



Department of Public Information  
15 Washington Street • Newark • New Jersey 07102 • 201/648-5262

June 7, 1994

Contact: Robert Clark

**MEDIA ADVISORY:**

Rutgers and On Television Project Announce  
Formation of Media Education Laboratory

(NEWARK)--As new and emerging technologies line up bumper-to-bumper at the on-ramp to the "information superhighway," the need for media education takes on added urgency. This is especially true for that most pervasive of media, television, according to Mary Megee, executive producer of the PBS documentary series, On Television, and professor of television studies at Rutgers' Newark campus.

"In the average American home," Megee says, "the set is on more than seven hours a day. Two thirds of us rely on TV as our sole or primary source of news and information. Although the U.S. produces and consumes more TV than other developed countries, our young people typically receive less training about who is communicating, for what purpose, with what effect, on behalf of which interests." Megee cites the tremendous potential of TV to serve the nation's educational needs. "However," she cautions, "meeting this potential requires deeper public understanding of how TV works and greater public involvement in determining new viewing options."

To address this educational void, Rutgers University and On Television, Ltd., a non-profit organization dedicated to public education about TV and media policy issues, are establishing a Media Education Laboratory within the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Rutgers-Newark. The objectives of the Laboratory are to design and implement a public-interest oriented undergraduate television curriculum on campus and to continue production of the On Television documentaries.

Details of the Rutgers-On Television collaboration will be announced at a news conference and reception on Tuesday, June 21, at 10:30 a.m., at The Explorer's Club, 46 East 70th Street in New York City. Excerpts from On Television programs will introduce remarks by several educators:

O Madeleine Kunin, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, will speak to the need for family and community involvement in children's television viewing, advocating the introduction of critical viewing skills in the elementary school years.

o Frank S. Lautenberg, U.S. Senator from New Jersey, will address the need for quality programming to meet the educational needs of children.

o Sherryl Browne Graves, Ph.D., Chairman of the Department of Educational Foundations at Hunter College and a consultant to Children's Television Workshop, will speak to the need for student analysis of multi-cultural media stereotypes.

o Richard Heffner, departing head of the Motion Picture Industry's voluntary film rating system and Rutgers professor of communications and public policy, will raise the spectre of censorship as an inevitable response to excesses of media violence.

o Mary Megee, Director of the Media Education Laboratory at Rutgers and Director of the On Television project, will present media education as an essential part of public education at all levels.

The cornerstone of the project is a 13-part documentary series which examines the function and impacts of TV. Hosted by Edwin Newman, the first three programs have aired nationwide on PBS--On Television: The Violence Factor; On Television: Public Trust or Private Property; and On Television: Teach the Children. Each of the remaining programs focuses on a distinct role of TV in society--TV as a political arena, marketplace, inter-cultural exchange, interdisciplinary art, cultural inheritance, and servant to the public interest. After broadcast in prime-time, all programs are to be reformatted and modularized for video-cassette use with supporting multi-media study guides.

The Newark campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, offers a comprehensive liberal arts program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to its nearly 10,000 students. Its graduate schools supply highly trained professionals to the state and the nation in such areas as law, management, arts and sciences, criminal justice, nursing and public administration. Rutgers-Newark is ranked by US News and World Report's annual "America's Best Colleges" issue among the top 100 national universities.

\*

\*

\*

**NOTE TO NEWS EDITORS/DIRECTORS: Reporters, photographers and video crews are invited to cover the June 21 news conference at The Explorer's Club, 46 E. 70th Street, New York City. To schedule interviews or for information, call Bob Clark at Rutgers, (201) 648-5262.**

##



**Media Education Laboratory**  
Department of Visual & Performing Arts  
406 Bradley Hall ◦ 110 Warren Street ◦ Newark, New Jersey 07102  
Phone 201/648-5609 ◦ FAX 201/648-1392

## **THE ON TELEVISION PROJECT AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**

Recognizing the influence of TV upon young people in particular, and responding to the need for public education about the significance of TV's images and impacts, Rutgers University, in association with On Television, Ltd., has established a Media Education Laboratory on the Newark Campus within the Department of Visual and Performing Arts, in the College of Arts and Sciences. Through the Laboratory, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and On Television, Ltd., an independent, not-for-profit organization, are launching a national, video-based campaign for critical viewing.

The objectives of the Laboratory are to design and implement a public-interest oriented undergraduate television curriculum at Rutgers-Newark and to develop the On Television project. Students, faculty, and other members of the university community are participating in research and production of the On Television programs, whose purpose is to increase public understanding of the medium and its potential for serving the nation's educational and informational needs.

**Media literacy video-conference and documentary:** U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley and Deputy Secretary Madeleine Kunin have been invited to host a two-hour national video-conference, *On Television: The Media Literacy Movement*.

Interactive discussion via satellite and a follow-up documentary planned for prime-time broadcast on PBS will address issues covered in these five video "roll-ins":

- What is Media Literacy? Varied viewpoints on using, analyzing, and making media.
- TV and Learning. The relationship of TV viewing to students' academic success.
- Teaching Critical Viewing. Information-age skills needed by young people.
- Exemplary uses of TV for Education. Tapping the potential of TV.
- The Movement. Spreading the word.

**On Television documentary series.** The cornerstone of the project is the *On Television* documentary series, a 13-part televised examination of the functions and impacts of television. Through the power of TV itself, the series creates a public forum for the examination of vital communications issues. Hosted by Edwin Newman, the first three programs have aired nationwide on PBS to high acclaim. *On Television: The Violence Factor* aired in 1984/85 to assess the relationship of televised violence to the real-life violence escalating in American communities during the television years. *On Television: Public Trust or Private Property*, aired in 1988/89, examined the conflict arising from broadcasters' dual role as businessmen and public trustees. And the third program, *On Television: Teach the Children*, aired in 1992/93, focused on the role of TV as teacher and showed the clear influence of television upon young people's beliefs, behavior, and academic performance.

To complete this video "primer," each remaining program focuses on a distinct role of TV in society--as cultural inheritance, "electronic family," health factor, public information system, political arena, marketplace, inter-cultural exchange, interdisciplinary art, and as servant to the public interest. After broadcast in prime-time, all programs are to be reformatted and modularized for class use on video-cassette.

**Study guides.** The critical viewing message extends beyond the PBS broadcasts. For each program, a 16-page study guide summarizes key concepts and offers discussion points, group exercises, surveys, and bibliographical information. With video-cassettes of the programs, the study guides are used by colleges, high schools, and community groups. The National PTA, among other organizations, has recommended use of the *On Television* tapes and study guides in workshops for teachers and parents. Among public television stations using the tapes and guides in teachers' workshops are KVIE in California, WNIT in Indiana, and WSDE in Minnesota.

**The Media Education Sourcebook:** Used in conjunction with the *On Television* documentaries, the Media Education Sourcebook aims to help teachers introduce critical viewing skills to students. Exercises are designed to channel the informal learnings young people gain at home from watching TV into the development of critical thinking, improvement of language arts and other skills, examination of ethical issues in TV, and mastery of the tools and techniques of modern communications. Newark schools and community groups make ideal collaborators for testing these curricular elements. A substantial archive of printed, computerized, and videotaped resources amassed over the past 20 years will be used as the basis of the work. Source-books for teachers, modularized programs, and an interactive multi-media database are planned.

**Promotion:** *On Television, Ltd.*, and Rutgers University will collaborate with PBS on a promotion campaign for the documentary series and the media literacy project. The publicity will range from press kits and viewer guides to promos on PBS and commercial TV. TV and radio talk shows will provide further opportunities for promotion of the series and public discussion of the issues it treats.

**Videocassette distribution:** The *On Television* programs have enjoyed an expanding audience through videocassette showings in workshops and coursework. California Newsreel is distributing *Teach the Children* and the two previous programs in the series as a package for universities, libraries, schools, and community groups. Newsreel principals have expressed their interest in acquiring the rights to distribute all remaining programs in the series, and will pay advances against future royalties.

**Project support:** Rutgers University is providing the use of studio equipment, office space, technical and administrative services, and personnel salaries--including the full-time salary of the Executive Producer/Laboratory Director and half-time salaries of the Assistant Director and Curriculum Coordinator. Support for the *On Television* project has come from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Catholic Communication Campaign (CCC), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, the National Education Association, the Russell Charitable Trust, the L.C. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and individual contributors.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded a grant to the *On Television* Project at Rutgers University to support production of the video segments of the media literacy video-conference and documentary, and to promote the teaching of critical viewing skills. Production begins Fall, 1994.

*For further information, contact Mary Megee or John Boyer at 201/648-5609 or 212/925-5289.*

Department of Public Information  
15 Washington Street • Newark • New Jersey 07102 • 201/648-5262

**Rutgers University and On Television Project Announce  
Formation of Media Education Laboratory**

**SELECTED COMMENTS FROM NEWS CONFERENCE**

Who will have access to the new information superhighway and who will not? How can education and public service be ensured in an era of burgeoning channels of communication? These and other issues sparked debate at a news conference held at the Explorers Club in New York City on June 21, 1994, announcing start-up of The On Television Project at Rutgers University at the new Media Education Laboratory on the Newark campus.

A letter from **Frank S. Lautenberg**, U.S. Senator from New Jersey, launched the event:

*This is truly a visionary project that recognizes the increased role that television plays in our lives. Like it or not, the information age is about to overtake our society. Our television sets will soon be our computers, phones, libraries, work stations--basically our link to the world. The information superhighway, once a subject of science fiction novels, will soon be structured by Congress.*

*...It is important that Congress make sure that educational programming is a major part of the information superhighway. As a member of the U.S. Senate, I will seek to ensure that television programming will be more than just a commercial enterprise--that it will also be an educational enterprise.*

Excerpts follow from comments by **Madeleine Kunin**, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education; **Richard Heffner**, departing head of the motion picture industry's voluntary film rating system and Rutgers communications professor; journalist **Edwin Newman**; **Sherryl Browne Graves, Ph.D.**, Chair, Department of Educational Foundations at Hunter College and consultant to Children's Television Workshop; and **Mary Megee**, producer of the On Television programs, Rutgers television professor, and director of the Media Education Laboratory.

"We're looking at TV as a social institution which provides most of the information we get about all social policy issues," Megee remarked. "A primary aim of the work we are doing is to open up this discussion for public understanding and informed participation in the shaping of the information revolution."

Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey; and On Television, Ltd., a non-profit organization dedicated to public education about TV and media policy issues; are collaborating on the On Television Project, based at the Media Education Laboratory within the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at the Newark College of Arts and Sciences. The cornerstone of the project is a 13-part documentary series which examines the functions and impacts of TV. Each program focuses on a distinct role of TV in society--TV as teacher, TV as family, health factor, political arena, marketplace, intercultural exchange, interdisciplinary art, servant to the public interest. The first three programs aired nationwide on prime-time PBS. A video-conference and a documentary on the media literacy movement are also in development.

The Newark campus of Rutgers University offers a comprehensive liberal arts program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to its nearly 10,000 students. Its graduate schools supply highly trained professionals to the state and the nation in such areas as law, management, arts and sciences, criminal justice, and public administration. Rutgers-Newark is ranked by *U.S. News and World Report's* annual "America's Best Colleges" issue among the top 100 national universities.

*For more information, contact Robert Clark, Department of Public Information, 201-648-5262; or Mary Megee or John Boyer at 201-648-5609 or 212-925-5289.*

**SELECTED COMMENTS  
FROM RUTGERS UNIVERSITY/ ON TELEVISION NEWS CONFERENCE**

**On the need for critical viewing skills**

**MADELEINE KUNIN:** Television and technology are tremendous assets for improving the quality of teaching and of learning. The whole idea of accepting information without question, or accepting entertainment without question, is being rapidly replaced with interactive learning, by really using television and other media to enrich textbook learning, changing learning from a passive to a more hands-on, rich, diverse process.

There's such a powerful correlation between reading skills and television watched. A recent report on writing skills in this country demonstrated that, when children watch seven hours of television, they simply don't have time to write. So TV is a thief of time....

[TV] is not going to go away. As Marshall McLuhan pointed out some years ago, we can't shut it out or shut it off. Our challenge is to make it a force for good, for positive learning, positive behavior, as much as possible, and to believe that, with the right awareness, even very young children can become discerning viewers. And, with the help of parents and teachers, they can acquire those skills for a lifetime.

**SHERRYL BROWNE GRAVES:** The curriculum of television is very important because it's a curriculum about the social world.... Why is it that people who look like me in particular--that is, African American and female--are less likely to be on television than other racial or gender groups? Why is it that someone like me, a professor and educator, is almost never seen on television? ...Children, as they watch TV, are constantly getting messages about people. And I think we have to be concerned about what those messages are--what's present, but also what's absent--because children make sense out of the things they see.

**MARY MEGEE:** The O.J. Simpson case exemplifies the need for understanding media. Life is more than imitating art; the line is totally blurred.... Millions of viewers are "identifying" not with the hero or the victim, but with the accused... because it is O.J. who has become a member of our extended electronic family--like a cousin or a brother. He has been a presence in our living rooms; he has achieved heroic status in the commercial marketplace. This story is holding our attention and will not let go. Children (and adults) need help sorting out the meaning of this complex, emotional, multi-leveled media presentation.

Future parents are today's children. If our teachers aren't trained to teach tomorrow's parents to understand how TV works, we're going to be stuck in an endless cycle.... All around the world, except in the United States, teachers learn how to teach about the media, about the structure, the content, the images, the impacts, the politics, and the economics of the media. Every student on every level of education in Ontario, for example, will study media literacy. Whether it's integrated into the language arts curriculum, the social studies curriculum..., or woven into all school disciplines, it becomes a tool by which students can respond to television.

**On the increase of violence and obscenity on TV**

**EDWIN NEWMAN:** What we're seeing on television is part of a national problem. We see it in the press; we hear it in radio; we see it in the movies and on the stage--obscenity and profanity. And as this kind of thing establishes itself, it has to go further and further to get any effect. So you get more profanity; you get more obscenity. And when violence began to take over and be seen on television, that led to more and more violence.

**RICHARD HEFFNER:** We need to watch what is on the media surrounding us and ask, "Could these materials possibly be conducive to the good life? To decency in the upbringing of our children?" The tobacco masters say they discourage their children from smoking and the media mavens say, "I won't let my kids see what I produce, what I exhibit."

Somewhere along the line, someone has to be concerned about our children, the children of this country. That's a responsibility that is not being taken in our media-driven, free market-driven, free speech-driven society. I wish it were.... There's no end, and you go from wretched excess to wretched excess because they're competing with each other.

**SHERRYL BROWNE GRAVES:** Did we wait until the cigarette industry decided to tell us that we shouldn't smoke? No. Some people said, "You shouldn't smoke; we're going to stop it; we're going to make it uncomfortable for you; we're going to make it difficult for you." So some of us are going to have to take that role [with respect to television's excesses], and start to create a movement.

**MADELEINE KUNIN:** When the heat is on, the industry responds. When it's off, it sort of falls into its old ways. My own view is that a vigilant public is our best defense. The consumer has tremendous power in this country.... I hope that we find a way within the Constitution to back a movement against increased violence and to create a more aware viewing public with some clout. We support the kind of critical viewing skills that are being developed here.

