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Association for Media Literacy - Defacto Pioneers in Media Literacy Education

More than ever, kids need media literacy. That's exactly what the AML has been delivering for 25 years. With approximately 200 members, AML is the largest organization of media educators in Canada and has served as a catalyst for the formation of other groups in other provinces and in the United States.

The AML is the leading Canadian organization in the media literacy field and has been honoured around the world for its pioneering work with educators.

The founder of the AML, Barry Duncan, has spent decades working with educators to help students make some sense of the media world they inhabit. "Twenty five years ago you only had two voices talking about media literacy in Canada. One was McLuhan and the other was us," admits Duncan. The group has led the charge in including media literacy in classrooms. "It's not an option anymore," says Duncan proudly, "It's legislated, for all English/Language Arts classes from Kindergarten to

Grade 12. Now, teachers must teach it."

Ironically, kids not only need media literacy more, they WANT it more. "Media - it's not only the air they breathe, it's their virtual playground. It shapes their language and binds their social groups" says Duncan. "All the more reason they should know how it's made, played and replayed."

The AML argues that, for educators and education to remain relevant to today's students, schools must expand the current definition of 'literacy.' "Complete literacy includes text-based literacy, media-literacy and technological-literacy", suggests Duncan. "Most of our members are on the front lines of education. We know that the majority of students are learning from square, electronic boxes. We can discount their influence, and live in a world of denial, or we can provide students with a 21st century model of education that includes Shakespeare, Steinbeck, MuchMusic and Grand Theft Auto."

Duncan points out that just because teachers choose to bring this media "text" into their classroom doesn't mean they are endorsing it.

"Those teachers understand that the best type of education involves debate, discussion and critical analysis. Students can write a reflection on Socrates and then use the same analytical skills to de-code gender stereotyping in advertising or editorial bias in a news report. Both topics have a place in the classroom," he says.

Members of the AML are available to discuss everything from Britney to Botox and Frodo to Friends.

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