


Executive Summary

Educationally/Insufficient?

An Analysis of the Availability & Educational Quality of Children's E/I Programming





In return for the free use of publicly-owned television airwaves, broadcast stations are required to air three hours per week of children’s educational/informational (E/I) programming. The guidelines that determine what qualifies as an “educational” program do not address the quality of the educational content. Thus, broadcasters have a great deal of discretion in applying the E/I label to a wide range of programs designed for a young audience. This study examines broadcasters’ commitments to serving the needs of children by assessing the availability and educational quality of their E/I programs.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Children’s Television Act	2
The Issue of Quality in E/I Programming	3
Key Findings	4
The Educational Quality of E/I Programming	4
The Availability of E/I Programming	5
The Content of E/I Programming	7
A Comparison with Public Broadcasting	8
Spotlight on Quality	9
Conclusion	10
Methodology	11
Endnotes	12

Introduction

Many parents today have childhood memories of learning the letter of the day from *Sesame Street* or how a bill becomes a law from *Schoolhouse Rock*. For those who grew up watching these classic educational programs, there is little question about television’s ability to enrich young viewers’ minds. These parents understand that, in addition to being entertaining, television can also support their children’s educational development. The key is to find programs that contain high-quality educational content.

Fortunately, television broadcasters are required to air three hours per week of children’s educational programming and to label those programs with an educational/informational (“E/I”) icon so parents can identify them. But how educational are broadcasters’ E/I shows? Can parents feel confident that programs designated by broadcasters as “educational” do, in fact, contain high-quality educational lessons? What types of lessons do these E/I programs teach? And how likely are parents to find E/I programming on broadcast television during the days and times their children watch TV? Answering these questions is imperative to understanding the effectiveness of children’s educational television.



The Children’s Television Act

Research has firmly established that quality educational television programming can have significant positive effects on young viewers’ cognitive and social development.¹ This evidence prompted Congress to enact the Children’s Television Act of 1990 (CTA) to ensure commercial broadcast television stations provide programming “specifically designed” to serve the educational needs of children in return for the free use of publicly-owned airwaves.

Congress passed the CTA with the intention of increasing the availability of high-quality educational programs, such as PBS’s *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, on commercial broadcast television. Since its inception, however, broadcasters have interpreted the CTA in various, and sometimes disappointing, ways. For example, some stations in the early 1990s infamously claimed that broadcasts of *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons* counted as educational programming because they taught children about history and the future, respectively.²

Such practices led the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to clarify its definition of educational programming, specifying that such shows must (a) have education as a significant purpose; (b) have a specified learning goal and target audience; (c) be aired on a regular schedule between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.; and (d) be labeled as “E/I” to identify the program to the public as educational/informational for children. In addition, the FCC decided that stations would be expected to air at least three hours per week of E/I programming, a policy often referred to as the Three-Hour Rule.

Congress passed the CTA with the intention of increasing the availability of high-quality educational programs, such as PBS’s *Sesame Street* and *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, on commercial broadcast television.





The Issue of Quality in E/I Programming

Unfortunately, this broad definition of “educational” does not address one factor critical to the effectiveness of E/I programs: the quality of the educational content. Without guidelines to ensure quality standards, broadcasters have discretion to apply the E/I label to a wide range of programs designed for a young audience.

Shortly after the Three-Hour Rule was enacted in 1996, Dr. Amy Jordan and her colleagues at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania began assessing the quantity and quality of E/I programs on commercial broadcast television.³ Their research revealed that although most stations offered three hours of E/I programming each week, the large majority of shows had only moderate or minimal educational quality. However, since 2000, no comparable research has been conducted.

We are now entering a new age of television. As analog television transitions to a digital format, station owners will be able to broadcast up to six unique digital channels rather than just one. At the urging of Children Now and our colleagues in

We are now entering a new age of television. As analog television transitions to a digital format, station owners will be able to broadcast up to six unique digital channels rather than just one.

the Children’s Media Policy Coalition, the FCC adopted additional rules in 2005 that require broadcasters to include three hours per week of E/I programming on each of their digital television channels. This ruling has the potential to increase the amount of educational programming available to children on free, over-the-air television. But this increase in quantity will benefit children only if the educational quality of the programs is high as well.

