

## ABSTRACT

Media Literacy Education in Texas High Schools: A Multiple Case Study

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Media literacy is an expansion of literacy where one has a proficient capacity to read, write, listen, and speak with the skills to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate across arenas of life using all forms of communication. While intended to sharpen awareness of media influence, effects, and relationships, media literacy education (MLE) serves to stimulate critical thought both as consumers and creators of media. If media literacy education has so much to offer, are schools using it to its full capacity? If they are, what are they doing to make it happen? If they are not, what is preventing them from doing so? The problem, given recent updates in MLE standards is that nothing is available to describe the extent to which media literacy standards are implemented by high school English language arts and reading (ELAR) teachers, and students need media literacy education to advance thinking for civic engagement and social justice, personal values, moral development, identity formation, critical thinking. Consequently, teachers do not receive the support, students do not experience media literacy, and schools continue to move away from preparing both teachers and students for a media rich world.

The purpose of this research was to investigate MLE implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools using a multiple case study methodology. The research question and sub-questions examined two major categories: 1) what do teachers know about MLE and do in their classrooms for media literacy? 2) what support, if any, do they receive from department, campus, district, and outside resources to understand and implement media literacy? Through data collection efforts via interviews, focus groups, and documents as artifacts, the researcher arrived at several findings. Findings imply that teachers had inconsistent instruction and ignored understanding and knowledge of media literacy. Teachers also demonstrated a mixed sentiment in the valuing of media literacy instruction although they seemed to have a “felt sense” that media literacy was missing. Other findings suggest that teachers had an underlying lack of support for media literacy education and confronted challenges and barriers for media literacy implementation.

Media Literacy Education in Texas High Schools: A Multiple Case Study

by

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A Dissertation

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AMLA – American Media Literacy Association
- CPKQ – Core Principles Key Questions
- CPMLE – Core Principles Media Literacy Education
- CTISD – Central Texas Independent School District
- ELAR – English Language Arts and Reading
- EOC – End-of-Course
- EVC – Educational Video Center
- FCT – Foundation of Critical Thinking
- ICT – Information and Communication Technology
- ILA – International Literacy Association
- IRA – International Reading Association
- MLE – Media Literacy Education
- NAMLE – National Association of Media Literacy Education
- NCTE – National Council of Teachers of English
- PME – Partnership of Media Education
- STAAR – State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
- TAC – Texas Administrative Code
- TAPR – Texas Academic Performance Report
- TEA – Texas Education Agency
- TEKS – Texas Education of Knowledge and Skills

## PREFACE

The impetus for this research stemmed from my passion for education in ways that help students and teachers prepare for the academic world as it relates to literacy overall but media literacy specifically. As our American society moves further into the complexities of communication, social interaction, and entertainment, understanding how the world works underneath the layers of media exposure is extremely important. How are students being prepared in today's classroom? It is my passion to understand how teachers are utilizing print and digital environments to galvanize academic discussions that move beyond facts and basic technological skills.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## DEDICATION

To my Grandmother, Angelita, who passed away before I completed my bachelor's degree but whose memory reminded me to persevere;  
To my father, mother, and sisters, who prayed for and encouraged me the whole way;  
To Lisa for her patience, love, and support throughout this graduate experience.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *Background*

In a media world overflowing with facts, opinions, images, and sounds, “young people’s ability to reason about the information on the Internet [might translate into] one word: bleak” (Wineburg, McGrew, Breakstone, & Ortega, 2016, p. 4). The world of media can be dizzying, liberating, educational, and menacing all at once for K-12 students, but to treat it with carelessness or a lack of skill is risky at best given the power and reach of media platforms. A characterization of the educative response to media education across K-12 curriculum in the U.S. seems slow if not unconcerned while support for media literacy reveals many benefits, such as acclimating students to their contemporary media environments, enabling them to decipher fact from fiction, engaging in civic discourse, and combating low self-esteem (Buckingham, 2003; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009; Kubey, 2003; Wade, Davidson, & O’Dea, 2003). Buckingham’s (2003) description of a contemporary media environment refers to a level of “access to information” through a variety of digital and non-digital technologies forming “a dynamic and multi-faceted process, a matter of the interaction between technologies, economics, texts, and audiences” (Buckingham, 2003, p. 18, 19). The mediated world is complex and deserves a place in the curriculum through media literacy education.

A basic perspective on why media literacy is so important to the K-12 curriculum is simply attributable to how media affects youth culture: moral and ethical thought and individual development; the impact on the greater meaning for society, democracy, and future policy; the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and the engagement of multiple literacies. Media literacy is “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication” (NAMLE, 2018, para 1). Others indicate that media literacy includes multiple literacies that cover print and non-print literacies such as visual, information, digital, computer, information communication technology (ICT), internet, film, and audio literacy.

Youth culture includes the way youth live, interact, and share norms of being. Media, such as that conveyed through pop culture, are a large part of contemporary youth culture (Greene, 2012). The implication for educators is understanding how to connect the classroom to youth mediated lifestyles as students are inundated with media. Ignoring youth cultures and languages can have developmental, social, and political repercussions as discussed by Brake (1985), but connecting with them can have liberating and beneficial outcomes in academic and personal arenas (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011; Steel, 2014). For example, several studies demonstrate benefits such as self-advocacy, self-expression, and the emergence of social identity (Austin, Austin, French, & Cohen, 2018; Livingstone, 2014; Munoz-Navarro, 2009; Steel, 2014; Vandenbosch & van Oosten, 2017).

From a moral and ethical standpoint, teachers need to enable youth to discriminate among media. Nothing captures the modern teenage eye more than visual media to persuade young minds to admire idyllic visual media portrayals of what an

individual should be or not strive to be. Examples of visual media portrayals are singer Justin Bieber, athlete Cristiano Ronaldo, K-pop stars, or any of the latest YouTube media sensations. In addition, addressing media issues such as pornography, sexting, or cyberbullying, brings moral and ethical questions to the fore and empowers and engages youth on topics of grave concern.

Connected to the issue of student well-being is the search for meaning in society, democracy, and future policy. Media literacy also leads students to question the exercise of 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment policy and the urgency to address free speech issues related to posting anything without consequences. Concerning media, students can engage in discussion about the potential risk in “sexting,” texting, and pornography related to public health crises linked to addiction, sexual violence, prostitution, and other nefarious activities (Hilton, 2013). Furthermore, media literacy is a conduit of civic preparation in that it provides the framework to explore political meaning and messaging for young people both as producers and consumers.

In a mediated world with social media taking up large portions of youth’s attention, the rampant proliferation of disinformation, misinformation, bias, opinion, and superficiality, young people have to wade out into the swamp of mixed messages in order to decipher the ‘code’ of what is real or fake. Unfortunately, Wineburg, et al’s. (2016) explanation is that most young people cannot decipher real and fake news. Consequently, with the rise of highly political and biased platforms for one issue or another, American youths face a tremendous task of short attention-spans and ‘laborious’ fact-checking. On the other hand, McGrew, Ortega, Breakstone, and Wineburg (2017) say that “[t]he

challenge [is b]igger [t]han [f]ake [n]ews” (p. 4). From an excerpt, McGrew, et al. (2017) explain:

Fake news is certainly a problem. Sadly, however, it’s not our biggest. Fact-checking organizations like Snopes and PolitiFact can help us detect canards invented by enterprising Macedonian teenagers, but the Internet is filled with content that defies labels like “fake” or “real.” Determining who’s behind information and whether it’s worthy of our trust is more complex than a true/false dichotomy. (p. 4)

Moreover, if American students are to confront the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges of personal media use and navigate the future of socio-political interactions, the mere ability to use technology will not suffice (Aufderheide, 1992). For example, in the branch of mathematics known as statistics, Huff (1954) describes the need to address media literacy issues in statistics citing that “[w]ithout writers who use words with honesty and understanding and readers who know what [statistics] mean, the result can only be semantic nonsense” (p. 10). Huff’s (1954) message to readers is the need to question media whether in the form of a graph, chart, or the descriptive statistics often encountered in reports, advertisements, and other publications. K-12 educators need to prepare students to confront not only academic topics but wrestle with political acts and activities. For instance, Stephanie Busari, an anti-sex trafficking advocate, describes a national Nigerian culture of complacency when faced with gross disinformation. Busari goes on to depict one of many unfortunate “hoax narrative[s]” disseminated by inhumane Nigerian politicians paid off by Boko Haram (Busari, 2017, 1:53), a well-known terrorist organization. The case Busari (2017) describes dealt with the very real kidnapping and rape of groups of adolescent girls still held captive today. Nigerian political figures appeared across media channels stating that such events never happened in Nigeria, but the reality, Busari contends, is that adolescent girls continue to be trafficked and raped



while Nigerian government officials continue to deny, dodge, and outright lie about such atrocities. Boko Haram's efforts to snub and curtail media attention about the twisted and wicked acts of violence and indecency were and are successful. This example and many other topics, such as biased news reporting, Holocaust deniers, low-voter turnout, and cynicism, illustrate the importance and responsibility of the being media literate.

Media literacy offers essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Baker, 2010; Gretter, 2016; Hobbs, 2005). Students must be able to utilize media platforms and create in them to participate in the mediated world (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In mediated environments, it is important to first reflect through questioning mediated messages but second to know which questions to ask (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Trilling and Fadel (2009) emphasize that “[t]he learning power of the right question at the right time” is the ability to conceptualize “creative [...and...] innovative” responses and novel modes of thinking and behaving by “inventing [. . .] possible solutions” to problems or challenges that span aspects of intellectual (academic), cultural, social, and political features (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 90). Scholars point to this relationship between inquiry, questioning, creativity, and innovation as not only for “[l]ife and career skills” but a keystone for democracy and civic life (Johnson, 2009; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2006, p. 11). For example, a media literacy lesson teaching students how to use media resources to create presentations on biased messaging from news reporting on climate change, gauging the real effects of internet neutrality and its impact on consumers, or exploring the ramifications of current practices of privacy relating to social media offer real-world relevant experiences. When students must make choices, and question the bias behind media sources, they experience an added complexity to their learning. To extend the

lesson, students can participate in a civic debate between other student groups offering positions on issues and suggest ideas on how to provide unbiased information to others outside the school. Teaching students to question their choices and challenge their positions in any subject is what media literacy scholars say is “[a]t the heart of media literacy” (Thoman, 1999, p. 50). Other media literacy skills include decoding, comprehension, and analysis. An important aspect emphasized by media literacy scholars is that of the principle of inquiry and reflection whereas “[a] variety of classroom practices flow from media literacy education’s focus on inquiry” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 54).

Developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through media literacy uses multiple literacies “[l]ike print literacy, [and] those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 4). The approach “builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages” (NAMLE, 2018; p. 4). Students can identify bias and intention in blogs, video blogs, and other various media on climate change and government policy, U.S. internet neutrality, and privacy in a free-speech society. Scholars believe creating media is also a key attribute of media literacy. For instance, Scheibe and Rogow (2012) explain the importance of creating media in the following excerpt:

In fact, the power of producing for an audience beyond teacher and classmates often improves student performance no matter what the project is. So, media literacy education encourages teachers to design assignments that take advantage of media technologies that allow for public sharing of student work and that connect to real-world tasks. Doing so helps students and teachers accomplish the Participation and Action aspects of media literacy, providing opportunities for community engagement, collaborative online projects and conversations, and lessons on digital citizenship (p. 52)

Jolls and Grande (2005) demonstrate the need to address media literacy teacher training to provide successful classroom experiences for elementary students through Project

SMARTArt. In the opinion of the participants and other participant media scholars, the project increased value to the student experience by providing artistic expression, creation, and interpretation. Media literacy can help build middle school students' self-advocacy and critical thinking skills to empower them instead of their remaining passive recipients of media messages (Bier, Zwarun, & Sherblom, 2016; Gainer, 2010).

Media literacy benefits youth culture and development, participation in democracy, the gaining of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in multiple literacies. Thoman's (1999) definition of media literacy follows:

Media literacy is the ability to create personal meaning from verbal and visual symbols we take in every day through television, radio, computers, newspapers, and magazines, and of course, advertising. It's the ability to choose and select the ability to challenge and question, the ability to be *conscious* about what's going on around us—and not be passive and vulnerable. (p. 50)

Teachers must ensure healthy youth culture and development, participation in democracy, and the gaining of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in multiple literacies is critical.

### *Problem*

If media literacy education (MLE) has so much to offer, are schools using it to its full capacity? If they are, what are they doing to make it happen? If they are not, what is preventing them from doing so? The previous questions are the burning issues of this present study, and the literature suggests that not much consistency and depth is happening among states, within school districts, through campus types/levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school), and even among English language arts and reading (ELAR) classrooms within the same school type (Abreu, 2008; Hobbs, 2004; 2007). ELAR is continuously the subject most associated with media literacy. Part of the reason may be that the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) continues to be the

organization most associated with MLE. According to Baker (2016), NCTE “...consistently recommend[s] media literacy education [with...r]esolutions and position statements [...that...] dat[e] back to the 1970s” (p. 34).

The problem, given recent updates in media literacy standards is that nothing is available to describe the extent to which media literacy standards are implemented by high school ELAR teachers. Do media literacy scholars know the level of support provided through professional development activities or the degree and nature of classroom practice regarding media literacy? ELAR is the most concerning as it is the only subject that introduces the term “media literacy” and is a four-year requirement for graduation, at least in Texas (TEA, 2018, section 9.12A). Previous research in Texas indicates that media literacy in general is barely addressed as apprehension, scarcity of support, and a lack of curriculum discourage teachers from the active use of media literacy standards and in-depth implementation of the state standards (Hobbs, 2004; Miners & Pascopella, 2007; Wineburg, et al., 2016). California’s Senator Todd even proposed legislation to include media literacy as a course of study, but it failed in a state known for its media production (Corpuz, 2017). At the federal level, media literacy seems only a consideration for federal programs chiefly addressing “youth substance abuse prevention” (Levitt & Denniston, 2014, p. 79).

Moreover, the majority of teachers are not required to study media literacy in alternative certification programs or traditional programs in schools of education (Schmidt, 2012a; Chen, 2007); it is up to the discretion of future teachers to seek training and development in media literacy (Flores-Koulis, 2005; Bulger & Davison, 2018)—a situation hardly engineered for coordinated media literacy exposure. The work of Flores-

Koulish (2005; 2006), Hobbs and Frost (2003), Scull and Kupersmidt (2011) and Thoman and Jolls (2004) suggest the need to explore media literacy implementation, teachers' media literacy competence, and classroom practice at all levels and across the country as variability continues to be a major concern and teacher certification requirements do not attend to the necessary professional development. There is a paucity of research on high school ELAR teachers' media literacy knowledge and practice (Schmidt, 2012a). There is an inconsistency of MLE practice (Stein & Prewett, 2009), and there is a lack of resources to support MLE within ELAR programs (Hobbs, 2004; 2007). Given the previous complexities of media literacy research scarcity, MLE practice inconsistency, and media literacy support, the problem faced is the need to continue to explore the why and how of media literacy implementation for high school ELAR teachers. These complexities and problem are especially critical to investigate in a large and influential state like Texas. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), state curricular objectives, do include some media literacy in Texas, as well. Texas teachers happen to represent the largest public classroom teacher demographic in the United States by almost 100,000 teachers from a demographic of over three million (National Educational Association, 2018).

In particular, urban areas are pivotal as they draw larger and more diverse student populations and are generally the hubs for media experiences from competing radio and television stations to newspaper and social media outlets that are fast becoming a part of personal and professional lives and identities in these communities. English language arts and reading (ELAR) teachers, armed with media literacy standards, have a ripe teenage environment to influence and teach; thus, their pedagogical approach is a critical place to

study media literacy implementation. How secondary ELAR teachers are implementing media literacy and connecting the classroom, media, culture, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, democracy, voice, and critical thinking to confront and prepare students for mediated environments is the essential issue of this present study.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this research was to investigate media literacy implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools. Specifically, the researcher documented and described ELAR teachers' current practices and perceptions of MLE and engaged in an exploration of the how, when, why, and where, and if ELAR teachers address media literacy standards. Teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of media literacy were pivotal to this research. This study explored if secondary ELAR teachers even possessed a working definition of media literacy and what it was.

By collecting qualitative data from secondary ELAR teachers, the researcher was able to evaluate what these teachers believed about media literacy, the training they received, and their pedagogical understanding of media literacy education. Moreover, capturing teachers' strategies, techniques, and approaches revealed understanding of media literacy education practice and perception. Additionally, this study considered professional support processes and structures that do or do not further teachers' evolving interaction with media and media literacy. The researcher sought to add to the literature by describing the ways Texas ELAR teachers do and do not implement media literacy in the secondary environment.

### *Research Questions*

To begin to comprehend media literacy implementation in an ELAR secondary setting, the researcher sought to answer the following overarching question.

1. What do teachers do and know about media literacy education?
  - a. To what extent are teachers familiar with the core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education?
  - b. What do they think media literacy education is?
  - c. What value do these teachers place on media literacy education?
  - d. How do English teachers teach, use, or address media literacy in the classroom?
  - e. What are teachers' views about students' media skills and understanding?
2. What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?
  - a. How competent do teachers feel about media literacy education?
  - b. What are teachers' sources of media literacy education materials?
  - c. What are the barriers to implementing media literacy education for them?

### *Theoretical Framework*

As Merriam (1998) states, “[t]he theoretical framework . . . derive[s] from the orientation or stance that [the researcher] brings[s] to [the] study” (Kindle location, 612). The National Association of Media Literacy Education’s (NAMLE) definition of media literacy, the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (CPMLE), and CPMLE Key Questions or Core Principles Key Questions (CPKQ) provide building blocks for the conceptual framework from which to investigate the why, what, when, where, and how teachers implement media literacy. The CPMLE is a document synthesized by media literacy education scholars to provide a common, consistent, working framework for media literacy education (NAMLE, 2018). The CPMLE offers six core elements, or principles, functioning as a starting point to begin establishing “measurable outcomes and

benchmarks for U.S. schools” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 2), and so it serves as a way to view the implementation of media literacy education. The following 6 principles compose the

CPMLE:

1. Media literacy education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.
  2. Media literacy education expands the concepts of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media.
  3. Media literacy education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.
  4. Media literacy education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.
  5. Media literacy education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.
  6. Media literacy education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.
- (CPMLE, 2018)

Following each principle in the CPMLE document are implications for practice which serve as suggestions within ELAR classroom in addition to cross-curricular practices.

Principle 1 highlights what Thoman’s (1999) work emphasizes in that “[m]edia messages are ‘constructed’[; w]hether [one is ] watching the nightly news or passing a billboard on the street, the media message [one] experience[s] was written by someone, pictures were taken, and a creative designer put it all together” (p. 50). Students need to understand that media messages are purposeful, idiosyncratic, value-laden, and often contain a semiotic element and frequently express a semantic structure that affects consumers, such as interpretations of body image through pictures and movies (Ackard & Peterson, 2001; Holmstrom, 2004). Principle 2 not only underscores the expansion of literacy to include visual, information, audio, and other literacies but stipulates the necessity of utilizing deconstruction and “expression” as a way of viewing and utilizing multiple literacies. Within media literacy, Meyrowitz (1998) describes the presence of



multiple literacies as in media “content[, ] grammar[, and] medium literacy” (p. 96), which explores substance, syntactical structures, and agency across micro- and macroscopic “social processes” (p. 96). By understanding the language and culture within a mediated environment, students can better participate in media experiences that are part of the contemporary and traditional socializing institutions such as family, government, school, and religious organizations. Principle 3 serves to reinforce the need for spiraling media literacy opportunities from elementary grades to the secondary school grades through multimodal, collaborative, and frequent practice. Developing a culture within the classroom attuned to media facilitates socialization, self-advocacy, collaboration, familiarity, and participation in healthy media creation and consumption practice that goes beyond the classroom. Principle 4 emphasizes media literacy education’s capacity to cultivate what Jenkins, et al. (2009) refers to as democracy’s “participatory culture [where n]ot every [citizen/student] must contribute, but [where] all must believe they are free to contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued” (p. 6). It extends the idea that students are independent thinkers and need self-advocacy skills to develop their social identity and cultivate their voice (Arnett, 1995). Principle 5 assigns media a culture producing attribute, which also serves to expose students to “diverse voices” by confronting issues “like violence, gender, sexuality, racism, stereotyping and other issues of representation” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 5). As students begin to understand media culture and socialization through media, principle 6 stipulates that members of society utilize their own talents, culture, background, and values to interpret media messages and generate meaning. Teaching students to question their media choices and

challenge their own perspectives is central to media literacy education; thus, an important aspect of media literacy education is “the principle of inquiry” or reflection.

Coupled with the six principles of the CPMLE, NAMLE (2007) developed accompanying key questions that help guide the inquiry-based approach espoused by media literacy scholars. The key questions help with analyzing media across categories to apply analysis such as “[a]uthorship[, p]urpose[, e]conomics[, i]mpact[, r]esponse[, c]ontent[, t]echniques[, i]nterpretations[, c]ontext, [and c]redibility” (Rogow, 2011, p. 18). Rogow (2011) offers that the key questions cover a broad range of aspects when considering media and their “flexibility” in application to teaching through broad categories allows multiple applications across content areas (p. 19). The key questions “document [...] literally and conceptually center[s] around categories of questions rather than any specific question” (Rogow, 2011, p. 19).

While teachers may be unfamiliar with the CPMLE, the researcher noted that NCTE/International Reading Association (ILA) standards and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) were assumed to be standards that Texas ELAR teachers utilized in their classrooms. The researcher compared and provided an analysis of all the standards and principles (i.e., TEKS, NCTE/ILA, and CPMLE) available to ELAR teachers in Chapter 2. With the presence of media literacy TEKS, the researcher assumed that Texas ELAR teachers utilized media literacy in some way, but to what extent ELAR teachers used media literacy education principles, as represented in the CPMLE, was the purpose of this present study.

### *Overview of the Study*

The purpose of this research was to investigate media literacy implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools. A primary objective of this study was to explore the extent to which and how urban secondary ELAR teachers in a South-Central Texas area school district reported their implementation of media literacy education, its practice, pedagogy, and professional support and training through a qualitative approach. The media literacy TEKS led the researcher to assume teachers were doing something with media literacy in their classrooms since they were explicitly stated as part of the TEKS. In addition, NCTE supported addressing “electronic media” (NCTE/ILA, 1996, p. 4). Thus, the researcher anticipated the use of media literacy standards of some kind. A multiple-case study design was appropriate as “the study as a whole covers several schools” (Yin, 2014, p. 56). Yin (2014) noted the “more compelling [. . . and . . .] more robust” nature of a multiple case-study design (p. 57).

### *Participants*

This section describes the selection of participants. For the purpose of this study, the selection of high schools is a convenience sample. They represent a collection of campuses to which the researcher has access.

After approval by the university’s IRB, the researcher sent an e-mail to the superintendent of schools for the participating school district requesting approval and access to district personnel. Subsequently, the researcher obtained consent from the campus principals at each school site and participating teachers. The school sites received assigned pseudonyms of High School A and High School B. Then, the researcher sent an

e-mail requesting ELAR teachers' response to a simple screening questionnaire. Once the screening questionnaire was complete, the researcher had an idea of how many participants to interview and sent them a formal request for participation. The researcher then set up a time and location for an individual 60-minute interview. Depending on the responses to the screening questionnaire and individual interviews, the researcher used two focus groups per school site with three teacher participants per focus group. Individual interviews and document artifacts accompanied focus groups along with follow-up interviews as necessary for clarification. The researcher also used member checking to improve internal validity and "trustworthiness" (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 260). The researcher ensured the anonymity of teacher participants by providing a pseudonym, encryption for digital files on personal computer, and a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access.

### *Data Collection*

Data sources included a screening profile questionnaire, individual 60-plus minute interviews, document artifacts in the form of reflective narrative-questions, 60-plus minute focus groups, and follow-up interviews in the form of member checking. The researcher solicited six individual interviews from each school site. Additionally, the researcher provided teachers a set of questions to use as prompts for a narrative written response to return to obtain a document artifact. The document artifacts questions served as a way for ELAR teachers to generate feedback about their own media literacy implementation experiences and thoughts. Next, the researcher used two focus groups. Three ELAR teacher participants composed each of the focus from the teacher participant pool of the six total ELAR teachers from each high school campus site. During additional

school site visits, the researcher was able to conduct member checking meetings using the individual and focus group times at each school site to review interview transcripts and preliminary results. The researcher performed follow-up interviews for clarification as well as member checking.

### *Data Analysis*

Using Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral approach, the researcher went through each of the following actions:

Managing and organizing the data[; r]eading and memoing emergent idea[; d]escribing and classifying codes and themes[; d]eveloping and assessing interpretations[; r]epresenting and visualizing the data. (p. 186).

Generally, the researcher used Merriam's (1998) description of the "constant comparative method" and Boyatzis' (1998) explanation of "thematic analysis" to analyze data (Kindle Locations 1916-1919; p. 4). The researcher used "scoring" and "scaling" or "clustering" of themes or thematic codes (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 133, 134). Further, the researcher performed a "thematic analysis," which was "a process for encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vi), once converting raw information. Using "a multimethod approach to data collection and data analysis" (Rothbauer, 2008, p. 893), the researcher performed the "triangulation of data sources" (Rothbauer, 2008, p. 893). The researcher used code development, formed themes, and classified themes to understand what the data described (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, "peer debriefing" assisted the researcher to work towards "analytic triangulation" of the data (ThếNguyin, 2008, p. 603). The "[p]eer debriefing" method was "to ensure that the [...] researcher [...] indeed ground[ed their] conclusions [...] in the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 381). The researcher used two colleagues to complete peer debriefing. The spiral approach

continued for each case to prepare the data for a within-case analysis. Once the within-case analysis was complete, the researcher performed a cross-case analysis.

### *Significance of Study*

In terms of historical location, Texas was an ideal place for this study as it served as one of several states to begin adopting media literacy into their state curricula (Hobbs, 2000; 2004; Ward-Barnes, 2010). This study contributed to the literature by providing insight into the progress of media literacy practice in one of the largest states as well.

Since Texas is the second largest state by overall size and K-12 population; the state affects decisions on nationally distributed textbooks, education agendas, and other major decisions at state and federal levels. Apart from size and influence of Texas on education, it is a convenient place for the researcher as it is accessible.

Reinforced by earlier research calling for the need to assess the state of media literacy education and practice in schools (Flores-Koulish, 2005; 2006; Scull & Kupersmidt, 2011; Thoman & Jolls; 2004), this present study explored current aspects of media literacy implementation and practice. Previous studies focused on other states and teacher preparation programs adopting media literacy programming (Hobbs, 2007; Schmidt, 2012b), identified participants through specific institutions or programs, or looked at a region outside of Texas (Ruzic, 2016). Very few studies undertook an investigation of media literacy implementation in K-12 schools and even less in Texas schools. Although Hobbs (2007) performed a study of media literacy implementation in high school English, the focus of her research was in Concord, New Hampshire—an early and complete adopter of media literacy programming in their high school curriculum. Therefore, this study contributed to the literature as one of the only and most

recent studies with a focus on media literacy education implementation in a K-12 U.S. school.

As there is a scarcity of research regarding media literacy implementation among high school English teachers, the researcher hopes also to add to that literature. Professional development programming is essential for teacher practice in any field, and scholars note that media literacy does not receive the support and professional development it deserves for implementation (Hobbs, 2004; Schmidt, 2013; Scull & Kupersmidt, 2011). Moreover, investigating media literacy in Texas classrooms will also help future scholars understand some of the progress and needs of high school ELAR teachers to meet the challenges for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century preparation (P21, 2006). Print literacy is no longer sufficient. Are teachers able to understand the language of media culture to teach about symbols, rituals, and meaning amidst the socialization aspects of photo-sharing, video-sharing, blogging, video blogging (i.e., vlogging) and posting messages? Are teachers prepared to encourage students to share knowledge meaningfully and responsibly? Are teachers prepared to speak to the unwritten rules and pitfalls of media culture and media illiteracy? At the individual level, media illiteracy may have an impact by limiting one's ability to navigate and understand contemporary dynamics of communication for personal, professional, and educational purposes. As a society, media illiteracy may affect competitiveness in a global economy, civic participation, and a general lack of ability to communicate in meaningful ways with a mediated world and current divisive climate.

This study highlights advances and areas of growth for media literacy education within the ELAR field. The feedback from the interactions with teachers was an

invaluable source of information for media literacy scholars, schools of education, principals, and district administrators. Professional development is also affected.

This study gauged ELAR teachers' awareness of media literacy standards and also identified the level of delivery of media literacy education to teachers through professional development at the department, campus, and district level. Additionally, it offered insight into ELAR teachers' classrooms' practices and perspectives about media literacy education. It also provided insight into district efforts to provide the tools necessary for media literacy education.

#### *Limitations of Study*

Apart from a limited time frame and financial resources, this research, as most research studies do, has limitations. The study cannot generalize beyond this case study as it is a convenience sample. Schools have idiosyncrasies and nuances as to campus, district, and state-supported efforts for programming and underlying politics. The how and why of media literacy education implementation may not generalize to other schools in and outside of Texas due in part to their nuances but also due to state curricular documents. However, teachers and schools everywhere may be dealing with similar overall conditions and this study will open up the conversation on media literacy education.

#### *Delimitations of the Study*

The study also presents some delimitations. Delimitations are important to point out as they the researcher's decision to engage with a specific focus. First, a delimitation in this study concerns the sample composition. The scope of this study focuses on



secondary ELAR teachers in an urban setting. The reason for focusing on ELAR teachers is due to the presence of explicitly stated media literacy standards in comparison to other subject areas. Secondary and urban attributes are of special interest as the literature does not contain much about urban environments and high school settings.

Site location choice is another delimitation. The choice of school district is partially due to its relative location and accessibility within an urban environment featuring a district serving a predominantly urban community but also includes some suburban campuses. Inherently, the study excludes other environments (i.e., rural, private, public charter schools), which may provide a different representation of the state of media literacy in ELAR classrooms in the region and overall in Texas.

### *Researcher Bias*

In case study research, the researcher “is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information” (Merriam, 1998, Kindle location 317).

The researcher inherently possesses bias. To curtail bias, Yin (2014) suggests to researchers to:

Ask good questions—and interpret the answers fairly. Be a good “listener” not trapped by existing ideologies or preconceptions. Stay adaptive, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats. Have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, even when in an exploratory mode. Avoid biases by being sensitive to contrary evidence, also knowing how to conduct research ethically. (p. 73)

Case study research compels the researcher to immerse himself in the setting to understand the circumstantial features that affect the phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006); thus, the researcher’s positionality and familiarity with the customs,

programs, and make-up of the South-Central Texas area school district will assist the researcher in understanding the context of urban ELAR teachers' practice and the population with which they interact. Lastly, the research will also use peer debriefing to guard against bias.

### *Definition of Terms*

Secondary: campus types include middle, junior high, and high school

Teacher: teacher of record or long-term substitute

ELAR: English language arts and reading

Literacy: the ability to encode and decode symbols and to synthesize and analyze messages (NAMLE, 2018)

Media: It includes all electronic and digital, print and non-print, artistic and professional expression or means utilized to convey messages (NAMLE, 2018).

Media Literacy: It is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (NAMLE, 2018, para 1).

### *Summary*

This study investigated media literacy practice and perspectives of high school ELAR teachers. The study focused on an urban South-Central Texas area school district's high schools. Using a qualitative approach, a multiple case study design was used. The researcher used thematic analysis to sift through data for common and divergent themes among participants.

Previous research literature supports the contribution this present research will make.

Through the CMPLE framework, the researcher hopes to deepen the understanding of

current media literacy education implementation in Texas as it was one of the first states to adopt media literacy standards in its state curricular document in the 1990s (Ward-Barnes, 2010; Hobbs, 2017a). Through this present study and a review of the literature, the research will offer insight into the implementation, practices, and beliefs of teachers. The following chapter will go into greater detail about the meaning, history, importance, status, struggle, guiding framework, and recent studies focusing on media literacy education in the K-12 environment.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Media literacy education has become an urgent concern amidst the need to help students discriminate among biased news outlets, encourage participation in an active democracy, and cultivate the emergence of an appropriate digital voice and footprint on the worldwide web. With the U.S. entertainment and media market value well above \$700 billion and climbing, the media constitute a huge power, and the need to prepare for a mediated world in K-12 environments just as students prepare for writing and reading print is timelier and more urgent than ever. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the literature on media literacy, its roots and development in the U.S., key attributes of media literacy education, the implications of media literacy standards in the English language arts and reading (ELAR) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (CPMLE), and finally the recent status (i.e., practice, beliefs, etc.) of media literacy in secondary ELAR classroom. This chapter outlines the meaning, history and purpose, importance, status and struggle, guiding framework, and recent studies focusing on media literacy education in secondary ELAR teachers' classrooms. This study explores the current state of media literacy education in Texas schools.

### *Definition of Media Literacy*

Among the definitional variations in the media literacy literature today (Livingstone, 2004; Potter, 2013; Thoman & Jolls, 2005), the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) provides a succinct definition of media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication” (NAMLE, 2018, para 1). NAMLE (2018) attaches an important and relevant piece of information after their definition that “media literacy builds upon the foundation of traditional literacy and offers new forms of reading and writing” (para. 2). Aufderheide (1992) extends NAMLE’s definition but takes a different approach to defining media literacy by outlining what a media literate person should be able to do. Aufderheide (1992) offers the following to define the value and function of media literacy:

A media literate person—and everyone should have the opportunity to become one—can decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence. (Aufderheide, 1992, p. 9)

By defining the media literate person, Aufderheide (1992) captures the essence of the intended outcomes for media literacy education. Potter’s (2013) review offers many more definitions of media literacy representing individual scholars, groups, and organizations. Given his review, readers can characterize what Livingstone (2004) and Thoman and Jolls (2005) cite as the disagreement among scholars in the field not just on definitions but in standards and approaches used to describe and teach media literacy (i.e., visual literacy; Debes, 1969, p. 25), information literacy (Zurkowski, 1974), digital literacy (Gilster, 1997), and “receivership skills” (Anderson, 1981, p. 19). Rather than being a

problem, the plurality of media literacy definitions underscores its versatility and utility. Aufderheide's (1992) definition depicts the Aspen Institute participants' agreement that media is "the ability to access, analyze, and produce information for specific outcomes" demonstrating several common elements with 2007 version published by NAMLE (p. v).

