Public and Private Media Analysis
Primary Content Area: Journalism/English, Civics, Law

Introduction
It is extremely important for citizens in a democracy to be media literate. Media literacy is defined as understanding the structure and function of media messages and the organizations that create them. Today, most media outlets are owned by very few large, private corporations. Many would argue this is not a healthy media environment for a thriving democracy. Chicago does have a few public media outlets (radio and television) that are dependent on public contributions for their sustenance. Having multiple media outlets—public and private—enhances a democracy. Students should have the opportunity to examine, interpret, and evaluate various media sources in order to become media literate and media savvy. Media literacy is a critical citizenship skill that can help students be more than simple consumers of media messages. This service-learning project introduces students to the public and private media and enables them to support a local public media outlet. Students will learn to be more critical of media and identify ways that they can support a stronger democracy.

Project Goals
- Students will be able to identify major differences between public and private media.
- Students will be able to understand and evaluate perspective and potential bias in media reporting and messages.
- Students will be able to examine the role of competition in news reporting.
- Students will be able to analyze the effects of ownership on news reporting.
- Students will assist a public media outlet in its fundraising efforts.
- Students will reflect on their experience.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. Explore concepts of the press and citizenship, choosing the news, comparing news media, bias and spin, news analysis, and media ownership. An excellent curriculum to guide you through these activities is available at: www.centerforactioncivics.org/site/epage/152966_963.htm.
2. Have students track a news story for one week. Divide your class into groups and assign each group a media to follow: Local news at 9:00 and 10:00; national news at 5:00 and 6:00, international news (BBC) at 10:00 (Channel 20). Make sure that students are assigned both public and private outlets. At the end of the week spent tracking the story, have students report their understanding of the issue.
4. Have students create a “live broadcast” reporting on the issue of corporate and public ownership of media.
5. Contact the volunteer coordinator at WTTW – Channel 11. WTTW conducts three on-air fundraising drives each year (November, March, June). Students will be asked to spend one evening assisting with the fundraising drive by answering phones and taking pledges. When you contact WTTW, you can also ask for a tour of the television station.

6. Conduct a reflection session with your students. You may want to focus your reflection on the following questions: What did we learn about ownership of the media? How will this information impact how I access media? Why is it important to have public media in this country? How would further deregulation of media impact this country? What if public media disappeared in the United States?

7. Extend the reflection by evaluating your work together: What did we accomplish with this project? What went well? What could have gone better? What else could be done about this problem?

Community Partners/Resources
WTTW Channel 11
5400 North St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60625
773/509-5559

Mikva Challenge
332 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60604
312 863 6340

WBEZ
848 E. Grand Ave., Navy Pier, Chicago, IL 60611
312 948 4600

http://www.freepress.net/work
https://decryptedmatrix.com/live/big-six-the-u-s-media/

Addendum
Standards
This project addresses the following Common Core State Standard
SL9-10-4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Duration
Students should spend 8-14 hours on this project depending on their level of participation. Students typically volunteer 4-6 hours at WTTW.

Preparation: Curricular Activities/Media Tracking/Discussion/Research – 3-6 hours
Action: Volunteer at WTTW – 4-6 hours
Reflection: Writing/Discussion/Follow-up Advocacy – 1-2 hours

Cross-Curricular Connections
Connections with English, Journalism, and Social Studies courses could be made during this project.