

Media Literacy Education in Elementary and Junior High Schools to Enhance Critical Thinking in the Digital Age

(Courtesy of Hao-Ran Wang at the Division of Junior High and Elementary Education)



In order to promote media literacy education in elementary and junior high schools across the country, the K-12 Education Administration, Ministry of Education, has implemented the "Elementary and Junior High School Media Literacy Education Base School Program" since the school year of 2019, and subsidized the Yu Xian Junior High School in Hsinchu City and the Pei-Cheng Elementary School in Luodong Township, Yilan County, and other three schools to establish their own media literacy base school program so as to gradually improve school teachers' media literacy knowledge and integration strategies in a professional learning community model. As such, they will have the ability to develop relevant teaching strategies and materials as well as lesson plans, to integrate media literacy education into the curriculum and teaching at elementary and junior high schools.

Under the leadership of the principal Shu-Wen Huang, the Yu Xian Junior High School has established a teacher community "Media Smiles" to develop and design media literacy course modules to implement media literacy education based on the two main pillars "Thinking Cultivation Program" and "Hometown Art and Culture Program". The Thinking Cultivation Program taps into the strength of the teacher community as a learning organization, through which the teachers jointly prepare for lessons, observe how classes are being taught, and conduct media literacy courses, while developing course modules, including "Karma in My Eyes—Discussion on Fake News, Trade Secrets in Advertisements, Wonderful World of Internet Celebrities, and Unable to Fight the Drama—Discussion on Chaos in the Drama", which have been fully launched for the eighth graders. The Hometown Art and Culture Program focuses on interviews, editing, production, and broadcasting of electronic newsletters and micro-documentaries, guiding students to visit the indigenous people living in the urban area, explore natural farming methods, and interview the veterans of the Black Bat Squadron, while visiting Spring Pool Glass to understand the value of circular economy and the Generals' Village to learn about the revitalization and reconstruction of historical buildings. Students need to edit newsletter and create audiovisual contents after each visit to demonstrate the influence of words and audiovisual contents and to bring the audience's attention to the local living environment, art, and history.

Principal Huang stated that the media literacy program developed by the school aims to integrate children's life experience and media literacy with a focus on integrating the local art and cultural environment and industry culture to cultivate students' ability to use media, technology, and marketing correctly. Meanwhile, the school also organizes city-wide media literacy empowerment seminars for teachers and parents, all the while enhancing teachers and students' ability and sensitivity to the media through the all-round media literacy education.

Po-Ling Liu, principal of Pei-Cheng Elementary School, has arranged the media literacy program in the curriculum for the fifth and sixth graders. The design of the program aims to transform students' use of the media, judgment of the media, and access to the media and guide

students to put them into practice accordingly. With daily life issues incorporated, the content of the program is divided into three categories: "Media Literacy", "Film Appreciation", and "Media Creation". In the Media Literacy course, activities to identify fake news are organized, so that students can learn the knowledge and skills to verify and judge the contents of the media, select appropriate information, keep personal information healthy, and avoid the contamination of the information environment. In the Film Appreciation course, students can learn lessons and life experiences from the scenarios in films, and internalize them into their own personal character and qualities through watching the films, pre-screening activities, and post-screening discussion. In addition, in the Media Creation course, students are provided with the ability to access the media in the process from script conception, filming to editing. Furthermore, students are able to learn about teamwork, problem-solving skills, as well as collaboration and communication, while caring for their hometown. Meanwhile, they need to complete a team project before graduation, and in turn participate in a graduation film festival, film competition, and other relevant large events, so that they will have a platform to recognize themselves and demonstrate their achievements.

After two years of implementation, Principal Liu found that students generally enjoyed the media courses based on the feedback in the course evaluations and that they expressed views actively in class with a high degree of participation. Through team projects in class, children work with peers to seek possible reasons and brainstorm new ideas. Therefore, learning is no longer individual work; instead, students put forth specific solutions after discussing their different perspectives. At the same time, students are also willing to take the initiative to share the joy of learning in the media courses with their families happily after returning home. Therefore, media literacy has been internalized by students and incorporated into their lives.

The K-12 Education Administration stated that in the future, this media literacy education school program at elementary and junior high schools will be gradually expanded and developed into an interschool regional implementation model, so that all schools can integrate media literacy into various subjects or interdisciplinary fields, and develop their own school-based

course modules and teaching materials as well as lesson plans to implement media literacy education thoroughly.