Media Literacy: Elementary School Beginnings

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According to the Center for Media Literacy, media education leads to media literacy. Media literacy is defined as “the ability to choose, to understand, to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and to respond thoughtfully to the media we consume.” (Megee, 1997) The Center advocates children should learn media literacy skills at an early age because they watch television, read magazines, or use the Internet during their developmental years. This research examines the history of media literacy and some concepts of media literacy programs used in the Guilford County school system. A convenient sample of three in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with elementary school teachers. The results of this study indicate that media literacy should be a priority in the classroom because students use media everyday and tend to believe what they view on television as real-life. The respondents said that students must be able to access media and that teachers need to be taught how to incorporate media into their lessons. Further, results indicate that students are ready to learn about media and students use media as a supplement for reading and writing. However, the respondents admitted media literacy lessons were not common because of other curriculum demands from end-of-year testing and county curriculum requirements. This research study concludes with suggestions about how to improve media literacy programs in classroom curriculums.