

EDUCATION 2000

Children and television

Television can have an enormous influence upon a child's mental and emotional development. Many excellent TV shows can teach children about sharing, giving, learning the alphabet and creating words.

But, the question parents often grapple with is, how much TV is permissible? And what kinds of shows should their youngsters be watching?

Allowing your children to watch as much TV as they want, and not regulating the types of shows they watch, can have negative consequences. According to a report by the Ontario Medical Association in 1991, watching too much TV "is a major contributor to sleeplessness, depression and hyperactivity in young children."

The report also indicates that children who watch too much TV are less physically fit and tend to be more aggressive towards other children.

Other reports have suggested that at least 25 percent of all TV advertising aimed at children is for food. However, the advertised food is rarely nutritious in nature. Salty, high-fat and pre-packaged foods are the foods that children view the most on TV.

To avoid the negative influences of TV on your children, parents are encouraged to take an active role in monitoring their child's TV consumption. Here are a few handy suggestions that can lead to improving the influences of TV on your child.

First and foremost, avoid TV shows that depict sex, violence and offensive language. It may take a little extra time, but a lot of good, family-type programming does exist; don't use the TV as a baby-sitter; don't allow a child to have a TV in his or her room; encourage discussion with your child of issues and ideas that are raised on TV; lead by example and personal involvement - don't encourage a child to watch less TV when you spend all of your spare time watching it; consider installing a V-chip, a technological device that filters out undesirable programming; set maximum time limits for watching TV and stick to them; praise your child when he or she makes good viewing selections; discuss the difference between fantasy and reality on TV shows; avoid TV during mealtime or when entertaining guests; encourage your child to finish his or her homework before being allowed to watch TV.

If you want to have a say about children's programming, a good place to start is to contact the Canadian Radio-Television and Communications Commission (CRTC) or the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

Take an active involvement in the TV that your child watches. It can be a rewarding experience for both child and parent.

Cooperative education

Cooperative education and work experience programs offer students another way of expanding their interests and exploring their career options. Cooperative education is a planned learning experience in the community that complements and enhances school courses and provides students with an opportunity to learn and to apply their skills and knowledge in practical situations. Courses in various disciplines may be offered through the cooperative education program, which can benefit all students, whatever their postsecondary destination. Students receive credit based on evaluations of their performance in the work placement.

Work experience can also be gained

through short-term work placements (from one to four weeks) that complement classroom instruction in a given course and are evaluated as part of the student's work in that course.

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program enables students in Grades 11 and 12 to complete their high school diploma while starting their apprenticeship training. Students earn credits for their workplace experience in the apprenticeship program, and the time they spend in the placement counts towards their apprenticeship training requirement.

More detailed information about work placements can be obtained from your local high school.

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