This study was undertaken to assess broadcasters’ compliance with the CTA and evaluate the industry’s overall performance in serving the needs of the child audience. Conducted by leading media scholars Dr. Barbara J. Wilson (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) and Dr. Dale Kunkel (University of Arizona), this research examines the quantity of E/I programming offered on commercial broadcast stations and evaluates the educational quality of the 30 most widely-aired children’s educational programs. In order to provide a valuable comparison to help judge the efficacy of these shows, a small sub-sample of 10 children’s programs on PBS was also evaluated. Three randomly-selected episodes of each E/I series were analyzed for their educational content.

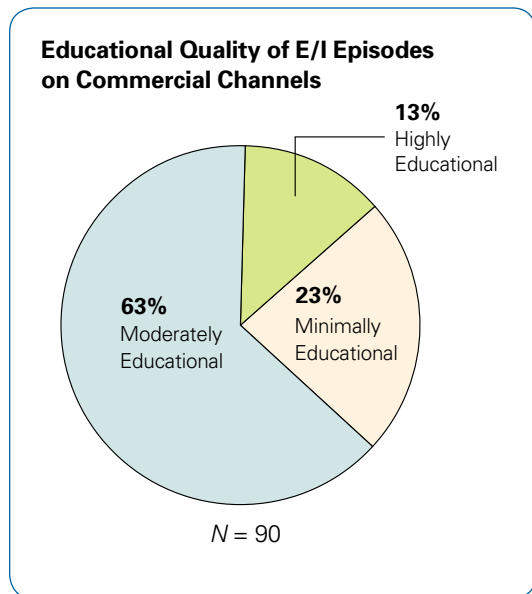
We hope this study will serve as a new benchmark of broadcasters’ compliance with the CTA as we head into the era of digital television and inspire federal policy makers, the media industry and parents to ensure that all children have sufficient access to quality educational television programs.

Key Findings

The Educational Quality of E/I Programming

If the Children’s Television Act is to serve its intended purpose, E/I programming must achieve a reasonable standard of educational quality. It takes more than a story with a moral or an academic lesson for

devote to enriching children’s educational development. Therefore, we must insist that those few hours are filled with effective, highly educational content.



a program to successfully teach children. Educational television must feature certain characteristics in order to be effective (see sidebar). Three hours per week is a relatively small amount of time for broadcasters to

Measuring Educational Quality

Six criteria were used to measure the educational quality of each episode in the study.

Clarity—How directly or explicitly is the primary lesson presented?

Integration—How often is the primary lesson repeated or incorporated in the program?

Involvement—How engaging or absorbing is the primary lesson?

Applicability—How connected is the primary lesson to the real world?

Importance—How valuable or useful is the primary lesson to children’s development?

Positive Reinforcement—To what extent is learning, including effort and mastery, rewarded?

Each criterion was judged on a 3-point scale from low (0) to medium (1) to high (2). Scores were then totaled, resulting in a possible score of 0-12 for every episode.

Episodes that received a score of 0-6 were considered *minimally educational*.

Episodes that received a score of 7-10 were considered *moderately educational*.

Episodes that received a score of 11-12 were considered *highly educational*.

Quality of E/I Episodes on Commercial Channels Over Time

Level of Educational Quality

Year	Minimal	Moderate	High
1997-98	26%	46%	29%
1998-99	21%	46%	33%
1999-00	23%	57%	20%
2007-08	23%	63%	13%

The data prior to 2007 come from Annenberg Public Policy Center reports on E/I programming conducted by Dr. Amy Jordan and colleagues. (See endnote 3.)

Only one in eight E/I episodes earned a rating of highly educational. In contrast, nearly twice as many were found to have only minimal educational value.

- Of the 90 episodes analyzed, twelve (13%) were found to be highly educational, meaning they achieved high scores on all or nearly all of the six quality measures.
- Twenty-one episodes (23%) were judged to be minimally educational, meaning that they earned a low score on at least one criterion and never had more than one high score.
- The largest share of episodes (63%) was judged to be moderately educational.