### *Media Literacy History and Purpose*

As the term media literacy emerged in the 60s and 70s, its definition and purpose are continuing to evolve with the development of new ways of thinking about literacy, media, culture, democracy, and human development and behavior. Understanding the history behind media literacy in the U.S. and particularly in K-12 education will help situate views on its emergence in ELAR classroom practice. This section will focus on the history and development of media literacy in the U.S. and move into media literacy education in the state of Texas.

A few of the seminal media literacy scholars, such as McLuhan, Culkin, Masterman, Pungente, Thoman, and Hobbs, provide emergent conceptualizations of media literacy education and practitioner interpretations from its infancy (Carpenter & McLuhan, 1953; Culkin, 1968; Masterman, 1985; Pungente, 1999; Thoman, 1977). Tracing back the history of these early media literacy scholars and their involvement with national movements offers insight into the evolution and assimilation of media literacy teaching strategies and approaches across the curriculum in the United States. Inherent in the work of media literacy scholars is a reminder of the urgency and relevance of media literacy education in ever evolving mediated environments emphasizing cultural and social elements as the field evolved from "protection [...to...] preparation" and even more recently toward "empowerment" approaches (Buckingham, 2003).

It is difficult to examine the U.S. media literacy educational landscape without giving a nod to Canadian scholar, Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan (1964; 1994) believed in the connectedness of humanity with the rest of the world given the reach of media. For McLuhan (1964; 1994), technology evolved rapidly, virtually unnoticed, over time. Although McLuhan elaborated that technology is an “extension of man” from an aesthetic appreciation of media expanding human form and function (McLuhan & Fiore, 1994, p. 7), he continued some of what Leavis and Thompson (1933) considered as the need to develop a “critical awareness” (p. 5). Leavis was a literacy critic with a classical education background, and Thompson was, in his time, a critic of mass communication and popular culture, and they had an impact on the moral and cultural standards of the time. From print to telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the combination of media reached a greater number of people as compared to previous centuries exposed to the print culture alone. Understanding types of media and gaining familiarity with media (the point of media literacy) was a social responsibility for McLuhan (McLuhan, 1964; 1994). He made others aware of media’s potential and sounded the alarm for the need to interpret the messages transmitted through various media as an important aspect of being a part of the “global village” and being able to see the potential influence or “massage” as he put it (McLuhan, 1964; 1994). The term “massage” was a misprint. McLuhan was amused and kept it in his book title. This aspect of social impact and responsibility remained part of understanding evolving media literacy foundations and the slow parting ways with the more protectionist approach of Leavis and Thompson’s (1933) work. Masterman (1985) offered that Leavis and Thompson’s (1933) work “was a clarion call to resistance against the influence of

‘civilisation’, of which one of the most corrupting manifestations was the mass-media” (Masterman, 1985, p. 38 – 39). Around the same time as Masterman, Postman (1985) continued a similar line of thinking echoed in Leavis and Thompson’s (1933) that technology was America’s undoing with its constant technophilic tendencies followed by “culture-death [as] a clear possibility” (p. 156). Schwarz (2005b) indicated that “Postman saw TV as the ‘other curriculum’ against which educators must fight” (p. 9).

Somewhat parting ways with McLuhan’s ideology, John M. Culkin, a priest and educator, developed inaugural curricular materials that trained students to understand film’s social impact, its language of communication, and skills of interpreting film. Formalizing lessons to address media message interpretation and media composition, Culkin’s early adoption of media in the classroom facilitated first attempts at getting students to create media as part of becoming media literate (Schillaci & Culkin, 1970). Iterated in Schillaci and Culkin’s (1970) emergent media literacy curricular piece was a simple-to-understand approach to interpret a single film medium (i.e., its language, its system of symbols, practices, and approaches). Schillaci and Culkin (1970) included various pedagogical approaches such as open-ended instruction, inquiry learning, experiential learning, cooperative learning, peer teaching and more focusing on individual self-reflection, intergroup collaboration, and group collaboration. Culkin put into practice some of the appreciative aspects of what McLuhan was preaching. For example, Culkin (1967) emphasized that:

The medium is thing to study. The medium is the thing you’re missing. Everybody’s hooked on content; pay attention to form, structure, framework, medium. The play’s the thing. The medium’s the thing. [...] We shape our tools and thereafter they shape us. These extensions of our senses begin to interact with our senses. (p. 52)



Culkin, at times, seemed to function as a sort of apologist for McLuhan's 'prophetic' work as illustrated in several of Culkin's articles citing the importance of communicating what McLuhan interpreted as value-laden messages contained throughout all media (Culkin, 1968; 1971). Culkin emphasized McLuhan's (1964) popular phrase that "the medium [was] the message" (p. 1). McLuhan's emphasis was on the transmittance of values through mass communication and the necessity of teaching younger consumers, students, to filter or sift through media techniques. McLuhan's emphasis on the medium can be captured also by Carr's (2011) assertion that "[t]he computer screen bulldozes our doubts with its bounties and conveniences[; i]t is so much our servant that it would seem churlish to notice that it is also our master" (p. 4). For McLuhan, Culkin, and later Elizabeth Thoman, an American media literacy pioneer, one can see the overlapping positions of protectionism, preparation, appreciation through production, and empowerment in the development of their work.

Continuing a similar approach to reaching the media illiterate masses, Elizabeth Thoman's life and work reflected her passion and efforts to influence teacher practice and infuse education and areas beyond education with media literacy approaches and perspectives (Hobbs, 2017a; Schwarz, 2005a, 2005b). Thoman's work advocated for students' experiences to be a part of what teachers taught. Thoman's establishment of the magazine, *Media & Values*, in the late 1970s and the Center for Media & Values in Los Angeles, later called the Center for Media Literacy (CML) in 1989, demonstrably advocated for one of earliest media literacy education movements. Her work on the West coast where film, radio, and television were popular media emerged from the influence of Culkin and later from the work of other Canadian and British scholars, such as John

Pungente and Len Masterman (Hobbs, 2017a; Iaquinto & Keeler, 2012, Pungente, 1989; Masterman, 1985). Like Culkin's efforts, Thoman's (1999) work emphasized practitioner-based approaches grounded in contextual learning-based practice. With inspiration from "Freire[ 's work], and encouraged by media literacy leaders from around the world, Thoman [...] adopt[ed] an 'empowerment' philosophy centered on informed inquiry" (Thoman & Jolls, 2005, p. 186). Thoman taught the awareness of, empowerment with, and preparation for mediated environments (Thoman, 1977), which also tended to identify early with a constructivist approach to learning in media literacy education.

In some of her initial work, Thoman understood the mediated environment as a place where "[a]ccess to the means of communication was access to power" (Thoman, 1979, p. 1). Not mentioned explicitly in the article but a theme encountered repeatedly in later articles is the idea of a skills-based approach, deciphering media's value-laden messages, and the training of youth to interpret constructed messages. In an interview conducted by Tessa Jolls, Thoman discussed how she thought about applicative approaches of "media into education, into family life, [and] into society at large" (Thoman, 2011)—a largely contextual learning approach to teaching media literacy. Thoman was not quiet about the intertwined relationships between media and religion as she cited "common values" based on the "Ten Commandments" in the first several issues of *Media & Values* magazine (1977, p. 4). Values and their place in media were a consistent concern and thread in Thoman's work. While Thoman's work reflected her background as a nun, her work to confront media illiteracy and value-laden media transcended any one faith.

Thoman's persistent confrontation with the idea of media illiteracy, power, and transmission of values was pervasive throughout her interviews, instructional recommendations, and published literature (Thoman, 1995; 1999; 2003; 2011; Thoman & Jolls, 2004; Thoman & Jolls, 2005). *Media & Values*, aside from being a call to not only Christians but also to secular education environments, was a supplication to all educators to use their capacity to confront the challenges and opportunities for media illiteracy. The magazine was meant to engage students with media content for its moral and ethical value in addition to its opportune framework as a way to engage students in critical thinking, democracy, and autonomy as captured in the CPMLE (Thoman, 1995; 1999; 2003; 2011; Thoman & Jolls, 2004; Thoman & Jolls, 2005). In addition, Thoman was a founding member of the organization that became NAMLE.

For the past 12 years, Hobbs, continuing some of Thoman's work, has emphasized salient topics such as media literacy teaching approaches, professional development and training in media literacy, copyright and fair use issues, and civic engagement through media literacy. Hobbs' emphasis on teaching approaches covered creativity through professional educator cooperation, teaching about disinformation (YouTube, twitter, social media, pop culture), producing media by allowing misbehavior (transgressions), and developing a healthy skepticism (teaching conspiracies) as ways to connect students' life experiences with building media literacy skills (Hobbs, 2017b; 2017c; 2017d; 2017e; 2016). For example, Hobbs (2017d) discussed the need for students to learn in teams as a generative approach to stoke ingenuity and creativity. This collaborative approach provided exposure and a mixing of ideas by cooperating with others on learning endeavors. Another teaching approach Hobbs (2017c) noted was the

need to explore “conspiracy theories [...] as a special type of disinformation defined as false information [...] intended to mislead” (p. 18). Hobbs (2017d) explained that using “disinformation, hoaxes, propaganda, and hyperpartisanship [that were] increasingly global phenomena” as teaching tools will lead to students toward critical questioning and the value of “acknowledge[ing] both the destabilizing function of mistrust, suspicion, and fear, and the powerful moral and humanistic values activated by the search for truth” (p. 23). Further, Hobbs (2017d) strongly advocated this technique as “learning in a post-truth world” by saying:

As many commentators [...] observe[], the use of the term fake news conceals more than it reveals. Although I'm happy that many K–12 educators have increased interest in teaching students how to critically analyze media, I recommend that they resist using this particular term.

Learners are far better served by a more precise set of definitions and concepts, including terms like propaganda, disinformation, clickbait, hoaxes and satire, pseudoscience, sponsored content, and partisanship. These more precise terms need to be a fundamental part of English and social studies education in all American secondary schools. (p. 2)

Lastly, a teaching approach that allows a look into the provocative, permitting students to bend or break social suitability and produce media that may lead to the controversial, may reveal opportunities for teaching with depth about areas of life such as culture, society, and civic participation (Hobbs, 2017d; 2015; Hobbs & Grafe, 2015). Death, drugs, challenging gender roles, and celebrating an anti-establishment political sentiment are topics that can be uncomfortable but are part of the exploratory landscape of media consumption and creation in schools. In another way, Hobbs and other scholars convey that using advertising that challenges social norms and conspiracy theories may help students that seem disengaged or disinterested develop a healthy skepticism about the mediated world (Hobbs, 2017b; Hobbs, He, & Robbrieco, 2015).

In Hobbs' writing, one notes a clear effort to discuss capacity building through professional development experiences for teachers aligned with CPMLE's spirit of collaboration and understanding. Hobbs (2017a) expresses that "[e]veryone agrees that teacher education is essential to integrating media literacy into the K-12 curriculum in the United States" (p. 54). Advancing media literacy education through teacher training and collaboration is a familiar attribute of Hobbs' work as "teacher training in media literacy is primarily a grassroots effort led by impassioned educators" (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 9). Professional development and training are possible by way of "collaboration [...for...] creativity [...b]ecause of [the] shared belief that collaboration through inquiry and media making can generate personally meaningful, transformative learning experiences" (Hobbs & Coiro, 2016, p. 623-624). This approach coincides with some of the implications one encounters in the CPMLE. For example, Hobbs and Coiro (2016) use a "[h]ands-on, minds-on learning [... approach that] relies on the power of collaboration and the engaging creativity [...] stimulated with the use of digital media texts, tools and technologies [...that ...] helps build confidence in digital [and media] literacy" (p. 623). In the CPMLE under principle 3, "[m]edia literacy education is most effective when used with co-learning pedagogies, in which teachers learn from students and students learn from teachers and from classmates" (p. 4).

A number of scholars have iterated a form of media literacy that captures the area of citizenship, civic engagement, involvement, and participation. For instance, in a recent article contextualized in the time surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Mihaildis and Viotty (2017) discussed the role media literacy plays in the face of media bias where civic mindedness devolved into groupthink, platform "polarization," or

political posturing rather than taking on a healthier form of “civic expression” and engagement that nurtured (digital) civic identity and (online) civic engagement (p. 442, 443). Students need to prepare to engage with the “proliferation of partisan reporting by news organizations, polarizing rhetoric by cable media outlets, and vitriolic opinions voiced by citizens online [...by having...] media literacies, as a popular response mechanism to help cultivate more critical consumers of media” (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 442, 441).

Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) suggested a skill-building approach where students could move away from an “[over]reliance on peers as credible (enough) sources of information [that] provides ‘a false sense of security,’ where ‘[students] become less likely to scrutinize the information in front of’ them (p. 450). Teaching students to vet their sources of information in offline and online environments is a necessary practice across subject areas and for all ages, and media literacy can provide these experiences. For instance, a lesson plan by Kozdras and Welsh (2018) provided a basic approach to uncovering the truth by comparing and contrasting reliable or truthful websites with ones that are unreliable, biased, or ‘fake.’ Exploring biased or unreliable information outlets can open opportunities for students to establish a sense for detecting trustworthy qualities and challenge issues of information legitimacy on websites (Kozdras & Welsh, 2018).

Hobbs (1998) advocated for civic engagement as some of her work demonstrated. Hobbs (2004) proposed a collaborative approach to improve media literacy skills in students when she wrote that educators need to “emphasize instead the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity” (p. 54). For Martens and Hobbs (2015):

Findings show that students in a selective-admission media literacy program have substantially higher levels of media knowledge and news and advertising analysis skills than other students. Participation in a media literacy program was positively associated with information-seeking motives, media knowledge, and news analysis skills. Moreover, information-seeking motives, media knowledge, and news analysis skills independently contributed to adolescents' intent toward civic engagement. (p. 120)

Hobbs, Donnelly, Friesem, and Moen (2013) made a poignant comment about the importance and intersection of civic engagement and media literacy when saying:

Even though some of us twentieth-century souls may crave the comfort and simplicity of having a one-stop-shopping experience by reading the *New York Times* and relying on responsible journalists to “tell us the truth,” it is not—and never has been—the solution to participating fully in the democratic process of self-governance. (p. 636)

In addition to the work of individual scholars, organizations, state, and districts have responded to media literacy education.

### *Beyond Individual Scholars*

As a principal promulgator for an emerging concept, NCTE did not include the term media literacy in its 1996 standards publication but it did emphasize the need to address “electronic media” and “nonprint texts” (NCTE, 1996, p. 3; Suhor, 1994). Mentioned in standards 1, 6, and 7, emphasis on “nonprint texts” changes the traditional focus on print literature. Also, the term “visual language” appears in standards 4 and 12. NCTE seems to use “nonprint texts” and “visual language” almost synonymously. NCTE (1996) appears to echo McLuhan, Culkin, Thoman and many other media scholars' views in saying that:

Being literate in contemporary society means being active, critical, and creative users not only of print and spoken language but also of the visual language of film and television, commercial and political advertising, photography, and more. Teaching students how to interpret and create visual texts such as illustrations,

charts, graphs, electronic displays, photographs, film, and video is another essential component of the English language arts curriculum. (p. 5)

Then, in the late 1990s with the participation of media literacy scholars traditionally trained in the field of English, Thoman and Renee Hobbs, formed the Partnership for Media Education (PME) as a U.S.-based professional organization for advancing the media literacy movement with “a founding conference [...] in Austin, Texas” (Thoman, nd, paragraph 7; see [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)). Later, PME changed its name to the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) after a brief debut as the American Media Literacy Association (AMLA). Around the same time, several factors emerged to create an opportunity for media literacy on the national stage. First, President Bill Clinton signed the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) in 1994, and along with IASA (i.e., Goals 2000) came funding to prepare teachers, students, school systems to meet the demands of “high-skilled jobs” in the job market (Riley, 1995, para. 3). Some of those funds went to Texas to revamp their state curricular documents especially for English language arts and reading (ELAR).

Additionally, conferences at the national level took place, and in 1996, the Carnegie Corporation validated the media literacy work addressing education and “[t]he question of what young adolescents [were] learning from the media” (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1995, p. 31). The NCTE acted, the PME evolved, and federal accountability increased measures on schools to improve their services and the rigor of the curriculum to help students confront 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. In conjunction with ongoing international and local efforts, Deborah Leveranz, other colleagues in Texas, with guidance from a Canadian media literacy scholar, John Pungente, began to pave the way for “state legislation of media literacy” in Texas (Pungente, 1994, para. 19). Texas



was briefly at the forefront of media literacy changes. Overall, by the turn of the century, Baker (2011) reported that all 50 states had some form of media literacy education in their curricular standards.

After concerted efforts by media literacy scholars and advocates, Texas took a head-on approach to include media literacy in the Texas essential knowledge and skills, or TEKS, curriculum framework document adopted in 2009 and implemented in Texas classroom in the 2010-11 school year (TEA, 2010) . Several sources point to a combination of efforts at the state level and at strategic local level locations to influence the implementation of curricular elements that included media literacy (Pugente, 1994; Ward-Barnes, 2010).

### *Media Literacy Importance*

Mentioned in the CPMLE are several items highlighting the importance of media literacy for students and teachers. The following section highlights and combines some of those elements. With media literacy standards part of the state curriculum framework document, it is the researcher's assumption that teachers are using some current instructional strategies, approaches, and thinking to implement media literacy education's versatile knowledge and skills within the CPMLE. The CPMLE possesses several major thematic elements, such as the treatment of personal values, consumerism, media consumption and image, critical thinking, identity/voice, and democracy. These elements establish the significance of media literacy education.

## *Personal Values*

From consumerism to sexting, value-laden messages are everywhere, and although media literacy education does not judge good values from poor values, it allows students to think through their own personal values inventory. Media literacy facilitates the identification and discernment of values embedded within messages by teaching students how to develop not only their own identity but a cultural belief in the importance of inquiry and the necessary skill set of asking questions (Bruce, 2015). Bruce (2015) notes that “in reading media texts, ML provides a paradigm through which issues such as representation, economics, cultural values, and production codes can be critically examined” (p. 69). In this manner, students are able to effectively decide whether to adopt or adapt presented ideals or analyze how mediated values align with their own personal morals, values, and identities (Bruce, 2015). An example is Bruce’s (2015) cultural analysis of youth representation in the media where his students performed the following:

Over the next several class days, I asked them to bring in one video clip, commercial, TV, or movie scene with depictions of teenagers. My students mostly shared scenes from classic teen movies and popular TV shows. After watching each clip, we talked about how the teenagers were portrayed and how that portrayal fit—or did not fit—into cultural stereotypes of teens. Like the print ads, most of the scenes could be placed into one of the brainstormed categories. (p. 70)

Bruce (2015) includes a list of descriptors students extracted from their media sample (i.e., TV show, commercial, video clip, etc.) that included “[c]ultural [s]tereotypes of [t]eenagers [as] [l]azy[, p]artiers[, s]exually [p]romiscuous[, v]andals[, and u]ndependable” (p. 70). In this way, Bruce (2015) engages students in analyzing how media can characterize and label groups of people and individuals’ identities.

From culture past to present contemporary American culture, values are part of the fabric of media. In the 1980s, some of Selnow's (1986) work focuses on television shows' values from which he extracts leitmotifs or values celebrated by popular TV shows. For example:

[T]ruth wins out in the end/honesty is the best policy; hard work yields rewards (work ethic); ingenuity finds a solution (clever thinking and creativity); and good wins out over evil[;] bad wins out over good; might makes right [...]; and good luck" is important. (Selnow, 1986, p. 70)

At the turn of the century with advancement of personal computers, mobile technology, and social media, personal values such as privacy, integrity, consumerism (i.e., an aspect of health and culture), sexual mores (i.e., sexting & revenge porn), and treatment of others (i.e., cyberbullying) have risen in importance. Examining personal values through media literacy is not only important but critical against the backdrop of escalating computer hacking, cyberbullying, disinformation, unhealthy media consumption, and the posting of revenge videos.

Although scholars explain the importance of cultivating a participatory culture through offline and online environments, media literacy also helps to make students aware importance of privacy (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kliglier-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016). While surveillance, spyware, phishing, and other intelligent software make privacy almost impossible, it is important to teach students about digital footprints and protection (MediaSmarts, 2018). MediaSmarts, a Canadian media literacy outlet, (2018) explains how privacy is a relevant aspect of contemporary American media culture and consumerism. Scheibe and Rogow (2012) provide an example lesson in which teachers can take an "[i]nquiry-[b]ased [o]nline [s]afety [e]ducation [approach] to address cyberbullying and other online safety issues [...] to

explore why the way one teaches is as important as what one teaches” (p. 57). It is relevant to note here that the lesson not only covers privacy and safety but integrity in a way that inculcates honesty, ethics, decency, and fairness. The argument for balanced and honest interactions and treatment in mediated environments encourages a culture of integrity. For example, researchers convey that “[m]edia analysis that uses a constructivist approach also encourages the development of moral reasoning as students clarify their own and others’ interpretations and discuss ethical issues” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 65)—an approach coded in the CPMLE (i.e., core principle 6.1, 6.2 and 5.6). As a practical example, students can discuss values of integrity, truth, and privacy in the idea of authorship and whether these values play a key role when authors (i.e., media creators) publish under anonymity (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012). Privacy is just one personal value that requires exploration.

### *Consumerism, Media Consumption, and Image*

Consumerism and body image are important. Advertisements such as periodicals (i.e., both digital and print popular magazines and newspapers), news outlets (i.e., online and offline), video games (i.e., console and web-based), and various other products and services elicit feelings and responses guided by personal values consumers hold. A common example is when a child watches his/her favorite TV show character (i.e., role model) in a commercial for a product (i.e., character paraphernalia) or service (i.e., web-based gaming based on character) and consequently develops a strong desire to obtain that product or service. Then, the child, guided or urged on by the advertisement and its values, responds with a set of sentiments that is either in direct conflict or cohesion with their own values system. While several connotations exist for the term consumerism

(Swagler, 1994), it is best to characterize consumerism with a focus on consumer behavior, attitudes, and values as defined by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as the “preoccupation with and an inclination toward the buying of consumer goods” (“Consumerism,” n.d.). Consumerism married to advertisements (i.e., media consumption) changes the landscape of human behavior, attitudes, and values in that exposure to advertisements challenges the quantity and quality of consumption and purchasing behavior (Paek & Pan, 2004).

When looking at Kasser (2005), one notes detail about consumerism in the following:

[Youth] low in frugality reported lower self-esteem, more use of cigarettes, and increased incidences of fighting with others. Those low in generosity reported being less happy, having lower self-esteem, drinking more alcohol, and getting into more fights and more trouble at school. Those high in materialism reported less happiness, more anxiety, and lower self-esteem. (p. 371)

While there are positive correlational effects of media (i.e. advertising and marketing) on consumers in terms of economic viability through merchandise item mindfulness and consumption of items, an article excerpt in *The New Yorker* says it best:

Associating products with certain values is a tactic practically as old as advertising itself. [...] Values-based ads may or may not sell products, but they do offer insight into how companies perceive their customers. And our reaction to them says a great deal about how we perceive ourselves. (Weiss, 2014, para 3)

In studying self-perception in youth, Kasser (2005) offers the following:

Materialistic individuals expend much energy toward becoming wealthy and owning many possessions, especially those that convey status and the "right" image in one's society. (p. 359)

Image is a central component of consumerism as one visualizes oneself with the advertised item (Kasser, 2005). In the case of body image, one visualizes oneself with the attributes of the advertised or publicized values, attitudes, and behaviors of the socially or physically attractive (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Holmstrom, 2004). These images

and interwoven value systems may have a socialized influence on youth in a positive way as suggested by Shaw and Waller (2007) or contribute to poor decision-making in the form of eating disorders, hyper-sexualization, and the increased likelihood of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use (Kirsh, 2010).

Many studies have examined how children and adolescents convey body image conceptualizations through media consumption (Ackard & Peterson, 2001; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Holmstrom, 2004; Harris & Bargh, 2009). Media has a wide-ranging impact on self-perception and self-esteem with effects on erratic eating habits, emotions, and social interactions (Ackard & Peterson, 2001; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Harris & Bargh, 2009). Martins and Harrison (2012) also noted that TV watching had a detrimental effect on girls and minorities as television did not offer the complementary images that affirmed their (racial, cultural, social, socio-economic) identities (Martins & Harrison, 2012). Media literacy possesses a mitigating effect on self-perception as it relates to body image issues providing adolescents with a positive self-perception and acceptance of their own bodies (Shaw & Waller, 2007).

Shaw and Waller (2007) explore the affective relationship (i.e., socio-emotional or mental health) between media and self-perception in girls influenced by norms on multiple media platforms. While Shaw and Waller (2007) posit that training in media selection correlates with positive affective outcomes and optimistic self-perception, it is important to emphasize that media literacy was what helped to combat feelings of inadequacy in women (Shaw and Waller, 2007). Shaw and Waller (2007) touched on an aspect of consumerism from a mental (i.e., socio-emotional) health perspective, but

Bergsma (2004) offered that media literacy studies cover a wide-range of health-promotion aspects.

With respect to consumer affect, the redress of health through media literacy was Bergsma and Carney's (2008) take in their analysis "that population health and well-being are intimately tied to, and consequences of, power and powerlessness, and that empowerment education is an effective model for achieving personal and social change" (p. 152). The social health aspect Bergsma (2004) discussed is a nuanced perspective of how media literacy can help facilitate social and civic awareness and identity in offline and online environments. Basing her analysis on "Freire[']s (1970; 1973) [...] framework for empowerment education that involves people in efforts to identify their own issues, to critically assess the social and historical roots of these issues, to envision individual health and a healthier society, and to develop social action strategies to overcome challenges and barriers in achieving their goals" (Bergsma, 2004, p. 154), Bergsma (2004) explains the need to maintain the health of a society by helping it to awake its social and civic media identity through media education approaches. Media literacy has the capacity to empower the young media consumer with the ability to search, shift, and find the truth, make judgements and informed choices, and envision a future where consumerism does not propagate feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. In the face of challenging mediated environments, the skill set and mental processes media literacy provides may offer critically important ways of dealing with some negative aspects of media exposure. With the prevalence of sexting and revenge porn, media literacy serves a critical role in the promotion of mental, social, and physical health and overall social responsibility in the treatment of others and self with respect to morality, ethics, and

principles of media behavior and responsibility. For clarity on the issue of revenge porn, the United Kingdom government offers a great definition:

Revenge Porn is the sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress. The images are sometimes accompanied by personal information about the subject, including [his/her] their full name, address and links to [his/her] social media profiles.

The offence applies both online and offline and to images which are shared electronically or in a more traditional way so includes the uploading of images on the internet, sharing by text and e-mail, or showing someone a physical or electronic image. (United Kingdom, 2018, paragraphs 1 – 2)

With a sharp spike in sexting (Madigan, Ly, & Rash, 2018), pornography (Madigan, et al., 2018), and revenge porn (Lenhart, Ybarra, & Price-Feeney, 2016), several articles and studies highlight current issues and interventions needed to curb negative media behaviors, attitudes, and poor values. Also, positive media literacy habits have the potential to curtail some of the more political charged and widespread issues occurring in schools such as cyberbullying (Bennett, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

As many victims can attest, revenge porn and other forms of harassment such as cyberbullying are harmful, but media literacy may be able to confront these issues by teaching students to manage media in a responsive, safe, and responsible manner (Bhat, Chang, & Linscott, 2010). Several definitions exist as to the definition of cyberbullying. Bhat (2008) offers the definition of cyberbullying as “the use of information and communications technology to intimidate, harass, victimize, or bully an individual or a group of individuals” (p. 54). Hinduja and Patchin (2015) differ in the explanation of cyberbullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (p. 11). Basically, cyberbullying implies the loss of values such as civility and courtesy in the treatment of others. Many are calling the



suicide rate among young generations of students an epidemic not before seen in the history of the United States. With a 2011 amendment decision by U.S. legislators for Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) “for educating minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyberbullying awareness and response” (see <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act>), Hinduja and Patchin (2015) remind their audience “that schools must educate both students and staff about the harmful nature of online aggression” such as cyberbullying (p. 147). To help, Scheibe and Rogow (2012) call for inquiry-based media literacy approaches that allow students to “engage in policy making” exercises concerning cyberbullying. For instance, utilizing “[k]ey [q]uestions for production [that] can structure one-on-one or small-group conversations with students who have engaged in cyberbullying or sent inappropriate photos” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 59). Having students use key questions is part of addressing cyberbullying through media literacy. Scholars add that teachers can use students’ lived experience, a conversation about consumers (i.e., victims in cases of cyberbullying), the analysis of values in cyberbullying situations, an evaluation of online destructive behaviors for victims and predators, and an incorporation of cyber civic behaviors could be a part of an instructional package to address cyberbullying while increasing media literacy skills (Bhat, Chang, & Linscott, 2010; Bruce, 2015; Scheibe & Rogow, 2012). While positive changes to media consumerism habits and understanding the treatment of others can alter youth life outcomes (Gee, 2007), media literacy through the CPMLE framework highlights NAMLE’s key questions coupled with an inquiry

skillset that qualifies reflective and informed decision-making (Schwarz, 2005a; Thoman, 1977).

### *Critical Thinking*

In the previous section, the researcher highlighted the importance of media literacy education concerning personal values, consumerism, media consumption, and image. In the following section, the researcher looks at how scholars treat the relationship between critical thinking and media literacy education as a way to develop ways of thinking about, through, and with media. Kellner and Share (2007b) express the following about media literacy:

Combing cultural studies with critical pedagogy, [they] argue that critical media literacy aims to expand the notion of literacy to include different forms of media culture, information and communication technologies and new media, as well as deepen the potential of literacy education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power. (p. 59)

Moreover, critical media literacy looks into “a multiperspectival approach addressing issues of gender, race, class and power” (Kellner and Share, 2007b, p. 59). Kellner and Share (2007a) indicate that “[e]mpowering the audience through critical thinking inquiry is essential for students to challenge the power of media to create preferred readings” (p. 13). The practice and conceptual understanding of media construction and influence reflects “[a]udience theory [where one] views the moment of reception as a contested terrain of cultural struggle where critical thinking skills offer potential for the audience to negotiate different readings and openly struggle with dominant discourses” (Kellner & Share, 2007a, p. 13).

To offer a thorough examination of the relationship between critical thinking and media literacy, understanding what critical thinking means is essential. Thus, the

Foundation for Critical Thinking (FCT) offers the following:

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. (Foundation for Critical Thinking, paragraph 1, 2018)

In minds of many media literacy scholars, “[c]ritical thinking is central to inquiry-based media literacy” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 22). Scheibe and Rogow (2012) describe critical thinking as follows:

In Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, & Cruikshank’s (2001) revision of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy, for example, critical thinking reflects six hierarchical skills: remember (knowledge), understand (comprehension), apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (synthesis). The overlap with media literacy capabilities is clear, especially when considering “power words” they associate with analyze (decode, inquire) and apply (action, participate). (p.22)

Exploring significance, implication, denotation, connotation, deconstructing, and constructing realities are essential as “[m]edia literacy is inquiry based and consistent with reflective teaching and critical thinking” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 5). Media literacy takes on many elements and purposes, but Davies’ (1996) suggestion is that “[a]t the heart of all the various elements of media literacy is critical analysis” (p. xv). Scholars concur that media literacy enables a “philosophy centered on informed inquiry” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005). Upon further examination, inquiry, as defined by Merriam-Webster (2018), is simply the act of asking questions that can take a systemic form, such as that of critical thinking, and media literacy education offers a framework to address the complexity of context, content, and form.

Worsnop (2008) makes a case for media literacy through critical thinking citing five foundational elements and additional critical thinking steps towards becoming media literate. Worsnop (2008) proposes a model and provides practitioner materials whereby he offers “media literacy through critical thinking” by conveying that “media education is about taking a second look [and by understanding that] media texts have purposes and target audiences” followed by considering the aforementioned “key concept[s]” to understand where “media texts have purposes and target audiences” (p. 5, 13). An example in Worsnop’s (2008) guidance begins with a preliminary exercise using ambiguous images where the teacher engages students by having them look for hidden or alternative messaging. The student exercises continue with students choosing several choice texts to implement what they learned in the preliminary exercise where they document a first text impression followed by another reading and a short-written reflection of a second reading (Worsnop, 2008). Another lesson builds on reviewing the messaging of each text by introducing the idea that media possess a predetermined agenda in their messaging (Worsnop, 2008). Providing examples of reasons for the creation and dissemination of a text, Worsnop (2004) offers students an idea of why an author would create their text and deduce the author’s intended readership’s demographic.

Similarly, Sperry (2012) provides insight into a different dynamic asserting that “[t]eaching [c]ritical [t]hinking [t]hrough [m]edia [l]iteracy” adds to core subject areas like science (p. 56). For example, he states that “in a forensics class, a student had to analyze an excerpt from the TV show *CSI* for accurate and inaccurate representations of

medical procedures” (Sperry, 2012, p. 58). In other words, the critical thinking involved applying an understanding of science concepts.

Feuerstein’s (1999) work explains that media literacy also supports critical thinking. Feuerstein (1999) reiterates the point that media literacy facilitates critical thinking by providing evidence that students demonstrate increases in “analytical and [critical thinking]” capabilities (p. 52). Feuerstein (1999) offers an example of putting together the “teaching video production groups in a small-group environment, engaging in multi-faceted tasks which demand[] from the students a defense of the choices they [make] from the wide variety of available options, and dealing with creative solutions to multi-dimensional problems” (p. 51). Feuerstein’s practical applications support Benson and Graham’s (2013) critical thinking example for a preservice experience in pedagogy when “[p]reservice teachers watch, then storyboard and re-create a film scene [and...] brainstorm ways to incorporate media texts along with anthology selections rather than simply showing a film version after reading the print version” (p. 17). The example serves as a pattern for teachers to use with their classrooms.