**MARY MEGEE:** Gratuitous violence leads the news line-up every day.... It creates a way of living that holds us all hostage.... Where is the community news, the important information? What aspect of what's real are we focusing on? When we use the "lowest common denominator," sex-and-violence approach (which some people think draws viewers as a way to increase ratings), we're creating a public health hazard of enormous proportion.

### On the threat of censorship

**MADELEINE KUNIN:** I think our toughest problem is the line between freedom of expression and the harm that freedom of expression might do. That's a constant struggle. How do we do this appropriately in a country that's always supported all kinds of freedom... and has relied on a discerning public to put it all together and try to figure out what's true and what isn't? The burden of doing that in our multimedia society is obviously much greater.

**RICHARD HEFFNER:** We've always placed this question of the conflict between the impact of the media, and concerns about our traditions of free speech, in the realm of ideas. I don't think we can afford to do that any longer.... I think we have a Supreme Court now that may be coming closer to understanding that a clear and present danger to our good life, to our good society, is presented by what we see on the screen.

**MARY MEGEE:** Sensationalism and commercialized violence in the media "censor" a wealth of vital information we might otherwise receive. Media education is the required antidote.

### On media economics and public interest responsibilities

**RICHARD HEFFNER:** The real problem is that we have lost a real concern for basic American values, the values of our founders, [because of] the distortions of those values by those who have interests at heart in distorting them. As long as the numbers game goes on, there's very little that we can do.

**SHERRYL BROWNE GRAVES:** As many things as we can think of must be done simultaneously to educate parents, teachers and children, and people who produce materials; to encourage legislators to produce carrots as well as sticks; to come up with alternative economic models that might encourage broadcasters to make money over here and not make money over there. Any and all of those things should be done.

**EDWIN NEWMAN:** I think it's a matter of some interest that the BBC's output, for a good many years, has been strictly influenced by the competition of Independent Television, ITV. You can see the level of BBC programming decline as [commercial television] becomes more popular.

**MARY MEGEE:** Since 1922, nothing has been done by the U.S. government to design a financial structure for television that works for the public [as well as] for the industry.... Is there a way to lift off the commercial filter through which media messages are strained? Is there a way to separate ratings from the amount of money that media organizations make? Can we exempt children's programs from the pressure of ratings? Should we exempt news from ratings? ...Commercial television rarely self-reports; so it's left to public television to inform viewers that TV, broadcasting in particular, is a public trusteeship; that the public owns the airwaves; that stations still have responsibilities for education and public service.

# **On Television: The Media Literacy Movement**

**A National Videoconference for Education Professionals**

**Hosted by**

**The Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA**

**Coordinated and Distributed by**

**The Education Satellite Network  
of the  
Missouri School Boards Association**

**and**

**The Network for Instructional TV**

**Presented by**

**On Television, Ltd.  
388 Broadway  
New York, NY 10013**

**212 / 925-5289  
212 / 925-0772 FAX**

## INTRODUCTION

---

For educators, television is the classic "good news-bad news" story. TV is uniquely powerful in its ability to deliver an idea and convey its importance. Never before has a medium reached so many people with so many stories and pictures. Yet, most of the messages that TV delivers seem less attuned to the informational and educational needs of young people than to the commercial interests of broadcasters.

The messages aside, the medium holds us enthralled from infancy. Before entering first grade, today's five-year-olds will have spent more time in front of the TV set than they may spend later in class earning a college degree. What is TV teaching in all these hours, by intent and by default, and what are children learning? What are TV's effects on the learning process? on children's imagination and creativity? on students' ability to pay attention, their persistence in solving problems, and their performance in reading, writing, social studies, math, and science?

Although television has played a major role in American life for almost half a century, most of our academic curricula take into account neither the problems nor the opportunities that TV presents. Young people are likely to know the idioms and conventions of TV better than they know the rules of English grammar; but our instructional materials and methods ordinarily overlook the significance of students' television experiences. In *Television and America's Children: A Crisis of Neglect*, Dr. Edward Palmer asserts that we have failed to use the world's most powerful information tool to address the nation's education problems.

This failure notwithstanding, some teachers are discovering ways in which to turn television's power to their students' advantage. They are involving students in the same processes that producers use to create those compelling TV programs--reading, writing, researching, editing, analyzing, visualizing, judging.... While they are fostering critical viewing, media educators also are pioneering effective means by which to help students master the tools and techniques of modern communications.

*On Television: The Media Literacy Movement*, a national videoconference for education professionals, will feature leaders in media education presenting varied perspectives on how to channel students' TV viewing experience into experience in language arts and critical thinking. This three-hour, live, interactive program will be available to more than 30,000 schools equipped to receive satellite programming. Originating from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, the event is to be produced by On Television, Ltd., a not-for-profit organization dedicated to public education about TV, and coordinated and distributed by the Missouri School Boards Association's Educational Satellite Network and the Network for Instructional TV.

The videoconference will expand on themes introduced in *On Television: Teach The Children*, which premiered nationally in September, 1992. This PBS documentary looks at television as the nation's primary educational institution, whether or not it is intended to be. The videoconference is designed to extend and exemplify the principal message of the documentary: this nation can and should take strides to harness the power of television for education, and media literacy is the first step.

## THE VIDEOCONFERENCE

The objectives of *On Television: The Media Literacy Movement* are as follows:

- to introduce the fundamentals of media literacy;
- to share strategies for channeling students' television viewing experiences into learning the skills necessary for effective participation in society;
- to extend participation in a national effort to make critical viewing skills a priority on every level of schooling and at home.

Introducing major themes will be pre-taped video segments, some drawn from *On Television: Teach The Children*, others taped specifically for the conference.

The videoconference will address the following concerns:

- **Varied perspectives on media literacy:** What are the understandings and disciplines involved, and how can teachers and parents channel children's viewing experiences into the learning of skills essential to effective participation in society? Leading media educators present routes by which to teach the critical viewing skills that empower young people to assess the conventions of TV and its cultural, political, and economic implications.
- **The influence of TV viewing on the learning process:** Participants examine the relationship of TV viewing to students' performance in traditional disciplines such as reading comprehension, science, and mathematics and assess the under-used potential of TV to serve the educational needs of children that has led to a "crisis of neglect."
- **Exemplary uses of TV for education:** Participants assess potential applications of outstanding programs from commercial TV, public TV, cable TV, interactive computer-based programs, and TV from other countries--Britain, Japan, and Canada--and examine the differences in terms of the amount, kind, cost, and impact of worthwhile programs for young people.
- **The curriculum of television:** Examining the primary subject matter of TV's commercial curriculum--consumption, violence, sex, and anti-intellectualism--panelists suggest curricular approaches, exercises, and activities geared to help students appraise these phenomena as well as to hone their language arts and problem-solving skills. Participants inventory media literacy resources available in print and video.
- **U.S. policy for TV and education:** Participants review patterns in TV policy, from the Communications Act of 1934 to the Children's Television Act of 1990, ending with a report on what some school groups are doing to encourage station licensees to better serve the informational and educational needs of children. Participants explore ways to initiate and maintain dialogue with local stations to ensure adequate news coverage of school events and education issues, and to broaden diversity in children's programming.

## PARTICIPANTS

---

Panel members will be selected on the basis of their experience helping educators respond effectively to the challenges that television has created. Invited on-site participants will include teachers of language arts, media arts, and arts education.

**Host:** Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Ph.D., Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication, will welcome conferees and will introduce the critical viewing skills goals of the videoconference.

**Keynote**

**Speaker:** George Gerbner, Ph.D., Dean Emeritus of the Annenberg School for Communication, will give insights into "The Message behind the Message."

**Moderator:** Mary Megee, media educator and producer of the On Television programs, will introduce panel members, program segments, and conference themes.

### **Prospective Panel Members:**

Earnest L. Boyer	Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Learning
Peggy Charren	Founder, Action for Children's Television
Joan Ganz Cooney	Founder, Children's Television Workshop
Keith Geiger	President, National Education Association
Nancy Hoene	Instructional TV Director, WDSE-TV, Duluth, MN
Pat Henry	President, The National PTA
Neil Hickey	New York Bureau Chief, <i>TV Guide</i>
Edward L. Palmer	Co-founder and former VP for Research, Children's Television Workshop and author, <i>Television and America's Children: A Crisis of Neglect</i>
Ron Powers	TV Critic, formerly of CBS's <i>Sunday Morning</i>
Thomas Pyle	Chief Executive Officer, Network for Instructional TV
Mariele Rowe	Executive Director, National Telemedia Council
Jerome Singer	Family Television Research and Consultation Center, Yale University
Carter Ward	Executive Director, Missouri School Boards Association
Alan Wurtzel	Vice President for Standards and Practices, ABC
Elizabeth Thoman	Executive Director, Center for Media and Values

## PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION

*On Television: The Media Literacy Movement* will be a remarkable event, not only because of its content, but also because more than 30,000 American schools will have the opportunity to participate. Through satellite technology, the potential to expand public awareness and understanding of the need for media literacy is tremendous.

The program will be offered without charge to any school, public television station, or community group capable of receiving the satellite signal. A well-tested, computerized pre-registration system will ensure that schools are properly prepared to receive the program, and that they have the supplementary print materials.

*On Television: The Media Literacy Movement* will be transmitted from Philadelphia as a live, interactive television program. The Missouri School Boards Association's (MSBA) Education Satellite Network (ESN), which itself serves nearly 500 schools, will manage the promotion and pre-registration activities for the conference. This will include featured coverage in *SatLink*, ESN's national program guide for schools using satellite programming. *SatLink* is distributed to more than 10,000 schools under an agreement with the Star Schools Project of the U. S. Department of Education.

This videoconference will benefit from the established working relationships that On Television, MSBA, and NITV have developed with national organizations representing education professionals and parents. The following organizations, among others, have expressed their support for this live videoconference format as an effective way to stimulate innovation in American education, and will be invited to participate:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics
- The American Federation of Teachers
- The American Psychological Association
- The National Association for Family and Community Education
- The National Association for Media Education
- The National Association for Teachers of English
- The National Association of Elementary School Principals
- The National Association of Secondary School Principals
- The National Association of State Boards of Education
- The National Education Association
- The National PTA
- The National School Boards Association
- The Public Television Outreach Alliance

## PRESENTING ORGANIZATIONS

### **On Television, Ltd.**

On Television, Ltd. (OTLtd) is an independent, not-for-profit organization devoted to public education about television and telecommunications policy. The primary work has been development of *On Television*, a documentary series examining the functions and impacts of TV in society, as the core for a media literacy curriculum for teacher education.

To date, OTLtd has delivered three programs for national prime-time PBS broadcast, hosted by veteran journalist Edwin Newman. *On Television: Teach the Children*, which premiered in September, 1992, has drawn praise from television analysts and educators alike. *On Television: The Violence Factor* and *On Television: Public Trust or Private Property* have won awards from the American Film and Video Festival, the Columbus International Film Festival, and the National Telemedia Council. Support for these efforts has come from the Catholic Communication Campaign (CCC), the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Education Association (NEA), the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

In researching themes for ten additional documentaries, OTLtd has amassed a substantial archive of videotaped interviews with communications authorities, as well as an extensive collection of print and video research materials. A long-time sponsor of University internships, OTLtd has involved graduate and undergraduate students in all phases of research and production for these documentaries. Participating schools have included Boston University, Columbia University, Fordham University, Hunter College, New York University, The New School for Social Research, Pratt Institute and St. John's University. Other OTLtd activities include design and production of symposia on communications issues, notably the cablecast symposium, *Broadcasting in the Public Interest*. OTLtd also provides consultation to other television organizations and academic institutions, and participates in public forums addressing communications concerns.

### **The Missouri School Boards Association**

The Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA) is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to aid and assist boards of education in performing their lawful functions and to promote, support, and advance the improvement of public education in Missouri through local citizen control. MSBA promotes the quality of public education by providing a wide range of services to its members, by increasing the influence of school board members at the state level, and by maintaining relationships with other educational organizations and governmental authorities.

MSBA created the Education Satellite Network (ESN) to ensure that all Missouri school districts, regardless of size or location, have equal access to instructional and enrichment opportunities through high quality, satellite-delivered educational television

programs. Through ESN, MSBA has provided leadership development programs for school boards, district-level staffs, and school administrators. The network has placed special emphasis on reaching rural and suburban communities.

Begun by MSBA's Board of Directors in 1987, ESN received a grant from NTIA shortly thereafter, which assisted schools with the installation of satellite receiving equipment. In 1988 and 1989, a \$1.75 million federal Star Schools grant allowed significant expansion of ESN's programming, as well as the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment.

MSBA owns studio production facilities and a sophisticated, mobile satellite uplink. ESN currently serves more than 500 schools in thirteen states. In addition, ESN's guide to national programming for schools, *SatLink*, is distributed to more than 10,000 schools, under the Star-Schools grant. The National School Boards Association (NSBA), headquartered in the Washington, D.C., area, participates as an ESN organizational affiliate. NSBA'S Board and the NSBA Delegate Assembly have passed resolutions conferring their support and endorsement on ESN.

### **The Network for Instructional TV, Inc.**

The Network for Instructional TV, Inc. (NITV), is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1979 with the goal of developing a national network of multi-channel terrestrial microwave television systems. This network was designed to use these Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) systems to meet local educational needs by increasing both the distribution and effectiveness of electronically delivered educational materials and services. NITV has an established record of creating effective public-private partnerships to help meet educational needs.

NITV has developed effective working relationships with both national educational organizations and teachers and administrators in local school districts. As a pioneer in the field of terrestrial television delivery to schools, NITV began forging partnerships with local school districts to create regional television distribution systems. Though NITV had been founded with the goal of developing a national network, it was not until the late 1980's that the growth of commercial wireless cable systems for consumers made it possible for NITV to forge the private sector partnerships which would provide the financial impetus to make the NITV dream a reality. Through a series of skillfully negotiated operating contracts with these wireless cable firms, NITV was able to create effective educational distribution systems in some of America's largest cities.

Funding for NITV's projects comes from specific program awards and from a series of operating grants and royalties provided by commercial operators of urban wireless cable systems that provide services using excess airtime on NITV's channels in the cities in which NITV is active. This funding enabled NITV to expand its working relationships with local school systems and to position itself as a coordinated national effort to help school systems, especially in large cities, use television to leverage their limited resources.

## KEY PROJECT STAFF

---

### **Mary Megee, Executive Producer**

Mary Megee, creator of the *On Television* series and producer/writer of the first three programs, leads the production team. A television analyst and an independent producer, she incorporated On Television, Ltd., in order to provide a comprehensive televised analysis of TV's social functions. Also, she has structured a companion media literacy curriculum in print, intended for development as a tool for in-service and pre-service teacher education. As preliminary video research for the project, Ms. Megee designed and produced *Broadcasting in the Public Interest: A Humanistic Appraisal of Telecommunications Policy Issues*. This two-day symposium was cablecast live and in edited form on New York's Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter systems.

Ms. Megee's work in media education spans more than twenty years. From 1987 to 1991, she served as Director of the Television Center at St. John's University in New York, a broadcast quality post-production facility used for educational TV production as well as academic instruction. Previously, she served on faculty at New York University, Hunter College, the New School for Social Research, and the University of Maryland. As a consultant, she developed public affairs programming and conducted seminars for teachers, students, and policymakers on the use of television for education. She appears in TV and radio forums addressing public interest issues in communications.

### **John Boyer, Director of Communications**

After more than ten years of experience in public affairs television, John Boyer joined the staff of On Television, Ltd., to oversee editorial development, database development, research, and outreach activities for *On Television: Teach the Children* and successive programs planned for the series.

