

6.5: Pandemic Policy Information in the Media

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, states have used their 10th Amendment powers to implement emergency public health and education policies (e.g., declarations of emergency, stay-at-home orders, mask mandates and mask mandate bans, travel restrictions, and vaccination rules), generating strong public debate and, in some cases, intense opposition.



Watch on YouTube <https://edtechbooks.org/-ZkV>

As the COVID-19 Delta variant surged in summer 2021, schools and the education sector became one of the most highly disputed areas of COVID-related policies. In some cases, state policies were in direct opposition to local rules. For example, throughout 2021, Florida's governor maintained steadfast opposition to masks for students and teachers in public schools, while local school boards voted to continue requiring face covering in classrooms and corridors. The governor threatened "maximum sanctions," including loss of state education funding while the Biden Administration suggested it would provide federal funds if state monies were withheld ([Politico, August 10, 2021](#)).

In Texas as well, school leaders in Dallas and Austin, among other districts, defied the state governor's executive order that schools

cannot require masks. Disputes over COVID-19 policies have heightened tensions within communities. In one Colorado county, sheriff's deputies were posted at schools for the first day of class to prevent disruptions from parents who objected to the district's in-school mask requirements ([Bradbury, 2021](#)).

Masks are just one of the public policy issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic. What level of government (local, state, federal) should decide vaccination mandates, vaccine passports, travel restrictions, eviction policies, and other matters? Or should these decisions be left to individuals and families?

Now, consider for a moment - how have you learned about your state's government policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Does your state government use the media to inform, persuade, and educate citizens about their pandemic policies?

In this activity, you will examine how state governments have used the media to communicate their COVID-19 pandemic policies.

Activity: Evaluate State Government's Media Use

- Select at least 3 states from different parts of the country.
- Explore these states' websites (e.g., www.mass.gov) and social media profiles (e.g., [Mass Gov on Facebook](#); [Mass Gov on Twitter](#); [Mass Gov on YouTube](#)).
- Compare and contrast how the three states use media (e.g., images, videos, audio, social media posts) to inform the public about their COVID-19 pandemic policies.
- Consider the following prompts:
 - How does each state government website communicate COVID-19 policy information to viewers?
 - How does each state government use social media to

- communicate COVID-19 policy information to viewers?
- Is there a difference in messaging, style, and design based on the platform (e.g., website vs. Facebook vs. Instagram)? Why do you think that is?
 - Who might the audience be for each platform? Why do you think this?
 - Given that many COVID-19 policies are subject to intense debate, how does each state seek to use media to convince people to follow its advice? Which state do you think is the most effective at using media in a convincing manner? Why do you think this?
- Then, complete one of the following tasks:
 1. **Complete a [SWOT analysis](#)** of each state government's use of media to inform the public about COVID-19 policies.
 2. **Redesign a state government webpage, social media post, or social media video** in a way that you believe would more effectively inform the public about a COVID-19 policy.
 3. **Write a Yelp or Amazon review** about each of the three state government's use of media (see example [Amazon Review template](#) by Madeline Hill).

Additional Resources

- [U.S. state and local government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Why Does the 10th Amendment Matter?](#) (Forbes)

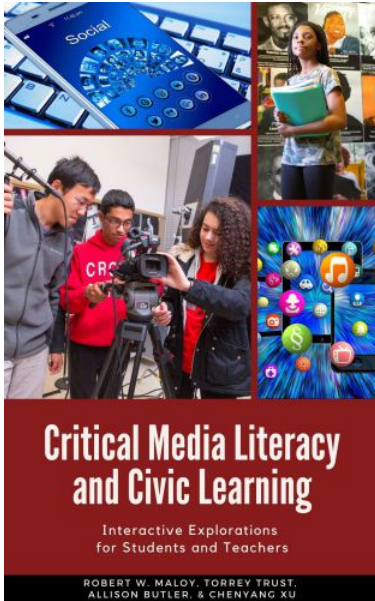
Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: State Government Pandemic Policies](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
 - *Explain why the 10th Amendment to the United States Constitution is important to state government and identify the powers granted to the states by the Tenth Amendment and the limits to state government outlined in it.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T6.5]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
 - Knowledge Constructor
 - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
 - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
 - 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
 - Creative Communicator
 - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
 - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
 - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
 - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
 - Digital Tools (DTC.a)

- Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
- Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. Equity Press.
<https://equitypress.org/mediaandciviclearning>