Other scholars offer similar examples of critical thinking through media literacy. Radeloff and Bergman (2009) explain that “[b]y encouraging students to explore the role of media in normalizing stereotypes and misrepresentations about other cultures, media can also be used to promote alternative ways of understanding different cultures” (p. 168). As an example, Radeloff and Bergman (2009) offer several briefly described lessons such as having students explore and examine internet sites of groups backing specific racial and social demographics or causes for “their accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage” (p. 169). Another lesson offers students the

opportunity to recapture the tone and tenor of marketing campaigns during the Cold War era and juxtapose the media environment of that past to the present situation with Middle East media campaigns and concerns with the race to Middle East armament and terrorism (Radeloff & Bergman, 2009).

Considine and Haley (1999) offer that “[b]y asking students to examine media texts and explore their content, form, origin, ownership, ideology, and influence, media literacy implicitly fosters critical thinking skills” (p. 8). For example, Considine and Haley (1999) discuss a lesson about using social, racial, and economic labels as the subject where the students discuss what defines a label and then evaluate the makeup of a label. Finally, students use various media platforms (i.e., film, internet, radio, print, etc.) to find the prevalence and ways in which media uses labels (i.e., media’s purpose).

A great resource for teachers and students alike is the Educational Video Center (EVC) where student “teaching documentary video [is] a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of young people, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change” (see <https://evc.org>). The website offers several programs to help teachers with content and offer students programs where students challenge idea about everything from teen pregnancy to the prison system. EVC offers a summer internship program that teaches youth about documentaries and how to complete one. The EVC summer program helps students “develop real-world 21st century skills as they collaboratively learn to ask hard questions, examine evidence, search for solutions, and make their voices heard through fact-based arguments and artful storytelling” (see <https://evc.org>). The students have an opportunity to present their documentary and respond to viewers after a “public screening” and provide proof of acquired knowledge

“to a panel of teachers, media professionals, and family members in a portfolio roundtable” (see <https://evc.org>).

Students taking on critical thinking through media literacy develop an acumen for identifying relationships, making connections, and understanding power and influence within social structures. These students challenge ideas about everything from teen pregnancy to the prison system to local issues of concern within their communities. This critical thinking takes an approach to challenge social structures that shape and control local norms. In other words:

Critical literacy gives individuals power over their culture and thus enables people to create their own meanings and identities and to shape and transform the material and social conditions of their culture and society. (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 381)

Much of the benefit of critical thinking in mediated environments goes well beyond the academic setting and into the personal and professional lives of students developing autonomy, self-advocacy skills, and voice. For support, Kellner and Share (2005) explain the following:

Coming to voice is important for people who have seldom been allowed to speak for themselves, but without critical analysis it is not enough. Critical analysis that explores and exposes the structures of oppression is essential because merely coming to voice is something any marginalized racist or sexist group of people can also claim. Spaces must be opened up and opportunities created so that people in subordinate positions have the opportunity to collectively struggle against oppression to voice their concerns and create their own representations. The process of empowerment is a major aspect of transformative education and it can take many forms, from building self-esteem to creating alternative media that voice opposition to social problems. (p. 371)

Even cross-disciplinary approaches such as having students analyze and evaluate the reasons for the continued use of tobacco during the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century until its recent ban in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century can have multidisciplinary opportunities across science,

history, politics, and media. For example, students can review early and contemporary marketing campaigns to understand target audiences such as the introduction of an animated character like Joe Camel to appeal to a younger generation to its most recent ads now requiring full disclosure statements. The TV commercials, print advertisements, and logo could spawn discussions about scientific accuracy of older advertisements, the historical significance of recent legal precedent, and geopolitical issues involved when discussing battles between health advocates, lobbyist groups, business strategies, and international marketing campaigns where legal approach (i.e., legal bans, import tariffs) and health advocacy are lagging or ineffective.

Using similar approaches to media literacy through critical inquiry, Hobbs and Frost (2003) encountered increased achievement and understanding, evaluation, interpersonal abilities with other forms of media among students in ELAR courses. Hobbs and Frost (2003) went on to explain that their “research shows that media-literacy instruction embedded in a secondary-level English language arts course can be effective in meeting traditional academic goals” while also addressing critical thinking approaches (p. 350). Hobbs and Frost (2003) provided an example in explaining that “analyzing the setting, speech, thoughts, and dialogue in a film scene may help students understand, identify, and evaluate those elements of character development in literature” (p. 333). Moreover, Hobbs and Frost (2003) reemphasized Hobbs’ (2001) point that “[p]articularly for struggling or reluctant readers, opportunities to analyze media texts may help internalize understanding of concepts like genre, point of view, and tone; such work may improve visualization and inference-making skills needed for skillful reading” (Hobbs & Frost, 2003, p. 333). Considine and Haley (1999) said that “[m]edia literacy represents an



alignment of the curriculum of the classroom and the curriculum of the living room” (p. 9).

### *Identity/Voice*

Media literacy can be pivotal to enabling self-expression by developing students’ voice to build self-advocacy and their unique identity. Rheingold (2008) expressed the need for youth “to master the use of media tools to express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with peers—to be active creators as well as consumers of culture” (p. 97). Using activities such as blogging, video blogging, podcasting, developing documentaries and other media, teachers can use “connected writing” in the ELAR classroom to tease out basic skills of expression, voice, and participation in civic and social discourse (Rheingold, 2008, p. 108).

As an instructional example for voice development, students can take the approach of a counter-advertiser in which students choose from topics (i.e., teacher pre-selected and student self-selected) that interest students and create an advertisement that stands in opposition to their chosen advertisement’s message (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012). Students can choose a medium or teachers can limit the medium to magazine front cover, mock radio announcement, or television commercial. Jenkins, et al. (2016) discuss the role social media play in facilitating student socio-political engagement and culture-shaping in a way that allows the emergence of individual voice, identity, and self-advocacy. For instance, several studies demonstrate the utility of blogging to develop English language learners’ comprehension, self-advocacy, and self-expression skills (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Noytim, 2010; Sun, 2009). In another lesson plan study, Bruce (2015) explains that students can introduce themselves through media excerpts

meant to de-stigmatize youth stereotypes and bolster their own identities. The same studies also indicate that media literacy skills aid in the emergence, development, and maturation of identities across an array of educative situations and often stimulate self-expression and self-advocacy in the process (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Noytim, 2010; Sun, 2009). In another way, several qualitative studies document the emergence of identity, voice, and participation through civic engagement in classroom activities across the curriculum (Mukundu, 2009; Munoz-Navarro, 2009; Yoon, 2009).

### *Democracy*

While voice and identity are foundational to students' personal development, the previous section alluded to civic engagement. The following section highlights what media literacy brings to the realm of democracy. Rheingold (2008), in support of understanding the relationship between media and creator, supported the following about Jurgen Habermas' take on the role of media:

Habermas drew attention to the intimate connection between a web of free, informal personal communications and the foundations of democratic society. Because the public sphere depends on free communication and discussion of ideas, it changes when it scales—as soon as your political entity grows larger than the number of citizens you can fit into a modest town hall, this vital marketplace for political ideas can be influenced by changes in communications technology. Communication media, and the ways the state permits citizens to use them, are essential to the public sphere in a large society. (p. 101)

Silverblatt (2004) takes a similar stance but explains that media has a socializing effect on people as well. For instance, the dissemination of fake media messages brings into focus the need to address media literacy skills in what Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) explain as a “post-fact culture” (p. 447). Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) also take a similar approach to the concept of participatory culture as Jenkins, et al. (2016) but offer the

notion that teachers need to move beyond traditional media literacy teaching into “repositioning media literacies are for spreadable connectivity [...,....] as mechanisms for caring [...,....] as facilitators of ‘everyday engagement [..., and...r]eimagining media literacies as intentionally civic” (p. 451). Mihailidis and Viotty (2017) suggest moving beyond the classroom approach to prepare students for mediated environments:

Media literacies that focus on participation in local issues [that] can frame the critique and creation of message as connected to one’s sense of place, belonging, and community. [...] Media literacy must focus on civic impact: The ways in which media can be used to impact, at realistic scale, the political, social, and cultural issues that define our democracy. (p. 451)

For example, Cohen and Mihailidis (2012) suggest an online tool, Storify, as a way to help students experience “curation [...]n order to tell a story about news and current events, while also encouraging interactivity” (p. 27). They describe the activity as a way to select, organize, and present “information to tell a story [that] creates a sense of responsibility[, ...] advance[] the core media literacy principle of creation[, ...] compose a story using content acquired on their search with heightened awareness of purpose and audience” (Cohen & Mihailidis, 2012, p. 28). Students can use Storify to collect news articles, videos of public officials’ interviews and statements, and personal accounts as a way to convey a storyline with a focus on accuracy and consistency.

Cohen and Mihailidis (2012) emphasize that the “research and discovery of information as well as evaluating and analyzing content enforces critical thinking skills and creates informed citizens” (p. 28). This research and discovery of information is especially important in societies where violence, cultural stereotypes, and abuse of public trust is commonplace. Given recent and continuously emerging news about foreign and domestic powers using weaponized media to influence other countries and its citizens to

cause unrest within that country (i.e., Black Lives Matter, 2016 U.S. presidential election, Ukraine takeover, Boko Haram, etc.), a media literacy educator's responsibility seems to be ever more meaningful.

Examining the issue of “polioptics to describe how important it is to control the image in today’s media world—from giving a speech at a podium to kissing a baby at a rally” is part of being aware of value-laden messages affecting political appeal, voting, lobbying, and monetary political contributions (Baker, 2014, p. 21). “[P]olioptics” is a term that connotes “stagecraft and choreography [...that...] impl[ies] the need to arrange media to communicate a coherent message to an audience within the image-driven world of politics” (Baker, 2014, p. 21). The term further “describe[s] how important it is to control the image in in today’s media world—from giving a speech at a podium to kissing a baby at a rally” (Baker, 2014, p. 21). Many scholars attribute political outcome to the influence of endorsements from politicians usually, but celebrities also impact political outcomes (Jackson & Darrow, 2005; Pease & Brewer, 2008). Media literacy competent teachers guide students to understand “messages are constructed” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 3), purposeful, idiosyncratic, value-laden, and often contain a semiotic element and frequently express a semantic structure that affects consumers. As an example, Fischer (2000) provides a lesson plan about “explor[ing] the role of special-interest groups in American campaigns [and...] creating their own political advertisements, both in the mode of those examined in [an] article and in [an] opposite [...] mode” (paragraph 1). Fischer (2000) uses individual, whole-group, and small group to first determine what students know about political lobbying, then to work on media related to lobbying, and third to create presentations for class using various media formats. Students can read,

research, and evaluate the influence of special-interest groups such as the MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), National Rifle Association (NRA), or the Sierra Club as they analyze the media ads paid for these organizations and the issues, groups, and individuals these organizations target or support.

As mentioned previously, stereotypes and social norms are important to address. Many think that media literacy addresses equality and advocacy. Several groups raise the issue that media literacy is the answer to gender equality by publicizing the following on a United Nations Vietnam (2019) website:

Gender biases and stereotypes have permeated all forms of media in ASEAN. Women remain underrepresented in the media and are often portrayed in stereotypical roles. Of concern is the normalization of violence against women on television and other media. The media heavily influences social perceptions, with young boys and girls internalizing gender biases. Constant exposure to gender stereotypes desensitizes the public and renders them immune to gender inequality and discrimination. (paragraph 1)

Men for Change, an advocacy group in Nova Scotia, suggests a media literacy lesson approach that discusses culturally inherited gender stereotypes (see <http://www.m4c.ns.ca>). The lesson reviews the aspects of gender labels, the impact of gender labels on students' lives, and the link between gender labels and violence across contexts, cultures, and experiences (Men for Change, 1994). Additionally, the lesson supports the critical analysis of the media's portrayal of gender, the practice of violence and abuse against both men and women, and the act of building capacity in younger generations and communities to create media and advocate for media that does not portray negative attributes that promote or support stereotypical behaviors across contexts, cultures, and experiences (Men for Change, 1994). Promoting democracy

through media literacy for accountability allows students to become “citizens [that] tak[e] on an increased role as watchdogs through citizen journalism and blogging” thereby facilitating civic participation (Martinsson, 2009, p. 5).

As previously mentioned, equality, advocacy, accountability, and transparency can all be learned through media literacy classroom experiences that contribute to the practice and experience of democracy, but civic participation is also key. Through engaged participation and the emergence of voice, principles 4 through 6 of the CPMLE explain that media literacy is an enabler of democracy. Scholars believe that the “[d]evelopment of that voice is foundational for the development of critical autonomy and nurtures the creativity necessary for problem solving in a democracy” (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012, p. 51). As mentioned previously, many scholars agree that media literacy education is a preparative framework for a participatory culture and democracy (Jhally & Earp, 2003; Kellner & Share, 2007a, 2007b; Mihailids & Viotty, 2017; Semali, 2005; Thoman & Jolls, 2005).

Although students have an opportunity to participate and voice their concerns and opinions through media literacy education, Jenkins, et al. (2016) pushes the media literacy education envelope toward “[m]aking the [l]eap[ f]rom [p]articipatory [c]ulture to [p]articipatory [p]olitics” and “activism through cultural, rather than overtly political, activities that [are] more widespread in the everyday experiences of American youth” (p. 39). Engaging in participatory culture and politics through media literacy can move students towards engagement, and Jenkins, et al. (2016) explains that:

Even painted in such broad strokes, one can see an ongoing process through which young people have refreshed and renewed the public’s symbolic power as they fight for social justice; they often push back against inherited forms and search for new mechanisms for asserting their voice. (p. 2)

Tolerance in the political sense is “the willingness to extend basic rights and civil liberties to persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one’s own” (Avery, 2001, p. 1). Calabrese (2001) discusses the need to address media literacy since it is a vehicle to understand the many opinions offered in the social, political, and functional realms of the mediated environment. Hobbs (1998) believes media literacy serves students’ civic abilities in their introduction to the multiplicity of perspectives. Experiences such as participating in online or offline public forums and debates, critically analyzing messaging from advertisements, judging the accuracy of scientific publications, critiquing geopolitical perspectives, or simply composing a video supporting a political, cultural, religious, or social position necessitate media literacy. Media literacy serves to lay the groundwork for constructive engagement where students learn to inquire and challenge perceptions. Hobbs (1998) expresses the following about the role media literacy in actuating respect for other’s positions:

In a multicultural society, people need to increase their comfort levels and tolerance with a wide range of different people. Media literacy can raise awareness of the vital role of exposure to a rich array of diverse opinions and ideas. (p. 63)

Media literacy lessons focusing on inquiry related to the form, function, authorship, audience, meaning, timing, and tone of a message opens the doors to understand the degree of tolerance of messaging between religious, social, political, and cultural groups. Teaching media literacy can illuminate students’ ability to recognize how media promote personal values, develop critical thinking, cultivate identity and voice, and enrich skills for and values of a democracy. The urgency and relevance of media literacy’s presence in

classroom instruction and curriculum, and the practical applications across varying instructional contexts make media literacy an important part of K-12 education.

### *Guiding Theoretical Framework*

As the researcher explores the curricular implementation of media literacy standards from the perspective of Texas high school ELAR teachers, the CPMLE will serve as a theoretical framework that guides the curricular implementation of media literacy education in this research study. The joint creators of the CPMLE are media literacy researchers such as Bergsma, Considine, Culver, Hobbs, Jensen, Rogow, Rosen, Scheibe, Sellers-Clark, and Thoman. NAMLE made the CPMLE public in 2007, and it offers six core principles relating the structure and intent of media literacy education. Table 2.1 provides an analysis of where the CPMLE is present across the NCTE/ILA standards and the ELAR TEKS with particular focus on subsections directly indicating media literacy. Supporting and extending every core principle within the CPMLE document is a subsection about the implications for practice whereas it “primarily addresses classroom teachers in the United States” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 1). The CPMLE framework “expands the boundaries of the field to encompass not only *what* we teach, but also how we teach it, distinguishing these as core principles of ‘media literacy education’ rather than solely as key concepts of ‘media literacy’” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 1). The document highlights instructional approaches in so far as the principles emphasize the educational expectations of media literacy education as well as what media literacy is not. Hobbs and Jensen (2009) explain the following about the CPMLE:

In 2007, when the community came together, under leadership by Faith Rogow, to create the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States, the American media literacy community had already developed some consensus



about the purpose of media literacy education and its instructional practices and values. (p. 7)

Highlighting the CPMLE as a “consensus document,” the CPMLE is an ideal framework by which to identify media literacy practice in public secondary ELAR classrooms. As an extension of the CPMLE framework (see Table 2.2), a list of “Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages” cues assist students in the assessment and breakdown of various media messages (NAMLE, 2019). The main aspects of the CPMLE to be discussed are its presence among the ELAR TEKS, a brief description of each principle, and the relevance of the Key Questions.

In classrooms across Texas, teachers use the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards as a guiding curricular framework to implement instruction and assessment activities. In particular, Table 2.1 analyzes the standards that are specifically labelled with the term media literacy. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) offers standards of guidance that “defines what students should know about language and be able to with language” (NCTE, 1996). Additionally, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) provides core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE) that guide curricular and instructional activities in the teaching of media literacy education in the United States. Taken together, Table 2.1 demonstrates what core principles appear across NCTE standards and TEKS standards. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to understand how the core principles are implemented or not in Texas high school ELAR classrooms to gauge to the degree to which the media literacy education is present in teachers’ planning, implementation, and assessment.

Table 2.1

*CPMLE, NCTE, and TEKS comparison (NAMLE, 2007a; NCTE, 1996; TEKS, 2018)*

CPMLE	NCTE/ILA Standards	TEKS
Media literacy education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.	6, 8,	9-12.A-D
Media literacy education expands the concepts of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media.	1, 2, 11	9-12.A-C
Media literacy education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.	7	9.12A-D, 10.12A-D; 11.12A-D; 12.12A-D;
Media literacy education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.		
Media literacy education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.	1, 9	10.12A; 11.12A
Media literacy education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.	2, 3	

In addition to NAMLE’s CPMLE, NAMLE provides a *Key Questions* document to assist teachers in the implementation of the CPMLE for a “sophisticated ‘close reading’ [that] requires exploring the full range of issues covered by the ten categories” (NAMLE, 2007b, paragraph 1; see Table 2.2). In other words, “[t]he [c]ore [p]rinciples can also be approached as [key questions]” (NAMLE, 2010, slide 13). The underlying motive behind NAMLE’s CPMLE and questions is to engender student behaviors of investigation and “skills of expression” (NAMLE, 2010, slide 17).

Table 2.2

*CPMLE Key Questions (Adapted from NAMLE, 2007b)*

Items	Categories	Sample Questions
Authors and Audiences	Authorship	Who made this media?
	Purposes	Why was this media made? What does this want me to do?
		Who is the target audience? Who are they talking to? Or Who is this for?
	Economics	Who paid for this?
	Effect	Who might benefit from or be harmed by this message? Why might this message matter to me?
Reaction	What types of reactions may a consumer have as a response?	
Messages and Meanings	Content	What is this about (and what makes you think that)? What ideas, values, information, and/or points of view are overt? Implied?
		What is left out of this message that might be important to know? What techniques are used?
	Techniques	Why were those techniques used? How do they communicate the message? How might different people understand this message differently?
	Interpretations	What is my interpretation of this and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?
Representations and Reality	Context	When was this made? Where or how was it shared with the public?
	Credibility	Is this fact, opinion, or something else? How credible is this (and what makes you think that)? What are the sources of the information, ideas, or assertions?

*CPMLE Principles*

A brief explanation of the CPMLE principles only highlights the salient points in each of the core principles. As mentioned previously, the implications for teaching under each principle are lengthy but necessary “to expand[] the boundaries of the field to encompass not only what [teachers] teach but also how [teachers] teach” media literacy (NAMLE, 2018, p. 2). The first principle implies the need to study the “language of [the] construction” of media (NAMLE, 2018, p. 2), and to understand that “media messages are ‘constructed’” (NAMLE, 2018, p. 2). Essentially, students better understand the construction of a message by constructing messages themselves for various purposes and

questioning the underlying purposes of messages. For example, Thier (2008) conveys the need to develop a “healthy skepticism” among students to question “contradictory claims and make evidence-based personal decisions [...about...] concepts and processes of science” (p. 20, 21). The second principle in the CPMLE moves beyond older definitions of literacy like reading and writing to tackle other forms of media such as social, news, and mass media through other media platforms such as radio, television, mobile technology, and the internet. The implications for teaching under the second encompass the utilization of pop culture media and deconstruction of mediated environments at the intersection of other literacies (i.e., visual, information, digital, computer, information communication technology, internet, film, and audio literacy). For example, having students compare and contrast salient social and cultural aspects of three forms of the Harry Potter world (i.e., videogames, printed books, and movies) allows the exercise and use of multiple media platforms.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth principles highlight the political, sociological, and ecological aspects of media literacy education in that they necessarily address democracy, socialization, and meaning making and awareness. For example, having students create a science skeptic blog emphasizing the merits of carbon-footprints based on scientifically-based fact sites and agenda-driven websites allows students to get involved in political debate and become familiar with social misperceptions on the issue. Extending the meaning making and awareness portion, the students can compose a letter to the local municipality encouraging the reduction of the city’s carbon footprint. The students can create a petition for the city to implement more carbon-conscious practices. By understanding the framework of CPMLE, media literacy education implications, and the

need to work toward a style of teaching that focuses students' attention on real issues and brings attention to students' lived experiences, teachers are able to address the an urgent need to help students become media literate.

### *ELAR TEKS*

The ELAR TEKS under media literacy/reading reflect a portion of the CMPLE (see Table 2.1). From Table 2.1, it is simple to see that NCTE and TEKS only reflect a portion of the CMPLE leaving out core principles 4 through 6. The state of Texas through the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) curriculum document attempts to integrate media literacy in the form of standards under the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for high school English courses entitled "Reading/Media Literacy" (Texas Education Code, 2018, §110.36(b)12). The following section presents the media literacy portion of the ELAR TEKS. From 9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the TEKS require students to compare, contrast, evaluate, and analyze media. For example, 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I outlines the following TEKS:

- (A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts;
- (B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);
- (C) compare and contrast coverage of the same event in various media (e.g., newspapers, television, documentaries, blogs, Internet); and
- (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. (TEA, 2018)

For 10<sup>th</sup> grade English II, the document includes in two of the expectations from 9<sup>th</sup> grade. To illustrate, the following 10<sup>th</sup> grade TEKS have (B) and (D) in common with 9<sup>th</sup> grade standards:

- (A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;
- (B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);
- (C) examine how individual perception or bias in coverage of the same event influences the audience; and
- (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. (TEA, 2018)

For 11<sup>th</sup> grade English III, the document includes in two of the expectations from 10<sup>th</sup> grade. To demonstrate, the following 11<sup>th</sup> grade TEKS have (A) and (D) in common with 10<sup>th</sup> grade standards:

- (A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;
- (B) evaluate the interactions of different techniques (e.g., layout, pictures, typeface in print media, images, text, sound in electronic journalism) used in multi-layered media;
- (C) evaluate the objectivity of coverage of the same event in various types of media; and
- (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for different audiences and purposes. (TEA, 2018)

For 12<sup>th</sup> grade English IV, the document includes two of the expectations from 11<sup>th</sup> grade. To demonstrate, the following 12<sup>th</sup> grade TEKS have (A), (B) and (D) in common with 11<sup>th</sup> grade principles:

- (A) evaluate how messages presented in media reflect social and cultural views in ways different from traditional texts;
- (B) evaluate the interactions of different techniques (e.g., layout, pictures, typeface in print media, images, text, sound in electronic journalism) used in multi-layered media;
- (C) evaluate how one issue or event is represented across various media to understand the notions of bias, audience, and purpose; and
- (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for different audiences and purposes. (TEA, 2018)

From a short TEKS analysis, the researcher notes the repetitiveness of the knowledge and skills, the inclusion of knowledge and skills from grade level to grade level, and the absence of COPLE 4 through 6. The added standard is for students to gauge “how one

issue or event is represented across various media to understand the notions of bias, audience, and purpose” (TAC, 2018, §110.36(b)12(C)). Moreover, the presence of media literacy TEKS leads the researcher to believe ELAR teachers are utilizing these standards in some way, and the investigation of the extent of media literacy education understanding and implementation is the central component of the purpose of this present study.

### *Core Principles Key Questions*

As mentioned previously, NAMLE’s (2007) document provides questions as cues that are adaptable across subject areas. Probst (2017), for instance, adapts the question prompts to teach Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning “[CASEL] Social and Emotional (SEL) competencies and address individualized education plan (IEP) goals and objectives of students with social and emotional deficits” (p. 45). Probst (2017) indicates that:

This [key questions] framework and case study are only a brief sampling of the ways in which NAMLE’s key questions can be applied in the special education setting to achieve social and emotional learning, and can be expanded in a number of ways for different types of media and social and emotional learning needs. (p. 54)

As illustrated, the Core Principles Key Questions (CPKQ) adapted by NAMLE provide ways to engage students in media literacy education. The application of the key questions in high school ELAR classrooms may also serve as best practice for teachers looking for maximization of learning at school and reinforcement at home. Finally, the key questions enhance the CPMLE by providing teachers prompts to use across content areas, as a way to encourage family engagement, and inculcate habits of inquiry.

### *NCTE Standards*

The NCTE standards reflect the CPMLE in several ways but may fall short of NAMLE’s intent. In total, NCTE suggests twelve standards as “interrelated and [...] not distinct and separable” (NCTE, 1996). Out of the twelve standards, media literacy does not appear specifically. One may argue that “nonprint text[, ] visual language[, ] media techniques[, and] technological and information resources” represent the spirit and scope of media literacy tenets in the CPMLE (NCTE, 1996, p. 3). NCTE, as an organization, has been supportive of media literacy (see <https://ncte.org>). See, for example, articles listed on the website. However, media literacy is only one concern of the NCTE.

### *Struggle for Media Literacy Education*

The United States houses some of the largest media broadcasting, technology, computer services, and computer hardware companies (i.e., media technology or information communication technology) in the world, such as Alphabet, Inc., Amazon, Apple, AT-&T, Verizon Communications, Walt Disney, Comcast, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox, Facebook, Viacom, CBS Corporation, and News Corp, in addition to countless others that did not make the \$1 billion profit margin in 2017. It may be safe to assume the U.S. ranks among the world’s leading media technology providers and tops the global chart for media traffic and consumption (Meeker, 2017). Yet, it is not uncommon to find rampant media illiteracy and a disjuncture between media literacy education and important social and political trends and changes (Wineburg, et al, 2016). Mediated environments could pose a problem to cognitive, social, and psychological aspects of youth development and interactions—problems that pertain to media literacy. While it is routine for U.S. youth to encounter digital media or mediated environments, the recent past in curricular revision



and reform has not been concomitant with educational policy and the modernizing literacy landscape to include media literacy (Schwarz, 2005a).

Encountering media literacy education to eradicate media illiteracy may be a path worth taking. For instance, nothing is more gripping than to witness the outcomes of what seems like an ill-prepared youth culture in the larger context of society. In the case of Michelle Carter and her cell phone texts that pushed her boyfriend to suicide (Bever & Phillips, 2017), media literacy might have helped her question the impact on the mental health of her boyfriend and rethink her menacing behavior via her electronic device. Another case of the murder of Sarah Ludeman over a social media threat (Lee, 2013) may have been prevented by educating students about cyberbullying. Lastly, media literacy may prove to counter a trend among young people that continue to limit their news consumption to Facebook (Gottfried & Barthel, 2015). Media literacy education aims to create students who have clear values, voice, critical thinking, and civic participation.

Studies such as Bickam and Slaby (2012) demonstrate the positive results of a media literacy on students. Their study's outcomes demonstrate "significant increases in students' understanding that (1) media violence is often glorified, unrealistic, and can make children act more violently, and (2) advertising can make smoking and fast foods look healthy and can affect children's desires and behaviors" (Bickam & Slaby, 2012, p. 255). In another study, media literacy helps improve awareness of the purposes of media such as advertisements that target audiences with "attractive portrayals designed to sell products and services" (Austin, Pinkleton, & Funabiki, 2007). On violence, a media literacy study demonstrates a positive impact on the decision-making of middle schoolers to "more likely [...] choose non-aggressive approaches to two of three conflict scenarios

presented [in addition to] boys in the sample becom[ing] more likely to acknowledge two of three effects of media violence” (Scharrer, 2009, p. 12). Many other studies and meta-analyses report positive outcomes after the implementation of a media literacy program on smoking or the intent to smoke, improved dietary choices, reduction of risky behaviors, realistic interpretation of hypersexual appeal in films and other media, increased protected sex behaviors, improved social media use, and the reduction of students’ plan to use alcohol (Austin, Chen, & Grube, 2006; Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Pinkleton, Austin, Chen & Cohen, 2013; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen & Fitzgerald, 2007; Primack, Douglas, Land, Miller, & Fine, 2014; Scharrer, 2006; Walther, Hanewinkel, & Morgenstern, 2014).

At the national level, future American leaders need have the capacity to address media literacy issues, such as the confirmed meddling in U.S. political elections by foreign intelligence operatives using multiple media tools and sites to influence the average American citizen voter (*Associated Press*, 2017). By upgrading educational policies to reflect a focus on media literacy to help identify, report, and reduce fake news, law makers might be able to prepare future generations. Media literacy education facilitates opportunities to learn about others, foster dialogue, participation, and increase familiarization with cultural and political norms. Additionally, it provides a creative environment in which to critically deconstruct and construct media experiences.

Among the many other struggles for media literacy education, Hobbs and Frost (2003) cite several in the following:

First, literacy educators have long elevated one form of literacy over others, as Goody and Watt (1988) noted about the long-subordinated position of speaking and listening within the curriculum. Second, Flood et al. (1997) stated that teachers’ ‘irrational loyalty to reading and writing’ (p. xvi) may come from their

fears that children's media use displaces their use of print, a fear that is not well supported in a comprehensive review of 30 years of research evidence [...]. (p. 333)

Schwarz (2005a) cites that “[t]he [p]lace of [m]edia [l]iteracy” continues to have trouble but that combining media literacy with other subject in ways that are relevant and appropriate serves to bolster subject areas (p. 240). The struggle to get media literacy training into the practices of in-service teachers and pre-service teachers may continue to pose a problem as school district and colleges of education do not readily offer media literacy as part of the preparation approach (Schwarz, 2005a). Studies support media literacy education but practice seems limited still.

#### *Other Studies*

The following section reviews studies on media literacy implementation and demonstrates gaps in the research. The studies can generally be categorized by media literacy implementation by subject area, by school institutional level, or by programmatic focus. For the most part, many studies concern local level movements to adopt or integrate media literacy into current curricular structures. Jolls and Grande (2005) demonstrate the need to address media literacy teacher training to provide successful classroom experiences for elementary students through Project SMARTArt. MacDonald's (2008) study, focusing on media literacy implementation at two elementary schools, looks at classroom instructional models most adapted for media literacy concepts and is non-subject area specific. The results of MacDonald's (2008) study indicate “[s]tudents in both classrooms demonstrated an understanding of and ability to apply the media literacy constructs that appeared in classroom instruction” (p. xiv).

At the middle school level, several studies emerge. Payne (2008) and Redmond (2011) look at media literacy implementation at the middle school but from two different perspectives. Payne (2008) investigates the media literacy experiences of Texas middle school students, while Payne (2008) generally focuses on implementation and student experiences. Payne (2008) provides insight into the literature by looking into the voice of middle school students' media literacy education with "non-print media forms" (p. 115). Both Payne (2008) and Redmond (2011) agree that middle school level teachers have a difficult time obtaining grade-level media resources. Additionally, Payne (2008) indicates that "[m]edia literacy is not experienced by middle school students as a fully integrated component of middle school curriculum" (p. 109). Redmond's (2011) study focuses on students and non-core subject area teachers to confirm that "[m]edia literacy in the United States is largely a grassroots effort lead by individual teachers" (p.40). It is important to note that Redmond's (2011) study is one of a few studies to adopt the CPMLE as a framework for the study of media literacy implementation.

The studies of Wood (2009), De Abreu (2008), Ritchie (2011), Callahan, (2001) and Huie (2011) focus on secondary implementation as well as with a diverse participant pool such as high school teachers, administrators, and students. Ritchie's (2011) study focuses on the perceptions of high school administrators and curriculum directors and concludes that media literacy is at full implementation within participant schools, but some administrators lack confidence that training and technology are up to the rigorous expectations of media literacy implementation. Callahan (2001) and Huie (2008) are the only studies that focus solely on high school ELAR teachers' experiences while De Abreu (2008) looks at the experience of three subject diverse high school teacher

graduates of one of the only U.S. media literacy certification programs from across three different school districts and two different states. Although Callahan's (2001) title leads the reader to conclude that the study's focus is on English classrooms, the narrative positions the English classroom as a secondary focus where the principle focus falls on the study of "a year-long elective called 'Cultural and Media Studies'" (p. 26) and its students' experiences along with the one English teacher's experience. Wood's (2009), like Ritichie's (2011) study, uses a survey approach to focus on media literacy implementation at secondary campuses across content and grade level areas to find that media literacy education is a supplementary tool to motivate student participation. At best, Wood (2009) alludes to a media literacy education approach that suffers from poor teacher training in technology, which signals that the study's focus may miss the mark of what media literacy means.

At the higher education level, Mihailidis (2009), Ngomba-Westbrook (2013), and Sellers-Clark (2006) focus on the issues of implementation at the higher education or in the teacher education arena. Mihailidis (2009) focuses on undergraduate student experiences to find that a media literacy course enhances students' media literacy readiness. Ngomba-Westbrook's (2013) study finds that teacher training in media literacy lags behind the contemporary experience of students where media production suffers at the expense of "process" and "watchdog/activist" teaching approaches "as opposed to the [looking at the] media industry" (p. iv). Sellers-Clark (2006) discovers that media literacy education suffers a stunted approach in its limited implementation in college educators' classrooms. Few college educators "were doing something in the co[ur]ses with regards

[to] media literacy, but what they [were] doing [was] not enough” (Sellers-Clark, 2006, p. 104).

Lastly, Ruzic (2016) and Taylor (2002) focus on media literacy implementation at the system-wide level examining education systems. Ruzic (2016) finds the problem of consistency at the system level and the need for more concerted effort to implement media literacy in Montenegro. Taylor’s (2002) study looks at media literacy implementation in three countries (i.e., Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom) to find that media literacy is part of a mandatory effort in these countries’ approaches that may help the United States’ efforts at full implementation.

