

Summary of Amicus Brief filed by National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), Media Literacy Now, and Media Education Lab

*Civics education that includes media literacy instruction is essential for students and for democracy.*

Evaluating media is an inseparable element of civics education required for citizens to function in modern democratic society and for the survival of democracy itself. New media bombard Americans with a torrent of unverified information served up by technology calibrated to maximize advertising revenues with the effect of undermining trust in government, institutions, and the electoral process itself. Current events have shown the consequences can be deadly. Children, whose waking moments are increasingly spent on screens, are particularly susceptible to misinformation. Yet education in media literacy —the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create information using all forms of communication— is almost completely absent from schools in Rhode Island and across the US. As a result, students are unable to distinguish between reliable and unreliable online content, jeopardizing their future participation as functioning citizens in our democracy and hastening its decline. Evidence drawn from numerous studies supports that the answer to this looming crisis is a minimum level of civics education under the Constitution that prioritizes basic media literacy skills.

This brief includes a storehouse of studies and data on virtually all of these points. See pages six through 11 for research on the drivers of the new media landscape. Pages 12 through 18 encapsulate evidence about the harms of media illiteracy to American politics and society. The acute susceptibility of children to new media is captured on pages 18 through 21. Finally, studies demonstrating the positive impact of media literacy instruction on students' effective use of the internet and overall civic engagement are found on pages 25 through 29.