12/11/06

Ms. Irene Coe
Principal
Moylan Elementary School
Hartford, CT, 06106

Dear Principal Coe,

We are students at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut in a Child Development class taught by Professor Dina Anselmi, and have been working on a public policy project for the duration of the semester. The focus of our project is the influence of television violence on child development. We have chosen to contact you because we believe that the school system is an effective way to reach parents of young children about the effects of TV violence.

Research has shown that television violence has a negative effect on children and their development, and tends to increase the amount of aggression in their behavior. According to research conducted by Jerome Singer, children who viewed Power Rangers as opposed to Barney and Friends showed significantly higher levels of aggression in a play session following the viewing. Numerous other studies have reported similar results. Exposure to violent shows on TV is a widespread problem that affects nearly all families with younger children. We believe that parents are largely uninformed of the actual impact their child's viewing habits have on their behavior. For this reason, we have produced a pamphlet for parents to provide them with the key facts about TV violence and child development.

In the pamphlet, we describe the television ratings that are now required to be shown at the beginning of all programs. These ratings are similar to those on movies, but since they are relatively new, some parents may be unsure about what they actually mean and which age groups they target. This should help parents decide which programs they feel are most appropriate for their child. We provide research in the pamphlet that should educate parents about the potential negative effects of violent TV shows. Parents are also provided with tips on how to help moderate their child's viewing habits, understand which programs are suitable for children, and become involved with their child in watching TV.

We hope after reading the pamphlet, parents will not only become more informed, but also be better parents to their children by curbing violent television viewing habits. Thank for you for time and consideration, and if you have any questions please feel free to contact either of us.

Sincerely,

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The TV Parental Ratings

All Children
This program is designed to be appropriate for all children. The themes and elements in this program are specifically designed for a very young audience, including children from ages 2-6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.

Directed to Older Children
This program is designed for children age 7 and above. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7.

General Audience
Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.

Parental Guidance Suggested
This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).

Parents Strongly Cautioned
This program contains material that most parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age, and contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).

Mature Audience Only
This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L).

Tips for Parents

Before you select a program for your children, make sure you know what the program is about.

Television can be a powerful learning tool, but it can not replace intrapersonal relationships — make sure to limit your child's viewing time.

The Discovery networks, Disney, Nickelodeon, and PBS all have age appropriate programs for children.

Set your child's TV schedule. It is important for the parents to be in control their child's viewing habits.

Use TV to spur other interests, such as reading or outdoor activities.

Research Findings

Children who viewed Power Rangers as opposed to Barney and friends acted in a much more restless and violent manner in a play time following the viewing.

TV violence viewing, identification with aggressive TV characters, and belief in the realistic nature of TV violence are all indicators of aggression later in life, both in men and women.

Even fictional stories of violence can have lasting impressions on young children who cannot yet tell the difference between fiction and reality.

V-Chip:

Protecting Your Children

The V-Chip allows parents to block any unwanted program based on its rating. All televisions 13 inches and over and bought after January 1, 2000 are required to be equipped with a "V-Chip."

Introduction

After reading this pamphlet we hope that you become more educated on how TV is rated and what is appropriate for your individual child to watch. TV can have significant effects on how children of all ages develop and perform both socially and mentally throughout adolescence. Parents should be aware not only of what shows their children are viewing, but also what the individual ratings of those shows are.

Ratings are provided for each individual show to address the issue of alerting parents to what the shows their children watch contain. However, in the end it is up to the individual parent to determine what is appropriate for their child to watch. Nonetheless, we hope that this pamphlet gives you a better grasp and ability to control the effects of TV on your child.

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Books:

Imagination and Play in the Electronic Age
by Dorothy and Jerome Singer

The Other Parent: The Inside Story of Media's Effect on Our Children
by James P. Steyer and Chelsea Clinton

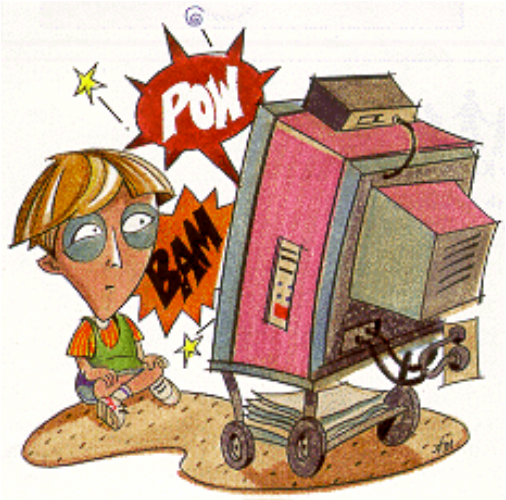
It's Not the Media: The Truth About Pop Culture's Influence on Children
by Karen Sternheimer

Media Violence and Children: A Complete Guide for Parents and Professionals
by Douglas A. Gentile

Websites:

The TV Parental Guidelines
http://www.tvguidelines.org/ratings.asp

Federal Communications Commission
http://www.fcc.gov

Parental Media Guide
http://www.parentalguide.org

TV Violence:
Educating Parents