This present study on media literacy education and its perception by teachers of high school English classrooms in Texas hopes to fill the gap in the literature in several ways. Texas is important by virtue of its size, influence on other states, and its historical significance in media literacy education (Ward-Barnes, 2010). Texas was one of the first states to adopt a comprehensive media literacy structure into its state curricular framework document. Since there are scant studies on media literacy and Texas public schools, this study fills a gap in the literature that focuses on Texas high schools exclusively. In addition, other studies do not have a specific focus on high school English teachers’ perceptions of current media literacy practices. Media literacy education is valuable, and the current state of the field needs investigation.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with an overview of the literature on media literacy education: the meaning, history and purpose, importance, struggle and status, guiding framework, and recent studies focusing on media literacy

education implementation. This chapter summarizes the literature in the field with a particular focus on media literacy education implementation efforts. While the research literature demonstrates efforts to study media literacy implementation at various educational levels from elementary to higher education and professional learning arenas, this study's primary focus is on media literacy education implementation in secondary, high school ELAR classrooms. As previously mentioned, this study uses the CPMLE as a theoretical framework. It is important to note that the CPMLE is not necessarily a widely-used framework although it is the framework adopted by the NAMLE, a leading resource and collective in the U.S. media literacy movement. NAMLE is also an organization that provides professional guidance for the implementation of media literacy education across the United States. NAMLE's CPMLE also serves as an umbrella guidance for modeling what media literacy education is and could become in classrooms. The following chapter will go into greater detail about the methodological elements involved in this present study and includes: (a) a review of the research questions; (b) overview of the research design; (c) a description of site and participant pool; (d) procedures for data collection; (e) a description of the data analysis methods, and actions to ensure validity, and study limitations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

Teaching media literacy can encourage students' ability to recognize how media promote personal values, to develop critical thinking, to cultivate identity and voice, and to enrich skills for and values of a democracy. As mentioned in previous chapters, the definition of media literacy is the "ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" (NAMLE, 2018, p. 1). The urgency and relevance of media literacy's presence in classroom instruction and curriculum, and the practical applications across varying instructional contexts make media literacy an important part of K-12 education. Other scholars go even further to say that "[g]iven the changing demographics in American schools and society, ongoing concern over the empowerment of all citizen in America, and growing human interconnectedness [...] media literacy matters [...] to understand the world and make it a better place" (Semali, 2005, p. 35, 40).

The focus of this study was to gauge the status of media literacy education in Texas public high school English language arts and reading (ELAR) teacher classrooms in the South-Central Texas area. The researcher's interest laid in understanding how implementation of media literacy education happens (or does not) in today's secondary school environments. Since the presence and inclusion of the term 'media literacy' appears among the standards in Title 19, Part II, of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 110 of the High School ELAR Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS;



see <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>), the researcher wanted to know how their presence translated into ELAR teacher implementation of media literacy education and of other standards such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (CPMLE). The researcher collected data from certified high school ELAR teachers at two individual high school campuses. Both campuses were within the same school district.

Facing the external pressures from campus and district administrators, parents, the community, high-stakes assessments, and policymakers, ELAR teachers confront a daunting task of teaching along with staying instructionally relevant and current. Through this present study, the researcher investigated the implementation, practices, and beliefs of teachers. According to previous studies, implementation of media literacy education remains stubbornly uneven and often requires local movement efforts (Hobbs, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007b; Schilder, Lockee, & Saxon, 2016). Through the lens of the CPMLE framework, the researcher described media literacy education implementation by secondary ELAR teachers of the recently updated 2017 media literacy TEKS standards. Media literacy education has had a history of struggle in implementation across the U.S. (Kubey, 2003; Schwarz, 2005a). Furthermore, the lack of research on the implementation of media literacy standards as they evolve in Texas, one of the first states to adopt media literacy standards, inspired this present study.

As mentioned in chapter two of this work, prior research on media literacy's implementation exists, but studies using the CPMLE framework are nearly nonexistent. The CPMLE framework is the guiding framework that experts endorse for media literacy education across the U.S. (NAMLE, 2018). Moreover, in one of largest states to adopt

media literacy education standards, the research is even further limited in the literature. Considering the challenges of tightened funding to schools, the achievement gap facing urban and racial demographics, and lack of policy interest in the state, implementation in Texas high schools may prove especially problematic. Investigating teachers' preparedness, practice, and thinking about media literacy education compelled this research. The contents of this chapter provided the methodological elements involved in this present study and include: (a) a review of the research questions; (b) overview of the research design; (c) a description of site and participant pool; (d) procedures for data collection; (e) a description of the data analysis methods, and (f) actions to ensure validity, and study limitations.

### *Research Questions*

Investigating how and what is working for media literacy implementation in the high school ELAR setting, the researcher sought to answer the following overarching question: what is the current implementation status of media literacy education in secondary school English teachers' classrooms in a Texas urban area public school district? To address the main question, the following sub-questions were answered:

1. What do teachers do and know about media literacy education?
  - a. To what extent are teacher familiar with the core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education?
  - b. What do they think media literacy education is?
  - c. What value do these teachers place on media literacy education?
  - d. How do English teachers teach, use, or address media literacy in the classroom?
  - e. What are teachers' views about students' media skills and understanding?

2. What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?
  - a. How competent do teachers feel about media literacy education?
  - b. What are teachers' sources of media literacy education materials?
  - c. What are the barriers to implementing media literacy education for them?

### *Research Design*

Based on the research questions, a descriptive multiple case study design was chosen as most useful (Yin, 2014). The descriptive case study was appropriate for this study for two principle reasons. An objective of this and all case study research is to develop an understanding of the bounded system (Yin, 2014). A bounded system “can be defined or described within certain parameters” (p. 97). Merriam (1998) provided “[e]xamples of parameters for bounding a case study [as a] specific place where the case is located and timeframe in which the case is studied[, and o]n occasion, certain people involved in the case may also be defined as a parameter” (p. 97). The main purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of how teachers implement media literacy education in southeastern ELAR classrooms in Texas high schools in a single school district.

Second, descriptive case studies answer questions based on theory. The descriptions of media literacy should be related to what the CPMLE, NCTE/ILA standards, and TEKS describe media literacy to be, and those descriptions should help identify assumptions under which ELAR teachers may operate. Also, case studies are the most appropriate qualitative research approach defined as “investigat[ing] a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context may not be clearly

evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Specifically, Stake (1995) stipulates that “[m]ultiple or comparative case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases” (Kindle Location 2338). The need for multiple cases “seeks to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1994, p. 112). A multiple case study is ideal when the researcher identifies a “clearly evident” case with boundaries and intends to offer a rich understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Additionally, Yin (2014) notes that multiple cases produces a “more compelling [. . . and . . .] more robust” design (p. 57).

Each case was carefully selected using criteria through a screening profile questionnaire (see Appendix B). Data analysis for this study followed guidelines from Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) by performing a within-case analysis to describe themes emerging from each case and cross-case analysis in performing a thematic analysis across cases. Prior to delineating the procedures for data collection, it is important to provide a description of the sites and participants that participated in this present study.

### *Site and Participants*

This study was conducted at a South-Central Texas area public school district. Hereinafter, the researcher assigned the school district organization the pseudonym of Central Texas Independent School District (CTISD). The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) indicated over 4,000 students at the school district’s high schools (TEA, 2017). The researcher assigned to the high school sites the pseudonyms of High School A and High School B to protect the identities of the school district and the participants. The researcher chose High School A and High School B as they were the only high schools available in the school district. High School A and High School B were part of a district

that serves a major suburban population. The Texas Education Agency defined a major suburban district as the following:

A district is classified as major suburban if: (a) it does not meet the criteria for classification as major urban; (b) it is contiguous to a major urban district; and (c) its enrollment is at least 3 percent that of the largest contiguous major urban district or at least 4,500 students. A district also is classified as major suburban if: (a) it does not meet the criteria for classification as major urban; (b) it is not contiguous to a major urban district; (c) it is located in the same county as a major urban district; and (d) its enrollment is at least 15 percent that of the largest major urban district in the county or at least 4,500 students. (TEA, 2018)

High School A and High School B were separate high school campus sites with their own student demographics. High School A provided services to 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

High School B recently opened and served a more suburban population of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders with the addition of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2018 – 2019 school year. Both school sites had minority-majority student populations, which translated into Hispanics being the majority population and white students comprising a minority population in the student population. Together, their disaggregated racial/ethnic distribution revealed 2.6% African American, 91.4% Hispanic, and 4.4% White students (TEA, 2017). A deeper analysis of subpopulations showed that 76.5% are economically disadvantaged, 7.0% were English language learners (ELLs), and 10% received special education services (TEA, 2017).

Overall, the district met passing standards for the state of Texas state assessment measures of accountability.

Gaining an understanding of the teachers' population was also an essential part of the picture that framed the context of this present study. Of the total collective number of 270 high school teachers (from both high schools), the racial/ethnic breakdown is 3.5% African American, 47.1 Hispanic, and 48% White (TEA, 2017). The gender distribution is 46.4% males and 53.6% females (TEA, 2017). The teaching experience distribution

indicated that 32.8% of teachers had zero to five years of teaching practice, and 67.3% had more than five years of experience while there was overall average experience of 10.9 years among district teachers and a 6.5-year average of experience with the district among teachers. The researcher chose to work with this school district since a colleague of the researcher worked for the school district and functions as a gatekeeper for the organization. Merriam (1998) said that “[g]aining entry into a site begins with gaining the confidence and permission of those who can approve the activity [...and...] gain entry to certain settings” (Kindle Locations 1236-1238).

Solicited from two different high school campus sites from the aforementioned school district, each teacher case was from either High School A or High School B. The high schools were secondary campuses with High School A teaching 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade and High School B teaching 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grades and later 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Choosing to conduct this study with ELAR teachers was due to the direct adoption of media literacy education standards into their subject specific TEKS. For instance, English I-IV under §110.31 for standards 9.12, 10.12, 11.12, and 12.12 delineated “Reading/Media Literacy” at the title of the standard (Texas Administrative Code, 2018). ELAR teachers were selected based on screening profile questionnaire on the basis of whether they volunteered to participate.

This study used purposive sampling. Described by Merriam (1998), there were several “types of purposeful sampling” (Kindle Location 835), and “[s]ome of the more common types are typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, snowball, chain, and network sampling” (Kindle Location 836). More specifically, the researcher used criterion-based purposive sampling approach to identify study participants. Criterion-based purposive sampling was used to “identify and select all cases that meet some

predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Among the preset criteria, the researcher asked in a screening profile questionnaire whether the teacher was currently implementing media literacy education in his/her classroom. Data was collected based on the number of respondents that met the criteria for participation in this study. The researcher collected data from six respondents from each campus site. In line with a multiple case research design, the researcher collected multiple forms of data.

### *Data Collection*

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “the backbone of qualitative research is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information” (p. 52).

These scholars explained that:

Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 96 – 97)

Substantiating evidence through multiple forms of data collection permitted triangulation, which offered validity to the researcher’s findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) described triangulation as “[r]esearchers mak[ing] use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of [a] study” (p. 328). Additionally, multiple forms of data collection allowed verification of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Individual interviews, document artifacts, and focus groups were the forms of data the researcher collected to enable triangulation.

## *Procedures*

The study employed several steps before interviews took place. First, with approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher sent an e-mail informing the superintendent of the study and included a request for formal approval to interact with district personnel. Second, an email indicating the superintendent's approval was sent to the campus principals for the high school principals' consent to access potential ELAR teacher participants for the study. Third, the researcher sent an e-mail to ELAR teachers containing a letter of informed consent to obtain consent to screen the ELAR teachers for participation in the study. The researcher used a screening profile questionnaire to understand if teachers are presently implementing media literacy education into their classrooms and gather other basic demographic and background information. The researcher is interested in understanding if and how implementation of media literacy education happens in today's secondary school environments. The researcher sent the screening profile questionnaire via e-mail to all high school ELAR teachers to identify qualified ELAR teacher study participants.

Upon receiving responses to the screening profile questionnaire, the participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) the teacher indicated he/she was currently implementing media literacy education in the ELAR classroom as defined by the TEKS, NCTE/ILA standards, or the CPMLE; 2) the teachers indicated he or she was able and willing to describe her or his experiences with the implementation of media literacy education 3) the teacher served at least one or more years in the teaching profession as an ELAR teacher. ELAR teachers with less than a year in the profession may not have had any experience implementing media literacy education. Identified



ELAR teacher participants then collaborated with the researcher to determine an interview time and location. The individual interviews lasted up to 60 minutes to gather basic information about their current content area terminology, understanding of media literacy, and current views and practices for media literacy. Each interviewee, campus site, and school district received a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participant per IRB guidelines, and interview and focus group recordings and transcriptions was kept in an encrypted file folder on the researcher's computer. Paper-based documents were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office where the researcher was only person to have access. The researcher securely stored and retained records and will keep data for five years before destroying them.

Follow-up interviews helped clarify initial interview data and offered an opportunity for member-checking. The researcher employed document artifact collection using a narrative-question reflection activity with ELAR teacher participants sent through e-mail. Focus groups composed of six participants took place at the two campus sites. The following sections explains each data source and collection approach.

### *Interviews*

Yin (2014) described that “nearly all case studies are [principally focused on] human affairs” (p. 78); thus, individual interviews were substantive “sources of evidence [that were] insightful [and] provide[d] explanations as well as personal views[, such as] perceptions, attitudes, and meanings” (p. 105, 106). This study used interviews as a way to collect information about the implementation of media literacy education in ELAR teachers' classrooms. The interview questions were developed by the researcher based on the research questions and the TEKS, the CPMLE and key questions. The interviews

were recorded on a digital recorder to safeguard the accuracy of participants' responses (Yin, 2014). The recorded interviews were transcribed using a transcription service. Each interviewee received a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participant per IRB guidelines, and interview recordings and transcriptions were kept in an encrypted file folder on the researcher's computer. The individual ELAR teachers' interviews were one source of essential data gathering in case study research (see Appendix C for interview protocols), but document artifacts and focus groups allowed a different type of corroboration and evidence in this case study.

### *Documents Artifacts*

Documents in the form of narrative document artifacts were an important source of data for a deeper description of the teacher's experience (Merriam, 2009). As Merriam (2009), conveyed, "[t]he term *document* is broadly defined to cover an assortment of written records, physical traces, visual data, and artifacts" (p. xi). Similar to Pottie, Haydt, Farrell, Dolovich, Sellors, and Hogg (2008), the researcher collected document artifacts in the form of narrative reflection about media literacy implementation experiences that solicited reflection about curricular and instructional issues. The researcher posed a question for reflection, and the ELAR teacher wrote up to a one to two-page reflection about his/her experience. As Patton (2002) pointed out:

Reflexivity has entered the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective. [...] To be reflexive, then, is to undertake an ongoing examination of what I know and how I know it [...]. (p. 64)

The question(s) were developed by the researcher based on the research questions. For instance, what curricular resources informed teachers' media literacy components of their

lesson? How often did they receive professional development specifically targeting media literacy education? Where did teachers place media literacy TEKS on the spectrum of important TEKS to cover during the school year? What instructional activities did teachers say focused on media literacy education? Another question covered instructional approaches such as asking about ways they encouraged habits of inquiry, students' self-directed use of questions reflecting media literacy analysis. Interviews and document artifacts provided a deep dive into the world of the teacher's experience, but focus groups, as defined by Morgan (1997), offered "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher [...where...] the researcher's interest [...] provides the focus" (p. 6).

### *Focus Group*

While interviews and documents were great sources of information in this case study research, focus groups offered "a more inclusive approach" that served as a "research technique that collects data through interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan, 1997, p. 6). The researcher conducted two or more focus groups based on the number of high school ELAR teacher participants at each high school campus site. In this case, the focus groups were "conducted with purposively selected samples in which the participants were recruited from a limited number of sources" (Morgan, 1997, p. 35). Using guidance from Krueger (1998), the focus group was generally "conversational" in order to establish a discussion among the members of the focus group with a focus on media literacy education implementation. The research used a relatively unstructured approach for the focus group interview protocol (see Appendix D). The researcher digitally recorded focus group interviews and transcribed them using a transcription

service. Each participant received a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participant in the focus group per IRB guidelines. The researcher used focus groups to triangulate data from individual interviews and document artifacts.

### *Data Analysis Methods*

The study's research design was multiple case study. The need for multiple cases “[sought] to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases [varied] in their details” (Yin, 1994, p. 112). Hence, the following described the analytical methods for this multiple case study.

The researcher adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral approach. The researcher's initial step was to transcribe the recording of teacher interviews and focus groups in order to organize and prepare the data for analysis. Next, the researcher read through the data several times in its entirety to get an idea of the complete interaction. Agar (1980) advised to “read the transcripts in their entirety several times [by] [i]mmers[ing oneself] in the details, [and] trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts” (p. 103). The next step in the spiral approach was memoing, which were “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur[red] to the reader” while reading the transcripts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188). During memoing, the researcher's written memos were used to develop codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After memoing, “[d]escribing and classifying codes into themes” were the next step (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher navigated through the “process that beg[an] with the development of the codes, the formation of themes from the codes, and then the organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 195). Creswell (2013) explained that a theme is a “broad unit

of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186).

The researcher reviewed raw data using constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam described the constant comparative in the following way:

The basic strategy of the method is to do just what its name implies—constantly compare. The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated. (Kindle Locations 1916-1919)

After developing codes and themes using “pattern recognition” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 32), the researcher used “scoring” and “scaling” or “clustering” of themes or thematic codes (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 133, 134). Additionally, “peer debriefing” helped work towards “analytic triangulation” of the data (ThêNgyuìn, 2008, p. 603). Peer debriefing was a method utilized by the researcher “to ensure that the conclusions of the researcher were indeed grounded in the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 381). The researcher used two colleagues to complete peer debriefing. The spiral approach continued the process for each case to prepare the data for a within-case analysis. Once the within-case analysis was complete, the researcher performed a cross-case analysis.

Since this study was a multiple case study, the researcher performed a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). Creswell & Poth (2018) explained that:

When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to provide first a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case. (p. 100)

The researcher used thematic analysis to discern current teacher practice and thought among the cases (Boyatzis, 1998). A cross-case analysis consisted of finding similarities and differences among the individual case themes (Yin, 2014). Once similarities and

differences emerged from the comparison of cases, the researcher searched for data to support “assertions and generalizations across all cases” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 216).

As mentioned previously, the researcher used peer-debriefing. ThêNguyìn (2008) defined peer-debriefing as an “analytic triangulation [and] the process whereby a researcher calls upon a disinterested peer—a peer who is not involved in the research project—to aid in probing the researcher’s thinking around all or parts of the research process” (p. 603). The researcher used the peer-debriefing approach to “enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of [this present] qualitative research” study (ThêNguyìn, 2008, p. 603). The researcher selected two colleagues to complete peer-debriefing.

### *Research Validity*

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “[v]alidity is the outcome goal of research and is based on trustworthiness and external reviews” (p. 354). The researcher utilized several methods to enhance the validity of this multiple case study. The researcher triangulated data to increase validation of data. As previously mentioned, the researcher used peer-debriefing to enhance external validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The peer debriefing took place after the initial coding and theming of the transcription of the recordings and was ongoing to compare to colleagues’ feedback.

The researcher also used member-checking. Member-checking provided internal validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a “member checking” method through probing questions during the interview and with transcriptions during post-interview moments allowed for internal validity and “trustworthiness” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 260).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described member-checking in the following way:

For this validation strategy, we convene a focus group made up of participants in the study and ask them to reflect on the accuracy of the account. We do not take back to participants the transcripts or the raw data, but the preliminary analyses consisting of description or themes. We are interested in their views of these written analyses as well as what was missing. (p. 261)

Lastly, the researcher used rich, thick description to “enhance transferability” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 182).

### *Limitations*

Apart from a limited time frame and financial resources, this research, as most research studies do, had limitations. The study cannot generalize beyond this case study as it was a convenience sample. Schools had idiosyncrasies and nuances as to campus, district, and state-supported efforts for programming and underlying politics. The how and why of media literacy education implementation did not generalize to other schools in and outside of Texas. However, teachers and schools everywhere may be dealing with similar overall conditions and this study facilitated the conversation on media literacy education as it applied to ELAR classrooms in high schools.

### *Researcher Bias*

In addition to the limitations, scholars indicated the need to address researcher bias (Merriam, 1998). In this case study research, the researcher “[wa]s the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information” (Merriam, 1998, Kindle location 317). The researcher inherently possessed bias. The researcher attempted to mitigate that bias by “ask[ing] good questions, interpret[ing] the responses, be[ing] a good listener, be[ing] adaptive and flexible so as to react to various situations, hav[ing] a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and be[ing] unbiased by

preconceived notions” (Yin, 2014). Case study research compelled the researcher to immerse himself in the setting to understand the circumstantial features that affected the phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006); thus, the researcher’s positionality and familiarity with the customs, programs, and make-up of the South-Central Texas area school district assisted the researcher in understanding the context of major suburban ELAR teachers’ practice. For the last several years, the researcher assisted in the development and delivery of professional development experiences. During this time, the researcher established a network of contacts. Lastly, the research also used peer debriefing to keep guard against bias.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter summarized the methodology the researcher used in this study. The researcher used a multiple case study. The researcher used the aforementioned methodology as it was the most appropriate to address the main research question: what was the current implementation status of media literacy education in secondary school English teachers’ classrooms in a Texas urban area public school district? Additionally, this study was performed at two high school sites in the South-Central Texas area and solicited high school ELAR teachers to participate using a set of criteria. The researcher collected qualitative data in the form of individual interviews, document artifacts, and focus groups interviews. Using several approaches, the researcher enhanced the validity of the data through triangulation of multiple sources, peer-debriefing, member-checking, and rich, thick description. As mentioned previously, the researcher used the Creswell and Poth (2018) guidance for the spiral approach to data analysis. Lastly, the researcher used several data analytic methods, such as within-case analysis, thematic analysis, and



cross-case analysis. In the following chapter, the researcher will explain the results of the findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Research Findings

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate media literacy implementation in a high school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools with a specific focus on high school English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) teachers. As mentioned previously in Chapter 1, the problem is that students need media literacy, and the need also brings attention to the need for research where scant literature is available to describe the extent to which media literacy standards are actually implemented by high school ELAR teachers. Do media literacy scholars know the level of support provided through professional development activities or the degree and nature of classroom practice regarding media literacy? ELAR was the most concerning as it is the only subject that introduces the term “media literacy” and remains a four-year requirement for graduation, at least in Texas (TEA, 2018, section 9.12A).

The researcher organized this chapter into several sections including a description of the sample using pseudonyms for school district, campuses, and teachers, research methodology applied to data analysis, presentation of data and findings of analysis, and a summary. Utilizing Creswell and Poth’s (2018) spiral approach, this chapter presents the findings of the multiple case study design and analysis explained in Chapter 3 to respond to the central research questions posed in Chapter One:

- 1) What is the current implementation status of media literacy education in secondary school English teachers' classrooms in a Texas urban area public school district?
- 2) What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?

This descriptive multiple case study design involved data collection methods that included focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews, and document artifacts. Additionally, thematic analysis and constant comparative method for a within-case and cross-case analysis were a part of the analytic structure of this study. The data collected came from two separate high schools and a sample of ELAR teachers to investigate how and what was working for media literacy implementation in each high school ELAR setting. The research questions were:

1. What do teachers do and know about media literacy education?
  - a. To what extent are teacher familiar with the core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education?
  - b. What do they think media literacy education is?
  - c. What value do these teachers place on media literacy education?
  - d. How do English teachers teach, use, or address media literacy in the classroom?
  - e. What are teachers' views about students' media skills and understanding?
2. What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?
  - a. How competent do teachers feel about media literacy education?
  - b. What are teachers' sources of media literacy education materials?
  - c. What are the barriers to implementing media literacy education for them?

The researcher organized the constituent questions into two major sections. The first set of select questions, 1a through 1e, deal with what ELAR teachers know and do in their classrooms (i.e., curriculum and teaching). The second set of select questions, 2a through

2c, concern professional development, training, and collaborations between teachers in the name of media literacy education.

### *Entering the Field*

As part of the IRB process, the researcher requested permission from the superintendent, school board, and principal to conduct the study. In addition, the researcher requested permission from the department head of each school site's ELAR department before conducting data collection. After the researcher acquired IRB approval and permissions from gatekeepers at each level of the school organization, an email to all ELAR teachers at both high school sites was the next step. The study began with a screening profile questionnaire to ensure that teachers were qualified to participate in the study and confirmed that they believed they implemented media literacy in their classrooms. From the two high school sites, 17 ELAR teachers responded, 14 qualified due to the one-year teaching requirement, and 14 were contacted through electronic mail for a face to face individual and focus group interview. In the end, only 12 teachers fully participated in each phase of data collection.

### *Description of the Sample*

First, these high school sites were ideal for the researcher as it was a convenience sample of teachers due to professional ties of the researcher to school district administration. During the past several years, the researcher was in communication with district administration working through a proxy organization to help with professional development for school administrators. Thus, a professional relationship with several of the school principals was present at the beginning of the research study.

Since high school ELAR was the focus of this study, the two traditional public high school sites within the school district were ideal for the study's sample as all students were required to take English for four years, and the English teachers and English courses with explicitly stated media literacy standards were the major delivery method for medial literacy (as of the 2009 adopted TEKS). After contacting the high school principal, connecting with the principal and the ELAR team was the logical next step. Selecting ELAR teachers was primarily based on the screening profile questionnaire basic qualifications and according to whether they would like to fully participate in all data collection activities in addition to the following criteria: 1) the teacher says he/she is currently implementing media literacy education in their ELAR classrooms as defined by the TEKS, NCTE/ILA standards, or the CPMLE; 2) the teacher is able and willing to describe her or his experiences with the implementation media literacy education; 3) the teacher has served at least one or more years in the teaching profession as an ELAR teacher. While 17 teachers responded to the screening profile questionnaire, only 14 of them qualified to participate based on the outlined parameters for participation. For example, one teacher did not have a full year of teaching while another did not indicate that he or she implemented media literacy in the classroom giving a total of 15 teacher participants. Later, another teacher agreed to participate but was not able to provide an individual interview yielding 14 teachers. In the middle of the study, two other teachers participated in individual interviews but did not participate in a focus group but provided a document artifact. Thus, the researcher had 12 total teacher participants for the study's sample. Ultimately, only 12 teachers fully cooperated throughout all three phases of the data collection process.

The researcher sought a large group to interview to gain a variety of perspectives. Out of the two participating high school sites, there were a total of 270 high school teachers, and thirty-two teachers of 270 teacher were certified to practice teaching in the state of Texas at grade level nine through twelve and assigned to teach ELAR. According to the Texas Education Agency, a state oversight agency for Texas public schools, qualified teachers must meet the following requirements: 1) obtain a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university; 2) complete a state of Texas approved educator preparation program; 3) pass certification exams; 4) submit a state application; 5) complete fingerprinting as part of a national criminal background check (see <https://tea.texas.gov>). Out of thirty-two high school ELAR teachers, seventeen agreed to participate in the study amounting to a 38% participation rate.

The screening profile questionnaire (see Appendix B) and interview phase began during the third week of May 2019. The researcher provided the consent form along with the screening profile questionnaire after recruiting teachers via e-mail. Recruitment and screening profile questionnaire data collection lasted nearly two and half weeks. After compiling all screening profile questionnaire data, the researcher determined which teachers qualified for the study based on the study's criteria. A total of 17 teachers participated in the screening profile questionnaire with 14 qualifying to participate in the study and 12 ultimately participating in each data collection phase.

The composition of the 12 teachers that qualified and fully participated in the study was 41.6 percent male and 58.3 percent female. All 12 participating teachers identified as white, but many of them self-identified as white Hispanic (66.7%) and white non-Hispanic (33.3%).

Table 4.1

*Sample ELAR Teacher Demographics (n=12)*

Demographic Descriptors	Distribution
Sex	
Female	58.3%
Male	41.6%
Ethnicity	
White, Hispanic	66.7%
White, non-Hispanic	33.3%

Many had varying backgrounds that included the alternative (75%) and traditional (25%) teacher certification routes (see Table 4.2). A majority of teachers (67%) indicated that they did not receive professional development in the area of media literacy specifically in a formal setting but had discussions informally with some of their more experienced colleagues within the ELAR department. Interestingly, some teachers (8%) indicated that they did not know or were unsure if they received professional development about media literacy education (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

*Certification Route and Media Literacy Professional Development (n=12)*

Certification Route	% of teachers
Alternative (post-graduate)	75%
Traditional 4-year	25%
Received Professional Development	
Yes	25%
No	67%
Unsure	8%

The teachers’ age range was 25 to 62. All 12 participating teachers have taught one or more years in the ELAR classroom at the high school level and were qualified to teach in the state of Texas in their subject area and grade level. Provided in Table 4.3 is detailed demographic information by teacher participant using pseudonyms. Several teachers

indicated that they taught subjects other than high school ELAR in past teaching assignments. Additionally, some teachers specified they received a graduate degree in education or related area. Almost half (41.6%) of the teachers had an English major for their undergraduate degree with several of these teachers going through an alternative certification program while the rest (58.3%) majored in subjects other than English. With regard to teacher participants' years with Central Texas Independent School District (CTISD), the range was 1 to 20 years with several (58.3%) teachers having less than three years of service on their school campus and several coming from another previous occupation.

Table 4.3

*Detailed Demographic Information by Teacher Participant (n=12)*

Pseudonym	Taught Other Subjects	Graduate Degree	Major	Campus Years	District Years	PD Y/N
Macario	Y	Y	Journalism	2	2	N
Emma	Y	Y	Physical Ed.	1	14	N
Cheri	None	none	Criminology	5.5	5.5	U
Adrian	Y	Y	English	8	16	N
Zoey	None	none	English	20	20	N
Nora	Y	none	Teaching	10	10	N
Allen	None	none	English	2	5	Y
Payton	None	Y	Counseling	2	4	N
Carrie	None	none	English	1	1	N
Cielo	Y	Y	Literacy	2	2	Y
Thor	None	Y	Religion	1	1	N
Manuel	None	none	English	2	4	Y

Lastly, all teachers indicated they have some familiarity with media literacy (ML), and most teachers (71.4%) specified they had seen the media literacy (ML) TEKS before filling out the screening profile questionnaire (see Table 4.4). A couple of teachers indicated they had never seen media literacy TEKS before this present study, but teachers noted they implemented media literacy in their lessons prior to the start of this



present study. For teaching assignments, the distribution of English courses, there were six teachers (42.8%) teaching English I, eight teachers (57.1%) teaching English II, four teachers (28.5%) teaching English III, and four teachers (28.5%) teaching English IV. Many of the ELAR teachers were English as a second language (ESL) certified (75%), and some (41.7%) of the ESL-certified teachers taught English language learners (ELLs) as part of their student classroom population. The researcher noted from interviews a common dilemma for teacher when implementing media literacy was that the type of student made a difference in determining how well ELAR were able to fully implement non-tested TEKS, such as media literacy, in their lessons. Many noted the difficulty in teaching high populations of ELLs (50%) and at-risk (64.2%) students as a challenge or even a barrier to implementing media literacy experiences. Several teachers indicated the challenge to adapt media literacy lessons to students that were technologically challenged and behaviorally inconsistent.

Table 4.4

*Teaching Assignment by Teacher Participant*

Participant	Course Assigned	ELL	At-Risk	Implement ML	Familiarity with ML	Previously Seen ML TEKS
Payton	English I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Allen	English I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Emma	English I	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Nora	English II - IV	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Thor	English II	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Carrie	English II	N	Y	Y	Y	U
Macario	English II, IV	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Manuel	English II	Y	Y	Y	Y	U
Cheri	English II, III	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Adrian	English III, IV	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Zoey	English III, IV	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Cielo	English I, II	N	N	Y	Y	Y

### *School District Demographics*

The researcher conducted this study in a school district with a student population of 13,843 distributed among 18 school campuses of which 12 were elementary schools, four are middle schools, and two were high schools. The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) indicated over 4,000 students attended the school district's high schools with each high school falling under the Title I school banner with an 82% socio-economically disadvantaged (i.e., free and reduced lunch) population (TEA, 2017). Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (school districts) and schools with high numbers or a high percentage of children who meet the criteria for low-income families. The researcher will refer to the high school sites as High School A (HSA) and High School B (HSB) to protect the identities of the school district and the participants. As mentioned previously, HSA and HSB were chosen as they were the only high schools available in the school district. HSA and HSB were part of a district that serves a major suburban population. The Texas Education Agency defines major suburban schools as follows:

A district is classified as major suburban if: (a) it does not meet the criteria for classification as major urban; (b) it is contiguous to a major urban district; and (c) its enrollment is at least 3 percent that of the largest contiguous major urban district or at least 4,500 students. A district also is classified as major suburban if: (a) it does not meet the criteria for classification as major urban; (b) it is not contiguous to a major urban district; (c) it is located in the same county as a major urban district; and (d) its enrollment is at least 15 percent that of the largest major urban district in the county or at least 4,500 students. (TEA, 2018)

### *Student Demographics*

HSA and HSB were separate campus sites with their own unique student demographics (see Table 4.5). The following data seemed important to include as several

teachers noted demographic context as a challenge to media literacy implementation. HSA provided services to 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders for students from a mostly urban and suburban demographic for a total of 2,152 students. HSB recently opened and serves a more suburban population of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders with the addition of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the 2018-2019 school year for a total student population of 2,026 students.

Table 4.5

*Student Demographic Breakdown by Campus Site*

Campus	African American	Hispanic	White	ELL	SpEd	EcoDis	ID
High School A	2.1%	94.6%	2.7%	11.9%	12.6%	92.1%	66.1%
High School B	3.6%	88.6%	6.2%	6.2%	12.5%	74.6%	70.9%

Both school sites had minority-majority student populations, which translates into Hispanics being the majority population and white students making up a minority population. HSA’s disaggregated data for racial/ethnic demographics were 2.1% African American, 94.6% Hispanic, and 2.7% White. HSB’s racial demographic distribution was 3.6% African American, 88.6% Hispanic, and 6.2% White (TEA, 2019).