There has been a substantial decline in high-quality educational programs over the years.

- The percentage of highly educational episodes has decreased dramatically from previous years, during which highly educational shows accounted for as much as one-third of all E/I efforts.
- As the percentage of high-quality episodes has declined, the percentage of moderately educational episodes has increased from 46% in 1997-98 to 57% in 1999-00 and finally to 63% in 2007-08.
- The proportion of minimally educational episodes has remained fairly constant with previous years at nearly one out of every four programs.

The Availability of E/I Programming

Since 1996, broadcast stations have consistently offered at least three hours per week of E/I programming for children. It is not surprising, then, that all but one station in the study reported to the FCC that they met this minimum requirement. On average, however, children watch three hours of television *per day, every day of the week*.⁴ Recognizing this, the FCC has previously stated that broadcasters must provide educational programming to children throughout the week, not just on weekends alone.⁵

The majority of broadcast stations appear to treat their three-hour requirement as a three-hour limit.

- A large majority of stations (59%) provided the least possible amount of programming—three hours per week, an average of about 25 minutes per day.

Broadcasters' Weekly Hours of E/I Programming

Amount of E/I Programming	Percent of Stations
Less than 3.0 hours per week	1%
3.0 hours per week	59%
3.1 to 4.0 hours per week	37%
4.1 or more hours per week	3%
N = 135	

Key Findings (continued)

- Only 3% of stations exceeded four hours per week of E/I programming.
- Market size was negatively related with the amount of E/I programs offered. Stations in the largest markets delivered the lowest average amount of children’s educational shows, at three hours and 10 minutes per week, whereas stations in the smallest markets averaged the most programming, at roughly three and a half hours per week.

The vast majority of broadcasters scheduled E/I programming exclusively on weekends.

- Only one-quarter of stations offered E/I programming on any weekday. The remaining stations (75%) offered E/I shows solely on Saturdays or Sundays.
- Market size was negatively related with better service to children. The largest markets had the lowest percentage of stations that aired weekday programming (22%), whereas the smallest markets had the highest percentage (32%).

The Range of Station Commitments to Children

KFVE (Honolulu)

This station averaged 5.5 hours per week of children’s E/I content during the fourth quarter of 2007, placing it near the top industry-wide in overall amount of programming. It presented highly-acclaimed shows for different age groups, including *Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?* for younger children and *Beakman’s World* for older children and teens. The station provided E/I programming every day of the week except Sunday.

KSAT (San Antonio)

This station averaged exactly 3.0 hours per week of core E/I programming in the fourth quarter of 2007. Its offerings included five different half-hour programs, one of which (*That’s So Raven*) aired twice each week in back-to-back time slots. All of the shows were provided by the parent network, so the station’s schedule looked identical to that of most ABC affiliates. Its entire slate of E/I shows appeared solely on Saturday mornings. Only one of its series (*The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*) scored high in educational quality.

WZMY (Boston)

This station aired just one children’s educational program series, *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, during the entire fourth quarter of 2007. Since the series targets children, ages 13-16 (the program is rated TV-PG), the station provided no service to children, ages 12 and under. In its FCC filing, the station claimed it presented the show 73 times during the period between October 1 and December 31, averaging exactly three hours per week overall. Because this series was in its seventh year of production in 2007, and it delivered a total of only 24 new episodes that entire year, the station had to re-run shows from several previous seasons in order to fulfill its weekly three-hour minimum requirement. Programs were offered on weekends and weekdays, but the schedule varied during the time period studied.

