

# Copyright code developed to guide teachers

By Eleanor Chute  
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To discourage high school students from smoking, medical instructor Brian Primack shows them cigarette advertisements and stills from movies, such as one of Julia Roberts smoking in "My Best Friend's Wedding."

Then he leads a discussion to help them learn how they're being manipulated and how to examine critically what they see and hear.

see, read or hear.

“This is an emerging type of education,” said Dr. Primack, assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics at the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, “And as media becomes more and more widespread, not just from traditional sources. ... this is going to be very important to teach young people about.”

Dr. Primack uses the materials for educational purposes under the fair-use doctrine, a portion of copyright law that permits some uses of copyrighted material without obtaining permission from the original creator.

Many educators, however, miss these opportunities because they don't know their rights under fair use, have been given bad information or lack administrators who will back them up, said a report last year by American and Temple universities. The report, “The Cost of Copyright Confusion for Media Literacy,” found that many teachers were censoring themselves.

Now American and Temple universities and several national associations have combined to try to remove the teachers' reluctance to use various sources including print, video, audio and the Internet — in their media literacy lessons.

sor of communication at Temple University.

“The first question out of teachers’ mouths these days is, ‘Will I get in trouble?’ The culture of fear has gotten out of control,” she said.

The code was developed by the National Association for Media Literacy Education, the Action Coalition for Media Education, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Visual Communication Studies Division of the International Communication Association and the Media Education Foundation.

Dr. Hobbs was one of three principal investigators of last year’s report on copyright confusion. She said the authors found that teachers were engaging in self-censorship because they misunderstood fair use.

Dr Hobbs said that does a

“huge disservice” to students because “to be a citizen you have to be able to comment on and analyze what’s going on in newspapers, in advertising, on film, on local TV news.”

She said some teachers used video clips and other media anyway but closed the door so they wouldn’t get caught, which she said sends students the wrong message.

The researchers found that getting sued is one of the big fears of educators. But some may be surprised to learn that Peter Jaszi, a faculty member at American University who collaborated with Dr. Hobbs on the new code, said he knows of no cases in which an educator has been taken to court for using copyrighted materials.

(In general, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette does not require teachers to get permission to copy material from the newspaper if it is strictly for classroom use. But if a teacher is

using PG material in textbooks or other for-profit situations, permission is required.)

While literacy traditionally means reading, writing, speaking and listening, Dr. Hobbs said:

“We now live in a culture where we also communicate through mass media and digital media. We have to expand the culture of literacy to critically analyze mass media and to have the ability to compose using media.”

Rocky Beech, who is a retired McKeesport Area administrator, said Dr. Primack’s use of media materials in teaching the district’s ninth-graders “made our kids start to think. For critical thinking skills, it brought out and enhanced those skills.”

The professors emphasized the importance of using the material in a “transformative” way for education, not for entertainment.

In one of her courses, Dr. Hobbs, now on sabbatical, examines gender representation in the media and has students examine clips from shows such as "I Love Lucy," "Gilligan's Island" and "Three's Company" -- all using the fair use doctrine without seeking permission. Her students sometimes create PowerPoint slides as they do their analysis.

"Before I started this project, I had my own anxieties about to what extent I could ask or encourage students to turn their slide shows into a YouTube video and put it online so their parents could see them," she said. "Now I feel confident I can do it under fair use."

More information on the various reports and media literacy will be available at [www.centerforsocialmedia.org/medialiteracy](http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/medialiteracy) and [www.mediaeducationlab.com](http://www.mediaeducationlab.com).

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