For special populations, HSA’s population broke down into 11.9% English language learners (ELLs) and 12.6% students receiving special education services with 66.1% under the intellectually disabled category (TEA, 2019). In HSB, the special populations organized into 6.2% English language learners (ELLs) and 12.5% students receiving special education (SpEd) services with 70.9% under the intellectually disabled (ID) category (TEA, 2019). Further reporting revealed a 92.1% economically disadvantaged (EcoDis) population in HSA while HSB had a 74.6% EcoDis population (TEA, 2019). Additionally, HSA reported less than 300 incidents of misbehavior

resulting in out-of-school suspensions (OSS) while HSB reported over 600 incidents of student misbehavior resulting in OSS. Overall total in-school suspension (ISS) and OSS incidents resulted in less than 600 at HSA while the number reached over 1,000 at HSB with a larger proportionality of students at HSB receiving disciplinary referrals.

State student achievement data also provided part of the environmental background of the schools. All schools in Texas, unless they obtain a waiver from the state of Texas, received a grade on a scale of “A” through “F” for their academic performance in three categories: student achievement, school progress, and closing the achievement gaps between subpopulations (i.e., race, socioeconomic background, special service populations, etc.). Recent state student achievement data reported an overall grade of “B” for HSA and “C” for HSB. HSA received a “C” for closing the performance gaps between various student descriptor demographics and HSB received an “F” for not sufficiently closing the performance gaps (TEA, 2019). Overall, the district met passing standards for the state of Texas state assessment measures of accountability.

### *Teacher Demographics*

Of the total number of 270 high school teachers, the racial/ethnic breakdown was 3.5% African American, 47.1 Hispanic, and 48% White (TEA, 2018). The gender distribution was 46.4% males and 53.6% females (TEA, 2018). The teaching experience distribution indicates that 32.8% of teachers have 0 – 5 years of teaching practice, and 67.3% have more than 5 years of experience while there was overall average experience of 10.9 years among district teachers and a 6.5-year average of experience with the district among teachers. From the most recent campus site data, HSA had 144 teachers with 4.3% African American, 45.6% Hispanic, and 49.5% White racial distribution and

48% female and 52% male gender distribution. From the most recent campus site data, HSB had 122 teachers with 4.7% African American, 57.7% Hispanic, and 36.6% White racial distribution and 46.7% female and 53.3% male gender distribution. The school district site also serves as a good picture of the future Texas with its demographic representation.

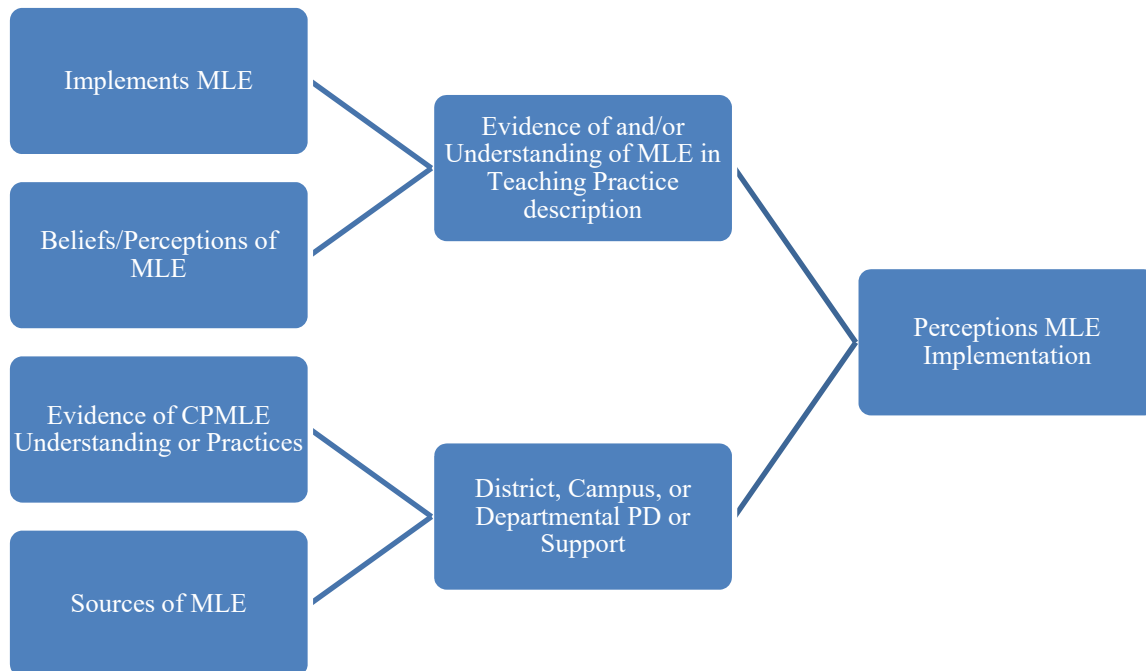
### *Sources of Information*

The Texas Education Agency, individual interviews, focus groups, and document artifacts were all sources of information. The Texas Education Agency provided data related to school district and campus demographic data. The individual interviews provided personal and professional data regarding beliefs and practices surrounding media literacy education practice contextualized within the classroom, campus, and school district (institution) settings. Further, the focus groups provided a broader overview of what campus ELAR department's media literacy practice and beliefs in addition to their perspectives on professional support and development for media literacy education at each campus site. Lastly, the document artifacts were in the form of narrative reflections since they can be an important source of data for a deeper description of a teacher's experience. As a self-reflection of the teacher's own media literacy thoughts concerning teaching, planning, and distinguishing features of media literacy, teachers wrote about their experiences with media literacy using several guiding questions.

### *Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis*

Data analysis for this study followed guidelines from Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) by performing a within-case analysis to describe themes emerging from each case and cross-case analysis in performing a thematic analysis across cases. As mentioned previously, the researcher adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral approach. Thus, the first step in the spiral approach was to memo, which were "short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur[red] to the reader" while reading the transcripts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188). During the memoing process, the memos evolved into codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Figure 4.1 illustrates the iterative process of coding individual and focus group interview based on the CPMLE introduced in Table 2.1 and theoretical framework of this qualitative study. The individual interviews transcripts were analyzed using Figure 4.1 schema.

After memoing, "[d]escribing and classifying codes into themes" was the next step (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, the researcher reread, ordered, and prepared the individual and focus group data along with the interview notes for analysis using matrices. The researcher navigated through the "process that began with the development of the codes, the formation of themes from the codes, and then [followed with] the organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 195).



*Figure 4.1.* Coding Schema for Individual, Focus Group Interviews. General sample codes on the left were useful that were then collapsed into the middle rectangles as categories and eventually provided the diverse perceptions surrounding thematic elements related to teachers’ perceptions across different areas of the teacher media literacy experience.

From this spiral data analysis approach, four themes emerged. Before diving deeply into the themes, it was important for the researcher to provide a synopsis of who these teacher participants were as it concerns their background and general degree of familiarity with media literacy in addition to their background qualifying them for this study.

Furthermore, the researcher provides a brief description of each teacher’s initial exposure to media literacy.

Pseudonyms were appropriate for the school district, campus, and teachers to protect the identity and privacy of each participant’s response. The researcher divided the teachers by high school sites (i.e., HSA and HSB). Emma, Nora, Macario, Cheri, Adrian, and Zoey all worked with HSA while Allen, Manuel, Payton, Cielo, Carrie, and Thor worked with HSB. Both high schools shared a similar culture of an informal sharing of

professional ideas about lesson planning, instruction, and curriculum. Both high school sites followed a loose, unsupported, and sporadic meeting structure during conference times and a disjointed master schedule with a more or less a common conference times for ELAR grade levels.

### *Findings of Data Analysis*

The findings of the data analysis fell into several parts. For each high school case, the researcher offered within-in case analysis using background information about the participants' college background, any relevant work experience, teaching experience, and introduction to media literacy. In some cases, there were unique items that surfaced as part of the individual within-in case descriptions as a result of the brief analysis of the interview, focus group, and document artifact for each participant. While six teacher cases came from each site, the researcher grouped cases under each high school campus site to facilitate the descriptions of cases for each site. Before the description of each campus site's multiple cases, the researcher provided a contextual description of each respective high school site to provide context. Finally, the researcher provided a cross-case analysis of the teacher cases and emergent themes from the cross-case analysis. The researcher used thematic analysis to discern current teacher practice and thought among the cases (Boyatzis, 1998). A cross-case analysis consists of finding similarities and differences among the individual case themes (Yin, 2014).

*High School A teacher cases.* While the following section provides brief synopses of six teachers from HSA, the individual interviews varied but focused on college background, any relevant work experience, teaching experience, introduction to



media literacy, and the uniqueness within individual teacher cases guided by the research questions. The following individual descriptions did not cover teachers' perceptions of the classroom environment exhaustively as these perceptions were analyzed as a whole for commonalities in the cross-case analysis. On the other hand, the descriptions provided a sense of person, a description of the teachers, and the researcher's initial understanding of each teachers' introduction and familiarity with media literacy education. As mentioned previously, it was important to understand teachers' situations as their beliefs and practice were relevant to discussions about the evolution of their experiences and beliefs with media literacy and how they used those experiences and beliefs in their classroom planning, teaching, and approaches to pedagogy to answer research questions.

*High School A context.* As the first high school in the district, HSA was the flagship high school with a typical Texas sports-centric culture and numerous academic programs that had historical local ties to neighboring businesses for student internships and summer training programs. Additionally, its location within the South-Central Texas urban area provided students access to urban and cultural resources of a big city. HSA seemed to generate a sense of pride within the community.

ELAR teachers described the benefits of the school climate and culture but also drawbacks in the form of campus, institutional, and personal barriers. First, teachers felt a sense of support for their whole subject generally but often felt completely isolated with media literacy specifically within their own grade-level and across grade-levels due to varying factors. For instance, teachers described grade-level and department meetings as rare with inconsistent agendas. In turn, informally sharing models, strategies, methods, and behaviors of instruction was less than common.

With a change of administration two years ago, many teachers felt the freedom to plan, implement, and create an academic program with little to no interference from the current campus administration, but teachers expressed a sense that the current principal may leave—initiating another bout of strict and state-assessment-limited instructional parameters as ushered in by the previous administration. Equally, teachers described district administration as having no role in day-to-day, weekly, or semester curriculum, planning, instruction, or professional development apart from using technology resources for administrative purposes, student performance data review, and occasional instructional technology introductions.

A number of times teachers referred to the demographics of HSA as a teaching barrier. Differentiating content for students receiving special education (and 504), bilingual and English as second language (ESL), and dyslexia services in addition to low-performing at-risk students was a challenge for several teachers. HSA had an enrollment of 2,400 plus students with a population that 72% economically disadvantaged and 62% at-risk. The Texas Education Agency (2019) definition of an economically disadvantaged student was one who was eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program, and an at-risk student was a student who was at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria (see §TEC 29.081). In terms of services received and percentages of students classified as receiving those services, the population reflected 6% English learners and 12% Special Education. Lastly, student mobility characterized 15% of the student population. The mobility definition from the Texas Education Agency (2019) is that a student has membership at the school for less than 83% of the school year (i.e., has missed six or

more weeks at a particular school). Several HSA teachers perceived the demographics as a challenge to abilities and classroom teaching and learning dynamic in general and specifically for media literacy education. Following are the teacher descriptions.

### *Within-Case Analysis*

#### *Case #1 - Macario*

Macario, an introvert with the occasional snap of wit, graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in communication. After a short career in journalism, Macario began thinking about teaching as a second career with less of the stressful work and travel schedule. Since he did not start off as a teacher, his journey began in an alternative certification program through a local public Texas university culminating in a dual certification to teach English and journalism. In hindsight, Macario did not remember the experience highlighting media literacy. Rather, his program focused on a teaching foundation or the ability to unite curriculum and teaching methodology.

After finishing the teacher certification program, Macario balanced between different aspects of the education industry but started off teaching high school English and Journalism in a public school in South-Central Texas. Subsequently, he spent the first couple of years teaching high school English and journalism and providing some writing training for various education clients as a consultant. Over the years, he worked in the central office as an English language arts and reading (ELAR) coordinator, a writing trainer, a consultant for state assessment processes, and independently as a consultant by

working with school districts in educational sales. In total, his teaching career spans a little over a decade.

Unique among the teachers, Macario participated on the steering committee to re-write and update the adopted (2009) ELAR standards for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He explained how the committee experience encouraged him to go back to the classroom where he began to implement the standards he worked on for the last three years to understand how teachers and students responded to work he helped create. Admittedly, he wanted to come back to the classroom from the world of consulting and central office administration which required an exorbitant amount of travel, did not allot enough time for working with students, and presented a ever-changing group of teachers with whom to work not giving him time to develop teacher cohort skills.

Macario's media literacy experience extended back to his days as a journalist. Teaching English I now, he stated how his journey through English I through IV along with a few courses in journalism was preparation for a future experience as he "was asked to be on the media literacy committee for [a previous school] district, and help[ed] write the curriculum." With fifteen plus years as national writing trainer, Macario served as a consultant to other school districts.

Noticeably conflicted, Macario acknowledged and rationalized his lack of attention to media literacy in his classroom. He mentioned his coverage of media literacy with an anecdote about a previous campus administration being more stringent on what content was taught in the classroom. Additionally, his candid confession was that media literacy was not a central focus of the state's academic assessment. In short, he taught

media literacy as a supplemental piece in his own classrooms but only when he covered curriculum requiring tested Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

### *Case #2 – Cheri*

Like Macario, Cheri's undergraduate career was outside of education with a major in criminology. She, an admitted country girl with quiet demeanor, worked briefly using her criminology degree but then retired to focus on family. After taking some time to raise a family, her experiences with her own children's academic development encouraged her to return to school to finish a teacher's certification program at a local public university in South-Central Texas with a focus on ELAR.

Finding which grade level to teach was not difficult as she found a timely opening at a local high school. Cheri's teaching experience started in January of 2014. Still not having completed her alternative teacher certification program, she, under a probationary status, took over for an English IV teacher who had to leave for medical reasons. Struggling with medical issues, the tenured teacher's attendance was inconsistent and cost the students a loss of learning, but Cheri covered for the ill teacher during the semester first as a substitute and then as a permanent substitute for the remainder of the school year.

Through an alternative certification program, she obtained her teaching credentials and taught English I through English IV over the years as well as a State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment preparation course, honors English courses, and classes designed for English language learners and special education students. Despite the tumultuous first years of teaching several course sections due to the school's high need in STAAR testing preparation, she

strived to solidify her place in the ELAR department. With signs of pride on her face, she explained that her longest subject area tenure was English II, and it was her strongest.

Cheri's media literacy experience was typical among her colleagues as she was not introduced to the area in her college experience, teacher preparation activities, or in formal conversations or training from her department or school district. Cheri recalled the use of Springboard, a secondary instructional program, during her first few years in the classroom, as her earliest recollection of using media literacy components; it was part of its programmed curriculum. She explained how Springboard introduced her to the media literacy TEKS more formally after reviewing them for herself to pass the ELAR. Giving an example from a Springboard lesson, she explained how she was able to teach students about how Tim Burton, a film director, used movie set scenes with lighting and sounds techniques to create meaning in the film *Edward Scissorhands*. Once the district eliminated the use of the Springboard program, Cheri no longer covered media literacy as intensely and planned for it even less since it was not tested by the STAAR program.

In Cheri's case, there were two elements present in the manner in which she interpreted media literacy potential and her reliance on commercially-produced ELAR lessons and resources. Noted later in this chapter, the issue of reliance on commercially-produced media literacy lessons came up in another teacher narrative. The use of SpringBoard, a commercially-produced tool, was what Cheri relied on for media literacy. as Cheri commented, SpringBoard was the source of media literacy education and was one of the reasons she consistently taught media literacy but only while the school paid for SpringBoard. On the other hand, Cheri's efforts to teach media literacy diminished and the inclusion of media literacy was "rarely" in her lesson plans after the commercial

resource was no longer available. The degree to which SpringBoard included media literacy components was undeterminable, but Cheri's reference to her decrease in addressing media literacy was evident. While Cheri's diminished incorporation of media literacy into her classroom reflected a degree of confidence in creating media literacy experiences for students, that confidence was torn down by her perception of campus and district administrative hegemony and curriculum control. Whereas the school administration and state accountability testing limited Cheri's willingness to pursue the inclusion of media literacy experiences, the lacking support and interest from colleagues and lagging resource structure for media literacy dissipated her confidence even further. From the focus group, Cheri mentioned that media literacy "unfortunately [...] doesn't [play a role in the classroom] because it is not something that is tested" (Cheri, Interview). Without commercially-produced resources, lack of collegial collaboration or professional development, or support from administration, Cheri's sentiments emerged in her individual interview and narrative artifact:

Because media literacy is not a tested TEK, it does not play a part in my planning or teaching until after the STAAR test. We do support the core texts we read by showing the film, but rarely do we discuss the angles, lighting, or music the directors chose to create meaning. (Cheri)

Cheri's case had a clear connection to Emma's case with respect to the diminished incorporation of media literacy once commercially-produced resources were no longer available.

### *Case #3 – Emma*

Emma graduated with a master's degree. She began her undergraduate career as a social studies major with a minor in physical education. Later, she took the required

coursework to qualify for the English exam and credentials. A go-getter, she worked for almost a decade in teaching before enrolling in a master's program in educational administration at a neighboring city's local private Texas university. She taught in several Central Texas school districts.

She started her teaching career as a middle school social studies teacher outside of South-Central Texas. After a year, she moved to CTISD and taught at another middle school for a year. She coached a variety of sports (e.g., girls' volleyball, basketball, and soccer) and taught a middle school optional course under the advanced eighth grade English I program for students to gain high school credit. With some difficulty, she recalled a hectic teaching and coaching schedule that led her to move onto another endeavor. She recollected that an alternative education program opened in CTISD, and there was a need for two English teachers. She applied and taught at the alternative campus for next five to six years of her career. She remembered teaching English I through IV while also teaching physical education to help students satisfy the requirements of high school graduation. After the closure of the alternative school, she transferred to teaching ninth grade English I but explained how she ultimately desired to go back to the alternative campus as soon as it re-opened.

Explicating her media literacy understanding and implementation, Emma explained how she thought of media literacy as computer literacy or technological exposure. She indicated that computer literacy was necessary for students to access media. After reviewing the TEKS provided in the screening profile questionnaire, she questioned whether she understood media literacy at all but indicated that she implemented a "loose form" of media literacy education.



When looking at individual interview data, Emma alludes to “[h]e’s got the honors kids. So, he can get through that…” when referring to Macario. This issue was markedly concerning as this issue of what kids received or did not receive media literacy wholly depended on their background characteristics. Emma, as the researcher noted in a later case, noted the difficulty incorporating media literacy in her classrooms with high populations receiving specialized services and coded under sub-populations descriptors (i.e., special education, 504, and English language learners). To explain, Emma’s special education, 504, and English language learners (ELLs) received federally mandated specialized education services according to their social, emotional, and learning needs as documented in their individualized education program (IEP). Emma felt overwhelmed with IEPs and did not see media literacy as a viable and steady part of the taught curriculum.

As in Cheri’s case, Emma brought up a similar point about the use of commercial resources. Emma used SpringBoard to teach media literacy since media literacy was a part of the curriculum. Emma, as Cheri stated, now only rarely teaches media literacy due to external and internal classroom barriers. On the other hand, Emma attributed the lack of media literacy teaching to the dynamics of student characteristics and conditions (i.e., low performing, misbehavior, and maturity). Emma’s perception and difficulty emerged in a couple of other teachers’ narratives.

#### *Case #4 – Adrian*

Adrian’s career began with a more traditional route than most of his participant colleagues. After graduating from a local public Texas university as an English major, Adrian, immediately took some time to travel and then pursued a master’s degree in

English the following year at another university with a teaching focus as part of the program. After finishing his master's degree, he searched for a teaching position at several local schools but none had the appeal of his hometown.

After contemplating various locations, Adrian chose to return to his high school alma mater. With a unique insight into the student experience of his previous school district, Adrian reflected deeply as he spoke of his proud 16-year tenure at the time of the interview. Adrian, a world traveler with an often-optimistic attitude, recounted that his teaching started with an ELAR position at the middle school level and subsequently developed into his current ELAR role at the high school level. He began teaching English I and II, but after years of testing exhaustion, he needed a break and time to pursue other endeavors. At the conclusion of his eighth year, he decided to take a year off for travel, reflection, and education consulting. After a year away from teaching, he returned to teach English III and IV. Over the years, he has developed a special interest in writing training for high school teachers and has actively worked with a private consulting group focused on writing for the last ten years.

Adrian's introduction to media literacy did not begin until much later in his career. Admittedly, his focus was on STAAR preparation since the first eight years of his teaching experience focused on tested grade levels. It was not until after he took his hiatus from teaching that he really began to use media literacy as an introductory element or as part of a hook activity (anticipatory set) where an activity shaped and drew attention to a particular topic, idea, or experience by drawing students' backgrounds and previous understanding into the forefront of their thinking. In his current sixteenth year of teaching, he explained how media literacy "kind of led to conversations about what was

actually happening when [...] watching a documentary and how effective or bias news” across multimedia formats (Adrian) (Interview). He explained that the transition from a less to a more focused approach to media literacy in the classroom happened when he started teaching juniors as the research paper took a central role in the English III experience compared to earlier STAAR-focused grade levels. He explained that media literacy aligned with the research component of the scope and sequence of the curriculum as it relied heavily on searches for resources in databases and online. Thus, the use of technology was the focal activity reflecting his understanding and description of media literacy.

#### *Case #5 – Zoey*

Far from a desire to teach, Zoey graduated with an associate’s degree in marketing with a focus on public relations and advertising from an out-of-state university. She worked with an international marketing and advertising firm after graduation for four years. An optimistic realist, she described those four years as time-constrictive and technologically demanding requiring local, national, and international travel that she did not have room for in her busy family-life schedule.

During her work experience, Zoey became keenly aware of the value of technology in the workplace. When a potential employer asked her about her skill set developed from the associate’s degree program, she drew a blank. She explained how she struggled to convey any skill that would convey her understanding of modern business technology. She eventually landed a job with her skill set but remembered being jolted by the exchange during the interview.

Her nascent interest in teaching began when her role in the company moved into providing orientation and technology-based skills training to adults. Thus, her interest in preparing students for an advanced technological society originated at the juncture between training adults in her place of work and starting a family of her own. She remembered vividly how she did not want her kids to undergo her own experience of ill-preparedness. Zoey realized the value of readiness and the reality that adults were grossly unprepared for fast-paced technological environments.

After her life changed with her own children coming into the picture and moving to Texas, teaching came more into focus as a career change consideration since it agreed with her personal life schedule. Going through an undergraduate teaching certificate program at a local public university, she finished a five-year program with a degree in English. She immediately applied to local South-Central Texas school districts. CTISD called her before anyone else, and she remained with CTISD for the last twenty years, moving from teaching English I and II to her current English II and III teaching position.

Zoey described her introduction to media literacy as beginning in her first career. As mentioned previously, the exchange between her and a potential employer shocked her to consider her level of technological awareness. Zoey conveyed her orientation to media literacy as more akin to that of a technological literacy description where she explained that media literacy had more to do with creating products such as documents, videos, and software programs. Functionality over substance was as far she went with media literacy.

From her classroom experiences, she described examples paralleling her understanding of media literacy. She explained how she asked her students to create what

a newspaper would look like during the Salem witch trials. She explained that she did not focus on the positioning of perspective but worried more about how students used technology to create the product. In other words, her explanation conveyed her focus on the interpretation of literature into technological environments and emphasized product over medium. She wanted them to understand the meaning behind the Salem witch trials but used technology as a tool to make the activity more relevant and contemporary.

Some emergent issues were revealed that spoke to the knowledge and understanding of media literacy education from Zoey's particular case. First, Zoey did touch on several elements that align with NAMLE's guidelines of media literacy in that understanding how to use media (i.e., technology) was an important part of the media literacy experience. Zoey referred to "software" and "computers" in her interview, focus group, and narrative artifact while leaving out print literacy altogether as a viable media format for media literacy education. Her perspective did not rise to the level of complete misunderstanding and total lack of media literacy knowledge; it did present the idea that other teachers might possess the same understanding, especially those teachers working closely with her.

#### *Case #6 - Nora*

Nora's road to teaching revealed a non-traditional path. Her reserved composure and sense of equanimity was evident as she explained her decision to have a family before finally moving onto a collegiate experience. Her inspiration for enrolling in a teacher preparation program stemmed from her curiosity about child development and learning as she raised her own children. She enrolled in a local South-Central Texas university and majored in English. After six years of college, she graduated and searched

for a teaching position. She explored several options but ultimately chose to work with CTISD.

Nora started with CTISD as an English teacher. Over the years, she taught English I through IV and commented that her most rewarding time was the transition from English IV back to English I. She realized at the transition what the students needed as they moved through their grade levels. After ten years of teaching, Nora appeared excited to continue with the teaching profession and to hone her craft.

Commenting on her professional life, she explained that she did not receive any form of media literacy training. She recollected the extent of her purported media literacy understanding as exposure to basic typing skills. With her being a non-traditional college student, her trajectory made her feel a little left behind but adequately versed in what she interpreted as media literacy skills. In this case, it was obvious that Nora had a misaligned perspective of media literacy and took media literacy to mean technological or computer literacy.

Nora's earliest experience of anything specifically dealing with media literacy was her exposure to computers and word processing during college. She commented that her media literacy understanding, as NAMLE defined it, did not emerge until after her college experience when teaching upper level English courses. With her gradual exposure to technology, she began thinking about technology, media, and literacy as they became a larger part of her teacher experience.

Nora's data alluded to the idea that some kids were not capable of learning media literacy as she compared the pre-advanced placement population of Macario's student roster to her own "regular general kids" and Emma's high special education population.

Nora maintained the narrative that student population characteristic limited her desire and ability to include media literacy experiences. For instance, Nora shared the following:

The main thing was that we need to understand also that we have to work with this [(student)] population that we have. We have to work on the grade level that we have, we have different populations. [Macario] unfortunately has those lovely pre-AP kids that want to be there, [but] the majority of them still have issues. I have regular general kids that [...] have a variety of [backgrounds...]. Then, [Emma] has our special [education] pop[ulation]s which we have to understand [and for whom we have to differentiate –] the variety of populations that we have, And I would love [to but] we all have our responsibilities. [...] I love hearing the [media literacy] ideas because we want to implement that deeper meaning [and] deeper understanding, but we have to balance it out with the reality of the time frame, time limitation as well as what works with our kids, [and] what doesn't work. (Nora) (Focus Group)

Thus, Nora also thought that student characteristics acted as a barrier to teach media literacy fully. Macario and Emma did not offer a dissenting opinion, nodding in agreement. Off the record, some teachers conveyed how some students with designations of English language learners, special education, 504 (i.e., student designation given by a civil rights statute which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities), and behavior issues prevented teachers from introducing media literacy.

Thus, the comparison of students' capacities reflected a connection between Nora's effort to include media literacy and her students' abilities to learn the material.

### *High School B Context*

As a newer campus, the six HSB ELAR teachers communicated feeling professionally disreputable among the district's high school teachers due to their and many other's relocation from HSA. Generally, the teacher population was a younger generation with somewhat advanced experience with instructional tools and technology, but age did not guarantee technological savvy or media literacy understanding. Although

a pervading negative sentiment was present, many ELAR teachers expressed that the new high school was a second opportunity to provide a more robust academic program with a culture less focused on sports (i.e., specifically football) that they feel overtakes much of the academic climate and culture. While HSB maintains partnerships with HSA's community industries (i.e., car manufacturers, information technology firms, military installments, etc.) ELAR teachers argue that the shadow cast by HSA was noticeable with instructional materials for them being recycled such as tattered print materials and technology with HSA's inventory labels. Additionally, the campus population predominantly comes from local farming communities with less urban development.

With recent changes in campus administration, ELAR teachers felt muted and constrained due to the lack of freedom to plan, implement, and create an academic program that included media literacy given the social and political issues of the campus climate. For instance, several teachers shared information but chose to share off the record. Many teachers felt unhappy and dissatisfied with the timing and resource distribution during a transitions period to the new high school. One teacher felt the general perception was negative with another teaching describing the poor administration and negative climate features coupled with the general dissatisfaction teachers felt with the reassignment of some teachers versus others from HSA. ELAR teachers shared how many HSB teachers felt unfairly treated given their years of service and loyalty to the school district and the HSA campus. In addition, the reassignment gave ELAR teachers the sense that they were under critical examination where their teaching, interactions, and general behavior were subject to circumspection at all times. Thus, ELAR teachers felt a disconnect among ELAR grade levels due to trust, anxiety, and the added stress of the



state testing culture. In addition, the sense of disconnect between teachers and administrators was even more pervasive with more attention channeled into addressing behavior issues and establishing a unique HSB culture to improve morale.

Equally, HSB teachers described district administration much in the same way as HSA as having no role in day-to-day, weekly, or semester curriculum, planning, instruction, or professional development apart from using technology resources for administrative purposes, student performance data review, and occasional instructional technology introductions without follow-up. Some teachers explained how district support staff and administrators advocated instructional technology initiatives with a whole group introduction but never came back to monitor or provide additional support. A couple of teachers shared about limited support they received with instructional tools (i.e., Pear Deck, Google applications, NoRedInk, etc.), media literacy education, and classroom practice in general saying the following:

For the teacher, I would say access. A struggle for us in this district is always resources. There's a lot of great online media tools that we've gotten a lot of mileage out of, that the kids have gotten a lot of use out of, but they're all things that need funding. For example, NoRedInk, things like Pear Deck, they're great resources that have got a lot of different media tools embedded in them. But we don't have full open access. (Allen) (Interview)

Yeah, I want to say so. They're also unspoken rules I guess to it. So if we could have the do's and don'ts of media literacy, that'd be great. I would say so. There's a gray area where you don't know if you're doing the right thing or not, or if you're showing the right version of the movie or a version of the TV show. (Manuel) (Interview)

I believe we did have one session, I think two years ago. And also, like I said, whenever we were introduced to Google Classroom as well. We also had another program that went away. The good thing is that we're ... this district is really open-minded into introducing programs. The only thing is that it shifts a lot, so we don't get a chance to really see technology through the program. (Nora) (Interview)

No. I haven't, and I know we have the district. I'm sure they have a session on it because here every year they do the lead conference for technology. I'm hoping or thinking maybe a teacher has done that here, but I've never done one exclusively. No. (Payton) (Interview)

A number of times teachers referred to the demographics of HSB as a barrier where their own professional skills and classroom management approaches did not match their classroom environment or their instructional needs. HSB had an enrollment of 1,500 plus students with a population that was 86% economically disadvantaged and 77% at-risk. In terms of services received and percentages of students classified as receiving those services, the HSB's population reflected 11% English learners and 12% Special Education students. Lastly, student mobility was not reported but district data maintain an average 18% mobility rate. Teacher descriptions follow.

#### *Case #7 – Payton*

Payton, a five-year teacher veteran with a bubbly personality, attended a local South-Central Texas university with a major in public relations. After graduating and working for a couple of years in public relations, she decided to enroll in Texas Teachers of Tomorrow, an online alternative certification teacher program, with a focus on ELAR. After a few years of managing a dance team as a coach and teaching high school English students, she felt ready to move into another area of education. In the last several years of teaching, she attended a counseling program through another local university with hopes of obtaining a counseling position close to home.

Payton was nearing the end of five years as an educator. She began teaching and coaching dance while teaching English at a local middle school in south Texas but had more of a love of dance. With a year of teaching dance and middle school English under

her belt in addition to soon finishing her alternative teaching program, she obtained a faculty position with CTISD. After three years of teaching English I at HSA, she transitioned to HSB for the next two years and taught English I as well.

Payton explained how public relations helped her with her communication skills. Managing interactions with the public honed her skills to relate to parents and students. As a central component of image management, teaching with and about media was a part of her motivation and understanding of teaching students the value of communication through English coursework. She explained that students have trouble connecting the reality of social media and what they learn in the classroom. It was her experience that students knew how to read, but they did not know how to analyze text whether in print or digital environments. With a passion for communication, she contextualized the student learning experience as that of managing thoughtful communication. When studying for the teacher certification exam, Payton first saw the media literacy TEKS. Her thoughts on media literacy education in the classroom were uncertain as a result of her initial experience.

In teaching, she stated that she covered media literacy, but she also felt that it was only useful when validating the credibility of news sources. Media literacy seemed to her only relevant in advanced honors courses. Up until this previous year (2018-2019), she had only covered media literacy in her advanced courses but began to see its relevance in all levels of courses. This approach, she said, is due to change in her media literacy conceptualization that media literacy is for all students since they all must critically analyze their social media lives. She conveyed that her most difficult moments were at the beginning of her teaching career when she had to figure out what media she could use

with the students. In other words, she had difficulty choosing multimedia formats and content for students based on time and curricular constraints.

*Case #8 – Allen*

Different from his colleague, Payton, Allen, a quiet and reserved but quick-witted person, participated in a traditional teacher preparation program. He majored in English and finished through a local major public Texas university. With no other work experience outside of teaching in public schools, Allen's teaching background spanned several levels of high school English over five years with CTISD and HSB being the only school in which he had taught.

As all of Allen's teaching career was in public schools, he knows all too well the imposing environment of high-stakes testing. He explained that his first year of teaching English I was the toughest as he became familiar with the work of preparing students for STAAR. As the years went on, each grade level presented its challenges, but Allen conveyed that his passion for teaching never waned even when faced with a Texas school campus report being a point away from becoming a failing high school.

Allen's teaching assignments changed during the course of his tenure. After teaching English I exclusively his first couple of years, he moved into English III and IV. English I, he explained, was difficult as the emphasis was on testing results of the STAAR. In the last several years, he alternated teaching assignments between a combination of English I, III, and IV. Allen spoke of English III and IV as a preparation ground for students for college. Allen explained that teaching juniors and seniors assisted him to prepare better as a teacher of freshmen English and to better prepare students for

the moment English teachers will inevitably see the same students in later grade levels for the research paper experience.