Amount and Scheduling of Children’s E/I Programming

	Market Size				Overall
	Small	Medium	Large	Major	
Average hours per week	3.49	3.41	3.23	3.18	3.32
Stations with any weekday shows	32%	26%	28%	22%	25%
	<i>n</i> = 28	<i>n</i> = 35	<i>n</i> = 35	<i>n</i> = 37	<i>N</i> = 135

The Content of E/I Programming

Social-emotional programs aim to teach the viewer life lessons about personal feelings and interpersonal relationships. Cognitive-intellectual programs offer more traditionally academic lessons and information on facts, ideas and concepts related to existing knowledge or ways of thinking. A third type of lesson, focusing on health and nutrition messages, was also identified in the study. In 2005, the Institute of Medicine called on the media industry to include more health-related messages in children's programs in an effort to help combat childhood obesity.⁶ All three types of content can provide valuable information for children of all ages. An ideal educational media environment should offer an ample amount of quality content of each type.

An ideal educational media environment should offer an ample amount of quality cognitive-intellectual, social-emotional and health-related content.

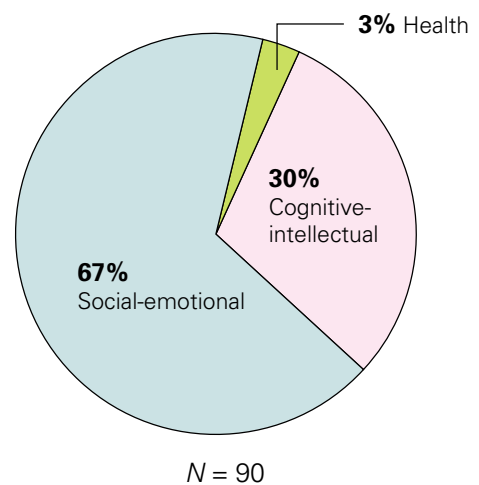
The large majority of E/I episodes featured social-emotional lessons rather than academically focused cognitive-intellectual lessons.

- Two out of three episodes (67%) featured a social-emotional lesson as the primary focus.
- The majority of lessons in social-emotional episodes focused on issues of positive interaction with others (26%), self-esteem (18%) or self-restraint (12%).
- Less than one in three episodes (30%) contained a cognitive-intellectual lesson as the primary message.

Health and nutrition messages were extremely rare.

- The remaining 3% of the episodes focused on health as the primary lesson. Each of these health episodes ($n = 3$) came from a single TV series, *The Adrenaline Project*.

Primary Lessons in Commercial Broadcast E/I Episodes



Key Findings (continued)

Hundreds of empirical studies have shown that extensive exposure to television violence can contribute to the learning of aggressive attitudes and behaviors in children.⁷

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that the inclusion of physically violent content may interfere with children's learning of social-emotional or cognitive-intellectual lessons.⁸ These negative effects of violent material on children's behavior and learning undermine the purpose of E/I programming.

In addition, several recent studies have documented that children can learn social aggression from viewing programs that depict and explicitly model such behavior.⁹ Social aggression refers to behavior designed to harm another person's self-esteem or social status. Although some may argue that social aggression is necessary to teach social-emotional lessons about appropriate interpersonal behavior, all too often such behavior is used gratuitously as a comedic device rather than as a storytelling device. For example, name-calling and teasing are used to get a laugh, not to teach that they are inappropriate behaviors. Because E/I programs are intended to teach positive behaviors and not model inappropriate ones, episodes in this study were examined for their inclusion of both physical and social aggression.

A substantial proportion of E/I programs featured high levels of aggression.

- More than one-quarter of E/I episodes (28%) was found to be high in aggressive content, meaning they contained numerous instances of either physical or social aggression throughout the program.
- A high level of aggressive behavior, especially social aggression, was more likely to be found in programs that taught social-emotional lessons (37%) than in programs that taught cognitive-intellectual content (7%).

Social aggression was more commonly featured than physical violence.

- Social aggression was found in over half (57%) of all E/I episodes, with 21% featuring "a lot" and 36% containing "some" social aggression. Less than half of the episodes (43%) contained no social aggression at all.
- Physical aggression appeared less frequently in E/I programs, although 40% included one or more violent depictions.

A Comparison with Public Broadcasting

To enhance the perspective of the assessment of E/I programs on commercial broadcast stations, the content and quality of 10 randomly-selected educational shows on

Aggression in E/I Episodes on Commercial Channels

Amount of Aggression	Physical Aggression	Social Aggression
A lot	8%	21%
Some	32%	36%
None	60%	43%

Note. For this analysis, $N = 90$.