Earlier, Mr. Boyer was Research Director and Producer for *Inside Story*, a PBS series analyzing the news media, with Hodding Carter as Chief Correspondent. While at *Inside Story*, Mr. Boyer developed a two-part series analyzing U.S. media coverage of the Soviet Union, which won a national Emmy in 1983. He also worked on Special Editions addressing media controversies, including *Eye of the Beholder*, a one-hour documentary about religious fundamentalists threatening to boycott network television; and *Vietnam Op/Ed*, presenting and assessing conservative criticism of the award-winning PBS series, *Vietnam: A Television History*.

In addition, Mr. Boyer was Associate Producer of a WQED/Pittsburgh series, *Visions of the Constitution*, collaborating on programs concerning equality and the judiciary. At Visnews International, he worked as a news writer and producer in the New York Bureau. Mr. Boyer has taught a course on the press and the public at Hunter College, and lectured on related issues at M.I.T., New York University, and Brooklyn College.

**Jeff Thaler, Curriculum Coordinator**

Jeff Thaler has collaborated on the research, production, and editing of *On Television: Teach the Children* and its accompanying study guide. Before joining On Television, Mr. Thaler worked for Children's Television Workshop developing video versions of *Sesame Street* with accompanying study guides for use by teachers in the classroom. Earlier, he was a classroom teacher, and holds an MA degree in Elementary Education from the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Mr. Thaler has presented workshops for teachers on using and producing video resources with children, and has taught curriculum-oriented video production to elementary school students. In addition, he has been a Writer and Educational Consultant for the *Skyshapers* National Youth Fitness Program, developing print materials and public service announcements to accompany video programs in the series.

**David W. Shively, Promotion Director**

David W. Shively is a media consultant and independent producer who has pioneered the uses of television and interactive videoconferencing in the health sciences. He is currently a principal in The SME Group, which provides editorial, design, and production services for projects in publishing and television.

Mr. Shively gained national recognition as founding Director and Chief Executive of The Association of Hospital Television Networks, a consortium of more than 1300 hospitals. He served as Vice President of Programming for Health Care Telecommunications Corporation in Harrisburg. Previously Assistant Vice President at WQED/Pittsburgh and Manager of Marketing and Production for Case Western Reserve University's Health Sciences Communications Center, he has produced numerous national programs on medical and health themes, including the weekly series, *Healthcare Today*.

Mr. Shively's communications consulting practice includes such areas as interactive television and computer-based instruction. A contributing editor for *Business TV* magazine, he publishes widely on education and communications issues for health care professionals. Mr. Shively holds a bachelor's degree from Trinity College, Hartford, and an M.B.A. in Marketing and Strategic Planning from Case Western Reserve University.

## PRELIMINARY BUDGET

On Television has prepared a preliminary budget for production of *On Television: The Media Literacy Movement*. Developed in consultation with MSBA'S Education Satellite Network, the budget provides estimates for promotion, production, distribution, and project management, based on current project design. Subsequent alterations in project structure could affect overall project costs. The summary of major expense categories are as follows:

Project Staff	40,200
Promotion	30,780
Registration	8,550
On-Site Print Materials	7,340
Video Production	47,500
Studio Production	23,450
Satellite Circuit	4,830
Administration	10,350
Total:	173,000

## PRELIMINARY RUNDOWN

### *On Television: The Media Literacy Movement*

segment time	cumulative time	
5	5	Opening remarks by Dean Kathleen Hall Jamieson
10	15	Keynote presentation by Prof. George Gerbner
5	20	Video: <b>VARIED PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA LITERACY</b>
15	35	Discussion and comments by panel
5	40	Video: <b>EXEMPLARY USES OF TV FOR EDUCATION</b>
15	55	Discussion and comments
5	60	Break - call for comments from site participants
10	1:10	Phone comments from site participants and discussion
5	1:15	Video: <b>THE INFLUENCE OF TV ON THE LEARNING PROCESS</b>
15	1:30	Discussion and comments
10	1:40	Phone comments from site participants and discussion
5	1:45	Video: <b>THE CURRICULUM OF TELEVISION</b>
15	2:00	Discussion and comments
5	2:05	Additional information on resources
10	2:15	Phone comments and discussion
5	2:20	Video: <b>NATIONAL POLICY ON TV AND EDUCATION</b>
15	2:35	Discussion and comments
10	2:45	Phone comments and discussion
10	2:55	Final remarks by conference participants
5	3:00	Closing remarks by Dean Jamieson



# ON TELEVISION

A THREE PART VIDEO SERIES

ON TELEVISION:

# Teach The Children



Children ages 6-11 spend more time watching television than they do in a classroom. **Teach the Children** is the first film designed to help teachers, parents and students scrutinize television's hidden curriculum.

Intercutting clips from Saturday morning cartoons, sit-coms, and music videos with commentary by critics, scholars, and network executives, **Teach the Children** explores the values television communicates and the role models it provides. The primary lesson of television's ads, product-based cartoons and insistent stress on fashion, style, and conspicuous consumption is "you are what you buy." "Broadcasters and advertisers are ganging up on children," says Action for Children's Television founder Peggy Charren.

Other staples of the TV curriculum are sex, violence and anti-intellectualism. Edward Palmer, George Gerbner, Dorothy Singer and other scholars ex-

*"I urge anyone concerned about the influence of television on young minds not to overlook this important report."*

— **New York Daily News**

plain how heavy TV viewing contributes to aggressive behavior, shortened attention spans and diminished cognitive skills among our young.

Vice-President Al Gore observes: "We're strip mining our children's minds and we're doing it for commercial profit without any concern for the consequences for them or our society."

**Teach the Children** chronicles the continuing tensions in telecommunication policy between public service and private gain - from the watershed Communications Act of 1934 to the watered-down Children's Television Act of 1990. The U.S. is virtually the only country in the world to allow commercial interests almost unfettered access to our children's minds.

**Teach the Children** argues that the answer is education, not censorship. It shows how parents and educators can follow groups like the PTA and teach

critical viewing skills to children. Action for Children's Television demonstrates how to lobby local stations and politicians to limit commercials and to press for more educational content in children's television.

College instructors of mass communication, broadcasting, child development and education, along with media educators, school teachers, family counselors, child psychologists and parents' groups can use **Teach the Children** to explore the impact of the nation's most ubiquitous technology - television - on its most important resource - our children.

*A 16 page user's guide is included with all orders at no charge. It contains reports on recent research and legislation, a policy history, an action guide and resource list. It outlines a complete media policy module for classroom and informal study.*

*Shows how this unparalleled educational medium, could also serve as an instrument of commercial child abuse."*

— **Erik Barnouw**  
author, *Tube of Plenty*

*"A provocative summary of what we know...worth watching for all students of media."*

— **Ellen Wartella, University of Illinois**

*"A sound, comprehensive presentation useful to citizens and professionals concerned with improving children's television."*

— **Aletha C. Huston**  
University of Kansas

---

Producer: On Television Ltd.  
Director: Mary Meggee  
56 minutes, 1992  
Video rental: \$75 sale: \$195  
(Three part series: \$395)

**ON TELEVISION:**

# Public Trust Or Private Property



**Public Trust or Private Property** poses the key question underlying 50 turbulent years of U.S. communications policy.

Most viewers will be surprised to learn that they, the public, own the airwaves. But, the Communication Act of 1934 authorizes the licensing of commercial broadcasters to develop this scarce national resource in exchange for serving "the public interest, convenience and necessity."

Former Reagan FCC commissioner Mark Fowler and heads of the three networks assert that the public's interest is what interests the public; the marketplace does not need government regulation. Media reformers Henry Geller, Ralph Nader, Fred Friendly, Dr. C. Everett Parker and Senators Tim Wirth and Ernest Hollings respond that, in a democracy, information is too important simply "to be bait to get viewers to look at commercials."

*"Lays out the issues clearly and strongly..."*  
— **Bill Moyers**

**Public Trust or Private Property** tests these competing claims through three in-depth case studies. The first analyzes the merger mania sweeping the television industry resulting in the sale of all three networks. In Congressional testimony, network executives declare they will not sacrifice public service programming for increased profits. But news anchors reveal deep cuts in their budgets and pressure for more soft news, "more heat and less light," as one puts it.

The film examines license renewal through the 1963 case of WLBT in Jackson, Mississippi. WLBT refused to sell time to black candidates or to cover the Civil Rights Movement while airing Ku Klux Klan programs, even though Jackson's population was almost 50% black. After a vigorous public interest campaign, for the first and only time a station's license renewal was denied for ignoring community needs. WLBT later became the first

minority-owned television station in the country.

**Public Trust or Private Property** explains the Fairness Doctrine through the 1984 case of WTVH, a Syracuse, New York station which ran ads favoring nuclear power plant construction. A local peace group petitioned the FCC which told the station to produce a series of spots advocating the opposing viewpoint.

The only overview of U.S. television policy, **Public Trust or Private Property** is indispensable viewing for all students of Mass Communications, Broadcasting, Communications Law and Government, as well as any citizen concerned about the future of telecommunications.

*"Goes to the heart of the political and economic issues surrounding television, the owner's right to make money versus the viewer's right to diverse programming."*

— **The New York Times**

*"Not only frames the debate, but shows how viewers at home can participate...A serious effort to deal with a serious problem."*

— **Newsday**

*"An important education for America's families. If parents and teachers act on its message, television could become a valuable educational tool for young audiences."*

— **Peggy Charren**

**Action for Children's Television**

Producer: On Television Ltd.

Director: Mary Megee

56 minutes, 1988

Video rental: \$75 sale: \$195

(Three part series: \$395)

**ON TELEVISION:**

# The Violence Factor



Fistfights, shootouts, car crashes, rapes... Take your pick. Violence is ubiquitous on television, sometimes gory and gruesome, other times anti-septic and remote. This classic study remains the only documentary to examine TV violence, ask why it's so commonplace and investigate its impact on our behavior and attitudes.

Clips from action-adventure series, Saturday morning cartoons, the nightly news and MTV are interwoven with comments by Dr. George Comstock and other scholars and producers to provide a taxonomy of TV violence. Prime time programs average eight hostile acts per hour; children's shows four times as much. Violence is depicted as a normal, justified response to conflict and threat. Identification with the aggressor is encouraged; domination and submission are often equated with eroticism.

*"This is a program that every American should see."*  
— Choice

Dr. George Gerbner reviews 30 years of research and reports that heavy TV viewers perceive the world to be a meaner and more dangerous place than light viewers: "They buy more guns and more watchdogs. They are more insecure, more apprehensive, and more dependent on authority."

Network executives disagree, criticizing the research as "flawed." The head of standards and practices at ABC states, "Network guidelines prohibit the glorification of violence." **A-Team** creator Stephen Cannell defends his work as "just fantasy."

Congress has held hearings on excessive television violence ever since Sen. Kefauver convened the first inquiry in 1951. Everyone deplors the violence - and nothing ever changes. In a fascinating "circle of blame" public interest groups blame the networks, a government official blames advertisers, a media analyst blames the gov-

ernment, an ad man blames technology and a network executive blames us. "The audience," claims former NBC chairman Grant Tinker, "gets what it wants and, therefore, what it deserves."

**The Violence Factor** shows that people can make a difference. It challenges us to help program rather than be programmed by television. It encourages viewers, young and old, to be more selective and critical, to police the violent imagery television brings into our living rooms each night.

*"The networks may deny that television violence stimulates violent behavior but the people who have looked at the problem disagree. What is there to do? Watch **The Violence Factor**, for one thing, a worthwhile examination."*

— New York Times

*"A thoughtful, provocative, comprehensive, forthright documentary which challenges its audience as well as the industry. Pulls no punches."*  
— New York Daily News

*"A provocative examination of TV violence, which has become another 20th century environmental problem, like toxic waste and smog."*  
— Associated Press

---

Producer: On Television Ltd.  
Director: Mary Megee  
56 minutes, 1984  
Video rental: \$75 sale: \$195  
(Three part series: \$395)

Resolution Inc./California Newsreel

149 Ninth Street/420

San Francisco, CA 94103

(415) 621-6196

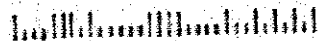
Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #11246  
San Francisco, CA

# TEACH THE CHILDREN

## THE NEW VIDEO ON KIDS & TV



GEORGE GERBNER  
DEPT COMMUNICATIONS  
UNIV PENNSYLVANIA  
PHILADELPHIA PA 19104



## THE ISSUES

Does TV teach,  
or is it just  
entertainment?

What is the  
curriculum of TV?

Why have we  
failed to apply  
the power of TV  
to the nation's  
educational needs?

What special  
obligations do  
broadcasters have  
to serve  
the child audience?

Should commercial TV  
provide kids more  
informational  
programs?

Should public TV  
be solely responsible  
for educational  
programming  
in the U.S.?

Why is the U.S.  
behind other nations  
in media education,  
or "media literacy"?

Why has  
the National PTA  
launched a major  
campaign for  
children's TV?

What can the  
concerned viewer do  
to harness the power  
of TV for education?

What potential  
do new technologies  
hold for increasing  
choice and diversity?

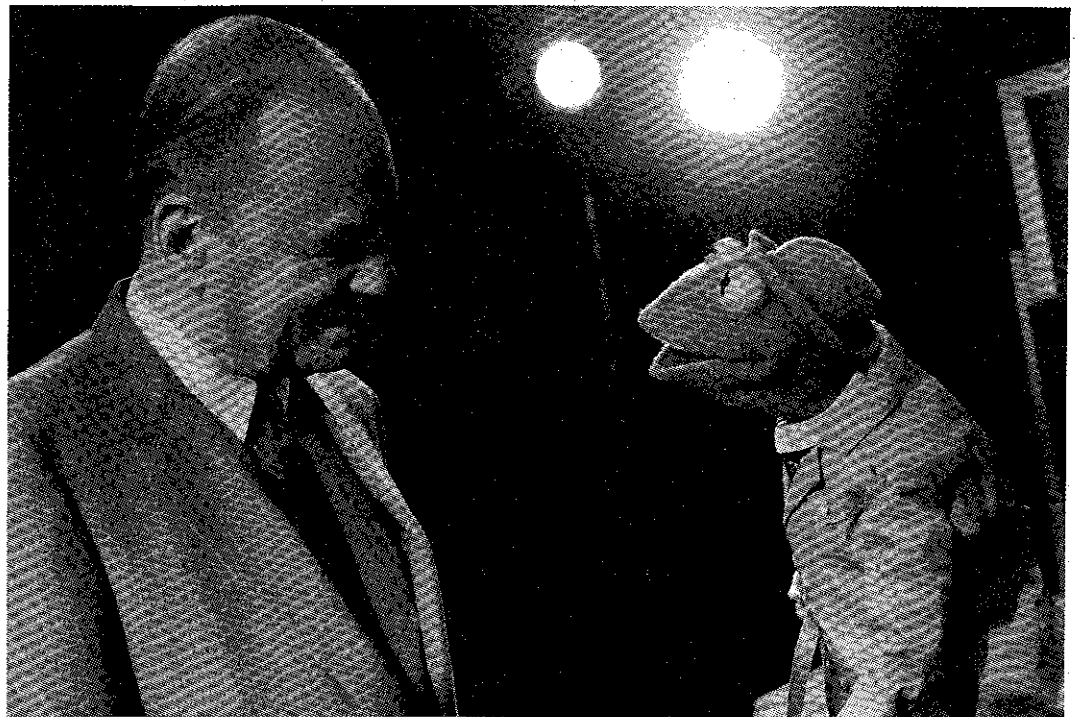
Have Commercial Values Subverted  
Educational Values in U.S. TV?