Allen described his media literacy experience as emergent but bolstered as he began his second year of teaching. It was in his second teaching year that Allen discovered the value of media literacy and found a deeper passion for teaching English as he began to realize how often students relied on social media for news and other information. He expounded on his instructional methods for media literacy education as a guided and shared exposure to items such as CNN10, a compact version of the daily news for students, and inquiry-based approaches to understanding current events. Helping students understand the media landscape was necessary even if students did not move on to college.

#### *Case #9 – Cielo*

Cielo's quiet but activist sensibility was an interesting addition to the participant pool. She started her college career at a small local Texas university obtaining a bachelor's degree in biology. In between volunteering at a small school and enrolling in an alternative certification program through a community college, she received her teaching credentials to teach middle school science and English. During her few years of volunteering and then working with a small private school, she finished a master's degree at a major Texas state university in educational administration. Inspired by her teaching experience and master's degree program, she then enrolled in a doctoral program to study culture, literacy, and language at a major state university. While she had more control over her collegiate experience that was long and consistent, she described her teaching experience as patchy and riddled with shorter tenures.

Cielo spent the last 11 years teaching but began her teaching career at a small private religious school in South-Central Texas, among the many in the city. Her career started as in middle school science teacher for a period of three years, and when her colleague could not teach ELAR any longer for the rest of the year, Cielo took over as the ELAR teacher for the eighth grade. With more trouble on the horizon, she recounted her frustration in the moment school enrollment fell and continued well into her fourth teaching year. She described how the school abruptly and literally closed its doors from one day to the next leaving her without a job for the rest of the school year and parents without a place for their children in addition to her own. She quickly applied to other local South-Central Texas area public school districts.

With the school year already in full swing, she was frustrated and searching for a permanent job. Only several weeks later did a local school district call her to replace a vacated position. It was the only school district to call her back, she admitted, and it had a well-known historical trend of high teacher turnover. Not dismayed, she explained her tenure there as a wonderful experience with opportunity for varied roles. In no apparent chronological order, she described her job titles as parent educator, dyslexia interventionist, instructional coach for the elementary level, and a fourth-grade reading, writing, and social studies teacher. After only five years with the school district, she described how the memories of the organizational instability in her previous school came screaming back to the forefront of her mind.

As instability gripped the school district with changes in the superintendency, hikes in health insurance costs, surges in teacher layoffs, and buzzes about school closures, she expressed her disillusionment and attempted to get ahead of the turmoil. Not

pleased with the instability of the political and social environment and the uncertainty of employment, she resigned at the end of the summer and applied to several local South-Central Texas school districts. In the fall of the same year, she took the ELAR certification exam to obtain the teaching credential to teach high school English. She was hired almost immediately at CTISD. At the time of the interview, she had only two years of teaching experience with ELAR. She was a novice in her high school English role at the recently opened HSB at the CTISD.

Cielo's experience with media literacy differed in that she was the only ELAR teacher among her colleagues at CTISD's HSB to start at a private school. Cielo's media literacy experience began with the training she received during her private school years as a volunteer and teacher. She explained how their International Baccalaureate (IB) program differed in its focus, rigor, and intent. She expressed how the sentiment of the Catholic Church and the school governing body was to prepare students to confront media in the classroom and beyond through various mediated activities in the classroom. Since the Catholic school did not have STAAR, they did not emphasize test preparation as much as public schools did, she explained. The private Catholic school utilized the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a nationally norm-referenced assessment, and gave teachers a little more flexibility within the International Baccalaureate (IB) program curriculum. She described how she and fellow teachers covered media literacy across the curriculum to highlight bias in the media. For example, her science course content included Al Gore's film on climate change, incorporated a guided interpretation of the film, and offered a comparative activity in which students were to compare the film content to another that provided an opposing viewpoint.

In her experience with CTISD, her current district, she felt as though the administration placed stringent parameters around content topics viewed to be too politically charged by the school community. A social activist at heart, she noted that the principal at the time made a list of censored topics for classroom discussion and sent the censored topics it out to teachers, but she refused to abide by the list. Instead, she included classroom experiences about topics she felt students needed to have in her class. She seemed reluctant to share what those items were but explained that media literacy was one of the items that received push-back in the curriculum for many reasons apart from the need for state testing preparation.

*Case #10 – Thor*

Thor's background was unique among his colleagues. After graduating from a small private Texas university with a bachelor's degree in English, he continued on to a master's degree from another small private Texas university in religious studies. Following graduate school, Thor spent the next twenty years as a church minister working with families and youth groups. After years of committing to ministering to adults and youth and wanting to make an impact in students' lives, he decided to go back to school to obtain his teaching credentials in an alternative certification program through small local community colleges.

Thor's work experience was limited to his church ministry, but his search for adventure in life experiences lead him to becoming a teacher. After finishing his certification program, he began teaching English II a year ago describing it as drinking from a fire hose. He likened his ministry work with adults and youth at his church to his current teaching assignment explaining the parallels of preparation and delivery of his



message to his lesson planning and instructional approach with his English course objectives.

Thor explained his media literacy experience as emergent and reflective of what the ELAR team brings to informal conversations over lunch or in the hallways. He described his encounter with media literacy as recent and “probably just within the last year and a half but was familiar with the concept for many years.” Oftentimes, an informal meeting with colleagues during conference time became his source of media literacy approaches. At other times, his own desire to have students understand bias in current events reported by media outlets allowed for lesson hooks (i.e., anticipatory set) at the beginning of class time.

#### *Case #11 – Carrie*

After spending several years working as a human resources (HR) representative, Carrie, a woman with reticent composure but absolute resolve, decided to go back to school to finish her undergraduate degree at a major out-of-state university. She struggled with making the transition since so many years elapsed between the time she first started her university experience and the day she decided to go back to finish her degree. Pushing her out of her comfort zone and in the direction of her ultimate decision to leave her HR position was her resolute refusal to go back to a dead-end HR job. She finished her bachelor’s degree with a major in English. Subsequently, she decided to move to South-Central Texas and enroll in an alternative teacher certification program through South-Central Texas’ local regional education service center.

As soon as she finished the preliminary coursework, she applied for and obtained a faculty position with HSB in the CTISD. As a new teacher and under the terms of her

contract, a university mentor worked with Carrie for the duration of her first year. Carrie's non-traditional student experience brought years of work experience to her struggle to prepare students for future success in college.

Unsure of her position and understanding of media literacy, Carrie's media literacy experience was emergent. Faced with her first year as an English II teacher, she felt she implemented media literacy in her classroom but did not recognize the media literacy TEKS. She explained how technology use and savvy was her understanding of media literacy education. As she neared the end of the interview, she noted the lesson products on the walls of her classroom. She explained the activity as a social media play on words using the term "Fakebook" to get students to understand media presence, posting, information sharing, and bias on social media websites. She discussed how students did not understand or appreciate the need to verify information sources along with the dangers and drawbacks of sharing unverified news.

#### *Case #12 – Manuel*

Unlike all of his colleagues, Manuel, a quiet and cordial individual, was the only teacher to graduate through a traditional teacher preparation program. He finished his program at a major public Texas university in with a major in English. Immediately upon his graduation, he looked at several places across Texas but ultimately settled into a local South-Central Texas area school district.

Still considering himself a novice teacher, Manuel's teaching experience spans five years. Manuel began teaching English I at a high school just north of the district where he also finished his teacher internship experiences. After teaching outside of CTISD for a year, he moved over to HSA for a couple of years teaching English I again.

Given the opportunity to help establish a new ELAR department, Manuel moved once again to the newly opened HSB to teach English II.

Manuel explained how he had no formal introduction to media literacy through his college coursework. He recounted his certification exam experience as one of the very few times he dealt with media literacy education and the media literacy TEKS. Creating visual representations of the content he read in his coursework was the extent of his media literacy. Thus, his view of media literacy was more akin to the exposure and use of technology. Admittedly, he explained that he had a limited understanding of media literacy education, media literacy TEKS, and any formal definition of media literacy. Yet, he did mention that his more recent teaching experiences included more media literacy components.

#### *Cross-Case Analysis*

After analyzing individual teacher cases, several themes emerged within each case and across data sources (i.e., document artifact, interview, and focus group). Each campus site offered a slightly different perspective. As mentioned previously, since this study is a multiple case study, the researcher performed a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014).

Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that:

When multiple cases chosen, a typical format is to provide first a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case. (p. 100)

The cross-case analysis consisted of finding similarities and differences among the individual case themes (Yin, 2014). Many teachers offered similar experiences, thoughts, and behaviors in spite of their individual characteristics such as experience, background,

and subject-level taught. Although many different items or common ideas and issues arose in the individual cases through the interview, focus group experience, and document artifact for each individual teacher, many of these items became common ideas and issues that made up the larger thematic topics in the cross-case analysis. The following were the four themes that emerged in the cross-case analysis:

1. Teachers display inconsistent understanding and knowledge of media literacy.
2. Teachers demonstrated a mixed sentiment in the valuing of media literacy instruction.
3. Teachers noted the lack of support for media literacy education.
4. Teachers expressed challenges and barriers to media literacy.

The themes answered the research questions about high school ELAR teachers' experiences, thoughts, and behaviors with media literacy education (see table 4.6). In table 4.6, the researcher identified the themes that answered the research questions and provided further thorough description of how themes answered the research questions in Chapter Five.

Table 4.6

*Themes and Research Questions*

Research Question(s) and Sub-Questions	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
1. What do teachers do and know about media literacy education?	*			
a. To what extent are teacher familiar with the core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education?		*		*
b. What do they think media literacy education is?		*		
c. What value do these teachers place on media literacy education?		*		
d. How do English teachers teach, use, or address media literacy in the classroom?		*		
e. What are teachers' views about students' media skills and understanding?				*
2. What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?			*	*
a. How competent do teachers feel about media literacy education?	*	*		*
b. What are teachers' sources of media literacy education materials?		*		
c. What are the barriers to implementing media literacy education for them?	*	*	*	*

*1. Teachers Display Inconsistent Understanding and Knowledge of Media Literacy.*

First, the researcher sought to unearth an overall picture of what ELAR teachers knew about media literacy education. The first theme over teachers' knowledge and understanding of media literacy spoke to the research question concerning what teachers knew and did with media literacy education as it did several of the sub-questions (see Table 4.6). As noted the following, there was a presence of inconsistency in the knowledge and application of media literacy. The qualifying threshold for a theme was

50% or half of the teachers demonstrating similar thematic elements to qualify as a theme in the majority. For instance, ELAR teachers responded to a question about their definition of media literacy. The guidelines of the CPMLE, NAMLE outlined media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication” (NAMLE, 2018, para 1). When the researcher inquired about several teachers’ definitions of media literacy, teachers had difficulty articulating a definition. Overall, what was evident was the absence of common and coherent understanding and knowledge of media literacy. For instance, while most teachers agreed on the need for their students to access media, but many teachers did not venture into other dimensions of media literacy. Elements of instruction that reflected media literacy aspects were part of teachers’ definitions. For example, Macario and Carrie did not specify creation as part of their definition, but in a few responses and instructional examples, they demonstrated a lesson by which creation was a part and parcel of the experience during a lesson with media literacy emphasis (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

*NAMLE Definition versus Teachers’ Definition*

NAMLE Feature	Access	Analysis	Evaluation	Creation	Action
Emma	*	*			
Macario	*	*	*	*	
Nora	*				
Cheri				*	
Adrian	*				
Zoey	*			*	
Allen	*				
Cielo	*	*			
Payton	*			*	
Manuel	*				
Carrie	*	*		*	
Thor	*	*			

Overall, ELAR teachers failed to align with the broader definition of media literacy as “access, analy[sis], evaluat[ion], creat[ion], and act[ion] using all forms of communication” (NAMLE, 2018, paragraph 1). Most (75%) saw media literacy as technology skills. For instance, a couple of teachers shared the following:

Media Literacy for me has... I mean, media in itself is such a umbrella word. Media can be anything from the computers, knowing your way around the computers. It can also mean knowing, well, software, know how to create videos, know how to use the various softwares. It requires a certain knowledge, a certain education. It requires a certain fearlessness. (Zoey) (Interview)

I define it as like a tool to kind of scaffold complex knowledge. I guess you can say. I will say it requires either video photo, anything in the news that could present like an alternative perspective without changing yours. I guess an unbiased representation. (Manuel) (Interview)

Some of the variation stemmed from teachers’ conveying a mixed purpose or the uncertain place of media literacy education. For instance, one teacher explained his definition of media literacy with the following:

Being able to use and engage with different forms of media. Understanding how media works when it comes to using technology, the technology that they see every day, online resources, using the internet, being smart about using the internet. Definitely an understanding of the different types of media that they are exposed to--like their personal media, their social media versus in the classroom. (Allen) (Interview)

Allen’s definition highlighted some of NAMLE’s emphasis on concepts of access and analysis, but his explanation did not move into elements of evaluation, creation, and action.

The technological emphasis was clear throughout all three data sets (i.e., focus group, narrative artifact, and interview), but when questioned on whether media literacy could be taught without technology, Allen affirmed that media literacy could be taught without technology. Thus, his view offered a confusing picture. For example, his

perception of (digital) technology took the place of traditional media formats in his examples but seemed central to his definition and other teaching behaviors and thoughts. For clarification, the researcher asked about media literacy's function to which he responded:

I think one of the things that I like to emphasize with my kids is the responsible use part. To not only be aware of how they engage with media, but what sort of consequences come with things like taking news at face value, not looking at sources. Things like, watching the things that are put out on the media. As far as the actual TEKS [...], I would need to see the TEKS. (Allen) (Interview)

Allen sensed the importance of media literacy without having a good definition.

Another teacher explained how media literacy is a tool but overlooked features of NAMLE's definition and aspects of access, analysis, evaluation, creation, and action.

Manuel responded in the following way:

I will say [media literacy education] requires either video photo, anything in the news that could present like an alternative perspective without changing yours. I guess an unbiased representation. (Manuel) (Interview)

Troubling in this description was the idea that Manuel thought media literacy was about technology or news media alone. An excerpt of the individual transcript conveyed the extent of the application and his understanding of media literacy education:

[Media literacy] helped a lot, especially with my first year, I wouldn't, I wasn't so well [(good)] at reading out loud, the texts. So, I remember my first year I had to teach a *To Kill a Mockingbird*. So, I bought the audio for *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Sissy Spacek read[] as Scout. So, that [experience] helped because she has an accent and she's female. So, the kids were able to visualize that better instead of me reading it to them. So they understood the content better with audio [...]. (Manuel) (Interview)

Again, technology use seemed to define media literacy.

Another example of a similar response was Zoey's definition. The teacher explained her definition of media literacy as follows:



Media literacy for me has... I mean, media in itself is such a umbrella word. Media can be anything from the computers, knowing your way around the computers. It can also mean knowing, well, software, know how to create videos, know how to use the various software. (Zoey) (Interview)

Zoey's orientation to media literacy was technology-based to a point that it seemed her definition touched on computer literacy rather than media literacy. Zoey's technology slant to her definition made sense when asked what media literacy had done for her classroom; it was job-oriented:

Classroom experiences have improved because the students see the need for media literacy beyond high school. There is more buy-in because the students realize that this isn't some cutesy software/program, and it will have a positive impact on their futures. (Zoey) (Document Artifact)

It was evident that Zoey saw media as a means that requires little critical thinking. Yet another teacher provided a divergent view that moved entirely away from traditional print literacy in the following media literacy definition:

It would be the students showing their understanding of the content using something other than pen and paper, creating some kind of visual representation or some kind of presentation using technology or even video. (Cheri) (Interview)

Cheri explained the technological preference through an approach less aligned to the purpose and relevance of media literacy in the succeeding excerpt from a focus group interview:

I've been reading a professional development book called *180 Days to Engage and Empower Adolescents*. And in the chapter on studying informational texts, they actually start with infographics, and they have the students write next to them. And so that's actually something that I'm planning to do next year. Because they do that before they ever start reading pieces. (Cheri) (Focus Group)

To Cheri, media literacy was an instructional means and not a topic to be challenged. She sees it as a teaching tool only. Another teacher explained how media literacy was a tool for measuring students' understanding of content.

Media literacy for me is [...] it's a tool. It's a tool that we can use for the learning of the students in variety of ways, so in a way it's very helpful that it's so broad, that we can use it in different formats and measure different things for our students' learning abilities and capabilities. (Nora) (Interview)

Nora also saw media literacy as technology education.

I had a couple of students that came back and said, "Thank you for helping us work with Google Classroom." Because we actually were using that type of programs in our community college." So that's pretty neat to see that they're actually applying a few of the skills that we actually practice in the high school. (Nora) (Focus Group)

Google Classroom is a free web service, developed by Google for schools, that tries to streamline production, distribution, and grading work in digital-only environments through file-sharing between students and teachers. The majority of the participants in HSA adopted the notion that technological savvy was media literacy. Adrian offered the following:

Media literacy, I would give it a definition as basically the kids being able to distinguish between the types of media documentary, as opposed to fictionalized. More along the lines of entertainment versus educational for what we do in the classroom. Education versus informational media. (Adrian) (Interview)

Adrian featured the ability to distinguish between media as the only function of media literacy. This aspect of Adrian's description seemed to be central in comparison to the broader characterization his colleagues provided. Carrie, like Adrian, limited her definition by explaining that media literacy was "[u]nderstanding how things were presented or [the way] different [visual] components" change and alter the meaning or the viewer's interpretation.

The major missing element in all twelve interpretations was action—a civic component of empowerment that provides capacity to informed reflective critical thought. Throughout each explanation of their media literacy understanding, a clear

alignment to technological literacy dominated each definition. Teachers explained a skills-based approach that focused primarily on the use of technology rather than focusing on media literacy's connection to critical inquiry, expansion on traditional literacy, reflective engagement on issues of a democratic society, culture, and socialization, and value-based aspects of society and its media.

Additionally, the researcher inquired about ELAR teachers' familiarity with and the extent to which they were familiar with the National Association of Media Literacy Education's (NAMLE) Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (CPMLE), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) general standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education, teachers overwhelmingly responded that they did not recognize or recall seeing anything related to standards or published information from the aforementioned organizations.

In short, ELAR teachers had a limited or at least a mixed understanding and knowledge of media literacy education. Despite their lack of knowledge and understanding, teachers valued media literacy to some extent and found it necessary and appropriate to include media literacy TEKS in the overall TEKS state curricular framework. On the other hand, a mixed valuing of media literacy called into question if they clearly understood what they valued.

In regards to applications within media literacy teaching, a couple teachers had practices that closely aligned to NAMLE's definition and the principles found within the CPMLE. For instance, Macario explained his thoughts about media literacy:

I think of media literacy as helping kids to become savvy consumers of media, and to recognize it, to evaluate it, to critique it, and then also just enjoy it.  
(Macario) (Interview)

Macario did not mention the creation or civic aspect of media literacy. Macario offered conflicting viewpoints between definition and teaching applications demonstrating his inconsistent understanding of media literacy.

## *2. Teachers Demonstrated a Mixed Sentiment in the Valuing of Media Literacy Instruction.*

Theme two spoke to several of the sub-questions under research question one and all of the sub-questions under research question two. For example, teachers' competence varied with their valuing of media literacy education. When teachers did not see media literacy as a viably tested TEK, many of the dismissed it or relegated it to a particular student population or specific time during the year or towards the end of students' ELAR high school English sequence where End-of-Course (EOC) exams did not interfere with teaching. They did not see value nor did they understand how to implement media literacy education effectively to address the integration of media literacy TEKS. This contortion of the media literacy TEKS to fit an underlying curricular and instructional agenda that spoke to the value teachers placed on media literacy education.

Over 67% of teachers indicated they somehow valued media literacy through various behaviors, beliefs, and platitudes. Since the inception of media literacy TEKS in 2009, all Texas ELAR teachers had the opportunity to pursue materials, resources, training, professional groups, and collaboration through various channels within and outside of their school districts. With respect to ELAR teachers' response to their knowledge and membership to professional organizations and their desire to deepen their

understanding of media literacy as it concerned definitions, ideas, curriculum topics, teaching resources, teaching strategies, lesson plans, and the like, the data demonstrated how a range of valuing media literacy education emerged among ELAR teachers. The consensus majority (100%) never heard of NAMLE or the CPMLE, and the majority (77%) of teachers were not interested in additional resources. A minority of teachers (33%) had heard of the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (IRA) with an even lower percentage (8%) ever participating in or reading material or using resources from NCTE. Some teachers (33%) had asked for resources from NAMLE, and a couple of teachers had interest in looking at materials from NCTE. Primarily, many teachers noted that they used the Texas Curriculum Management Program Cooperative (TCMPC), an adopted ready-made curriculum with prepared lesson plans, for reference and curricular guidance. Despite teachers' lack of awareness of and desire for media literacy resources, valuing media literacy remained a central theme in behaviors and classroom practices.

In regards to applications within media literacy teaching, a couple teachers had practices that closely aligned to NAMLE's definition and the principles found within the CPMLE. For instance, Macario explained his thoughts about media literacy:

I think of media literacy as helping kids to become savvy consumers of media, and to recognize it, to evaluate it, to critique it, and then also just enjoy it.  
(Macario) (Interview)

Macario did not mention the creation or civic aspect of media literacy. Macario offered conflicting viewpoints between definition and teaching applications demonstrating his inconsistent understanding of media literacy.

Teachers demonstrated mixed feelings about the value of media literacy. ELAR teachers often provided a binary response (i.e., media literacy is good or media literacy is irrelevant) of media literacy education. On the one hand, (aside from the tested versus non-tested TEKS polarization) media literacy was valued by teachers in their descriptions and explanations. Comments such as the following shared by a couple of teachers illustrated this value:

But we do it because we understand the value of it, because we understand that they're going to need it for not just the next level, but for multiple levels that they're going to go through. (Zoey) (Focus Group)

Media literacy plays a vital role in the classroom, especially at this particular point in time. As students are spending more and more time online, it is crucial that educators prepare them to look at each piece of media they encounter with the ability to think critically about what they are encountering. (Carrie) (Document Artifact)

On the other hand, teachers' actions conveyed mixed valuing and defended reasoning based on the testing culture. The following comment illustrated this point:

It's hard to justify spending more time on it when it's not tested (Cheri) (Focus Group).

In consideration of the previous sentiments, it was necessary to learn whether teachers had interactions (i.e., meetings, professional learning communities, district learning opportunities) surrounding the topic of media literacy to determine if their words of valuing aligned with their behaviors. The following sections explore the school climate surrounding media literacy implementation and the sense of purpose teachers feel for the teaching of media literacy.

In classroom practice, some teachers described how they pursued their own agenda apart and irrespective of the state-, district-, and campus-focused desire to address tested TEKS alone. As exceptions in teachers' valuation of media literacy, a couple of

teachers communicated high valuing in their classroom practice of media literacy. Teachers such as Allen, Cielo, Macario, and Carrie diverged from the rest of their campus groups and shared how their practice reflected the value of media literacy education. For instance, Allen cited the following:

Well, we try to have our students look at media in different lenses, at least once a week. We do current topics. Sometimes that's through Newsela [(i.e., an instructional web-based software)]. Sometimes that's through CNN 10[, a prepared digital 10-minute news segment that allows teachers to keep students abreast of current events without overwhelming them with extra information or commentary]. Sometimes, we ask them to go out onto the internet using the Chromebooks [(a laptop or tablet running the Linux-based Chrome OS as its operating system)] to find their own media sources. (Allen) (Interview)

With the judgement of frequency and quality inferred from his description of media literacy experiences aside, Allen's determined attempts were sufficient to demonstrate his valuing of media literacy education to some extent.

Another example of valuing among a few teachers was Cielo's use of media literacy in the classroom in the following description of her practice:

Well, I like to use [media literacy approaches] with the warmups and then I also like to use them for journaling. What I try to do is, for journaling, is I do something called stop and jot. As a strategy, we look at it in, I guess, increments. If I'm going to show the kids, for example, CNN 10, and it's 10 minutes, I'm not going to let the whole thing run 10 minutes, we'll watch the first two or three minutes. [...] it could just be a free write. [...]. That's another way that we analyze media literacy. (Cielo) (Interview)

Cielo conveyed her practice of journaling as an attempt to analyze media and not a common practice of media literacy education. Overall, it demonstrated a degree of valuing of media literacy in Cielo's classroom.

Similar to Cielo's case, Macario's behavior highlighted defiance of the high school administrative agenda of teaching to the test. In this boldness, Macario demonstrated his valuation of media literacy in the classroom. He explained that he was

typically on his own when it came to media literacy implementation as the following description depicted:

Okay, [I] go do [media literacy] on [my] own, but there's not encouragement or opportunity for [me]. Nobody's coming around saying, "Here's this professional development on the latest, super cool media techniques you can use in your classroom." (Macario) (Interview)

As mentioned in the description, Macario exposed a common practice of high school administration and the lack of support at all levels in the school district from departmental to district.

When questioned about the media literacy's place in the ELAR classroom, some teachers were notably hesitant and troubled. For instance, one teacher responded with a spiteful tone:

I think some of it too is just that almost as English teachers, we are almost expected to be all things for all. [I]n an English class, it is just like we are supposed to be able to help them break down every iteration of any kind of message! A lot of teachers who are English teachers studied English and they studied literature! (Macario) (Focus Group)

Macario's experience, belief, and behaviors were similar to that of Cielo's where support was nonexistent. For instance, Cielo reiterated a defiance of administration when attempting to include a media literacy and civic component in her classroom as a collaboration among the ELAR classrooms of Cielo, Allen, and Payton. Speaking for the focus group, Cielo recounted an encounter with an administrator requiring her not to introduce political elements into her classroom for debate connected to required reading in her classroom. She explained the following as Allen and Payton nodded in agreement:

Yeah, because last year I remember one specific conversation with an administrator and they're no longer here, but I remember being told I should not be talking about politics in my classroom. [...] And for me, my personal philosophical ideas of pedagogy. [Paolo Freire] says to read the world, read the text is to read the world. Right? Is that how he says it? And to me education is



political. It's been political since it was established. Your TEKS are political, the people making the TEKS [political]. (Cielo) (Focus Group)

As Allen nodded in affirmation, Payton agreed and offered the following comment in support of Cielo: “Public education itself [is political]. We are in a political game”

(Payton) (Focus Group). While Payton did not offer more substance in her comment, it was clear that Allen, Payton, and Cielo felt a connection to exposing students to media and the evaluation of it under the banner of media literacy. In the teachers’ minds, media literacy included the evaluation of media in the context of politics as it was connected to the readings from the English coursework in spite of administrative disapproval.

Several teachers across the district, Allen, Cielo, Payton, Zoey, and Macario communicated high valuing of media literacy through their real-world motivations for including media literacy components in the classroom. Adding to their civic reason, Cielo and Allen contributed the following from their focus group interview when asked what media literacy contributed to their classroom:

[I see media literacy as] an enrichment of the curriculum. I think it's helped my kids to make connections in a broader sense to, maybe, the real world or I like to teach my kiddos you're not just citizens of this community, you're global citizens and so you need to know what's happening around the world and to, maybe, help with that consciousness right of whether it's a political consciousness or a consciousness just to help them want to make a difference in the world, but have a purpose. So, that's how I see media literacy helping with that. (Cielo) (Focus Group)

Allen responded in much the same way in the following focus group excerpt:

It lends itself to getting them to think about things in a broader perspective. So, the big struggle was always like, what is the relevance of what we're doing? Or like how does this specific topic relate to our kids in out in the real world? And then the media literacy piece really helps our kids see that a lot of the stuff that we do is connected to life outside [of high school]. (Allen) (Focus Group)

Thus, media literacy for Cielo and Allen was an issue of exposure to real-world experiences. Some examples of real-world experiences included searching media sources for current topics in order to discuss them in class to address access and evaluation. For instance, Allen reiterated how he asked students to use technology to access and evaluate events connected to real-world happenings in the following way. Their motivation to teach real-world experiences demonstrated their valuation of media literacy, but they were the exceptions.

Zoey shared how digital tools under the umbrella of media literacy impacts students' lives beyond the classroom in the following excerpt:

Well, first off, you're learning the software because if you can do this software, then you can do the rest that are like it. Aside from that, real-world experience, if you can do this here, you can do it for your business, your company or whoever you work for." Those are the kinds of questions we get. If that's the case, I can't just be throwing something out there. "Well, they want me to do this?" [...] It has to be effective real-world and they have to see the value in it, because if they don't, they are not gonna use it again. (Zoey) (Interview)

Zoey's experience illustrated how her motivation to teach media literacy connected to needing to expose her students to real-world tools and experiences. Additionally, another activity she described in her classroom made a similar reference to the provision of real-world experiences as part of her valuation of media literacy. She shared the following:

There was a time, as matter of fact, the beginning of the year, I asked them to create a newspaper. They went online and they found... We found some software online that they could put pictures in, and they would type. It fit like that. Of course, we talked about the memoir, the video memoir. We talked about the Pear Deck, and we talked about the Google slides. [...] Google slides, where they're each putting in to something to... They're each putting in to create a bigger document. Divide and conquer work, which is real world skill anyway. There are so many times when you work with a group in the real world, and you each put in your piece and here's the product. (Zoey) (Interview)

The use of tools was an important media literacy aspect for Zoey and illustrated her high valuing of media literacy in the classroom, but as mentioned previously, she had a strong belief that media literacy was more about the students using technology as opposed to NAMLE's core concepts. Within the same HSA campus site, Macario shared something similar as an activity motivated by real-world connections. Macario conveyed the following practice:

So, you just try to find different things. We looked at ... I did some kind of micro-writing with kids, and we pulled the back of the Chobani labels, and they had little messages on the back of the Chobani labels. And so we wrote our own versions of those, and what were they communicating with that, what's the message behind that? So it was kind of, for them to see in their real world. And then for them to go back and find examples that matter to them. (Macario) (Interview)

Across ELAR teachers at HSA, a general sense of value emerged from the data. A couple of teachers iterated students' need for media literacy was to develop a sense of awareness of bias, responsibility in their media use, and autonomy. For example, one teacher responded with the following:

The most important aspects of it or the reason why I think it's critical for the kids is [all media have] a purpose, and they have to understand how they're being manipulated by what they're seeing. Having more media literacy gives them more autonomy about how they receive information and what they're receiving, and they become more critical, and I guess in a sense, more cynical about it, too. But they have an awareness, and they seem to lead to more ownership, at best, of what they're actually learning through everyday media. (Adrian) (Interview)

Another teacher responded with similar reflections and in line with his background in journalism and traditional literacy whereas modes of persuasion dominated the purpose of teaching media literacy. For instance, Macario responded:

[Students] learn to distinguish and determine credible sources, to recognize bias, and [to analyze . . .], from a rhetorical standpoint, the ethos, pathos, and logos [(i.e., modes of persuasion)], and what makes this source credible. (Macario) (Interview)

While Adrian seemed to articulate a breadth to his description of the reasons for media literacy, Macario added depth to his reasons for teaching media literacy. Overall, other teacher participants did not identify any outcomes for media literacy and lacked a coherent and consistent approach as a department to address underlying instructional issues concerning media literacy.

HSB's ELAR teachers' reasons for teaching media literacy include engaging with different forms of media, understanding how media works when it comes to using technology, scaffolding complex knowledge, verifying credibility of the sources, and looking for bias in the news. For instance, an ELAR teacher explained the following:

I think it is really important for students to understand the credibility of the sources that are being used online. Like what are their correct credentials, what site are you even on? (Payton) (Interview)

Payton touched on an issue Carrie described surrounding meaning-making and interpretation. She conveyed the following about why she taught media literacy:

Understanding how things are presented. Or different components that change how things are presented and the meaning. Understanding, I guess, that different small things can change how you interpret a piece of information in the media. (Carrie) (Interview)

Additionally, Thor made a point about sifting through information in search of the truth.

He explained how students need to extract meaning from context as he described the following:

I guess it would be able to weed through everything out there, to be able to find what's true, and what's reliable. And able to, I guess, even interpret people's biases from the way they come at a subject. Skepticism, I think. And also, you have to be willing to... and I guess this goes with skepticism... be able to view various sides, and get lots of information, in order to be able to make an informed decision. (Thor)

In short, the theme of mixed sentiment for the value of media literacy described this collection of ELAR teacher participants. Teachers sensed the media were influential but had no consistent curricular philosophy. In the end, teachers did not even consistently value media literacy. A couple of comments such those shared by Cheri seemed to permeate the interviews, focus groups, and document artifacts:

Because media literacy is not a tested TEK, it does not play a part in my planning or teaching until after the STAAR test. We do support the core texts we read by showing the film, but rarely do we discuss the angles, lighting, or music the directors chose to create meaning. (Cheri) (Document Artifact)

Further analysis revealed even more about the support structure that may have contributed to this low to inconsistent valuing of media literacy education.

### *3. Teachers Noted the Lack of Support for Media Literacy Education.*

In the previous sections, the researcher explored the teachers' knowledge and understanding of media literacy and how they valued media literacy. As research question two reflected (see Table 4.6), teachers did note something missing in the form of assistance whether it was instructional time and planning, resources, materials, and funding that exposed the lack of support teachers were feeling. The data on teachers' knowledge and understanding had a mixed response where some teachers understood a few components of media literacy and integrated them, others offered a mixed understanding of technology-focused approaches, and yet others did not offer much at all. Despite their mixed understanding and knowledge of media literacy, most teachers agreed that media literacy was an important component and said they valued it. However, there was a lack of support of media literacy education in various forms for high school

ELAR teachers, and the teachers described behaviors, thoughts, and experiences that were in line with the lack of support theme.

Instructional and time and resources were an issue. When pressed on the specific issue of instructional training or resources provided and utilized for media literacy, some teachers reached back to instances in the past and made no comments about current approaches for media literacy. For example, when asked what her teaching strategies for media literacy were, Cheri mentioned “the only one that [she had] used was SpringBoard” several years ago. Essentially, this instance demonstrated that Cheri only addressed media literacy when available in a commercially-produced curriculum product in the past and did not continue with media literacy. Coupled with her repeated mention of only teaching what was tested, the forgone conclusion was that media literacy had a low value in Cheri’s classroom practice. While her response spoke not only to her reliance on commercially-produced systems for media literacy teaching and low value of media literacy, it was evidentiary support for what may be low understanding and knowledge of media literacy as mentioned in theme one. In the focus group setting, Adrian and Zoey agreed with head nods of affirmation as Cheri explained her school’s brief history with Springboard.