PBS were also analyzed. The results reveal that PBS offers some of the most highly educational programs on broadcast television and serves as a model of successful educational programming for commercial broadcasters.

Educational programs on PBS were more likely to contain high-quality lessons that focused on cognitive-intellectual content, and less likely to contain aggression, than were programs on commercial stations.

- Public broadcast episodes scored, on average, more than a full point higher on the quality assessment (9.1) than did those airing on commercial channels (7.9).
- The type of primary lesson differed significantly by channel type, as public broadcast episodes were more likely to feature a cognitive-intellectual lesson (55%) than were episodes airing on commercial stations (31%).
- Commercial stations were more than twice as likely to offer programs with high levels of physical or social aggression (28%) compared to public television stations (13%).

Spotlight on Series Quality

This report has, until now, focused on the content and quality of individual E/I episodes that air on commercial or public broadcast television. Now we turn our attention to a broader assessment of program series, specifically those that achieved a high level of educational quality.

Eight commercial and public broadcast series earned an exemplary rating for their educational content.

Sesame Street (PBS)

Beakman's World (Commercial)

Between the Lions (PBS)

3-2-1 Penguins (Commercial)

Cyberchase (PBS)

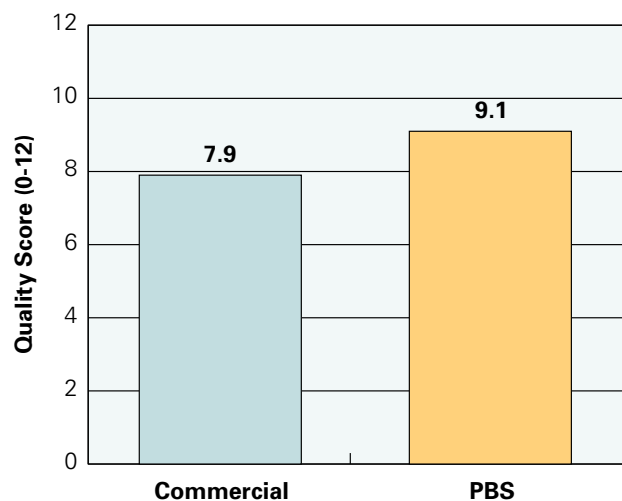
The Suite Life of Zack and Cody (Commercial)

Fetch! with Ruff Ruffman (PBS)

Teen Kids News (Commercial)

It is interesting to note that this is a very diverse group of programs: they target all age groups, from toddlers to teens; they deal with both social-emotional and cognitive-intellectual subject matter; they are animated and live action; and they appear on both commercial and public broadcast stations. Furthermore, none of these exemplary programs contained a high amount of physical or social aggression, underscoring that effective educational programming can be accomplished without the use of violence.

Educational Quality of E/I Programming as a Function of Channel Type



Conclusion

Television broadcasters in the United States have been given a tremendous gift—the opportunity to use the nation’s publicly-owned airwaves free-of-charge. But with that opportunity comes the responsibility to use the power of their resources to foster the educational development of young viewers. This research shows that commercial broadcasters are currently meeting the minimum time requirements of the Children’s Television Act by consistently providing three hours of E/I programming each week.

We applaud the media companies for adhering to the letter of the CTA, but question whether their efforts truly live up to the spirit of the law. When only one in eight E/I episodes is highly educational and nearly twice as many are deficient in educational merits; when few broadcasters offer more than the bare minimum of programming and confine their entire E/I schedule to one or two days of the week; when more than one-quarter of E/I shows model harmful violent or socially-aggressive behavior; and when the vast majority of programs contain no basic academic or health-related lessons, it is difficult to see how broadcasters’ efforts are sufficiently serving the educational needs of the nation’s children.

This research illustrates far too many weaknesses in the broadcast industry’s efforts to provide children’s educational programming. Creating the change necessary to guarantee quality educational television programming will require action from everyone who plays a role in this system, including policymakers, the broadcast industry and parents. Following are Children Now’s recommendations for steps that should be taken by all stakeholders to ensure the Children’s Television Act lives up to its promise.