Study  
Guide

# ON TELEVISION

ON TELEVISION, LTD., a not-for-profit media education organization, presents the PBS special

# TEACH THE CHILDREN



Host Edwin Newman discusses the issues with guest Kermit the Frog, appearing in cameo.

**ON TELEVISION: TEACH THE CHILDREN** looks at TV as the nation's primary educational institution, whether by intent or by default. This hour-long PBS documentary examines TV's role as a teacher and assesses the content and impact of TV's predominant curriculum.

**American television, a "crisis of neglect"?** The primary courses within the TV curriculum, analysts assert, teach expensive lessons in consumption, larded with images of sex, violence, and anti-intellectualism. On occasion, television enhances classroom learning, but TV programming in the U.S. ordinarily consists of "entertainment" fare. In fact, 20 percent of all air time on commercial TV consists of advertising. This preference for commerce over culture has resulted in "a crisis of neglect," according to Dr. Edward Palmer, former vice president for research at Children's Television Workshop.

# How Can TV Best Serve the Educational Needs of Children?

The Communications Act of 1934 sets forth the duties and obligations of U.S. broadcast television stations to serve the educational needs of the community. Specifically, as a prerequisite for using the public airwaves, the Act requires broadcasters "to serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity."

**"the public interest,  
convenience, and  
necessity"**

But this language is imprecise, leaving the exact manner in which to satisfy these requirements to the individual interpretation of the

broadcasters themselves. Because so few viewers are aware of television's service obligations, our efforts to hold broadcasters accountable have been limited and sporadic.

Approximately every 10 years since the inception of the Communications Act, Congress and the Federal Communications Commission have attempted to define broadcasters' requirements in terms of the quantity and kind of programs most necessary for informed citizenship. Unfortunately, to date, these efforts have failed to yield any specific directives. Yet, despite the imprecise wording of the legislation, the National PTA and other organizations are using the Children's Television Act of 1990, and its clear intent, as a vehicle by which to press broadcasters for more and better programs for young viewers.

Through TV programs and commercials, Americans receive most of the information we get about all other social institutions—government, school, church, and even the family. Because the medium commands the highest credibility of all information sources—more than parents, teachers, and books—it is imperative that young people understand the many functions of TV and its impact on society. Despite our technological achievements, the United States is lagging far behind other developed countries in media education. A growing movement is now underway to integrate media education into the basic school curriculum.

Television uses multimedia techniques to make complex subject matter more vivid and accessible. New laws governing these new delivery systems are being proposed, yet questions remain: What provisions are being made to ensure that these systems will serve the educational and informational needs of the public? How can we bridge the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor? As Edwin Newman pointedly asks at the conclusion of the program: "All of us are the children of television, its lifelong students. Are you going to become involved in the programming of television, or are you going to sit back and let television program you?"

## About this Guide

This study guide for *ON TELEVISION: TEACH THE CHILDREN*, a PBS documentary that premiered nationwide in 1992, suggests ways in which teachers and parents may further public understanding of our society's use of television. Using the guide you can facilitate discussion, aid in teaching about critical television viewing skills, and share some ideas about how to become more involved in the programming of television.

Statements from the program reintroduce its themes, while "fact boxes" provide supplemental information. The discussion questions (Qs) should help you provoke debate and pursue in greater depth the public interest issues central to this program—particularly those regarding broadcasters' obligations to children. Most importantly, the exercises are offered as models for original activities you may tailor to the interests of the people closest to you.

I would stress that critical viewing involves understanding the political and economic bases of TV, as well as assessing the social implications of TV's messages. It also involves a mastery of the tools and techniques of modern media, starting with a letter-to-the-editor.

We're interested in learning about the success of any activities you may undertake in helping other viewers, young or old, understand some aspect of "how television works." Please let us hear from you. See page 16 for our address.

Mary Megee  
Media Educator and Producer



## INDEX

*This guide is organized according to the themes and issues addressed in the program.*

ALL TV TEACHES	Page 3
THE CURRICULUM OF TELEVISION	4
TV AND LEARNING: <i>The Research</i>	6
A CRISIS OF NEGLECT	7
PROMISES, PROMISES: <i>A 60-Year History of National Policy for Educational and Children's Programming</i>	8
THE CHILDREN'S TV ACT AND BEYOND	10
WHAT CAN THE VIEWER DO?	11
EDUCATION FOR MEDIA LITERACY	12
EXEMPLARY USES OF TV FOR EDUCATION	14
ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT	15
ABOUT ON TELEVISION	16

# ALL TELEVISION TEACHES



**Edward Palmer, Ph.D., Author, TELEVISION AND AMERICA'S CHILDREN:** "Television definitely is teaching all the time, just like parents are teaching all the time, not just when they think they are. It does more educating than the schools and all of our institutions of higher learning thrown together."

**Jerome Singer, Ph.D., Yale University:** "Parents have to realize that there is a stranger in your house. If you came home and you found a strange man...teaching your kids to punch each other, or trying to sell them all kinds of products, you'd kick him right out of the house. But here you are; you come in and the TV is on; and you don't think twice about it."



**Jim Henson, Producer/Creator of The Muppets** "Television teaches a great deal.... It teaches vocabulary; it teaches the way the rest of the world looks, the way people talk; it teaches them the world outside of their house.... And so, television basically is teaching, no matter whether you want it to teach or not."

**Dorothy Singer, Ed.D., Yale University:** "Everything that comes on television is educating in the broadest sense of the word—everything that you're exposed to for so many hours a day. And, remember, American children are watching about five hours a day. You have to be learning something."



## Does TV Teach, Or Is It Just Entertainment?

**Q.** Dr. George Gerbner, of the Annenberg School for Communication, calls entertainment "the most powerful educational force in any culture." Because we are not judging the information we enjoy, we integrate it more readily into our framework of knowledge. When Dr. Gerbner says, "Entertainment is the information people seek when they don't seek any information," what does he mean?

**Q.** A viewer reports learning the Crest toothpaste commercial at age six: "...Crest has been shown to be an effective decay preventive dentifrice that can be of significant value when used in a conscientiously applied program of oral hygiene and regular professional care." In your opinion, did this viewer expand her vocabulary, or did she "buy" the advertiser's message? Cite support for your opinion.

**Q.** Sometimes incidental learning from TV seems frivolous, or even destructive. At other times what's learned can be life-saving. Consider the child who saw the Heimlich maneuver used on TV, then saved his sister from choking. What other kinds of public service messages might writers include in scripts for TV dramas or cartoons?

**Q.** On TV, what is the difference between "intentional" or "direct" teaching and "unintentional" or "indirect" teaching? For instance, when Kermit the Frog presents the word/concept BETWEEN—"the Ping-Pong ball, the doughnut, and the phonograph record, and the top of the table are *between* me and one of the ugliest monsters I've ever seen"—what is taught intentionally, and what may be learned incidentally?

## Discuss Viewing Habits With Your Children

1. Children 6 to 11 watch an average of 26 hours a week. Before they get to first grade they will have spent as much time watching TV as they may later spend in class during four years of college. How many hours a week do you watch TV, and how many do you spend in school?

2. Most viewers are convinced they don't learn anything from television. Then there's the viewer who reported, "I learned everything I know from television." Describe something you learned from television that you did not learn elsewhere. Describe something you learned from your parents or school rather than from TV.

3. When asked, "How do you spell relief?", most American adults answer, "R-O-L-A-I-D-S!" Often heard in conversation are phrases such as "Where's the beef?" and "Sock it to me!"—"Not!" Who are your favorite TV characters? What words or slogans have you picked up from them? What about fashions or hair styles?



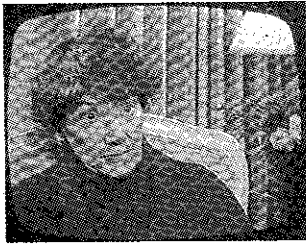
## Scholar Calls TV World's Most Influential Educational Institution

As early as 1960, Canadian literary scholar Marshall McLuhan wrote that, just as the wheel is an extension of the foot, television is an extension of the human brain. Because it reaches so many people at the same time, he asserted, TV should be regarded as "the central nervous system" of the body politic. He further observed, "In the 19th century, the knowledge inside the classroom was higher than the knowledge outside. Today it is reversed. The child knows that, in going to school, he is in a sense interrupting his education."

# THE CURRICULUM

## Lessons in Consumption

**Peggy Charren, Founder, Action for Children's Television:** "The advertisers and broadcasters are ganging up on children, manipulating them with the worst advertising we have in this country...; young children really don't understand that we permit people to say things that are exaggerations about products."



**Squire Rushnell, former Vice President, ABC-TV Children's Programming:** Advertising will always promote consumption, and I think that the audience will always need to be discerning...about what the limitations are on consumption."



**Q.** Just as school offers lessons in core subject matter—English, math, and social studies—TV gives lessons in basic subject matter as well. The abundant and repeated messages on TV (20 percent of all air time) constitute a parallel, but different, curriculum. In what ways are school and TV curricula alike? In what ways do they differ?

**Q.** Broadcaster Squire Rushnell advises viewers to be discerning about TV advertising. What kinds of questions might a discerning viewer ask about the content, intent, and effect of an ad? Because young children are unlikely to ask such questions, what kinds of precautions, if any, should broadcasters and parents take?

**Q.** Dale Kunkel, Ph.D., testified in Congress that all TV advertising aimed at children is inherently unfair, because young children cannot differentiate "commercial speech" from "editorial speech." Why, then, are there commercials during children's programming? Could broadcasters provide children's programming commercial-free? Why or why not?

**Q.** Consider the plight of the middle-income father who spent \$1,000 on Ninja Turtle toys. Why are products associated with toy-based programs, or "program-length commercials," so popular? In addition to cost, what other factors should parents consider when their children demand certain products?

**Q.** As Dorothy Singer says, "Television tells us what we really need, even if we don't need it." What devices do TV ads use to persuade us that a certain product can make us more popular, more beautiful, more powerful? What kinds of problems emerge when young people feel they need items, such as \$150 sneakers, which their families can't afford?

**EXERCISE: Tracking the Ads. What or Who is Being Sold?** Track TV ads during an hour of viewing by dividing a page into 4 columns. List **PRODUCT NAME AND KIND** (food, health, beauty, car, toy, event...); **TECHNIQUE** (implication of love, power, popularity...); **CAST** (age, sex, and wealth of characters and target audience); **NEED** (How helpful or harmful is the product, to whom? How much does it cost compared to other brands?) Tally the number of ads of each kind and summarize your findings about them.

## Sex

**VIEWER, New York:** "What do they see? They see bimbo blondes, or they see Marlboro men. Constantly this is piped into your house, eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours a day. We have images and stereotypes just so constantly presented to all people. And it's not just the children. I think it influences everybody."



**VIEWER, Pennsylvania:** " [Young people] have learned to be very flip about violence and sex, and drinking and pregnancy and AIDS, and all of that. They're very flip about it. It's a shame that they can't get a more accurate picture of it from television. Television makes anything seem normal."



**Q.** How is sexual innuendo used in TV advertising? How might an ad imply that a man who buys a certain car or aftershave lotion is powerful or otherwise attractive to women, or that a certain brand of jeans or perfume will fulfill a woman's romantic dreams? What unrealistic expectations may result from viewers' exposure to such ads?

**Q.** The anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote that TV drama combining sex and violence causes greater damage than drama using either element singly. What ideas about love, sex, and power are conveyed when the hero seduces or conquers, then injures or kills a female villain? How might such portrayals affect adolescents' attitudes toward rape and other physical abuse?

### EXERCISE: How Much Sex Do Teens See on TV?

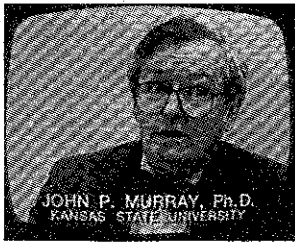
A 1992 Planned Parenthood study shows that, in a typical TV season, the average adolescent views 14,000 instances of sexual contact or sexual innuendo in TV ads and programs. Watch a soap opera and count such instances during the program and ads. How many of those instances make any reference to emotional and physical health consequences? What conclusions might a teenage viewer draw? (For the record, soap operas average 35 romantic encounters per hour.)

### EXERCISE: Charting the Curriculum

In one hour of television, catalogue the recurrence of each theme that coincides with the schools' curriculum. For the same hour, on a separate page, chart the recurrence of themes in TV's curriculum—consumption, sex, violence, and anti-intellectualism. Note the name and format of the program or ad; describe the characters involved; summarize the action. Evaluate the hour in terms of your original expectation and the number and types of incidents documented. Summarize the primary messages conveyed in the hour, comparing the educational and commercial values presented.

# OF TELEVISION

## Violence



**John P. Murray, Ph.D., Kansas State University:** "Using violence to amuse ourselves is a very dangerous game.... We need to deal effectively with violence rather than incorporate it as a mainstay of our amusement."



**Joseph DiGenova, former U.S. Attorney:** "We are underscoring in the way we communicate through the mass media all kinds of values that are inconsistent with obeying the law, with trying to fit in and be part of a greater whole for the good of the greater number. We are almost destroying ourselves with the messages we're sending out."

**Q.** The scientific community concurs that the primary effects of viewing violent programming, fear and desensitization, predispose viewers to tolerate aggression against themselves and others. In addition, the acts demonstrated become part of viewers' "behavioral repertoire." Does such content benefit viewers? Does it advance the commercial interests of TV managers?

**Q.** John P. Murray, Ph.D., considers cartoon violence more dangerous than the violence in action-adventure programs for adults. Why does the use of violence in a "humorous" context suggest that violence may not cause harm? When the Roadrunner gets flattened by a steamroller, and then bounces back to life, what might young children conclude about the likelihood of physical harm?

### EXERCISE: What's the Motivation?

Watch an hour of action-adventure. Chart the number and kind of aggressive acts you see, both physical and verbal, noting program name, time, station, and producer. For each act, jot down (1) the kind of aggression, (2) what motivated it, (3) how it enhanced the story, (4) its dramatic effect, (5) how the conflict could have been handled differently. Write a letter sharing your observations with the station's head of programming.

## Anti-Intellectualism

**Christina Santiago, Teacher** "Usually the teachers are portrayed having no control over the children, just imparting knowledge that's not important, and making school seem like a waste of time—that you could be somewhere else having a better time doing other things."



**Q.** TV critic Ron Powers calls the portrayal of education and educators on television "shameful, bordering on decadent." When teachers are shown in a negative light, what characteristics are attributed to them? When teachers are shown as competent and caring, what characteristics are attributed to them? How can TV portrayals of teachers affect the attitudes of students, parents, and teachers themselves about school? About teaching as a career choice?

**Q.** "The more they watch television, the less [young people] want to be a scientist," concludes Dr. George Gerbner, summarizing his findings. If scientists are portrayed as older, strange, solitary, and subject to constant danger, what attitudes are young viewers likely to form about entering the science professions? How often do real scientists appear as guests on talk shows and TV news, compared to appearances by rock stars and actors? Why might a TV news director run a crime story rather than report on a scientific breakthrough?

