Why Media Literacy Is So Important For Children

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CNK Digital Ebook Series
Why Media Literacy Is Important To Children Today

Media Impact

Have you sent a text, used a social media site, talked on a cell phone, watched television, or used a tablet today? Could you go 24 hours without the internet or your cell phone? Media and communication technologies play an important role in our daily lives, but many of us worry about the impact that it has on our children.
Not only are we concerned with the amount of time children spend in front of a screen, but the content they absorb as well. Media literacy allows children (and families) to become more aware of both intended and unintended media messages. Children learn to create and think critically about these media messages. These skills allow children to take control of the media that surrounds them, rather than letting it control them.
Today, most of us walk around with wireless technology in our pockets. Media and communication technologies are increasingly becoming integrated into our every waking moment. According to a study by Common Sense Media, 52 percent of 5 to 8-year-olds have used some form of mobile media. We tweet, text, post and talk all day. Many have trouble disconnecting even on vacation, and yet sometimes we feel very disconnected from the people around us.
Children Spend an Average of 28-32 Hours Per Week in front of a screen

Another report by the American Academy of Pediatrics notes that children spend more time with various media (an average of 7 hours per day) than they do in any other daily activity other than sleeping.
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"Health Effects of Media"

Among the many health concerns, various studies suggest a strong relationship between high exposure to violence in the media and aggressive behavior, as well as a strong correlation between heavy television viewing and obesity, substance use, and increased sexual activity at younger ages. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics study noted that children with a television in their bedroom are 31 percent more likely to smoke and many children have a television in their bedroom by the age of three.
Government regulations are limited, especially when it comes to advertising on the internet. The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) is a Self-Regulatory Program designed by the National Advertising Review Council (NARC) in 1974. According to the program guidelines, “The standards take into account the special vulnerabilities of children.” Does this seem like an effective program to you?
Diversity in the Media is Lacking

The majority of all media is controlled by just five media conglomerates including Disney, Time Warner, Murdoch's News Corporation, Bertelsmann of Germany, and Viacom. Columbia Journalism Review's [website](http://www.cjr.org) allows you to look up newspapers, radio stations, magazines and production studios that are owned by various companies. Flipping through hundreds of television channels makes it seem like we have endless choices, but the sources of the information are extremely limited.
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Turning off the Computer or TV Does Not Solve the Problem

From the billboards that line the highways to the teenager with the logo on his T-shirt in front of you at the check-out counter, media messages surround us on a daily basis. Try to write down the name of all the advertisements and logos that you encounter in a day and you will quickly realize how much media penetrates your life. Becoming media literate increases one's awareness of media and its impact on each of our lives.
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Children Need Media and Literacy Skills In Any Career In The Digital World

Whether one chooses to learn a trade or obtain a college degree, most children will enter a career that requires some technical competency and comfort with some form of media. Children with media literacy skills will be better prepared for a successful future.
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It is About Maximizing the Benefits and Minimizing The Risk

There is conflicting evidence on the value of technology in regards to child development. In addition to the health concerns mentioned earlier, research has also shown media can be powerful tools for teaching and learning. Children have displayed increased cognitive and social abilities when media are used effectively. Studies have also shown benefits for children with special needs, home-school connections, and dual-language learners according to a joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College.