Recommendations

The FCC

We believe the FCC has a responsibility to children and their families to make sure that the Children’s Television Act fulfills its promise. We therefore call on the FCC to implement the following policy changes:

- **Strengthen the guidelines for what constitutes an E/I program.**
- **Actively monitor broadcasters’ compliance with the CTA.**
- **Respond quickly to public complaints about the adequacy of broadcasters’ CTA compliance.**

Industry

We challenge broadcasters and children’s television producers to take the following steps to improve the quality and availability of their E/I programs:

- **Consider the six criteria of highly educational programs when developing new productions.**
- **Find creative ways to teach educational lessons without resorting to the use of social or physical aggression.**
- **Offer more programs that emphasize cognitive-intellectual and health-related lessons.**
- **Offer more than the required minimum of three hours per week of E/I programs, and schedule shows on weekdays as well as on weekends.**

We applaud the media companies for adhering to the letter of the CTA, but question whether their efforts truly live up to the spirit of the law.

Methodology

Parents

Parents are the gatekeepers of their children's media use and therefore have an important role to play in providing them with high-quality educational programming. Following are some steps parents could take to improve their children's media environment:

- **Seek out programs that display the E/I symbol on screen.**
- **Watch television with your kids and look for the six criteria of highly educational shows to judge for yourself which programs are educational and which are not (*see back cover*).**
- **Contact the FCC and file a complaint against a station if you feel an E/I show does not adequately meet educational standards.**

Parents are the gatekeepers of their children's media use and therefore have an important role to play in providing them with high-quality educational programming.

A nationally representative, stratified sample of 24 television markets was chosen for inclusion in this study. The E/I program offerings for all major commercial broadcast channels in these markets were examined during the fourth quarter of 2007, specifically focusing on the amount of E/I programming offered and the placement of E/I programs in the stations' weekly schedules.

Series that aired in more than one-third of the sampled markets were identified, and three randomly-selected episodes from each of those series were recorded between November 2007 and May 2008 for further investigation. The content of the episodes was analyzed using a range of measures, including the age of the target audience, the type of educational message, and the presence of physical and social aggression.

The quality of each episode's primary educational message was evaluated using an index of educational value based on six key criteria: clarity, integration, involvement, applicability, importance and positive reinforcement (see page 9). Each variable was judged on a 0-2 scale (0 = low, 1 = medium, 2 = high). Scores for all six criteria were then summed, resulting in a quality index score for each episode that could range from 0 to 12.

Episodes with scores of 6 or less were classified as *minimally educational*; episodes in this group typically had a "low" rating (score of 0) for at least one of the criteria and never had more than one "high" rating across all six criteria. Episodes with scores of 7 to 10 were classified as *moderately educational*. Episodes with scores of 11 and 12 were rated as "high" on at least five of the six criteria and were classified as *highly educational*. In order to provide a basis for comparison, three episodes each of ten randomly selected E/I shows on PBS were also examined using the same

criteria. In addition, quality scores for all three episodes of each series were averaged. Series that earned an average quality score of 10 or above were given an *exemplary* rating.

For the assessment of physical and social aggression, we defined *physical aggression* as the overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force or the actual use of such force intended to physically harm an animate being.¹⁰ Examples of physical aggression include “hand-to-hand” fighting such as kicking and punching, use of weapons such as guns and bombs, and intentionally harmful acts such as tying someone to railroad tracks. Physical aggression does not include accidents, natural disasters or animals attacking other animals in their natural environment.

Social aggression was defined as any behavior designed to harm an animate being’s self-esteem or social status.¹¹ Examples of social aggression include derisive name-calling, socially ostracizing someone, gossiping and spreading hurtful rumors. We coded the amount of both physical and social aggression in E/I episodes. Episodes were judged as having no aggression (0), some aggression (1) or a lot of aggression (2).

Complete information about all aspects of the research methodology can be found in the full report, available at www.childrennow.org/eireport.