### EXERCISE: Education in the News

Watch a week's worth of local news broadcasts, noting every reference to schools, teachers, and education. How many reports center on violent events? How many center on improprieties or crimes by teachers and administrators? How many report exemplary teaching or achievements by students and teachers? How many inform community members of PTA meetings and other school events? Analyze the results and report them in (a) an article in the school newspaper, (b) letters to the editors of the local newspapers, (c) letters to the managers of local TV stations, (d) a video press release for community access cable TV, or (e) all of the above!

## A Public Health Issue: The Link Between TV Viewing and Violent Crime

The more a child watches TV violence, the more likely he is to commit homicide as an adult, according to Dr. Brandon Centerwall, a Seattle psychiatrist. His corroborating research, conducted in the United States, Canada and South Africa, compares homicide and TV viewing statistics *before and after each nation's first TV generation reached adolescence.*

In the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dr. Centerwall notes that murder among white Americans in the U.S. and Canada nearly doubled between 1950, the inception of popular TV, and 1975. The biggest surge occurred after 1965, as the first generation of TV-reared children reached adolescence. Similarly, between 1975 and 1987, when South Africa's first TV generation came of age, murders there more than doubled. Dr. Centerwall sees the long-term curriculum of TV violence for

children as a causal factor in half of the homicides in the U.S. each year—or about 10,000 deaths.

Supporting these findings is the research of Dr. Leonard Eron, chairman of the American Psychological Association's Commission on Violence and Youth, in a 30-year study of 400 individuals. Those who viewed the most violent programs at age eight were most frequently involved as adults in criminal arrests, spouse and child abuse, traffic accidents, and drunken driving.

Media violence alone cannot account for antisocial behavior, Dr. Eron states: "The current level of interpersonal violence has certainly been boosted by the long-term effects of many persons' childhood exposure to a steady diet of violence." Like Dr. Centerwall, Dr. Eron advocates broad-based education about public health implications of TV violence.

# THE RESEARCH: TV AND LEARNING

**Ron Powers, TV Critic:** "We have a whole heritage in America that depends upon...an understanding of the printed word, an understanding of our record... It has been sort of wiped away by this falsely soothing and gratifying, time-present medium of television, and I think we're paying a heavy price for this."



**Jerome Singer, Ph.D., Yale University:** "Television...creates a whole different way of thinking. ... Because of the tremendous amount of material presented, and the rapidity..., you don't process it very well. As a result, we find that children who watch less television actually seem to have a better knowledge of the world and world information."



## What Does the Research Show?

Heavy television viewing tends to impoverish a child's imagination, says Dr. Dorothy Singer of Yale University. **Children who are very heavy television viewers are the least imaginative in their stories and language.** "They are simply following the television line", she says. "Good guy, bad guy. Hit each other. That's the end. Good guy wins." Here are some additional findings reported by the National Institute for Mental Health.

**Unmediated viewing of TV tends to inhibit children's ability to communicate ideas through language, and impedes their ability to process the printed word into image, sound, and meaning.**

**Children who grow up watching TV have difficulty adjusting their eye focus from the TV screen to the linear, printed page.** Heavy TV viewing is linked to restlessness, anxiety, and aggressiveness.

**Children below the age of five don't readily distinguish between ads and other programming.** They learn to want what is shown, regardless of need or family income.

**Children who watch LESS TV, and whose parents foster reading at home, score higher on achievement tests.** The average 10-year-old knows more beer brands than presidents' names.

**Children "believe" TV's messages more than they do their parents or teachers, and therefore reflect the behaviors and attitudes prevalent in popular TV—including a negative attitude toward school.**

## Exercise: "Can We Talk?"

"Winston tastes good, like a cigarette should." In the 1950s, this motto drew hundreds of letters from viewers asking the sponsor to correct his grammar ("as a cigarette should"). When the sponsor declined, many predicted the end of the English language. Keep a notepad near your TV set. Whenever you hear a grammatical error, write it down, noting the source and context. Keep a list of nontraditional spellings and/or misspellings that appear on TV; e.g., "PURR-TENDERS," "DIET RITE," "MILLER LITE." Keep a separate list of slogans from TV that have become popular; e.g., "Can we talk?" **To follow up, write a letter to the producer of the program in which an irregularity occurs, or write an editorial about the effects of TV on spelling and language.** (Remember to proofread carefully!)



**Dewitt F. Helm, Jr., President, Assoc. of National Advertisers:** "I haven't seen any empirical evidence anywhere that non-deceptive, accurate, truthful advertising is harmful to children."

## The Literacy Dilemma

New York University's Neil Postman decries TV's effect upon literacy: "As we move into this imagistic culture of short duration, dynamic, and amusing images", he says, "we have a population that becomes pacified, that is no longer capable of...sustained reflection and analytical thought that is characteristic of literate cultures, where typography is vital to every day's functioning."

Statistics bear this out. It is generally agreed that 20 to 30 million adults cannot read, and another 30 to 40 million are only marginally literate. That doesn't include those who can read but have become *aliterate*, meaning they choose not to. At this rate, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*, the U.S. could enter the next century with "a virtually untrainable pool of 90 million illiterate citizens." The implications of this for U.S. worker competitiveness in the global economy are dire, as is the prospect of millions of dysfunctional adults unable to effectively support and govern themselves.

## Caution: Children Practicing TV!

*Dr. Bernard Friedlander, of the University of Hartford, says children have no backlog of experience to give them perspective on the adult world they see daily on TV. For kids, he says, TV is society. In an average household, TV is on for seven hours daily, and kids are soaking it all in from day one.*

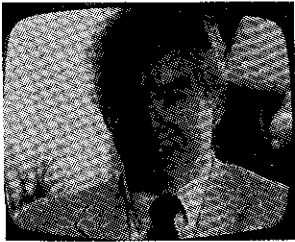
*Even when they don't understand every word, children are learning from TV. Ads build "unfulfillable expectations," Dr. Friedlander says, while the programming wrapped around them shows expedient ways to get what's advertised. Don't be surprised, he adds, when children violate laws and other people to get what TV teaches them to want. They're simply practicing their TV lessons.*

## Linking the Findings With Regulatory Policies

Scientists agree that TV violence viewing can lead to violent crime. How, then, should regulators respond? In Canada, 14-year-old Virginie Lariviere is petitioning the government to require on-air warnings that gratuitous violence on TV is hazardous to public health, to limit TV violence to programs shown after 11 p.m., and to impose fines on stations airing gratuitous violence before that hour.

Ms. Lariviere, whose sister was murdered by teenagers copying a crime they viewed the night before in a TV movie, suggests that fees from commercial broadcasters support non-commercial, public service programming and agencies that aid victims of violent crime. So far, she's collected more than a million signatures on the petition. Would you sign? What alternatives would you recommend?

# A CRISIS OF NEGLECT

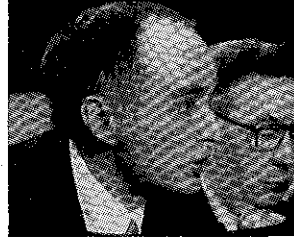


**Edward Palmer, Ph.D.:** "Everybody in the country is wringing hands about the dropout rate, our competition internationally, and how much we need to attend to our nation's educational problems. And here we are, neglecting to use the most powerful tool around by which to do that."

**Squire Rushnell, former VP, Children's Programming, ABC-TV:** "We're the only country in the world where television does not treat children with the kind of special care, with mandates of programming of a positive nature, that must be done for children."



**Robert Wright, President and CEO, NBC:** "There are good broadcasters and there are bad broadcasters. There are those that have an ability and an interest in educating, serving, and informing the public, and then there are those that don't have much of an interest."



**Lloyd Morrisett, President, The Markle Foundation:** "As a nation, we have not dedicated ourselves to using broadcasting to...create a learning society that will help us achieve the national goals that we all applaud."

**Q.** Dr. Edward Palmer says commercial TV's primary activity is "attracting viewers—whatever that takes—and selling those viewers to advertisers." Whose interests should come first, citizens' or television companies'? What ethical questions arise when an industry with a unique power to help children learn limits its subject matter to that which best serves its own commercial interests?

**Q.** Consider NBC Chairman Robert Wright's point that, in commercial TV, it's the advertising that pays for the programming. If the networks were to run educational programs for children, would advertisers decline to purchase time on those shows? Can stations and networks make more money from ads placed during adult programs? What values other than profit should be considered?

**Q.** Both the television industry and the FCC under Presidents Reagan and Bush have argued that special requirements for children are unnecessary, that the marketplace will provide adequate programming, without regulation. Has the marketplace adequately served children's needs? Do most children have access to cable TV and video cassettes? Should access to substantive programming be the right of all children?

**Q.** Lloyd Morrisett, president of the Markle Foundation, told Congress in 1983 that it is economic folly to overlook the cost efficiency of using TV for education. **Less than a penny a day per child would markedly improve TV programs for children, yet our nation's support for public television is woefully inadequate.** "There can be no education policy", he said, "without an effective and coordinated telecommunications policy." If commercial TV does not provide diversity and quality in children's programming, and public TV has insufficient funds to supply such programs, what options are open to government?

**Q.** Without dictating content, should government define how much educational programming stations must provide? What is "a reasonable amount"? Who should judge? Whose fault is it that the power of television has not yet been applied to the educational needs of the nation? Who is responsible for harnessing the power of TV for education and channeling it to support the goals of the schools?

**Note:** In 60 years, even Congress has not come up with all the answers to the above questions; but it's important to ask and to ponder these issues anew.

## A Quid Pro Quo for Kids?

Dr. Nolan Bowie of Temple University calculates that, by age 18, today's youth will have ingested 400,000 commercials for all manner of products, from spaghetti sauce to soap suds. In 1990, the average TV station raked in \$1.8 million from children's advertising, more than 10 percent of total station revenue. According to *Advertising Age*, children ages 4 to 12 comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population and make or influence purchases totaling about \$140 billion per year.

Although regarded as a valuable "market," children do not seem to be considered an important segment of the viewing public. Less than one percent of commercial TV time is devoted to children's educational needs.

Since children comprise more than one tenth of the viewing public, should TV stations devote a proportionate amount of air time to quality children's programming? Should such programs help children cope with TV's commercial fare?

## U.S. Students Low in Math and Science, High in Television Viewing

U.S. students ranked near the bottom in science and math learning compared with students from 19 other developed nations, according to 1992 International Assessment of Educational Progress tests. The tests showed U.S. students scoring consistently lower than Asian students. The largest gap was in math, where Americans scored an average of 58 percent at age 9 and 53 percent at age 13; and South Koreans scored an average of 75 percent at age 9 and 73 percent at age 13.

In science learning, U.S. 13-year-olds ranked 13th among students tested in 20 countries. Students from Japan and Germany, usually higher achievers, were not tested.

American students who watched the most TV scored lower than light viewers. Attitudes also affected performance. In Asia, scholarship is admired, says Gregory Anrig, president of Educational Testing Service. "In the U.S.," he adds, "we call our best students 'nerd' or 'dweeb'." As a nation, I think we have conflicting feelings about people who are smart, and as parents, we send conflicting messages to our children about being smart."

Another difference between U.S. and South Korean approaches is that South Korea uses "the world's most powerful teaching tool" to advance its national education goals. Korean television broadcasts daily math and science programs for parents and children to view together at home.

# PROMISES

## Highlights in U.S. Practices and Policies

**1920s** Visionaries, amateurs, and entrepreneurs develop radio technology. Programming is invented as a way to sell radio sets. To overcome the chaos of overlapping radio signals, Congress passes Radio Act of 1929.

**1930s** Although promising a "University of the Air," broadcasters fill the airwaves with entertainment and advertisements. Responding to complaints of overcommercialization, Congress drafts a new law. School, church, and labor leaders rally behind the "Wagner-Hatfield Amendment," which proposes to reserve 25 percent of the spectrum for non-profit educational and cultural use. Opposing the measure, broadcasters initiate educational programs and tout radio's new offspring, television, as "a window on the world," "a brilliance in the sky." Establishing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Congress passes the Communications Act of 1934—without the troublesome education amendment.

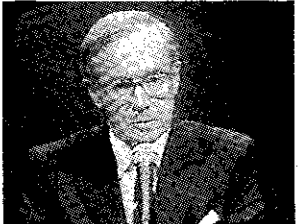
**1940s** Radio advertising continues to boom. In 1946, FCC issues "The Blue Book" on broadcasting standards, citing broadcasters' failure to deliver on their promises. Broadcasters accuse the FCC of trying to censor the airwaves; Congress does not enforce the standards. In the late 40s, popular television begins, offering cultural and public affairs programs for adults and daily morning and afternoon programs for children. Almost everyone wants TV, especially kids.

**1950s** During this decade, almost everyone gets TV. The Ford Foundation funds National Educational Television (NET), which begins to bicycle around a number of programs to non-profit stations. On commercial TV, advertising revenue soars and cultural programming fades. By the mid-50s, westerns and crime dramas dominate prime time. Under Sen. Estes Kefauver, Congress assesses the effects of TV violence. Government officials reprimand producers for gross deceptions in popular quiz shows and remind broadcasters that their First Amendment rights are not absolute. Networks drop the quiz shows and add documentaries in prime time.

**1960s** FCC Chairman Newton Minow calls commercial TV "a vast wasteland" and threatens to deny license renewal if broadcasters do not fulfill their obligations to serve the public interest. "Money-madness" continues as, to increase profits, the networks cut children's programs from weekdays. The Saturday morning "ghetto" is awash with cartoons (made originally for adults) and a glut of advertisements targeting children. This bonanza for broadcasters yields little value for young viewers. As a partial antidote, an act of Congress establishes the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1967. Despite recommendations by the Carnegie Commission for the Future of Public Broadcasting, government fails to plan for PBS's long-term support. In 1968, Joan Ganz Cooney creates Children's Television Workshop and begins research for *SESAME STREET*, the first major PBS series. The same year, with other parents, Peggy Charren founds Action for Children's Television (ACT) and begins to lobby broadcasters and government for improvements in children's TV.



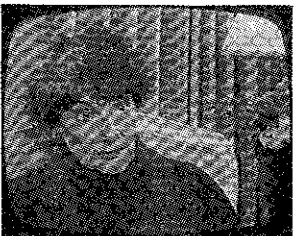
**Sen. Clarence Dill:** [D-Washington] "When we wrote the Communications Act [of 1934], we had not then foreseen the fact that radio stations and television stations were going to become devoted to making money rather than to serving the people."



**Newton Minow:** [former FCC Chairman; 1961 speech] "...Sit down in front of your own television set when your station goes on the air. Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. ...What you will have observed is a vast wasteland."



**George Heinemann:** [former V.P. for Children's Programming, NBC-TV] "Without the pressure from Washington, without the pressure from the public...the bean counters and the bookkeepers took over, and we really didn't do any significant programming from then on in."



**Peggy Charren:** [founder, Action for Children's Television] "We can go back to the letter of the law and say, "Hey, you're supposed to be educating in return for using that license."

**Q.** Shortly after passage of the Communications Act of 1934, CBS Chairman William Paley assured FCC officials that his network would supply generous amounts of educational programming, and would devote no more than two percent of its air time to commercials. Almost 60 years later, CBS, NBC and ABC devote about 20 percent of their air time to ads—and less than one percent to education. What happened to those early promises? What do they mean today?

