caregivers want research showing why media literacy is important, which teaching strategies are most effective, and how media literacy education impacts a child's development and academic achievements. Leaders, administrators and policymakers want research showing effective and scalable media literacy education. There is a lack of research on media literacy, especially digital media literacy for children ages birth through 8.

In order to overcome this barrier, there must be more research studies focused on media literacy of young children from birth through age 8. There must be an expansion of the body of research to shed light on many less-understood areas of media literacy for young children.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize the current body of research which includes many literature reviews • *The Challenges of Assessing Media Literacy Education* by Evelien Schilder, Barbara Lockee, and D. Patrick Saxon (2016) • *What a Difference Ten Years can Make: Research Possibilities for the Future of Media Literacy Education* by Renee Hobbs (2011) • Also see relevant articles in NAMLE's *Journal of Media Literacy Education*	**Expand the body of research to understand the following areas of media literacy** • Long term effects of media literacy education • Effective implementation of media literacy education in formal and informal education settings • Developmentally appropriate media literacy topics and practices with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers • Effective and scalable professional development programs for early childhood practitioners, leaders, and administrators

Current Barrier ⑩ Low value of media literacy, child development, and early education

The low value of media literacy, child development, and early education is a barrier for Barriers 1 through 9. Without high value placed on media literacy, child development, and early education, practitioners, caregivers, leadership and administrators, as well as policymakers and researchers, will not prioritize advancing media literacy efforts for young children.

Information regarding the importance of these areas must be spread utilizing media and social networks. Fortunately, in recent years there has been noticeable mass media attention on the implications of early childhood experiences, which includes an increased exposure to digital, interactive, and mobile media devices. Media literacy practitioners and leaders can utilize current movements and trends by incorporating media literacy into conversations such as early childhood education, appropriate technology use, and STEM. However, an increase of focus on media literacy in mass media, social media, and public education may increase the public's understanding of the importance of media literacy in early childhood.

Existing Solutions	Needed Solutions
Utilize current movements and trends by incorporating media literacy into the following topics • Early childhood education • Appropriate technology use in early childhood • STEM implementation in libraries, museums, and other early childhood education settings • Civic engagement and digital citizenship • Social emotional learning	**Increase public's understanding of importance** • Mass media tell a more nuanced narrative of digital media consumption • Early education includes home-based providers, practitioners in museums, libraries, hospitals, and community-based organizations • Social media campaigns share media literacy strategies • Human development, specifically, child development is incorporated into public education for grades K-12, including learning theories