Similar to Cheri, Emma expressed her sentiment with regard to commercially-produced curriculum products and the introduction of media literacy into the classroom. When asked to clarify when and to what extent she taught media literacy, she mentioned the following:

We have done a little bit of [media literacy]. We used to use a SpringBoard book that would have some media literacy in it. (Emma) (Interview)

The implication here seemed to be that she only taught media literacy with some degree of frequency while SpringBoard was available; and without it, her media literacy teaching dwindled to nothing or nothing intentional. When pressed about why they paid so little attention to media literacy with loss of Springboard, Cheri and Emma in separate focus groups affirmed that untested topics received very little attention. In the one on one interview, Emma responded with the following:

Sure, I don't think we know enough about [media literacy]. I don't think it's tested, or tested well, or enough. (Emma) (Interview)

Her response implicated her and her department as not valuing media literacy due to the absence of commercialized curriculum products but also due to the lack of knowledge and understanding in applied approaches. In addition is Cheri's response that "it is hard to justify spending more time on [media literacy] when [media literacy is] not tested". Nearly 100% of teachers emphasized the issue of tested TEKS versus non-tested TEKS whereby teachers valued the time devoted to tested material versus non-tested material. This feature proved truer and more reliable among tested grade levels (i.e., English I and English II). Not only echoed in their lack of effort or desire to teach media literacy outside of a commercially-produced curriculum product, but the lack of training or professional development (i.e., formal or informal, district-wide or campus-based, and department-led versus grade-level cohort-led) signaled a generally low value of media literacy. The following sections explored the quality and frequency of interactions or formal meetings.

First, there were mixed responses about the occurrence of instructional meetings at both campus sites. Some teachers explained that they did but more than half conveyed that meetings did not happen. Overall, both campus sites lacked formal practices to

communicate instructional and curricular ideas, approaches, and discussion centered around the topic of media literacy. If the districts or departments did not have formal meeting, professional learning communities, and grade-level meetings, naturally it meant that teachers had the opportunity to pursue media literacy through unofficial formal meetings or informal exchanges. Again, teachers' responses offered mixed feedback.

While some teachers explained that administration did not follow up with teachers, grade-level leads, and department heads about meeting for professional growth, several of the teachers felt that development in the area of media literacy education waned and commitment to collaboration remained stagnant and irregular. Several teachers voiced concerns about regular meetings and growth in the area of media literacy but relegated their dissatisfaction to reluctance and acceptance of their state of affairs. For example, within HSA, Macario offered an explanation whereby district administration was at fault for not keeping department heads and campus administration accountable for professional grade-level and departmental meetings. In a statement, Macario shared the following:

Probably more informally in that I am an idea sharer, and so I'm like, "Oh I saw this." And so, I'm constantly sending links to people, or, [saying] "Here is what I am doing with this or in that way." Nothing organized, but yes, I share a lot.  
(Macario) (Interview)

Yeah, we are on our own. I think a lot of [development and meetings] though happen[] informally. (Macario) (Focus Group)

Similarly, each teacher narrative across HSA demonstrated similar descriptions of behaviors related to professional growth, meeting as a team, and sharing resources and ideas within and across departments. It was nonexistent.



Conversely, four out of six teachers at HSB shared how they met regularly with their teams every Monday and with administrators on Thursdays to go over state assessment data. Prompted by a question on whether teachers collaborated with each other on the campus to discuss lessons on media literacy, teachers at HSB did not discuss media literacy but generally focused on TEKS on the state assessment and their reteaching of the tested TEKS. For instance, Cielo explained the encounters in the following excerpt:

We do [meet]. Now [that] STAAR is over, we have not, but every Monday we usually would plan as a team, and then we would meet with our [campus] administrators on Thursdays. (Cielo) (Interview)

It seemed that the meetings ran in conjunction with STAAR as the motivating factor for meetings. In support of Cielo's response, Thor shared a similar description:

We do [meet]—very little right now. But we collaborate on all of our lessons. And so, I actually do depend on [the meetings]. We have a couple of younger teachers, and they're good about [meeting]. And so, I lean heavily on them, the younger ones. (Thor) (Interview)

Two other teachers responded with a short affirmative answer as to whether they met but did not elaborate on the content or quality of the meetings. In a more direct way, two other teachers, Payton and Carrie, responded that the grade level or the department did not meet regularly. Interestingly, no one at HSB confirmed any collaboration within or outside of their departments. This non-collaborative behavior was part of a common culture in both ELAR departments where some informal collaboration between newer teachers happened such as the experience of Thor. Thus, informal sharing and irregular meetings were a common practice among both campuses. In short, the mix of responses and the presence of media literacy as a topic of importance in informal or formal

meetings between teachers demonstrated behavior in line with a low commitment to, low motivation for, and low valuation of media literacy education.

In another revealing interaction, a few (33%) of teachers admitted not pursuing media literacy outside of commercially-based products that included media literacy lessons. Specifically, when questioned on the matter of instructional development and resources used for media literacy, a few (33%) of teachers had difficulty remembering when they implemented media literacy after the school district discontinued the SpringBoard curriculum. For example, Cheri mentioned “the only [media literacy resource] that [she] used was SpringBoard” several years ago. Essentially, the moment SpringBoard went away, she discontinued regularly teaching of media literacy due to the campus and district’s lack of support for resources that included media literacy components. In the focus group setting, Adrian and Zoey agreed with head nods of affirmation as Cheri explained her school’s brief history with Springboard.

With the loss of SpringBoard, there were two outcomes. The first is the loss of district support for the purchase of the curriculum product to continue media literacy lessons. The second is loss of media literacy support that teacher felt. Without SpringBoard, her media literacy teaching dwindled to nothing or nothing planned. When pressed about why she paid so little attention to media literacy with loss of Springboard, Cheri and Emma in separate focus groups affirmed that untested material received very little attention. In the interview, Emma responded with the following:

Sure, I don't think we [(the department)] know enough about [media literacy]. I don't think it's tested, or tested well, or enough. (Emma) (Interview)

Her response implied that she and her department received little support through resources, training, and professional development. As the researcher noted, there was another area where teacher felt the lack of support.

As a response to the sub-question under research question one, HSB reported a similar situation to HSA with low resources. With such low resources, teachers felt limited to teach anything outside of the tested material. For example, Carrie commented on their campus situation during the focus group about the scarcity of resources in the following:

You have to buy [resources] yourself. Yeah, my kids with the *1984* books have commented, "They smell, these books are so old, and the covers are old. The covers aren't cool." And I think there's a higher level of interest [when the resources are newer]. Because even like the *Animal Farm*, like they had a newer version, of *Animal Farm* and so the cover was sleek, and it was a little more modern, and they were all [sold on it]. [It is the] same author. My *1984* books are old. They look old. They smell old. The cover is very outdated, and [the students] are dragging their feet [because they] do not want to read it. (Carrie) (Focus Group)

When we opened the school, we actually just inherited half of everything that [High School A] had, and they kind of just gave us the scraps. So, a lot of our books are damaged, and they have not [provided adequate resources]. So, these kids open it, and they are not even interested. [...] The [funding] I think was the big deal, [a]nd then just topics too. Like we were told to stay away [...] from anything that was school-related and violent. (Carrie) (Focus Group)

While it was clear that HSB teachers lacked the resources to engage students in general and media literacy in particular, there were reasons for the lack of resources. Teachers did not have curricular materials that included media literacy, and they did not have access to resources such as books to even begin to think about composing media literacy lessons surrounding the required literature students needed to read. Noted in the last portion of Cielo's comment was the control of content imposed on the classroom.

Another challenge highlighted by teachers was funding. Funding prevented implementation of media literacy in different ways whether it was purchasing material resources, human resources, or digital online resources. For instance, when pressed on the topic of instruction and resources afforded and employed for media literacy, a couple of teachers commented on discontinued projects and support. When asked what her teaching strategies for media literacy were, Cheri recounted that “the only [thing] that [she has] used was SpringBoard” for media literacy lessons, but the campus or district administration discontinued the software after a couple of years. This discontinued adoption and lagging support of software that possessed media literacy components was at least tied to media literacy education to a degree with some frequency, but the lack of financial support was a barrier for teachers. As previously mentioned, Emma shared the same outlook that the school did not provide the support needed for instructional materials containing media literacy. Cielo and Carrie also mentioned along with other teachers (58%) indicated the lack of support for (offline) material resources due to funding. For instance, Manuel, with Thor in agreement, shared the following about iPads being outdated:

I kind of wish we had more funding to provide like documentaries in our, like since we teach English, if funding was provided I mean we could get credible sources such as documentaries, new novels that interest them, more than just computers. Maybe even cameras, that they can capture just even a theme in a photo. (Manuel) (Interview)

We used to have iPads but now for some reason I guess they're doing away with it. Like I still have my iPad from the older campus, but they haven't provided that for us here. So, I think the iPad is outdated too, where I was able to take pictures, show them in class and it was just like a classroom tool for them as well. (Manuel) (Focus Group)

I think [Manuel] just covered [it] in talking about funding. (Thor) (Focus Group)

Manuel, Cielo, Thor, and Carrie all agreed that resources were lacking due to funding, but other teachers implied that funding affected training and teacher development outcomes as well.

Some teachers felt that professional development dwindled in general and did not fully develop for media literacy. As Nora described earlier in this chapter, she felt that training was incomplete and lacked what they needed. Some teachers felt that central administration abandoned some initiatives without teacher input and notifying teachers that initiatives dropped. For instance, Payton described a situation where she thought funding affected training outcomes:

We only get like the basic [training]...The basic membership or access, accessibility and then you want to take it further but we don't have funding for those things. (Payton) (Focus Group)

I think we would've gotten funding. The funding would have been possibly fixed. I would've gotten a lot more mileage out of if the professional development had been more focused on implementing that tool in my classroom. (Payton) (Interview)

From the interview and focus group, Allen shared equal sentiments about funding and online resources for media literacy. His thoughts, although centered around online tools, echoed Payton's challenges:

For the teacher, I would say access. A struggle for us in this district is always resources. There's a lot of great online media tools that we've gotten a lot of mileage out of, that the kids have gotten a lot of use out of, but they're all things that need funding. For example, NoRedInk, things like Pear Deck, they're great resources that have got a lot of different media tools embedded in them. But we don't have full open access. (Allen) (Interview)

I think as far as access goes sometimes... You get a pretty, a pretty limited offering from central office in administration. These are the tools that we have and then I think a lot of the tools that we go out and find on our own, a lot of those media platforms, a lot of those resources work really, really well, but then it comes back to, it comes back to things like funding. [...] Like the trial version. (Allen) (Focus Group)

Many teachers thought funding acted as an institutional barrier with the central administration held responsible for the majority of failed initiatives and lacking of resources through funding mechanisms. Many ELAR teachers agreed that testing culture usurped funding and focus. As mentioned previously, many of the efforts to train teachers on tools to analyze test data. Thus, their logical conclusion was that the state assessment took up time, attention, and funding resources.

Lastly, despite the lack of instructional time and support, resources and resource support, and old materials and no funding, teachers had the ability to pursue professional resources on their own. On the other hand, not a single teacher mentioned that they were familiar with NAMLE, NCTE guidance for media literacy, or any other media literacy resources. Theme three did provide a response to the research question concerning teachers' sources of media literacy education. Thus, it was concerning that teacher themselves did not pursue any professional learning on their own as it concerned specific TEKS. As noted in the previous pages on theme three, it was obvious that teachers did not have a reliable and consistent source for media literacy education. Overall, the lack of support in its various form stunted the development and interest in media literacy education for teachers. If the local district did not make media literacy a priority, neither were most teachers going to do so.

#### *4. Teachers Expressed Challenges and Barriers to Media Literacy.*

In the last several sections, the researcher described the teachers' inconsistent and misaligned media literacy knowledge and understanding, their mixed valuing of media literacy education, and the lack of support for media literacy. Several responses to research questions emerged in theme four (see Table 4.6). As mentioned previously,

ELAR teachers attempted to implement media literacy in various ways and sustain its implementation through informal channels of professional exchange, but through their circumstances and narratives, they conveyed some persistent challenges and barriers facing media literacy implementation in spite of their efforts, lack of media literacy competence, and lack of sources for media literacy education. This section provides a response in many ways to the directly and indirectly to several of the research sub-questions under the first and second research question (see Table 4.6).

Professional and professional learning communities (PLCs) were two items that reflected part of the challenge and barriers for ELAR teachers to teach media literacy education. Many teachers (92%) indicated they relied on their organization for training and resources. This data emphasizes the influence of CTISD on these aspects for the development of teachers' skills and understanding. Thus, evidence pointed to the practice that these teachers were dependent on in-district and campus-based professional development and informal interactions with each other for growth and development. For instance, teachers (92%) replied to a specific question about professional development in the area of media literacy and provided responses reflective of professional development in general as lacking consistency, frequency, quality, and relevance for instructional growth overall but severely lacking any media literacy component. Since teachers did not rely on professional organizations and did not receive professional development at the district level, the researcher sought to inquire about the nature, focus, and intent of professional development. Several of the following responses reflected their comments about professional development:

I'm going to say probably not. (Emma) (Interview)

I would say there is a pretty standoff-ish approach to [professional development]. In a way size is kind of ... you know you are respected or trusted as an educator to do what you are supposed to do in the classroom. So I would say there is probably not [a lot of professional development or support]. (Macario) (Focus Group)

Because we are testing grade level we have gotten some trainings but mainly to understand data. It is a very specifically designed kind of trainings, it is not really kind of like tools to actually implement to the classroom. It's just mainly how to navigate through certain assessing systems. (Nora) (Interview)

Actually, it is more focused on online cyber etiquette, and so it is not exactly media literacy, but it is an awareness that not everything out there is going to be pleasant. (Adrian) (Focus Group)

I know that they do not want us to tear technology away from the kids. So even though I think it is helpful to have electronics on you, I think it is a distraction in the classroom when it is not teacher directed. (Manuel) (Focus Group)

I mean, I think they promote it, in a sense, I see different blurbs and online postings or things, but- No, and nothing mandatory either, I would say. It is just kind of there. (Payton) (Focus Group)

Yeah, we're on our own. I think a lot of it though happens informally. (Macario) (Focus Group)

Other teachers responded simply with a “no” and did not elaborate. Noted in their response was the absence of a desire to pursue media literacy resources on their own and the provision of training from their own backchannels. Therefore, the nature, focus, and intent of professional development in general and specifically for media literacy was doubtful.

Teachers, like Thor, did not know whether the campus or district offered professional development for instructional support in general and for media literacy specifically. Other teachers in the focus groups nodded their heads in agreement with Thor as a general lack of awareness of training existed throughout the focus group. Thus, sources of media literacy lessons, information, and concepts were not available to them,



and teachers provided a sense that they did not try to seek out resources for media literacy.

In terms of barriers, teachers explained the lack of formal, consistent, and sustainable training, meetings, and professional learning communities (PLCs) that directed instructional support for media literacy at the campus. PLCs, they believed, was a place where ELAR teachers could share pedagogy, instructional methods, and curricular sequencing for all lessons including media literacy. Carrie along with Macario, Nora, Emma, Cielo, Allen, Payton, and Manuel denied ever receiving help formally from the ELAR department or the campus administration for media literacy. For instance, Carrie described a lesson that focus on media literacy as being the first of its kind in the later part of the year.

Cielo described a more hostile quality toward media literacy implementation. When asked about her experience with media literacy at the campus, she explained the following:

I feel, last year with our administration, it was a very different atmosphere. And I did not feel like we could incorporate media literacy. And if we did, we just didn't put it in our lesson plans, but we still did it anyways. I think this year, like I said, we had more freedoms, and there was a lot more trust in the teachers. So we were able to do media literacy a lot earlier in the year. (Cielo)

Another example from Cielo's interview portrayed her having to hide what she was doing in her classroom with regard to media literacy. The following excerpt described her situation:

I try to use their work, because they do promote a lot of creative and visual types of learning. And I feel that it is important for our [English Language Learners]. For example, we had our kiddos create one-page summaries with nonfiction pieces [...]. I felt like I needed [to] because last year, when we tried to do something with visualization, which is in the TEKS and we have our English

language learners, we were told not to, because they weren't going to do that on STAAR. (Cielo) (Interview)

Institutional challenges arose as well. All teacher participants described the lack of professional development generally, but specifically, media literacy did not and has not received any attention.

Another issue was the informal professional development that went on without focused agenda or guidance. Only two teachers functioned as the sharers or nerve centers of sharing instructional material with other teachers. Both of these teachers, Macario and Adrian, were a part of the team at HSA and indicated that a relationship did not exist with HSB ELAR teachers. No one clearly had this role of sharer at the HSB campus. Thus, if anyone was going to share media literacy approaches, teachers admit that it was going to be Macario or Adrian. A couple of teachers shared the following about Macario and

Adrian:

Mr. Adrian. Yes, Mr. Adrian. He's really a smart cookie. There are times when, as a matter of fact, whenever new software is being rolled out, [he will show us how to use it.]. (Zoey) (Interview)

Macario since he's the honors teacher, he shares a lot of the stuff he does. (Emma) (Interview)

I know Adrian has actually... I think he's helped a few people here and there too. (Zoey) (Interview)

Or every now and again we'll run across software. I know that Adrian does, "Oh, I found this is really cool." And he will show me, and we will use it, or we will mess with it a little bit to see how we can fit it into what we are doing. (Zoey) (Focus Group)

While professional development lacked consistency, relevance, or sustainability for teachers at the district-level generally, some teachers informally offered their colleagues what they could in terms of media literacy. They relied on Adrian's and Macario's

expertise at the department level at the HSA site. Adrian suggested that media literacy was not supported because it was not tested as mentioned the following:

And it's not that media literacy is just cast off by those people in charge. But if it were testable, I think that we would probably be seeing a lot more- (Adrian) (Interview)

As teachers noted in previous sections, they did not use or rely on professional organizations for their professional development, training, or resources. Thus, it was a logical conclusion that ELAR teachers relied on district, campus, and each other for growth and development in general and specifically for media literacy. As noted, there was some professional development available, but it either lacked focus or it had the wrong focus for ELAR teachers. Therefore, ELAR teachers relied on the informal sharing as one support mechanism for the development of their teaching such as the cases of Macario and Adrian.

The presence of a high-stakes testing environment complicated matters for teachers and media literacy education. Many teachers indicated a less than supportive environment for media literacy. Attributed to this unsupportive environment was, in many (67%) teachers' perspectives, the high-stakes state assessment climate. As illustrated by comments by a few teachers on primacy of the testing culture:

It's hard to justify spending more time on it when it's not tested. (Cheri) (Focus Group)

I think some of it too is just that almost as English teachers, we're almost expected to be all things for all. (Macario) (Focus Group)

Well, and we don't cover it because, remember, we are the ones who really test it. But even though it's not really tested, we know they need it. (Zoey) (Focus Group)

With the exception of Adrian and Zoey (upper grade-level teachers), teachers felt stuck on the state assessment without the reprieve of the freedom to teach (as noted later in this chapter) or the support necessary to teach outside the assessment system climate, structure, and culture. Some teachers tied the limitation of professional development offerings in the area of media literacy to whether the TEK objective was going to be on the STAAR. If the TEK was not tested, it was not valuable enough to consider under the professional development offerings for the department, campus, or district. Thus, this behavior and thinking was symptomatic not only of a low value of media literacy but a lack of support structure for media literacy education where the focus of instruction centered around testing. For example, Cheri and Emma affirmed that untested material received very little attention. In the interview, Emma responded with the following:

Sure, I don't think we [(the department)] know enough about [media literacy]. I don't think it's tested, or tested well, or enough. (Emma) (Interview)

Additional evidence pointing to the support of tested TEKS over non-tested TEKS came in the following comment:

[Media literacy], unfortunately again, [media literacy] does not [get attention] because it is not something that is tested. It is one of the TEKS that we are not too concerned about. (Cheri) (Interview)

Adrian provided additional evidence that testing culture overtook their content in the testing culture in the following remark:

[9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELAR teachers] focus is on the test readiness, for the most part. (Adrian) (Interview)

On the other hand, all teachers (100%) explained the provision of assessment data training systems across grade levels for the purpose of data disaggregation of benchmark and annual state testing data. All teachers receive state assessment training data

disaggregation regardless of grade level. Thus, the narrative teachers offered was that of a tested TEKS-focused (with the exception of media literacy TEKS) environment and receiving training on instructional technology (i.e., Eduphoria, Aware, etc.) to that end.

The control of content and curriculum also stagnated media literacy implementation. In the area of curricular content, there emerged a narrative that related to a lack of support for media literacy in form of repression through censorship. One teacher felt so passionately about how administrators controlled the content of what they taught that she brought it up in the interview, focus group session, and narrative artifact. In the interview, Cielo shared how she felt administrators controlled the topics and current events she taught in class. For instance, Cielo mentioned the lack of teaching freedom regarding events deemed too political that seemed to jar the administration:

Yeah, because last year I remember one specific conversation with an administrator and they're no longer here, but I remember being told I should not be talking about politics in my classroom. (Cielo) (Focus Group)

I feel, last year with our administration, it was a very different atmosphere, and I do not feel like we could incorporate media literacy. (Cielo) (Interview)

Cielo noted the lack of support through campus administration but explained how controlling content went well beyond normal procedural channels of approval. Allen and Payton nodded in agreement during the focus group session. Additionally, Payton offered similar feedback in the description of the lack of support from administration in the following:

I don't know, from the very beginning, I was told not to do this, this, this, and I, but I have been here a couple of years where it's like, "No you are going to do it this way." Providing the resources for us or how to do this or that. So, it just depends I think on the administration as Cielo said. [...] Public education itself [is political]. We are in a political game. (Payton) (Focus Group)

In short, taken with a mixed understanding and knowledge of media literacy, mixed feelings about the value of media literacy, and the evidence pointing to a lack of support, ELAR teachers did not indicate much media literacy professional development. More specifically, the lack of grade-level, administratively supervised professional learning communities, formal ELAR department instructional seminars, and grade-level meetings demonstrated a lagging system lacking support for media literacy at the campus-level. Additionally, administrator support for media literacy, the control of content, the testing culture, and the lack of district support structures in the form of training or a professional development plan demonstrated a lack of an overall support system throughout the school district. Where a few (33%) teachers felt supported, the majority (67%) of teachers indicated that they did not receive any support or were unaware of the support. This behavior created not only low valuing for curricular issues in non-core subjects but seemed to create a void that was only filled with a testing culture or instructional technology to fulfill state assessment outcomes. Within the ELAR department, campus, and district, media literacy received very little support, and the hope for grassroots and informal sharing among teachers kept media literacy barely afloat.

Moreover, several teachers noted the shortcomings of their teacher education programs to impart media literacy education experiences and content to prepare them for their ELAR teaching roles. First, a few (42%) teachers described personal barriers contributing to their inability to implement media literacy classroom experiences. Many teachers (83%) did not mention ever having exposure to media literacy before teaching at CTISD. Many teachers felt new teachers were not ready to teach media literacy. The two teachers (27%) that cited having exposure to media literacy education only came into

contact with it in their last four years in a previous school district. Referring to his preparation program, Allen expressed his lacking experience with media literacy:

As far as [my teacher] preparation program goes, not very much [was covered on media literacy]. (Allen) (Interview)

He, like many of his fellow ELAR teachers, did not know where to go to find media literacy resources while several showed no interest in media literacy resources.

Some teachers were themselves barriers as they evaluated their own students' abilities noting that student capacities to become media literate was predetermined by their academic, cognitive, and behavioral disposition. Nora shared some thoughts on the limitation of students' understanding due to student characteristics. For instance, Nora explained the following:

It's just like I said, the maturity level, it's not there yet so it's kind of likes goes one ear, gets out the other. (Nora) (Interview)

Emma felt the same way as described the following:

I think the other thing though is a lot of our kids, because of their immaturity, their age, we can show them things but they don't transfer things into... I think it comes with maturity. But you know the other thing is, is they have, I want to say like no remorse about taking things from the Internet and just saying, "Yeah, this is my work." Like they have no...there's remorse for that. (Emma) (Interview)

What was unfolding was a sub-narrative among teachers that student characteristics and background drove their ability to implement media literacy and what content they would introduce. For instance, the focus group interaction revealed an interesting exchange about student characteristics as a limitation to teachers' inclusion of media literacy experiences. In a focus group exchange between Nora, Macario, and Emma, Nora mentioned (without the objection of the other two teachers) how student characteristics

influenced what they were able to academically introduce in general and specifically unrelated to media literacy. Nora introduced the following:

The main thing was that we need to understand also that we have to work with the [(student)] population that we have. We have to work on the grade level that we have, we have different populations. Mr. Macario unfortunately has those lovely pre-AP kids that want to be there, [but] the majority of them still have issues. I have regular general kids that I have a variety of [backgrounds...]. Then, Ms. Emma has our special [education] pop[ulation]s which we have to understand [and differentiate for] the variety of populations that we have, and I would love [to but] we all have our responsibilities. [...] I love hearing the [media literacy] ideas because we want to implement that deeper meaning [and] deeper understanding, but we have to balance it out with the reality of the timeframe, time limitation as well as what works with our kids, [and] what doesn't work. (Nora) (Focus Group)

Thus, teachers also thought that student characteristics acted as a barrier to teach media literacy fully. Macario and Emma did not offer a dissenting opinion but nodded in agreement. Off the record, some teachers conveyed how some students with designations of English language learners, special education, 504, and behavior issues prevented teachers from introducing media literacy. Some of the teachers' issues emerged from the content and timing of the lesson material, while other teachers felt that students were not ready to understand the concepts and experiences of a media literacy education.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter presented the results of the analysis, and connects the analysis back to the research questions. Twelve teachers gave an interview, participated in a focus group, and submitted a document artifact for this multiple case study. Structured to investigate media literacy implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban high schools, teachers answered questions regarding their



thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs about media literacy education in their ELAR classrooms.

Consistent with multiple case study methodology, the researcher employed within-case and cross-case analysis. The researcher adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral approach. Thus, the first step in the spiral approach was to memo. During the memoing process, the memos evolved into codes that led to themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following four themes emerged from the analyses:

1. Teachers display inconsistent understanding and knowledge of media literacy.
2. Teachers demonstrated a mixed sentiment in the valuing of media literacy instruction.
3. Teachers noted the lack of support for media literacy education.
4. Teachers expressed challenges and barriers to media literacy.

It was evident in the researcher's results that a clear lack of understanding and knowledge of media literacy education influences consistent implementation and current media literacy practice in these high schools. In the following chapter, the researcher presents the significance of these findings. The researcher provides a summary of the outcomes and discussion, implications of this study, conclusions of the findings, and limitations. Lastly, Chapter Five provides recommendations across the education field for education practitioners and policy makers as result of this present study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

#### *Introduction*

Previous research in Texas indicates that media literacy in general was barely addressed as apprehension, scarcity of support, and a lack of curriculum discourage teachers from the active use of media literacy standards and in-depth implementation of the state standards (Hobbs, 2004; Miners & Pascopella, 2007; Wineburg, et al., 2016). The United States is facing another presidential election in which social media will be used to “weaponize information” (DeSouza, Ahmad, Naseer, & Sharma, 2020, p. 2). An imposing media culture exists where presidential candidates are microtargeting people for disinformation (Birnbaum, 2020), where people foolishly choose not to vaccinate their kids (Atwell, Van Otterloo, Zipprich, Winter, Harriman, Salmon, Halsey, & Omer, 2013; see <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism.html>), and where a dead basketball star gets more acclaim than Mother Teresa. Additionally, the media culture subverts privacy to a point of non-existence (Draper, 2018; Jenkins, et al., 2016), and creates a fragility and freneticism where one false report sends the stock market plummeting (Foster, 2013). The media are problematic and students need teachers teaching media literacy education since it is more relevant now than ever. Media literacy benefits its learners by expanding civic capacity and engagement (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017). Additionally, media literacy helps students understand personal values (MediaSmarts, 2018). It offers learners skills such as verifying information (Van de

Vord, 2010), recognizing multiple points of view (Middaugh, Bowyer, & Kahne, 2017; Middaugh & Evans, 2018), fostering critical thinking through an inquiry process (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012), and sharing media sources responsibly (Middaugh, et al., 2017). Lastly, media literacy inculcates the skill of discernment between media motives towards wise consumption (Austin & Johnson, 1997; Austin, Pinkleton, Hust, & Cohen, 2005). Media literacy citizens can also use media for connecting families and friends, gaining useful information, and expressing their own voices. However, current social media environments especially are highly problematic.

While Chapter 4 provides a description of the findings of this qualitative multiple case study, the goal of this chapter is to reiterate the purpose of this study, provide a summary of the outcomes and discussion, implications and applications of this study, limitations, and recommendations for future research. This chapter begins with a reassertion of the purpose of this dissertation and then a summary of the outcomes. Next, the conclusions of the findings and what they mean in terms of implications of this study for practice, research, and society are offered. As with every study or research project, there were limitations. Lastly, with the limitations in mind, the researcher has recommendations for further research.

#### *Purpose of This Study*

The particular purpose of this research was to investigate media literacy implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools. Specifically, the researcher documented and described English language arts and reading (ELAR) teachers' current practices and perceptions of media literacy education and engaged in an exploration of the how, when, why, and where, and if ELAR teachers

addressed the media literacy standards as mentioned in the State of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curricular document. Teacher attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of media literacy were pivotal to this research.

By collecting qualitative data from secondary ELAR teachers, the researcher was able to investigate what these teachers believed about media literacy, what (if any) training they received, and the extent of their pedagogical understanding of media literacy education. Additionally, this study considered professional support processes and structures in place that did or did not further teachers' evolving interaction with media and media literacy. Lastly, the researcher sought to add to the literature by describing the ways Texas ELAR teachers did and did not implement media literacy in the Texas secondary high school environment.

### *A Summary of the Outcomes*

In the previous chapter, the researcher undertook the presentation of several themes culled from twelve ELAR teacher participants in a mid-sized urban school district with two high school campus sites. Several themes emerged from a collection of data through focus groups, narrative artifacts, and semi-structured interviews. The following were the four themes that emerged in the cross-case analysis:

1. Teachers display inconsistent understanding and knowledge of media literacy.
2. Teachers demonstrated a mixed sentiment in the valuing of media literacy instruction.
3. Teachers noted the lack of support for media literacy education.
4. Teachers expressed challenges and barriers to media literacy.

Chapter 4 spelled out the themes in relation to the research questions (see Table 5.1).

Some research questions garnered evidence across many themes while others a single thematic element.

Table 5.1

*Research Questions and Themes*

Research Question(s) and Sub-Questions	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
1. What do teachers do and know about media literacy education?	*			*
a. To what extent are teacher familiar with the core principles of media literacy education (CPMLE), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Literacy Association (ILA) standards, and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that relate to media literacy education?		*		*
b. What do they think media literacy education is?	*			
c. What value do these teachers place on media literacy education?		*		
d. How do English teachers teach, use, or address media literacy in the classroom?		*		
e. What are teachers' views about students' media skills and understanding?				*
2. What needs do teachers see for implementation of media literacy education and professional development?			*	*
a. How competent do teachers feel about media literacy education?		*		*
b. What are teachers' sources of media literacy education materials?		*		
c. What are the barriers to implementing media literacy education for them?	*		*	*

As mentioned previously, the problem with current research was the scant availability of studies to describe the extent to which high school ELAR teachers in Texas implement media literacy standards. After a decade of new standards labelled as Media Literacy/Reading, not a single study looked into high school ELAR teachers' knowledge, implementation, beliefs, and support. Reinforced by earlier research calling for the need to assess the state of media literacy education and practice in schools (Flores-Koulis, 2005; 2006; Scull & Kupersmidt, 2011; Thoman & Jolls; 2004), this present study explored current aspects of media literacy thinking, implementation and practice. Previous studies focused on other states and teacher preparation programs

adopting media literacy programming (Hobbs, 2007; Schmidt, 2012b), identified participants from a specific program (i.e., Texas A&M University's graduate certification program, Huie, 2011), or looked at regions outside of Texas (Ruzic, 2016).

This multiple case study design yielded several findings in line with other research findings. First, the teacher participants demonstrated an inconsistent knowledge and misaligned understanding of media literacy compared to the National Association of Media Literacy Education Core Principles of Media Literacy guidelines (NAMLE CPMLE), the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). For example, ELAR teachers cited how media literacy addressed technology use while others explained how media literacy is a tool to measure technology understanding. Teachers' definitions lacked analysis and evaluation for some and many lacked the creation component while all teachers lacked the action component of NAMLE's definition. Other researchers encountered similar issues in their studies regarding teachers' knowledge and understanding of media literacy, definitions of media literacy, knowledge of the standards, and expectations for outcomes of media literacy education (Arke, 200; Hobbs, 2005; Huie, 2011; Tyner, 1994).

Second, ELAR teachers presented a varied or mixed valuing of media literacy education. The overarching sentiment imbued by an environment focused on state assessment culture diminished the value teachers placed on media literacy education. Several scholars encountered similar findings surrounding the teachers' valuation of media literacy in light of the state testing culture (MacDonald, 2008; Ritchie, 2011). Where testing culture prevailed to readiness-type standards (i.e., testable TEKS), supporting standards did not consistently receive attention. Teachers described their

implementation of the media literacy TEKS to be haphazard, informal, unplanned, and opportunistic. Teachers described lessons that lacked a connection between the living room and classroom, between contemporary communication media (i.e., social media) and traditional literature, and between tested readiness standards (TEKS) and a truer assessment of what students understand and know (lived experiences and skills-based or practical knowledge).

Third, teachers conveyed how they lacked support for media literacy education. These support issues aligned with other studies (Huie, 2011; Redmond, 2011; Ritchie, 2011). An issue that appeared in this present study that did not appear in other studies was the administrative control of the curriculum that served as a direct counteractive agent against media literacy implementation. Although administrative control was only a part of the High School B (HSB) environment, the lack of support was pervasive at both high school sites.

Fourth, teachers noted challenges and barriers to media literacy education. Many of these issues appear in other studies. Barriers in the form of professional development, high-stakes testing, teacher education, and teacher attitudes emerged from the narratives with implications for the future of media literacy education practice at CTISD.