**Q.** Broadcasters continue to argue that specific regulatory requirements violate their First Amendment rights—although they censor by omission most educational and public affairs programs that do not promise profits. What is the difference between freedom of speech for broadcasting companies and for individual citizens? Between a broadcaster's First Amendment rights and those of a newspaper? What about the First Amendment rights of children?

**Q.** Radio operators in the 1920s, TV operators in the 30s, and cable operators in the 70s assured the public its educational needs would be well-served. In the 1990s, media conglomerates are making the same promises about video and data services delivered through fiber optics and other technologies. Should these new operators be required to serve "the public interest, convenience, and necessity?" Why or why not? How can they be held to their promises?

# PROMISES

## Affecting Television and Education

**1970s** ACT petitions the FCC to ban all advertisements aimed at children, including selling by program hosts, and to set standards for children's programming. In hearings by Senator John Pastore, Peggy Charren testifies about the relationship of TV's commercialism to violence on TV and the rise in crimes by juveniles. The feeling of impending regulation moves network officials to develop exemplary programs such as *Go*, *30 Minutes*, *In the News*, *Schoolhouse Rock*, and *Afterschool Specials*. This golden age lasts until 1974, when the FCC issues voluntary guidelines on children's TV rather than rules, per se. Suddenly the networks withdraw the children's shows. In 1979, the FCC issues a five-volume report calling for remedial action, charging that TV stations have all but ignored the guidelines and have failed to serve children's needs.

**1980s** A new decade ushers in President Ronald Reagan and an era of "deregulation"; FCC Chairman Mark Fowler cuts away "unnecessary and burdensome rules." Finding in 1983 that broadcasters provide only 61 minutes a week of educational programming for children, then-Representative Tim Wirth introduces the proposed Children's Television Education Act, which would require every station to provide one hour each day of educational programming for children. Supported by educators but not by broadcasters, this proposal never comes to a vote.

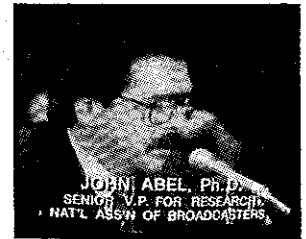
Commercial TV profits reach new heights; one ratings point means a million dollars gained or lost. CBS cancels *CAPTAIN KANGAROO*, the last weekday series for children. Overlooking the arguments made by educators in a succession of hearings, the FCC removes all restrictions on children's programming and declares that the marketplace will serve the needs of children. ACT takes the FCC to court, and the court instructs the FCC to reconsider. (Reconsidering later, the FCC again found no need to set standards for children's programming.) In 1988, ACT, industry leaders, and Congress agree on the pending Children's Television Act, a compromise version of the 1983 bill, which does not require any specific amount of educational programming. To everyone's surprise, President Reagan pocket-vetoes the bill, citing First Amendment concerns. In 1989, all parties return to Congress and new hearings ensue.

**1990s** Both houses of Congress pass the Children's Television Act of 1990. Withholding his signature, President George Bush reluctantly allows the bill to become law. This law limits the number of commercial minutes in children's programs and requires broadcasters to serve the educational and informational needs of children; however, it does not define that requirement. Granting a request by the National Association of Independent Television Stations, the FCC delays full enforcement until January, 1992—after the lucrative Christmas season. After 22 years of lobbying for children, ACT closes its doors. The National PTA and other citizens' organizations take up the fight for quality in children's TV.

## GROUP EXERCISE: Rotating Roles

There are two ways of doing this exercise—a group of six persons debating before an audience, or all in attendance dividing into six-member debate groups. At each debate table are placed six identity cards: NETWORK EXECUTIVE, ADVERTISER, PRODUCER, CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE, GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE, and MEDIATOR. Participants choose their identity and respond to a theme selected by the mediator, who keeps the discussion moving with additional questions and comments as needed. Each mediator is given a prepared list of possible subjects for debate, based on questions from this guide, events or issues from the history above, or other problems—for instance, the lack of educational programming for children on weekday afternoons. Varying amounts of advance preparation can be assigned.

In mock debate, each group member takes a position consistent with the role assigned on his or her card. Then the group focuses on possible solutions. At intervals, everyone exchanges identity cards and the mediator selects and introduces another issue. The debate goes on. Ideally, by the end of this exercise, each participant will have played all roles. As a follow-up, members of the group can write letters describing the problems, sharing the group's proposed remedies with their real-life counterparts. Alternate follow-up: participants can select an issue and write persuasive arguments, one paragraph from each of the six points of view.



**John Abel:** [Ph.D., Sr. V.P., National Assoc. of Broadcasters] "The nation's broadcasters do not need the government to be its programming partner. The [FCC's] proposal is very intrusive in a sensitive First Amendment area."



**Grace Baisinger:** [Past President, National PTA] When they inject the First Amendment threat, they're using the First Amendment as a smoke screen in an attempt to hide behind it. The real issue is money and the buck."



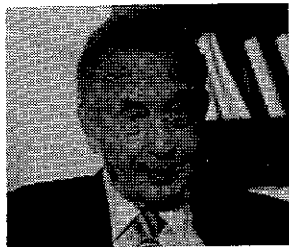
**Rep. Tim Wirth:** [D-Colorado] "Results on children's programming show that this nation's broadcasters devote only 61 minutes a week to educational programming for children, or 3/4ths of one percent of their daily air time."



**Sen. Albert Gore:** [D-Tennessee] "We're strip-mining our children's minds, and we're doing it for commercial profit without any concern for the longer-term consequences for them and for our society."

# THE CHILDREN'S TV ACT—AND BEYOND

**George Gerbner, Ph.D.:** "Unfortunately, the bill itself simply stabilizes the existing industry standard. So, if anything, it will give industry protection to maintain a relatively high standard of commercial content during children's television programming, which is pretty much what they are doing now."



**Peggy Charren:** "We must focus on what it *does* do, and what opportunity it gives the public now to hold stations responsible for what they should have been doing a n y w a y, which is considering children part of the public that they are licensed to serve."



**Pat Henry:** "The National PTA is going to be asking every local PTA—and there are 29,000 across this nation—to conduct at least one workshop within their school community, for parents, emphasizing the importance of the implementation of this new law."



## What the Law Says

The Children's Television Act of 1990 requires:

- That every TV station serve the educational and informational needs of children.
- That children's programs contain no more than 10.5 minutes of commercials per hour on weekends, and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays. Every five years, in its FCC license renewal application, each station must describe how it has complied with this law. On review of this report and public comment, the FCC may withhold license renewal for inadequate compliance.
- The National Endowment for Children's Educational Television will be established "to enhance the education of children through the creation and production of television programming specifically directed toward the development of fundamental intellectual skills." The Secretary of Commerce will award grants based on recommendations by an advisory council.

**Q.** Joan Ganz Cooney, Children's Television Workshop founder, says there is "a kind of blackout" on commercial TV of news about television policy issues. "It's not in their interest", she says, "to educate the public as to what the bills are in Congress that they could write their Congressman about." Why might such reports not serve broadcasters' interests? How can viewers encourage broadcasters to cover TV issues? What positions do your Congressmen hold on the Children's TV Act? The National Endowment for Children's Educational Television? Gratuitous violence on TV? Funding for public TV?

**Q.** Squire Rushnell, former VP for Children's Programming at ABC-TV, says programming is really an economic question. "The station would rather put Oprah Winfrey on in the afternoon than a children's program.... Oprah makes a lot of money for the station." What criteria other than profit can broadcasters use to craft their program schedule? Under what interpretation of the Communications Act of 1934 are local stations responsible for airing educational and informational programs at times when young viewers are most available? How many education programs do your local stations air, and when? What might encourage more air time for kids?

**Q.** Dr. Edward Palmer, who says commercial TV stations "have almost totally lapsed in their responsibility to serve children in return for the right to use the public airwaves," believes the Children's TV Act will be "waffled on" by the FCC. What has been the relationship of the FCC to public service programming? What is its responsibility for children's programming? Given that Congress oversees the FCC, should it compel the FCC to specify a certain amount of educational programs that broadcasters must provide? What role should citizens play?

## Study Blasts TV Service to Kids

WASHINGTON – A study released here last week charged that some broadcasters may be running afoul of the Children's Television Act by citing cartoons as examples of their "educational and informational" programming for children.

Moreover, according to the study, sponsored by the watchdog Center for Media Education, many shows created specifically to serve children's educational and informational needs appear to be scheduled before 7 a.m., when few children are likely to be watching. "Overall, television broadcasters are not making a serious effort to adequately serve the educational and informational needs of children," the study says.

Yet broadcasters said the law at issue, which went into effect last October, gives them broad discretion to meet their programming obligations to children. "We are confident that television broadcasters are in full compliance with the Children's Television Act," said Jeff Baumann, executive vice president and general counsel of the National Association of Broadcasters.

*Electronic Media* – 10/5/92  
(reprinted with permission from Crain Publications)

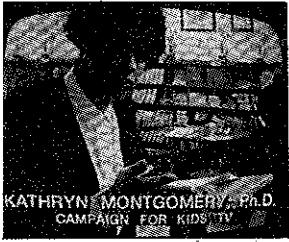
## Center for Media Education Looks out for Public Interest

The Center for Media Education, a non-profit organization, has launched two national projects to promote the democratic potential of the electronic media—the Campaign for Kids' TV and the Future of Television.

To maximize the impact of the Children's Television Act of 1990, the Center is developing workshops, action kits, and newsletters to increase public understanding of the law, and to encourage communities to work with local broadcasters toward delivery of a diverse range of programs for children. Monitoring stations' compliance with the Act for license renewal, the Campaign is assisting the National PTA, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other child advocacy organizations. The Center kicked off the Maryland Campaign for Kids' TV with a September, 1992, preview of TEACH THE CHILDREN and a follow-up workshop.

The Future of Television is a research and policy effort to include public interest requirements in legislation for new communications technologies such as fiber optics. Consulting with legal experts and testifying before Congress and the FCC, the Center sees its job as making sure the public has a voice in the new information environment.

# What Can the Viewer Do?



**Kathryn Montgomery, Ph.D., President, Campaign for Kids' TV:** "Let the broadcasters know that you are watching them, that you know about this law, and that you expect them to comply with more than just the minimum.... We need to be very careful not to use this law as a way to censor. What we really want to see here is diversity and choice; we want to see a range, a variety of programs."



**PTA Leader, Yonkers, New York:** "It's a sense of taking back our own culture, which I feel like we've lost to the media, and it's a very strong pull to pull it back and take it back."

## Get Involved in the Programming of TV!

In a workshop for leaders of PTA groups in Yonkers, New York, Kathryn Montgomery stressed the importance of adults becoming involved in children's viewing. In addition to helping children develop critical viewing skills, Dr. Montgomery said, parents and teachers should begin a dialogue with managers of local television stations to encourage their service to the informational and educational needs of children. Dr. Montgomery, Peggy Charren, and other children's advocates recommend the following actions:

### *Find out what your children are watching.*

- Watch TV with children and mediate their viewing.
- Monitor educational programs for children, assessing quality and quantity on each station. Also note the number of minutes per hour of advertisements during children's programs.

### *Hold TV stations accountable.*

- Call the station manager or the head of community relations at your local TV stations for an appointment to discuss children's programming.
- Ask station officials how their station is complying with the requirements of the Children's Television Act of 1990. What programs are they airing to serve the educational and informational needs of children? How often do they broadcast such programs? What time of day? What additional programs do they plan to air, and when?
- Find out when the station's license is due for renewal and ask to see the station's report to the FCC describing its compliance with the Act. You may photocopy the report, which is available on request during normal business hours.
- After you call or visit, write a letter to the station manager. Name programs you applaud and tell why. Specify your complaints and recommended remedies. Cite items in the station's report. Send copies of your letter to the FCC and to Congressional representatives.

### *Raise public awareness.*

- Send copies of your letter to local newspapers and radio stations. Suggest an editorial on how well TV serves the child audience. Better still, write your own letters, articles, and opinion pieces for organizational newsletters and local and national publications.
- Organize a town meeting or PTA meeting with station executives, school leaders, and government representatives. Arrange for broadcast of the meeting on public access cable TV.
- Help a student group produce 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) about the issue. Press station officials to air these spots.

### *Be an advocate for children's educational needs.*

- Contact TV news directors often by press releases, telephone calls, and personal visits. Report upcoming school and PTA events, student achievements, innovative work by teachers, school board issues, and other matters of educational importance. Request regular education news, noting that such service may be included in the station's FCC compliance report.
- Offer your assistance. Recommend to station, school, and government leaders the kind and quality of programs you believe would best serve the community's young people.
- Establish media education as a priority for your school.

## Citizens' Groups Make Children's TV a Priority

After the Children's Television Act went into effect on October 1, 1991, both the National PTA and the National Association for Family and Community Education launched national campaigns to improve children's TV. They are informing members of the law's provisions, encouraging dialogue between community members and local TV stations about fulfillment of the law.

The National PTA has mailed its 29,000 local chapters information on the tenets of the law, the dates when TV station licenses come up for renewal in each state, and criteria on which to judge the stations' service to the educational and informational needs of children. At the annual meeting held in June, 1992, National PTA President Pat Henry advised all PTA leaders to conduct at least one workshop introducing the new law and reviewing critical viewing skills for parents and teachers. This campaign is part of the PTA's long-term effort to raise public awareness of the potential of television to serve the nation's educational aims.

The National Association of Family and Community Education has made children and television its top priority for the next five years. Long known as the National Extension Homemakers Council, the FCE is one of the largest continuing education organizations in the country. FCE President Judy Weinkoff reports that FCE members are monitoring the number of commercial minutes appearing in children's programs. Further, the FCE aims "to inform interested families about the drastically underutilized state of children's informational and educational television, and to help them demand, and acknowledge, efforts to substantially increase the availability of excellent child and family TV programs."

Mrs. Weinkoff urges FCE members to be advocates of the National Endowment for Children's TV, which has received \$3 million from the federal government to allocate in 1993.



**Elizabeth Thoman, Executive Director, Center for Media and Values:** "To be media literate, to be media savvy...is to be able to survive—to be able to see through the advertising, to be able to understand the conventions of the medium, to be able to see the value system that is there and choose their own values, and to be able to make their own media."

## UNESCO Declaration On Media Education

In 1982, representatives of 19 nations attending a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Symposium on Media Education issued a formal declaration on the need for media education, worldwide. Excerpts follow:

*We live in a world where media are omnipresent... The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen's participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication.*

*Regrettably, most informal and non-formal educational systems do little to promote media education or education for communication...*

*The school and the family share the responsibility of preparing the young for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds. Children and adults need to be literate in all three of these symbolic systems, and this will require some reassessment of educational priorities...*

*Media education will be most effective when parents, teachers, media personnel and decision makers all acknowledge they have a role to play in developing greater critical awareness among listeners, viewers and readers. The greater integration of educational and communications systems would undoubtedly be an important step towards more effective education.*

The UNESCO group called upon authorities to initiate and support comprehensive media education programs from pre-school to university; to develop training courses for teachers; to stimulate research and development for communication science; and to support international efforts in media education.

## Critical Viewing Skills

The education of teachers, parents, and children for media literacy includes mastering the following critical viewing skills:

- Viewing TV selectively
- Examining the social roles of TV
- Understanding the effects of TV on behavior and belief
- Identifying televised stereotypes of different age, class, ethnic, national, and professional groups in TV drama, news, and ads
- Distinguishing between "real" and "unreal," "fact" and "fiction," "documentary" and "drama," "commercial" and "non-commercial"

## What is Media Literacy?

Since this nation's founding, liberty and literacy have been twin articles of faith. The First Amendment freedoms of Americans have always depended upon an informed and responsible citizenry, able to share information and ideas through reading and writing. Government at all levels has made literacy training the foundation of a basic education aiming to teach young people to think critically and to think for themselves.