Endnotes

1. Kirkorian, H. L., & Anderson, D. R. (2008). Learning from educational media. In S. L. Calvert & B. J. Wilson (Eds.), *The handbook of children, media, and development* (pp. 188-213). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
2. Center for Media Education (1992). A report on station compliance with the Children’s Television Act. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Law Center, Institute for Public Representation.

3. Jordan, A. B. (1998). *The 1998 state of children’s television report: Programming for children over broadcast and cable television*. Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania.
 4. Kaiser Family Foundation (2005). *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8-18 year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Author.
 5. FCC, Children’s Television Report and Policy Statement, Nov. 6, 1974, at paragraphs 26-27.
 6. Institute of Medicine. (2005) *Food marketing to children and youth: Threat or opportunity?* Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.
 7. Anderson, C.A., Berkowitz, L., Donnerstein, E., Huesmann, L.R., Johnson, J.D., Linz, D., et al. (2003). *The influence of media violence on youth*. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 4, 81-110.
 8. Bushman, B. J., & Phillips, C. M. (2001). If the television program bleeds, memory for the advertisement recedes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, 44-47.
 9. Coyne, S. M., Archer, J., & Elsea, M. (2004). Cruel intentions on television and in real life: Can viewing indirect aggression increase viewers’ subsequent indirect aggression? *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 88, 234-253.
 10. Bushman, B. J., & Bonacci, A. M. (2002). Violence and sex impair memory for television ads. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 557-564.
 11. Galen, B. R., & Underwood, M. K. (1997). A developmental investigation of social aggression among children. *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 589-600.
- Martins, N. (2008). *Social aggression on television and its relationship to children’s aggression in the classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Ostrov, J. M., Gentile, D. A., & Crick, N.R. (2006). Media exposure, aggression, and prosocial behavior during early childhood: A longitudinal study. *Social Development*, 15, 612-627.
- Paik, H., & Comstock, G. (1994). The effects of television violence on anti-social behavior: A meta-analysis. *Communication Research*, 21, 516-546.
- Schmitt, K. L. (1999). *The three-hour rule: Is it living up to expectations?* Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.
- Jordan, A. B. (2000). *Is the three-hour rule living up to its potential?* Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.



Credits

Research conducted by: Barbara J. Wilson, Ph.D.; Dale Kunkel, Ph.D.; and Kristin L. Drogos, M.A.

Executive Summary written by: Christina Romano Glaubke, M.A.; Barbara J. Wilson, Ph.D.; and Dale Kunkel, Ph.D.

Editorial Assistance: Eileen Espejo, Brian Kennedy, Ronald Pineda and Kristi Schutjer-Mance.

Design by: Dennis Johnson Design

Acknowledgments

Children Now would like to thank The David B. Gold Foundation, The Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund, and the Otto Haas Charitable Trust for their generous support of this research.

Children Now would also like to thank the following individuals who made important research and/or technical contributions in the conduct of this study:

University of Arizona

Vanessa Garrison and Stephen Whitney

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Zachary Benkowski, Jacquelyn Grimes, Kelsie Hughes, Kylie Hughes, David Isaacson, Caitlin Kolkau, Erica Larivee, Susan Lester, Caroline Roth, Lee Ann Sangalang, Ashley Spinozzi and Ryan Wildy