Although there were some differences in the two campus sites, there were major similarities between both high school sites as well. Both campus' ELAR teachers explained their lack of media literacy implementation due to personal, professional, and institutional challenges and barriers. HSB faced more institutional challenges in the form of district opposition to content. In terms of district professional development, nothing existed to cover media literacy for either HSA and HSB. Both campuses had a mix of

alternatively (2-year certification with and without a master's degree) and traditionally certified teachers (4-year bachelor's degree in education). Both campuses exhibited the same amount of understanding and knowledge of media literacy with one or two teachers acted as central nerves of dissemination of teaching resources and approaches for media literacy.

While teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors may vary slightly across individual narratives, each of the four common themes were salient issues influencing media literacy implementation at both high school sites. The four themes answer the two main research questions, but what does it all mean? The responses to the research questions of this present study provide implications for the policy, practice, students and society, theory and research related to the importance and place of media literacy education.

### *Implications, Recommendations, and Interpretation*

#### *Implications for Policy*

The high-stakes state testing culture and state curricular policy changes may be undermining efforts to teach media literacy. Although a focus on testing should not take the place of good teaching and learning, it may pose a threat to teachers' thinking and planning for classroom experiences. Understandably, state assessments could be useful as tools for learning and promoting equity in addition to delivering critical data for teachers, students, families, the local and state communities to gauge growth and improve outcomes for all students. On the other hand, creating a culture around state assessments can threaten what teachers deliver and what school leaders emphasize and require



teachers to deliver through directives, the provision of professional development and training, and information delivered at school staff meetings. Special events (as happening in Texas) emphasizing testing performance and testing pep rallies that school administrators plan also contribute to this same testing culture that rally teacher and community alike. The goal of state policy must emphasize student development and preparation for life and connect students' experiences to classroom experiences and assessed material to educational policy to education culture.

In 2009, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) introduced the terms “media literacy” into the state curricular framework document for high school ELAR. In the 2017 ELAR TEKS adoption (to be implemented in the 2020 – 2021 school year), the state removed the terms. It was interesting to note that teacher participants had difficulty identifying resources for media literacy or felt little need to identify media literacy resources with the terms included in the 2009 adoption of the ELAR TEKS.

If teachers found it difficult to connect with resources under the terms “media literacy,” how much more difficult will it be for teachers and administrators alike to know and understand the underlying principles and concepts of the state curricular ELAR document that refer to media literacy? The emphasis in the new 2017 adoption was the “interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking through the seven integrated strands of developing and sustaining foundational language skills; comprehension; response; multiple genres; author's purpose and craft; composition; and inquiry and research” (TEA, 2020, §110.36. ELAR, English I – IV (b) (1)). For the 2009 adoption, students expected to experience ELAR in the following way:

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact

meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to:

- (A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts;
- (B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);
- (C) compare and contrast coverage of the same event in various media (e.g., newspapers, television, documentaries, blogs, Internet); and
- (D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes. (TEA, 2020, §110.36)

There was a general progression from comparing and contrasting, analyzing, and evaluating in English I to solely focusing on evaluation across the TEK in English IV. As noted in the teachers' narratives, many teachers did not know media literacy well enough to teach it and did not understand how to conceptualize media literacy for students to act upon their knowledge and understanding. As noted in the Table 5.2, CTISD teachers, surprisingly, relied on very few resources of information and guidance for media literacy. Teacher access to media literacy information and guidance suggested the lack of know-how to search for media literacy or an entrenchment so far into testing culture that information and guidance resources were not a relevant aspect for the fulfillment of their professional role. Either way, policy as an influencer of school environment mediated by internal pressures from administrators and external pressures from community expectations seemed to be common across the teachers' narratives. As highlighted by Nora's comments, the environment in which teachers found themselves influenced their professional focus as illustrated by the following comment:

Like I said, to be honest, some things I hear them and it depends on the conversations that we go through. (Nora) (Interview)

Table 5.2

*Teachers' Sources for Media Literacy Guidance and Information*

Teacher	NAMLE	NCTE/ILA	CPMLE	TEKS	Other Print/Video Resources	Teacher(s) w/in District
Emma	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Macario	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Nora	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Cheri	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Adrian	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Zoey	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Allen	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Cielo	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Payton	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Manuel	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Carrie	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Thor	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

*Recommendations for Policy*

Policy needs attention. Media literacy advocates need to connect with policymakers as they may need to learn about the potential of media literacy and its importance across the curriculum. ELAR teachers and professional organizations need to collaborate with professional media literacy organizations to speak to policymakers and educate them on the potential and actual impact of media literacy education. Organizing strategic visits to state senate and house education committees and speaking at forums for local state senators and state representatives may offer open lines of communication. Media literacy advocates need to participate in local private and public school boards where advocacy begins at school board meetings and conferences. Through policy, the culture of testing might be lessened and students could receive classroom experiences that connect life to academics.

### *Implications for Administration*

A central implication for educators is the integration of media literacy into the preparation of administrators, pre-service teachers, and school districts. Depending on the preparation of school leaders, some lack the skills and understanding to deliver when faced with such issues as literacy instruction, but school leaders are out of touch with media literacy and know even less than the teachers. School administrators are the instructional leaders and therefore determine time and money spent for focal academic initiatives on their campuses and lead instructional initiatives but do not determine what curriculum to teach and not teach. Several scholars agree with the importance of the school principal as the linchpin for teacher development and instructional leadership (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). School leaders in this present study determined content and led instructional initiatives focused on testing. For instance, Macario and Cielo shared how they were familiar with media literacy and provided media literacy experiences for their students despite not having departmental involvement and in the face of campus administrator admonition. The finding supports current research about the obstacles and challenges facing teachers' media literacy instruction but adds the element of active administrator involvement in the suppression of media literacy education. Even so, the implication that administrators either do not care about and do not understand media literacy well enough to micromanage curriculum to the point of erasing it from implementation is troublesome. Administrators need to stop seeing teachers as clerks.

Several recommendations stem from the previously mentioned implications. Scholastic, for the last five years, has organized an event to train principals and school

leaders to understand and implement literacy practices across the curriculum through the process of program evaluation. Principals, through a problem-based learning seminar, figure out how to address literacy issues on their campuses with their campus leadership teams. Scholastic and other groups like theirs may consider partnering with media literacy experts so as to include media literacy components to change leadership thought, practice, and supervision.

With administrators telling teachers what to do or not to do, teachers experienced very little autonomy and decision-making for media literacy. For instance, administrators, according to Manuel and Cielo, did tell teachers at HSA “to stay away [from politics and] to stay away from anything that was school-related and [had to deal with] violence [in society]” (Manuel) (Focus Group). This administrative practice did not help teachers coalesce around a unifying definition or approach to media literacy under the additional pressures of the testing culture. Administrators need media literacy education training.

Lastly, school district curriculum and instruction leaders and professional development directors need to plan and exercise purposeful professional learning in a long-term way. Developing content-based implications for practice may help teachers conceptualize and integrate media literacy approaches more fluidly into their content area. While many media literacy interventions offer short-term adjustments to practice, a culture shift in thought and practice must take place from the leadership to the classroom practitioner. NAMLE offers professional development and resources that guide schools for specific and broader issues of teacher practice (see [www.NAMLE.net](http://www.NAMLE.net)). Moreover, school curriculum and instruction district leaders need to consider guidance from media

literacy experts to guide schools toward achieving long-term teacher and leader development components.

### *Teacher Preparation*

Two issues emerge from media literacy in teacher preparation. First, traditional four-year teacher preparation programs that contain a media literacy component are few and far between (Culver & Redmond, 2019). Alternative teacher certification programs may not touch on media literacy at all given their fast-paced programming and emphasis on compliance and basic content area knowledge. The certification route is a problem. Thus, a recommendation for both traditional and non-traditional teacher certification routes is to have a media literacy component that offers teachers an opportunity for media literacy application as guided by NAMLE. Additionally, school district need to actively seek out partnership to study evolving issues of curriculum and instruction in the area of media literacy. Developing research partnerships or small case studies through current university programs for action research benefit the university and the practicing community.

Second, ELAR teachers' unfamiliarity with CMPL, NCTE/ILA standards, and media literacy TEKS shaped their disposition and understanding for bridging traditional literacy with media literacy, making cross-curricular connections, and ultimately influencing their pedagogical approach to the classroom (see Table 5.2). Several of the teachers limited their description to students interacting with technology in the form of word processors (i.e., digital worksheet) or purely emphasized the importance of computer literacy. Teachers' familiarity with media literacy as individuals generally limited discussion of media literacy outside of those teachers familiar and seemingly

proficient with the topic. Therefore, ELAR teachers with knowledge and understanding of media literacy should cover media literacy as part of a purposeful mentoring approach with district curriculum and instruction personnel following up to ensure ELAR teacher understand and apply media literacy.

The lack of meeting as a group for anything other than testing issues suggested a compounding of the general absence of media literacy discussion. Meeting purposefully on the topic of media literacy is important for teacher preparation. ELAR teacher leaders and department chairs need to establish an annual plan for what to address at meetings and include media literacy as part of that plan.

The spread of incoherence and limited understanding of media literacy among teacher participants in turn produced an anemic presence of constructed media literacy classroom experiences. For instance, not a single teacher understood the value of media literacy as applied to civic participation (see Table 5.3). In other ways, teachers limited media literacy to certain grade levels, to specific times of the year, and within truncated introductions. Adrian explained the following scenario:

In terms of the classroom, we would use documentaries and news footage to convey certain things like tone and mood in our English classes. And so, we had almost like a cinematography kind of intro, a very basic intro. That kind of led to conversations about what was actually happening when we were watching a documentary, and how effective or bias news was. That was probably when I started teaching juniors when the research paper was more prevalent as opposed to STAAR focused. (Adrian) (Interview)

Adrian tried to implement media literacy but ultimately saved media literacy experiences for juniors and seniors. Thus, the incongruency of media literacy understanding and knowledge only served to confound curriculum and pedagogical thinking surrounding media literacy among older teachers unfamiliar with technology and younger teachers

emergent in their understanding of teaching and learning approaches. If teachers cannot understand media literacy fully, teachers cannot teach it fully.

Table 5.3

*Definitions/Experiences and Digital Tool Familiarity*

Teacher	NAMLE Definitional Feature					Total
	Access	Analysis	Evaluation	Creation	Action	
Emma	*	*				2
Macario	*	*	*	*		4
Nora	*					1
Cheri				*		1
Adrian	*					1
Zoey	*			*		2
Allen	*					1
Cielo	*	*				2
Payton	*			*		2
Manuel	*					1
Carrie	*	*		*		3
Thor	*	*				2

Carrie’s situation touched on the importance of teacher preparation and the value of being networked into the professional learning communities that know what they are doing and have the resources needed to teach media literacy. Media literacy advocates need to highlight and communicate with schools about teacher education programs or abbreviated certification programs that either focus on or include media literacy experiences. Currently, Guersney (2018) highlights two certification programs for in-service teachers that certify them as media literacy specialists (similar to a reading specialist) as an alternative way to reach teachers and develop their media literacy understanding and knowledge. In addition, a number of courses at graduate schools cover



media literacy. In addition to certification programs and courses, Scull and Kuperschmidt (2011) offer insight into the relevance and impact of school-based professional development programming and teachers' knowledge and understanding of media literacy education for implementation. Thus, departments of curriculum and instruction or district leaders must come together to formulate a district initiative that combines media literacy certification opportunities, taking coursework as a department or cohort, and a professional development district plan to address media literacy. Flexibility may be key for in-service teachers.

### *School District Professional Development*

With two distinct populations of teachers (traditional certification and alternative certification), school-based professional development for media literacy is essential to level the experience and create similar classroom experiences for all students regardless of certification route and background experiences. Media literacy needs the support and attention via the system of teacher learning and development. Domine (2011) touches on the need to develop teachers and broadening their experiences:

Ushering the field of MLE into adulthood ultimately requires that we as educators widen our focus to include an increase in our own technological proficiency level as well as an expansion of our understanding of technology as a way of seeing and mediating the world. MLE also requires us to more deeply understand the interplay of the democratic purposes and bureaucratic constraints of schooling in the United States and to ultimately move beyond merely consuming information to the creation and sharing of information in ways that are socially meaningful and civically responsible. ( p. 9)

Not having structure in place to treat media literacy seriously fails to provide teachers and students alike an opportunity to wrestle with content through media literacy experiences that would address personal values, consumerism, media consumption, personal image,

critical thinking, identity/voice, and democracy. School-based professional development is a necessary conduit for teaching educators how and what to do with media literacy in the classroom. Among the teacher participants, most indicated the absence of any media literacy training with the exception of informal sharing of websites and videos. Even then, teachers only relied on one or two teachers from each campus site for media literacy help and therefore, their experience was limited (see Table 5.2).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, a number of teachers believed their students incapable of media literacy learning. While this issue was not a clear theme, it suggests a possible problem in teacher development. The lack in professional development surrounding the issue of media literacy for all suggests a pervasive social justice issue when only certain (high-achieving) students receive media literacy education and others do not receive differentiated or similar experiences. Only “easy” to teach or advanced students should receive media literacy according to several teachers.

#### *Implications for Students and Society*

The findings also had implications for student learning. Basically, students were missing out by not receiving media literacy education or by receiving media literacy education through a poorly informed and trained teacher, or by both the lack of media literacy education and poor delivery due to teachers’ low understanding and knowledge. Not getting a media literacy education prevented students from receiving added experiences on the many media literacy benefits such as civic engagement with multiple perspectives on issues, moral development and identity, development of personal values, critical thinking, and engagement with social justice.

Civic engagement with multiple perspectives was an important aspect of media literacy from NAMLE's inception, and it was troubling when ELAR teachers did not mention the civic component of media literacy. For instance, not a single teacher mentioned the action part in their media literacy definition as it applied to a civic approach to teaching. Though one teacher mentioned how she told students to value the concept of global citizenship, it failed to connect the concept to application and experiences through media literacy in the classroom as described in the following:

I think it's helped my kids to make connections in a broader sense to, maybe, the real world or I like to teach my kiddos you're not just citizens of this community, you're global citizens and so you need to know what's happening around the world and to, maybe, help with that consciousness right of whether it's a political consciousness or a consciousness just to help them want to make a difference in the world, but have a purpose. So, that's how I see media literacy helping with that. (Cielo) (Focus Group)

In Cielo's case, the shortcomings in her response were clear in that she explained the connectedness of citizens through technology and not civic action. Students were not offered the opportunity to understand media literacy as a way to understand multiple perspectives but offered a superficial platitude about the connectedness of the world through technology. On the other hand, Cielo's case was a start on the road to media literacy teaching. A thoughtful professional development centered on media literacy can capture Cielo's case and many more ideas, practices, thoughts, and conversations surrounding media literacy at its launch.

Cielo and Adrian mention the civic aspect but do little more than expose students to speeches without a deeper analysis that the core principles of media literacy offer. For example, Adrian's introduction to famous speeches by politicians provides a missed opportunity to teach students how to question message constructs and why those

constructs might affect people with different individual and population characteristics. Moreover, the example offers an opportunity to learn how to form their own voice and advocate for themselves giving them a voice to participate in the larger landscape of civic life to either change their own lives or impact the lives of others.

It should go without stating here but schools need to stop selectively determining what to teach solely to produce test results that only serves to perpetuate ill-prepared students for post-secondary (civic, social, and academic) life. Civic engagement with multiple perspectives is not the only experience students lose, but an opportunity to understand personal values is lost. For instance, a focus group noted that plagiarism was a pervasive behavior, but since it was not a tested TEK, teachers did not bother to address it very much. It was apparent in Nora's explanation when she referenced administrator interference with curriculum in the following excerpt:

Because I always go back to, and I didn't make that point this year, I always make the point with plagiarism based on that forecaster that actually lost his job because he was plagiarizing the websites that he actually got his information from. [...] I don't know if we give them enough training on media literacy and taking things from the Internet. I know if we have a student handbook that has all that stuff in and they sign their paper, saying that that content there, they're allowed to look at apparent signs. But how far does that [take students. Administrators] put it back on the teachers saying, "If you're going to take so many words [and time] you have to do it like this." (Nora) (Focus Group)

The lack of implementation prevents students from receiving beneficial and often necessary experiences that expose students to moral dilemmas that form the collective composition of personal values and in turn the larger part of a student's identity. Emma described the potential for examining moral values when she mentioned the following:

Because sometimes we give a good foundation of certain morals and values as teachers and as in our English content, which what you're talking about. The only thing is I really feel that the kids need to also have that open conversation with us. It's like the way you were saying right now, let's talk about this in a very

structured way so we can actually bring some ideas or our own norms towards how we deal with social media and different issues. (Emma) (Focus Group)

In addition, what was at stake in the teachers' varying mixture of diminished and disoriented knowledge and understanding of media literacy was best described by Schwarz (2003):

The study of traditional print texts remains important but not sufficient for tackling such concerns as economic development around the world, body image problems of adolescents, or violence in American society. The mass media can no longer be ignored in the curriculum. ( p. 44)

Another aspect of a missed media literacy opportunity is critical thinking. For example, Feuerstein (1999) reifies the point that media literacy enables critical thinking by providing evidence that students demonstrate an increase in “analytical and [critical thinking]” capabilities (p. 52). In the case of CTISD, teachers, including 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, feel confident that their students do not develop and lack a demonstrated and underdeveloped habit of inquiry and critical thought.

Considine and Haley (1999) offer that “[b]y asking students to examine media texts and explore their content, form, origin, ownership, ideology, and influence, media literacy implicitly fosters critical thinking skills” (p. 8). For example, Considine and Haley (1999) examine a lesson about using social, racial, and economic labels as the subject where the students converse about what defines a label and then evaluate the composition of a label. Finally, students use various media platforms (i.e., film, internet, radio, print, etc.) to find the prevalence of various labels and ways in which media uses labels (i.e., media's purpose). These skills are applicable to literature in a cross-curricular manner involving, for instance, climate change, racism, social justice issues across

demographic characteristics (i.e., socioeconomic, race, immigrant status, etc.), and the obfuscation of truth using mathematical and statistical interpretation.

### *Implications for Theory and Research*

Lastly, while a few teachers mentioned their concerns about parents' media illiteracy, research in the area of parents and their thoughts on media literacy was another area not highlighted in this present study but needed. For instance, one teacher mentioned the need for parents to understand media in general without going into specific thoughts on parents' media literacy understanding. Allen noted the following:

The kids are very, very, media savvy. The teachers can be, but it's the parents that seem to lose track of what we use media to do. They're very, very tech illiterate. We've got a lot of online resources for them as well. We can set up, what's it called, it's parent portal where they can see their attendance and the teacher comments, and the grades in real time, and the kids know more about how those systems work than parents do. (Allen) (Interview)

While Allen's reference implied technological literacy, it brought up an interesting point about parents' understanding surrounding media literacy as many schools across the state make efforts to educate parents on basic numeracy and literacy skills across grade levels.

### *Recommendations for Research*

First, researchers might focus on media literacy across grade levels and content areas, implementation and instructional practice across state lines, teacher development in media literacy, media literacy assessment, and parents' understanding of media literacy. Expanding the research into the systemic treatment of media literacy is an important focus for researchers. For instance, exploring media literacy at the elementary level and the systemic support for media literacy education throughout grade levels may provide a better way to understand media literacy.

Second, researchers might study the depth of the media literacy framework and its fit within other content areas and cognitive theoretical approaches within them to cover contextual relevance across curriculum. Often, either teachers ask how media literacy fits within ELAR or teachers ask how the media literacy principles apply across subject areas. Studying the CPMLE as a theoretical framework in conjunction with other theories such as social change (Hegel, 1821; Kuhn, 2012), social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), social constructivism (Glasserfeld, 1995; Palincsar, 1998), and (social) conflict theory may prove insightful. Moreover, couching the CPMLE within the aforementioned theories may help expand the scope of the media literacy applications and practice within teaching and learning.

Third, researchers could explore implementation and instructional practice across state and international lines. Exploring what other states and countries are doing or not doing with media literacy may offer insight into trends in and strategies for policy. For instance, what states or countries do more for media literacy and how do they do it? Cruise (2020) explains that some areas do more for media literacy in terms of legislation to legitimize media literacy. On the other hand, Schwartz (2020) argues that doing more translates differently for different groups. Thus, what, how (and how differently) do states like Florida and Ohio implement media literacy (as compared to Texas)?

Studying successful media literacy legislation and programs in states such as Ohio, Florida, California, and the other parts of Texas may offer insight into practice and replication. Additionally, studying policy and implementation in other countries as a comparative educational approach may also offer insight into media literacy progress, educator preparedness, and student response. At the other end, exploring policy makers'

perceptions in failed media literacy legislation attempts may also insight into how attempts lack the political and practical gusto necessary to achieve state-wide adoption and implementation.

Research suggestions for teacher development are also important. Teachers are the linchpin for curriculum implementation. Thus, exploring what support structures teacher need for media literacy and what support teachers have in other areas of the state, country, and internationally have may offer deeper understanding of influence, resources, and pressures that lead to successful implementation and practice for teachers.

Lastly, researchers need to focus on how and what parents understand about media literacy education. Little is available regarding research into parents' understanding of media literacy education and the support structures available to families in the U.S. context (see Stasova, 2015). Additionally, studies focused on parents' media literacy understanding do not seem to exist especially in the U.S. context. Thus, investigating parent and family understanding of media literacy may offer a holistic picture of student development and support for media literacy education.

### *Conclusion*

The idea of a comprehensive implementation of media literacy education based on the presence of media literacy TEKS in the state curricular document for ELAR is generally rejected in this present study, but some hope exists. The efforts of teachers at two high school ELAR classrooms offers insights into the thoughts, practices, and implementation of media literacy education. These teachers demonstrate the need for media literacy training and reorientation at every level of schooling from the classroom to the district-level leaders to address a weak understanding of media literacy education.



In a country where “Nabisco and Kraft [...] change how we eat and what we eat, [and] Amazon, Facebook, and Google [...] alter how we read and what we read (Foer, 2017, p. 4), teachers must look to media literacy to prepare students how to think and reason. As Rushkoff (2019) explains, “[a]utonomous technologies, runaway markets, and weaponized media seem to have overturned civil society, paralyzing our ability to think constructively, connect meaningfully, or act purposefully” (p. 3). In a post-truth era, students equipped with media literacy inquiry might be more adept to face the pitfalls of mediated-saturated environment and participate civilly in civic society through the practice of understanding multiple perspectives. On the other hand, the media are killing reality and teachers are stagnating in their application of media literacy, administrators are actively suppressing it, and teachers are selectively relegating it to advanced courses where the students they think could understand have an opportunity to wrestle with media literacy—at least in one Texas school district.

The findings of this present study suggested four themes related to the investigation of how teachers implement media literacy education in southeastern ELAR classrooms in Texas high schools in a single school district: 1) Teachers display inconsistent understanding and knowledge of media literacy; 2) Teachers demonstrated a mixed sentiment in the valuing of media literacy education; 3) Teachers noted the lack of support for media literacy education; 4) Teachers expressed challenges and barriers to media literacy. In the end, media literacy is important, but it is not being taught.

At first glance, media literacy seems to be a part of the ELAR implementation strategy. On the other hand, it is evident that media literacy needs a deeper investigation in order to understand how to assist schools in developing their media literacy education

approaches and understanding. The need to expand what teachers know and do with media literacy, the need for professional development of media literacy, and the need for guidance toward media literacy implementation is obvious for teachers and students. While the onus of implementation of media literacy is on the ELAR teacher, administrators, media literacy experts, other content area teachers, and university faculty must take ownership of quality education to prepare students for social, civic, and academic discourse and life. Up until now, media literacy, in Texas, remains a high impact approach without a place and without a name.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Informed Consent (Teacher)

**Baylor University**  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Media Literacy Education in Texas Public Schools: A Descriptive Multiple Case Study

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joseph Anthony Luévanos

#### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

Dear educator,

You are invited to share your perspective as a part of a research study. This consent form will help you decide whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form. The purpose of the study is to investigate media literacy implementation in English language arts and reading classrooms (i.e., English I – IV) in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas public schools. In order to participate, you must be a fully certified teacher of English I – IV and a teacher of record for a high school English course. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a 60- to 120-minute interview, provide a brief written/typed reflective response to a question prompt, and participate in a 60- to 90-minute focus group interview during the spring 2019 semester on or off-campus. Risks or discomforts from this research include risks that are not greater than everyday life. The possible benefits of this study include an increased awareness of media literacy education. Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. More detailed information may be described later in this form. Additionally, the aim of this research is to investigate media literacy implementation in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate media literacy implementation in English language arts and reading classrooms (i.e., English I – IV) in a secondary school setting in a selection of Texas schools.

#### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to respond to a screening questionnaire, participate in a 60- to 120-minute individual interview, provide a brief written/typed reflective response to a question prompt, and participate in a 60- to 90-minute focus group on- or off-campus. The following bulleted list provides clarity:

- Task One: Individual interview, 60- to 120-minutes
- Task Two: Respond to a question prompt with a brief written/typed reflective response

- Task Three: Focus group interview, 60- to 90-minutes

The researcher would like to make an audio recording of your participation during this study to provide accuracy of information. Audio recording is required for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

**How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?**

Participation in this study will last 1 to 4 months. Up to 16 subjects will take part in this research study.

**What are the risks of taking part in this research study?**

The researcher does not believe there are any risks from participating in this research.

**Are there any benefits from being in this research study?**

You may benefit from being in this study because this study includes information that may increase your awareness of media literacy education. Additionally, others may benefit by learning about media literacy.

**How Will You Protect my Information?**

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

The researcher will keep the digital and hard-copy records of this study confidential. Additionally, the researcher will provide each interviewee a pseudonym to protect the identity of the participant, and interview recordings and transcriptions will be kept in an encrypted file folder on the researcher's personal computer that is password protected using a 128-bit file encryption. Hard-copies of any material will be locked in a file cabinet to which the researcher only has access. The researcher will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

**Will I be compensated for being part of the study?**

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Is it possible that I will be asked to leave the study?**

The researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can't make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

**Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary**

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

**Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:

J. Anthony Luévanos Phone: 254-855-5962 Email: [joseph\\_luevanos@baylor.edu](mailto:joseph_luevanos@baylor.edu)

-Or-

Dr. Gretchen Schwarz Phone: 254-836-5349. Email: [gretchen\\_schwarz@baylor.edu](mailto:gretchen_schwarz@baylor.edu)

**Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board

Office of Research Compliance

Phone: 254-710-3708

Email: [irb@baylor.edu](mailto:irb@baylor.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. The researcher will give you a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Consent to be audio recorded**

I agree to be audio recorded.

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Screening Profile Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Portion	Section 2: MLE Background
<p>Please indicate your gender.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Female b) Male</p> <p>Please indicate race/ethnicity. _____</p> <p>Please indicate number of years taught for each school type.</p> <p>___ Public ___ Charter ___ Independent/Private</p> <p>Please list subject(s) other than ELAR that you have taught. _____</p> <p>Please indicate if &amp; where you attained a Bachelor's degree. _____</p> <p>Please indicate if &amp; where you attained a Master's degree. _____</p> <p>What was your major area of study? _____</p> <p>Which route did you pursue to become a certified teacher?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Alternative teacher certification b) 4-year teacher preparation program</p> <p>Did you obtain your teacher certification in Texas?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No</p> <p>Would you be willing to participate in this study?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No</p> <p>Are you currently a teacher of record for a high school ELAR class?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No</p> <p>Are you currently certified as an ELAR teacher in Texas?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No</p> <p>Which grade level(s) do you teach? ___ 9 ___ 10 ___ 11 ___ 12</p> <p>Please proceed to Section of this questionnaire if to the last two questions.</p>	<p>Are you familiar with media literacy education?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No c) Not sure</p> <p>Are you familiar with media literacy/reading TEKS (see below)?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No c) Not sure</p> <p>Do you currently implement media literacy education in your ELAR classroom?</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a) Yes b) No c) Not sure</p> <p>How many years have implemented media literacy education into your ELAR classroom experiences? ___ yrs</p> <p>Grade-Level TEKS list:</p> <p>TEKS110.31.(b) English I - Reading/Media Literacy 12 (A-D) 12(A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts</p> <p>TEKS110.32.(b) English II – Reading/Media Literacy 12 (A-D) 12(B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);</p> <p>TEKS110.33.(b) English III – Reading/Media Literacy 12 (A-D) 12(C) examine how individual perception or bias in coverage of the same event influences the audience; and</p> <p>TEKS110.34.(b) English IV – Reading/Media Literacy 12 (A-D) 12(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for different audiences and purposes</p> <p>You are finished with this questionnaire. Thank you for participating. In the following days, the researcher will contact you will some follow-up questions. Thanks again!</p>

## APPENDIX C

Table C.1 Semi-structured Interview Protocol

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<b>Individual Interview Questions</b>
<b><u>General Questions</u></b>
Could you tell me a little bit about your teaching background?
When did you first encounter media literacy as a term or topic?
How do you define media literacy? What does media literacy education (MLE) require?
What role does media literacy play in your planning and/or teaching?
Are you familiar with the National Association of Media Literacy Education and the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (CPMLE)?
Are you familiar with the NCTE/ILA standards associated with media literacy?
What has been your experience with media literacy?
What do you feel are the most important aspects of media literacy?
What role does media play in the lives of students?
How do you feel students learn to be media literate?
To what extent do you feel MLE plays a role in the education of a child?
What are some of the objectives of media literacy?
<b><u>Curriculum/Planning</u></b>
To what degree were you aware of ELAR Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills labelled as “Reading/Media Literacy”? Were you aware of the ML section?
What are your thoughts about the media literacy education standards in the TEKS?
<b><u>Teaching/Instruction</u></b>
Do you have any previous experience teaching media literacy?
What are the best teaching strategies that you’ve used to teach media literacy?
To what extent do you teach with media and about media?
Have you taught a lesson about video games, comic books, or social media applications?
Do you collaborate with teachers to teach about media (i.e., ads, commercials, etc.)?
<b><u>Training/Professional Development</u></b>
Have you ever had professional development for media literacy education?
To what extent is there support for media literacy from your principal? colleagues (w/in & outside of ELAR)? school district?
<b><u>Resources</u></b>
Do you have multimedia resources in your classroom, campus, school district?
Do you have physical access to up-to-date media technologies? Which media technologies do you have access to?
Do you or colleagues offer media literacy education training/PD to fellow teachers in your own or other subject areas?
To what extent do you feel that your students have developed “habits of inquiry”?
<b><u>Media literate</u></b>
To what extent do you feel that you have high-quality content and knowledge on how to use the up-to-date media technologies?
Is there anything that would impede you from implementing media literacy lessons, experiences, or activities in the classroom?
Do you feel that there is a lack of teacher preparedness and teacher training/PD to implement, teach, and evaluate media literacy?

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## APPENDIX D

Table D.1 Focus Group Interview Protocol

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<b>Focus Group Questions</b>
<b>General</b>
What kinds of things has teaching media literacy done for your classroom experiences?
Do you feel your students have developed a healthy skepticism about their mediated experiences using a habit of inquiry taught in high school English courses (i.e., social media, video, discussion forums, etc.)?
<b>Pedagogy</b>
What are distinguishing features about media literacy that generate student interest?
How do you think students learn about media the best?
<b>Curriculum</b>
What key concepts about media literacy education do you emphasize? Is there something you feel is missing from the media literacy/reading standards section of TEKS?
What are the key skills that come out of media literacy standards?
<b>Support</b>
How have fellow teachers, administrators, instructional coaches/specialist unpacked the standards for you (i.e., in PLCs, T-PESS, training, PD, etc.)?
<b>Curricular Alignment</b>
How does media literacy align with traditional literacy (i.e., print literacy)?
How does media literacy align with college and career readiness expectations?
Do you feel media literacy has any more to offer (any potential) other than what these standards have to offer?
<b>Barriers</b>
Have you had any difficulties with analyzing media in the classroom? Or creating media?
Are there barriers to implementing media literacy in your campus or classrooms? If so, what are they?
<b>Professional Development</b>
Do you think there is general need for more information, techniques, instructional strategies, guidance, or professional development (i.e., training, mentorship, co-teaching, etc.) in the area of media literacy education?

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## APPENDIX E

### Recruitment E-Mail

Dear high school teacher,

Currently, I am in the process of working on my dissertation at Baylor University. My proposed dissertation topic is entitled *Media Literacy Education in Texas Public Schools: A Multiple Case Study*.

My purpose is to explore the knowledge, skills, perceptions, and experience obtained and practiced by English language arts and reading (ELAR) or English teachers in Texas public secondary schools. This study seeks to describe and analyze teachers' perceptions and experiences with media literacy in their own classrooms by using multiple data collection approaches.

In order for this study to be completed, I am recruiting several ELAR certified teachers with 1 or more years of experience. In order to participate in the study, the researcher is looking for teachers meeting the following criteria:

- 1) The teacher must be willing to participate and consent to participate in the study.
- 2) Second, teachers must be employed with the school district at either of the high school campus sites.
- 3) ELAR teachers must be a teacher of record in a high school English Language Arts and Reading classroom.
- 4) ELAR teachers must indicate that they have or do not have experience teaching media literacy education in their classroom.

The duration of study will be approximately 1 – 4 months and will involve an individual interview, participation in a focus group, and provision of a written or typed response to a question prompt to be collected as a document artifact.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of this research is to describe media literacy experiences, perceptions, practices, knowledge, and implementation in a secondary high school setting in a selection of Texas urban and suburban schools. We will have an opportunity to meet and talk over the next few days. If you are interested in participating, please respond to this e-mail or call me at \*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I appreciate your time and thank you for your consideration.

Best,

J. Anthony Luévanos  
Student Researcher  
Baylor University

## APPENDIX F

Table F.1 Data Collection Timeline

<b>Data Source/IRB Documents</b>	<b>Time of Collection</b>	<b>Form of Data</b>
Consent	Early – March 2019	E-mail response
Screening Questionnaire	Early – April 2019	E-mail response
Individual Teacher Interviews	Mid – May 2019	Audio digitally recorded
Member Checking	Late – May 2019	Transcribed recording
Focus group	Mid – May 2019	Audio digitally recorded
Collection of Document Artifact	May – July 2019	Print/Digital Submission
Peer debriefing	June – February 2020	Compare themes/categories

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