Today, the value of print literacy seems diminished by unprecedented developments in mass communications technology. The print medium has been replaced by television as the most relied-upon and trusted source of information. Beyond TV, we are inundated with more entertainment fare than any generation in history, through radio, music, computers, videocassettes, video games, and more books and magazines than ever before. Learning to "read" now requires the ability to extract meaning from the profusion of messages we receive daily.

*For the first time in human history, most children are born into homes where most of the stories do not come from their parents, schools, churches, communities, and in many places even from their native countries, but from a handful of conglomerates who have something to sell. These changes have had profound consequences.* - George Gerbner, Ph.D., Dean Emeritus, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

As a society, what has been our response to this phenomenon? By only minimally addressing TV's significance, U.S. media managers and educators have accorded it too little attention, and too late. We have failed to recognize how our use of TV as a primarily commercial medium is coloring what all citizens, young and old, are learning about personal freedom, expression, and social responsibility.

In this neglect, the U.S. stands alone among modern industrialized nations. Western Europe, Great Britain, and Australia have long histories of educating their people to watch and listen critically. In Canada, perhaps the world's leader in teaching about media, high school graduates are required to earn 30 percent of their language arts credits in media studies. As far back as 1982, UNESCO strongly advocated educating globally about the impact of the media. In relatively few U.S. schools there are laudable models of what can and needs to be done on a large scale.

What, then, does "Media Education" or "Media Literacy" mean? In brief, it is talking back to TV, questioning its messages and motives.

*Media literacy is a new, expanded view of traditional literacy, which acknowledges and includes the role and impact of the mass media. It is an essential basic skill for our future as individuals, and as members of a democratic society.*

- Marieli Rowe, National Telemedia Council

As reading and writing made one literate when words on paper were the principal medium, so the media-literate person today is able to analyze TV's messages and to master its tools and techniques. We

- Evaluating the implications of TV's messages for health, education, and welfare
- Addressing citizens' rights and responsibilities in broadcast and cable television
- Evaluating the dual roles of television managers as public trustees and as businessmen
- Understanding the dynamics of communications policymaking

## Why a Movement for It?

can learn to recognize the codes and conventions of TV and its assumptions about the audience; to see through the special effects, lighting, laughtracks, and music; and to understand how images work to condition our responses to ads and other program forms.

*Our sense of who we are and what we value is based to a large degree on the pictures and perceptions created by the media. If children are socialized by the media into this value system and belief structure, educators must respond by helping them think clearly about the relationship between pictures and print, words and images. When schools begin to address media... they begin to talk to kids in the language that they speak, and the world they live in.* - David Considine, Reich College of Education, Appalachian State University.

Perhaps most important of all, today's literate person understands how and where TV and its messages fit into the broader social, economic, and political framework. Particularly in view of the emerging multi-media environment, education for media literacy is essential to the task of revitalizing American education. By putting into context the television experience, and by learning to be sophisticated *senders as well as receivers* of media-channelled information, students readily develop the critical viewing, thinking, writing, and other skills necessary for participation in our representative form of government.

*Media literacy skills should be part of any school program, from kindergarten to grade 12, that encourages young people to understand a world that is profoundly influenced by the mass media.* - Barry Duncan, Canadian Association for Media Literacy

*Educators need to be enlisted in this effort. They need to be convinced, and then trained. Materials must be made available to them.* - Nancy Hoene, WDSE-TV (Duluth Public Television)

Now more than ever, teachers need preparation for helping young people connect to the larger world and empower themselves for effective citizenship. Only with a broad-based movement for media literacy can teachers fill the gap separating the information-poor from the information-rich, those with limited options from those with abundant opportunities. As television itself is dubbed "the great leveller," accessible to all who can see and hear, so media literacy is a force for equality in education for the future.

*We should seriously push to take media literacy out of the margins and bring it into the mainstream, and think of it as a movement with some direction and national leadership. I strongly urge that we link the media literacy movement with the critical policy issues that have so much importance for us now.*

- Kathryn Montgomery, Campaign for Kids' TV

*We want to elevate this issue to the national agenda.*

- Edward L. Palmer, TV AND AMERICA'S CHILDREN

- Mastering the tools and techniques of television analysis, writing, and production
- Otherwise participating in the programming of television.

**Note:** For further information about critical viewing, see "Parenting in A TV Age," by the Center for Media and Values, 1991, and other resources available through organizations listed on Page 15.

**Pat Henry, President, National PTA:**  
"You and your children are going to be watching television. The important thing is for you to sit down with that child, watch that program together, and then analyze it. Begin to talk about it. Give your own family values and your own beliefs. And is that really reality that that child is seeing? Is it just fiction? So our kids begin to separate out fiction from reality."



## Home Viewing Activities To Improve TV Experience

Eight out of ten parents believe their children are better off with TV than without it—that "the advantages of TV for children outweigh the disadvantages." Media educators say the question is not "Is TV good for you?", but "What use are you making of TV?" Families can get a lot more out of their TV viewing experiences when they view selectively, limit children's viewing to programs chosen together, and discuss TV with children. Following are some things to do while watching television with children.

- **Talk about it.** At times you may notice a child seems particularly wrapped up in a drama. Use the opportunity to ask, "Do you ever feel like that? Tell me about it."
- **Compare family values.** Commercial TV provides many occasions for a parent to point out the differences between the family's values and those of the story. How do you feel about this kind of behavior, this attitude, this choice? Express your viewpoint, as your silence will be interpreted as approval of what is shown.
- **Conduct a Critics' Caucus.** Family members can watch a show and dissect it afterward. Did the story make sense? Why did certain actions happen? Would real-life characters act that way? Would you act that way? Each person identifies values the show has or lacks, giving reasons for watching or avoiding that program.
- **Forecast the outcome.** Use the commercial breaks to elicit predictions of what comes next and why, in a TV drama.
- **Read in.** Ask children to "watch" a program with their eyes closed and to relay the story to you. Does the dialogue let them know what is happening? What does the music suggest?
- **Count the cuts.** When watching commercials, have children count the number of cuts, noting each time the picture loses continuity. What is the effect of so many picture changes? Why does this fast cutting tend to hold our interest?
- **Watch the commercials.** Have children analyze commercial techniques. What images are used? What do they suggest about the product? How big is the product *really*? Does it *actually* move by itself? Will having it make you more popular? more beautiful? more grown-up?

- **Pass judgment.** Have teenagers note each instance of driving and drinking on TV, for instance. Are passengers wearing seat belts? paying attention to the road? following traffic rules? What would happen if you drove that way? What are drinkers consuming? How often do characters in shows ask for alcohol, soda, milk, juice, water?

- **Read more about it.** Direct young people to articles, books, and other resources related to TV show themes that have interested them. Suggest choosing such topics for open-ended homework assignments.

# EXEMPLARY USES OF TV FOR EDUCATION

**Jim Henson, Producer and Creator of The Muppets:** "Education has to go toward video. It's got to be a part of the future, and there's no way you can really stop it. So, what you should really be doing...is trying to harness it, trying to get on top of it, figuring out what it does and how to use it."



**Anna Home, Head of Children's Programs, British Broadcasting Corp.:** "We do everything from news to drama, to comedy, entertainment—the whole range. There has been a kind of commitment to the child audience, which I don't find in the majority of American programming."

## New Technologies Deliver News to Schools

Two TV services with different philosophies offer daily news shows free to U.S. high schools. About 23,500 schools receive CNN NEWSROOM, and more than 10,000 receive CHANNEL ONE.

Whittle Communications' CHANNEL ONE is a daily 12-minute satellite telecast. Whittle gives each school \$50,000 worth of free equipment. In return, schools must guarantee 70 percent viewing by students. The catch? A fifth of each program is commercials for candy, gum, soft drinks, sneakers, or other "youth market" items. School superintendents in New York, California, and Rhode Island say "no" to CHANNEL ONE because of the ads.

By contrast, Cable News Network provides a commercial-free, 15-minute newscast, CNN NEWSROOM. Transmissions are taped at 3:45 a.m. daily for later use in class. The CNN classroom guide is free via telephone modem. (For information, call 800-344-6219.)

Teachers using the services rate them high in educational value. A study commissioned by Whittle, however, showed CHANNEL ONE did little to increase students' current events interest or knowledge. Most students did report remembering the commercials.

**Q.** While many have applauded CHANNEL ONE, others find the nonmonetary cost too high. What is the difference between kids' watching TV ads at home and watching them in class? What issues arise when a private enterprise is allowed to exploit a captive audience? Why should students analyze the ads as well as the news?

## Cable in the Classroom

Eighteen TV cable companies in a non-profit venture, CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM, provide schools free educational programs and study materials. Participants include Arts & Entertainment, Black Entertainment Television, BRAVO, C-SPAN, CNBC, ESPN, the Family Channel, Discovery, The Learning Channel, Lifetime, Mind Extension University, The Monitor Channel, Nickelodeon, Showtime, The Weather Channel, and X-Press X-Change.

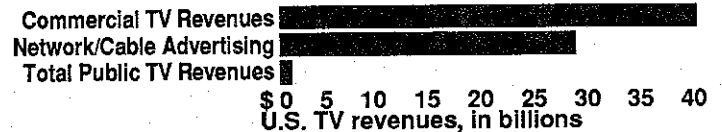
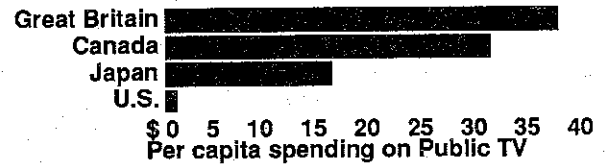
Presenting cultural programs, news, science, and special reports, the service also includes interactive computer databases and programs produced by students. The commercial-free service has cleared the rights for duplication of video and print materials for classroom use. Teachers rate these valuable learning resources.

CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM Magazine (1-800-343-0728) lists a monthly program schedule and timely features. For more information on its availability, contact your local cable TV system.

## U.S. Lags Behind In Spending for TV Education

In the U.S., public TV provides most available educational programming. In 1991, federal spending for public broadcasting was \$250.6 million, about one dollar per person. By contrast, Japan spent more than \$17 per person, Canada \$32 per person, and Great Britain more than \$38 per person. "If you look at the industrial countries of the world that should be able to do well by their children, I'd say that we do least well," says Dr. Edward L. Palmer. While PBS children's programs are high-quality, he says, it's "a repeat factory."

Including all non-federal income (viewers gave \$285.5 million), 1991 public TV spending was \$1.32 billion. By most measures that's a lot of money, but not when compared with the nearly \$29 billion advertisers spent on commercial network and cable TV. Including advertising income for independent stations (one of every five TV stations) and cable TV subscriber payments, 1991 revenues for commercial TV total \$40 billion. Despite this vast income, commercial TV allots only about one percent of its air time to educational programming designed for children.



## Public Television: The Largest U.S. Classroom

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), launched in 1967, has long delivered exemplary preschool programs such as SESAME STREET and MR. ROGERS NEIGHBORHOOD. PBS also delivers noteworthy prime-time series such as THE CIVIL WAR, NOVA, and THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. For classroom use in grades K-12, PBS's National Instructional Television Satellite Schedule (NISS) offers more than 1,300 hours annually. Afterschool and weekend programs include 3-2-1 CONTACT, READING RAINBOW, WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?, and DEGRASSI HIGH.

In 1981, PBS's Adult Learning Service (ALS) began college telecourses, serving more than 1.5 million students. Since 1988, PBS has added interactive videoconferences for satellite-equipped colleges. Closed captioning, descriptions of on-screen action, and second-language audio tracks provide access for special audiences. By 1994, PBS Education will offer on-line computer linkup through CURRICULUM CONNECTION, LEARNING LINK, and EDISON.

**Q.** In the 1970s, the Carnegie Commission for Public Broadcasting suggested funding PBS with a 2% "spectrum fee" commercial broadcasters pay for using the public airwaves. Could Congress adopt this strategy today? What about a "check-off box" on income tax returns allocating \$1 to \$5 to PBS, or a tax on TV sets, as in Great Britain? What about tax incentives for advertisers to support educational programming? Other ideas?

# ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT

## **Public Interest/Advocacy:** Work with these and other organizations to press for more educational and informational programming for children.

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Office of Government Liaison  
Committee of Communication  
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 721 North  
Washington, DC 20004-1703

Children's Advertising Review Unit,  
National Advertising Division,  
Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.  
845 Third Avenue  
New York, N.Y. 10022  
(212) 754-1320

Viewers for Quality Television  
Box 195  
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

The National PTA  
700 N. Rush Street  
Chicago, IL 60611-0977  
(312) 787-0977

National Coalition on Television Violence  
P.O. Box 2157  
Champaign, IL 61825  
(217) 384-1920

National Association for Family and  
Community Education  
Children and Television Project  
5963 Jefferson  
P.O. Box 835  
Burlington, KY 41005  
(606) 586-8333

## **Television:** Express your views in letters of praise and complaint to companies that produce or distribute TV programming.

ABC Entertainment  
2040 Avenue of the Stars  
Los Angeles, CA, 90067

Public Broadcasting Service  
1320 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, VA 22314

National Cable TV Association  
1724 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036

CBS Entertainment  
7800 Beverly Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Fox Broadcasting Company  
Network Division  
1211 Sixth Avenue  
New York, NY 10036

National Association of Broadcasters  
1771 "N" Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036

NBC Entertainment  
3000 W. Alameda  
Burbank, CA 91523

Turner Broadcasting System  
1 CNN Center  
Atlanta, GA 30303

## **Education for Media Literacy:** Contact these organizations for information on alternative ways to teach about TV and other media.

Association for Media Literacy  
Etobicoke Board of Education  
40 McArthur Street  
Weston, Ontario, Canada M9P 3M7  
(416) 394-6992

National Telemedia Council  
120 E. Wilson Street  
Madison, WI 53703  
(608) 257-7712

National Alliance  
for Media Education  
c/o O.E.P., Room 503  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 941-5944

Center for Media Education  
& Campaign for Kids' TV  
1012 Heather Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
(301) 270-3938

Center for Media and Values  
Media & Values Magazine  
1962 S. Shenandoah  
Los Angeles, CA 90034  
(310) 559-2944

Canadian Assoc. of Media Education  
Organizations (CAMEO)  
405 - 3rd Avenue S.  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada  
S7K 1M7

Strategies for Media Literacy, Inc.  
1095 Market Street  
Suite 410  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 621-2911

The Public Television Outreach Alliance  
P.O. Box 83111  
Lincoln, NE 68501  
(402) 472-3611

KIDSNET  
6856 Eastern Ave., N.W.  
Suite 208  
Washington, DC 20012  
(202) 291-1400

Family TV Research & Consultation Ctr.  
405 Temple Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-4565

## **Government:** Write to federal agencies to make inquiries, register complaints, and propose solutions to TV programming problems.