Children Now Board of Directors

Jane Gardner, <i>Board Chair</i>	<i>Harbour Consulting</i>
Peter D. Bewley, <i>Vice Chair</i>	<i>The Clorox Company</i> (Retired)
Neal Baer, M.D.	<i>Wolf Films/Universal Television</i>
Laura Casas Frier	<i>Football-De Anza Community College District</i>
Geoffrey Cowan	<i>USC, Annenberg School for Communication</i>
Jim Cunneen	<i>California Strategies, LLC</i>
John Garcia	<i>Kaiser Permanente</i>
David G. Johnson	<i>Johnson-Roessler Company</i>
Allan K. Jonas	<i>Jonas & Associates</i>
Donald Kennedy	<i>Science Magazine</i>
Gay Krause	<i>Football College, Krause Center for Innovation</i>
Ted Lempert	<i>Children Now</i>
Lenny Mendonca	<i>McKinsey & Company</i>
Theodore R. Mitchell	<i>NewSchools Venture Fund</i>
Molly Munger	<i>English, Munger & Rice</i>
Craig A. Parsons	<i>Communications Consultant</i>
Hon. Cruz Reynoso	<i>UC Davis, School of Law</i>
Karen Schievelbein	<i>UnitedHealth Group</i>
Katharine Schlosberg, Ed.D.	<i>Educational Consultant</i>
James P. Steyer	<i>Common Sense Media</i>
Michael Tollin	<i>Tollin/Robbins Productions</i>
Gloria Tristani	<i>Spiegel & McDiarmid</i>
Jennie Ward Robinson, Ph.D.	<i>Institute for Public Health and Water Research</i>
Grace K. Won	<i>Farella Braun + Martel LLP</i>

Parents: Detach this reference card to use while watching television with your kids. Be sure to look for the six criteria of highly educational programs to judge for yourself which shows are educational and which are not.



Children Now is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization working to raise children's well-being to the top of the national policy agenda. The organization focuses on ensuring quality health care, a solid education and a positive media environment for all children. Children Now's strategic approach creates awareness of children's needs, develops effective policy solutions and engages those who can make change happen.

Children Now

1212 Broadway, 5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

childrennow.org

Phone: 510.763.2444

Email: info@childrennow.org



Parents: Detach this reference card to use while watching television with your kids. Be sure to look for the six criteria of highly educational programs to judge for yourself which shows are educational and which are not.

Parents: Judge for Yourself!

1. Watch television with your kids.
2. Look for the inclusion of the six criteria of highly educational programs listed below.
3. Judge for yourself how educational they really are.

Clarity—How easily can you identify the primary lesson?

- A lesson with good clarity is easy to understand, straightforward and obvious.
- A lesson with poor clarity is difficult to identify and may be hidden by distractions, unclear dialogue or other subplots within the episode.

Integration—How often do you hear or see the primary lesson?

- A lesson with good integration is repeated or demonstrated multiple times throughout the episode.
- A lesson with poor integration is separated from other program content and may not seem related to the main plot or storyline.

Involvement—How engaging and interesting is the lesson for the viewer?

- An episode with good lesson involvement makes a strong and consistent effort to get the viewer's attention. Some techniques can increase involvement, such as speaking directly to the viewer, tying the lesson to emotionally involving content and/or using popular characters.
- An episode with poor involvement does not engage the viewer in the primary lesson.

Applicability—Is the primary lesson connected to the real world?

- An episode with good applicability shows how the primary lesson relates to the everyday experiences of a typical child.
- An episode with poor lesson applicability does not demonstrate how the information is relevant to the child's everyday world.

Importance—How valuable or useful is the primary lesson to the viewer?

- A lesson that is high in importance is one that is crucial for a child to learn.
- A lesson that is low in importance is one that holds little utility for a child's development.

Positive reinforcement—Is effort or successful learning rewarded?

- An episode that is high in positive reinforcement includes features that support motivation for learning, such as cheering a character on, rewarding a character for accomplishments, having a character show pride in what is learned and/or verbally praising a character. Positive reinforcement also can be delivered directly to the viewer (e.g., "Good job!").
- An episode that is low in positive reinforcement does not show characters receiving praise or rewards for their effort or success at learning a lesson.

For more information visit, www.childrennow.org/eireport.

The guidelines on the reverse are from Children Now's study, *Educationally/Insufficient? An Analysis of the Availability & Educational Quality of Children's E/I Programming*, which is available to the public at **www.childrennow.org/eireport**.

Children Now is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization working to raise children's well-being to the top of the national policy agenda. The organization focuses on ensuring quality health care, a solid education and a positive media environment for all children. Children Now's strategic approach creates awareness of children's needs, develops effective policy solutions and engages those who can make change happen.



Children Now
1212 Broadway, 5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
childrennow.org
Phone: 510.763.2444
Email: info@childrennow.org