Federal Communications Commission  
Mass Media Bureau  
2025 "M" St., N.W.  
Room 8210  
Washington, DC 20554

U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee On Telecommunications  
B-331 Rayburn Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

United States Senate  
Subcommittee on Communications  
227 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

Bureau of Consumer Protection  
Federal Trade Commission  
Washington, DC 20580

**We'd like to know  
how our videotapes and  
study materials are meeting  
your needs.**

Send your comments,  
recommendations and reports to:  
**ON TELEVISION**  
388 Broadway  
New York, NY 10013  
FAX (212) 925-0772

For information about  
**ON TELEVISION**  
**videocassettes**, write or call:

**CALIFORNIA  
NEWSREEL**  
149 9TH Street, Suite 420  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-621-6196  
FAX (415) 621-6522

For **single copies** of this  
study guide/transcript,  
send **\$7.00** each to:

**PTV PUBLICATIONS**  
P.O. Box 701  
Kent, OH 44240  
**Bulk quantity prices are  
greatly reduced** for classroom and  
study group use. Write to address  
above, or call 216-673-3663.

## **ON TELEVISION Media Education Curriculum in Development**

**ON TELEVISION: TEACH THE CHILDREN** premiered on PBS in Fall 1992 to enthusiastic response from the education community. Third in a series of thirteen hour-long documentaries for prime-time PBS broadcast, this program sets the stage for the larger project that On Television, Ltd., is developing. The **ON TELEVISION** series is the core of a comprehensive, video-based media education curriculum. Each corresponding unit of the curriculum focuses on one function of TV in American society, placing in historical context the related cultural, economic, and policy concerns.

How does TV affect the form and content of other media? How does TV work as a cultural inheritance? as a political arena? as an international exchange? as a marketplace? as a servant to the public interest? Particularly in view of the emerging multi-media environment, understanding of the content, intent, and impact of the dominant cultural medium—TV—is vital for the readiness of American schools and teaching in the Information Age.

By helping to harness the power of television to support

classroom learning, On Television is working to establish media education throughout the country as an essential part of training for teachers and students on every level of schooling. A primary goal is to help teachers channel the informal learnings and skills that young people gain at home from watching TV into the development of critical viewing, thinking, writing, and other communications skills necessary for effective citizenship. Exercises and activities are designed to encourage students to move the results of their labors beyond the school and into newspaper, radio, TV, town hall, and other community forums.

In development for 1993-1994 are the next four **ON TELEVISION** programs and their related study materials: **THE TV GENERATION**, **THE ELECTRONIC FAMILY**, **HEALTH OR HAZARD**, and **WHAT'S THE NEWS**. On Television, Ltd., a not-for-profit organization dedicated to media education, operates on grants from foundations and government agencies and tax-deductible contributions from corporations and individuals.

### **California Newsreel Offers Videocassettes Of Three ON TELEVISION Programs**

California Newsreel, the San Francisco-based educational film distributor, is offering **ON TELEVISION: TEACH THE CHILDREN** and the first two programs in the **ON TELEVISION** series. The series pilot, **THE VIOLENCE FACTOR**, examines the social, economic, and political implications of gratuitous violence in TV news and entertainment programming.

The second program, **PUBLIC TRUST OR PRIVATE PROPERTY**, explores the potential conflict between broadcasters' dual role as businessmen interested in profit and trustees responsible for managing the public airwaves in the best interest of their local community.

All three programs have aired on the PBS network to critical acclaim and are used in videocassette form in university communications courses. For more information, contact California Newsreel at the address above.

#### **STUDY GUIDE**

Cover design and photo by Robert D'Alessandro

**Text:** Mary Megee, Producer/Writer

Roger Widness, Editor/Publisher

John Boyer, Director of Communications

Jeff Thaler, Curriculum Coordinator

Karen McCree and Annika Thunborg, Project Associates

Susan Berfield and Mara Ganeles, Research Assistants

Jerry Steibel, Project Consultant

Richard Swanson, Project Consultant

Karen Barnett, Librarian

© On Television, Ltd. 1992

For more information, contact John Boyer, On Television, Ltd. (212) 925-5289

#### **ON TELEVISION Advisory Board Members**

**Marvin Barrett** - *Director Emeritus*

*Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Survey  
and Awards in Broadcast Journalism*

**Peggy Charren** - *Founder*

*Action for Children's Television*

**George Comstock, Ph.D.**

*S.I. Newhouse Professor of Communications  
Syracuse University*

**James Day** - *President*

*Publvision, Inc.*

**George Gerbner, Ph.D.** - *Dean Emeritus*

*The Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania*

**Reesom Haile, Ph.D.**

*Communications Consultant, UNICEF*

**George Heinemann** - *Professor of Communications*

*Tisch School of the Arts, New York University*

**Henry Herx** - *Communications Specialist*

*U.S. Catholic Conference*

**Leonard S. Matthews** - *President*

*American Association of Advertising Agencies*

**Rhoda Metraux** - *Anthropologist*

*Institute for Intercultural Studies*

**Joseph Michenfleder** - *Executive Vice President*

*Public Affairs Analysts, Inc.*

**Ron Powers** - *Media Studies Faculty*

*Middlebury College*

**Robert Stubblefield, M.D.** - *Medical Director*

*Spring Shadows Glen, Houston, Texas*

## **ABSTRACT**

---

### **ON TELEVISION: THE MEDIA LITERACY MOVEMENT**

A National Video-Conference and Follow-up PBS Documentary

Next to parents, television is a child's "most persistent and most influential teacher," according to Dr. Ernest L. Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Although television has played a major role in American life for almost half a century, most academic curricula take into account neither the problems nor the opportunities television presents for the education of our students. Unlike other developed nations, the U.S. has not yet established media education as a priority for everyday schooling.

The On Television Project at Rutgers University in Newark aims to launch a unique media campaign to raise public awareness of the need for an expanded vision of traditional literacy to include the roles and impacts of the mass media in society. Highlighting the importance of responsible viewing and the acquisition of critical viewing skills, this project has five components: a two-hour video-conference; media education resources in video and print; evaluation; a one-hour follow-up documentary for PBS; and national dissemination.

#### **I. THE VIDEO-CONFERENCE**

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and Deputy Secretary Madeleine Kunin have been invited to be host and TV journalist Linda Ellerbee has been invited to be moderator. Featuring leaders in media education, a two-hour national video-conference will present diverse approaches to media literacy training for teachers and students. This two-hour program will be available to more than 30,000 sites equipped to receive satellite programming. Five pre-produced program segments will be introduced and followed by discussion among speakers and participants at the varied sites.

Combining the imagery of television with first-hand testimony and documentation of exemplary learning situations, the program segments employ and analyze the tactics of modern media. Excerpts from almost five decades of television fare punctuate the observations by educators, TV professionals, legislators, public interest advocates, and others. Graphic titles, text, and headlines help to illuminate key points. Themes of the video segments (each five to fifteen minutes long) and live discussion include:

**What is Media Literacy?** How can teachers and parents channel children's viewing experiences into the learning of skills essential to effective participation in society? Leaders in media education present varied viewpoints on using media, analyzing media, and making media about media issues.

**TV and Learning.** What is the relationship of TV viewing to students' success in traditional disciplines such as reading comprehension, social studies, science, and mathematics? How does TV's portrayal of the teacher, the scholar, and the school affect students' attitudes toward school, their performance in school, and their professional ambitions? Media analysts and teachers address these and related issues.

**Teaching Critical Viewing.** What skills empower young people to assess the conventions of TV and to understand the cultural, political, and economic implications of TV? Case studies document innovative school-based media education initiatives, ranging from stand-alone exercises to a state-wide effort to provide media literacy training to teachers on all levels.

**Exemplary uses of TV for Education.** How can the under-used potential of TV be tapped to serve the educational and informational needs of children? Excerpts from exemplary programs are shown from U.S. commercial TV, public TV, cable TV, interactive computer-based programs, and TV from around the world.

**The Movement: Spreading the Word.** What organizations are involved? Advocates advise on ways to implement training for media education within established programs for teachers-in-training and teachers-in-service. Specialists inventory media education resources available in print and video. On-site participants report on their plans for local networking.

## **II. THE DOCUMENTARY**

The video-conference will provide the substance for an hour-long documentary designed for prime-time broadcast to more than 300 PBS stations. By using TV itself to "validate" the need for understanding media, this documentary is designed to promote the integration of media education into standard curricula for teachers, parents, and K-12 students. Other elements of the documentary include pre-conference comments, workshop discussions, and coverage of post-conference activities at five selected sites.

## **III. RESOURCES**

The following materials will be distributed at the video-conference sites:

- o A study guide for teachers and parents
- o A listing of media education resources in print and video
- o Sample work-sheets for conducting critical viewing skills workshops

## **IV. EVALUATION**

Evaluation through surveys, focus groups, and other methods will determine how well the project meets its objectives. Projected long-term outcomes include:

- o Heightened public understanding of the need for critical viewing
- o Local networking and exchanges on media education methods
- o Increased family mediation of children's TV viewing
- o New media education activities initiated by project participants in school, at home, and in organizational workshops
- o Commitment by school administrators to assist teachers in media education through in-service programs, acquisition of materials for promoting critical viewing, and involvement of media educators in K-12 school programs
- o Measurable gains in students' academic performance and improved attitudes toward education

## **V. NATIONAL DISSEMINATION**

Videocassettes and related study materials from this project and the first three On Television programs will be made available for national dissemination at low cost. Pending additional funds, an instructional CD-ROM disk will be produced using materials generated for this project, also to be made available at low cost. Broad-based distribution of these resources will help fuel a national movement for media literacy.

# FILM & VIDEO INDEPENDENT

M O N T H L Y  
October 1994

## RUTGERS OPENS MEDIA EDUCATION LAB

When Rutgers University and On Television, Ltd. announced the opening of a new media education center at the university's Newark campus earlier this year, they were initiating one of the first media education programs for college students that focuses on television's role in serving the public.

"At most schools students study the history of television, but it's from a commercial orientation," says Mary Megee, On Television Ltd.'s founder and the director of the Rutgers lab. "They need to know the profound impact of the art they are making and the responsibility that comes with that art."

Megee is also the executive producer of *On Television*, a documentary series broadcast on PBS over the last decade. The series' first three one-hour installments, which aired respectively in 1984, 1988, and 1992, examine television's influence on children, its violent images, and the history of communications policy. The lab's work revolves around both the series' content and its production, as students learn to analyze television and will eventually assist in creating the remaining 10 hours of the documentary.

In the two courses she teaches, Megee asks students to view televised images critically rather than passively by, for instance, screening videotapes of programs that illustrate how ratings and advertising can influence content. A typical example is showing how a tabloid news program may dramatize a news event, using look-alike actors, while a network news program uses actual footage and interviews. Megee says the goal is to show students "the difference between fact and fiction, marketing and public service."

After completing Megee's courses, students can continue in television production classes where they will act as camera operators, researchers, production assistants, and interviewers for *On Television*. They may also contribute to accompanying teacher study guides. The courses are required of undergraduate journalism and television students, though others can choose them as electives.



**Educating educators (l-r): Mary Megee, director of Rutgers University's new Media Education Lab, George Heinemann from the Advisory Board of On Television, Ltd., and Edwin Newman, narrator of the *On Television* series.**

Courtesy On Television, Ltd.

Besides providing the lab's equipment, including a television studio, five portable cameras, and a mobile production van, Rutgers will cover the salaries of its three professors. The lab recently received a Kellogg grant to cover portions of a video conference with media educators from across the country to be held in the spring of 1995, and the university is helping to secure funds for the final 10 installments of *On Television*. Megee anticipates that the next four segments, with topics ranging from TV as cultural influence to TV as health educator, will be completed in the next two years.

Dr. Annette Juliano, chairperson of Rutgers-Newark's Department of Visual and Performing Arts, knew she wanted a media education program when the university put her in charge of its media center in July 1992. Classes began in September 1993, but it wasn't until June of this year that Rutgers and On Television Ltd. formalized their relationship with a contract and a press conference.

In the future, Megee hopes the lab will expand to train teachers in media education. "When I started a million years ago, that was my main objective," she says. She and Juliano have also discussed testing the lab's study guides in Newark-area schools and homes. Meanwhile, getting Rutgers students to think about what they see on television is her main concern. "These kids have to sort out good and bad and right and wrong without much help," she says. "And that's why I'm doing what I'm doing."

KIMBERLY WINSTON

*Kimberly Winston is a freelance journalist based in the San Francisco Bay area.*

# Who's minding kids' TV?

## PBS probes the demise of children's programming

**O**NE MAY well ask whatever happened to "Captain Kangaroo" and "Mr. Wizard" as "Batman" occupies the 4:30 p.m. time slot on Fox (Ch. 5). The new animated series, which is running weekdays after premiering over the weekend, best illustrates TV's desire to appeal to older viewers while allowing young people to ride in on their coattails.

The evolution of children's programs, and the demise of TV as a teaching tool — except, of course, for public broadcasting — is seriously dealt with tonight on PBS' "On Television: Teach the Children," a documentary hosted by Edwin Newman (Ch. 13, 9 p.m.). The show will also be presented Monday at 9 on WLIW/Ch. 21, and Wednesday, Sept. 23, at 8 on WNYC/Ch. 31.

I urge anyone concerned about the influence television is having on young minds today not to overlook this important report, which is effectively illustrated with film clips.

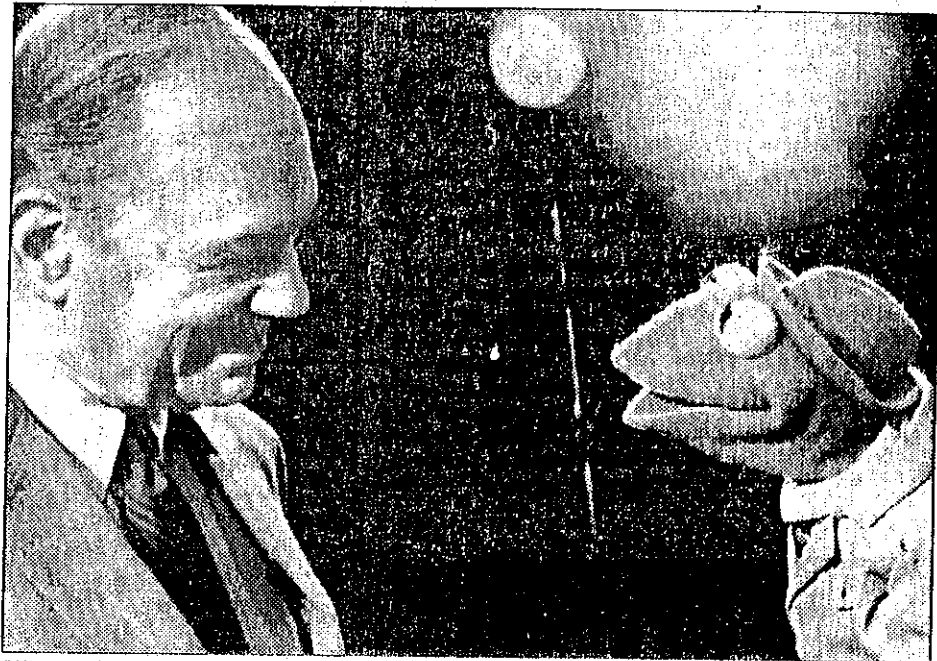


**KAY GARDELLA**

Children ages 6 to 11 spend more time watching television than they do in a classroom — 15,000 hours vs. 11,000 hours (through the end of high school). Since TV has become the primary educational tool, the curriculum today, as noted by Peggy Charren, who headed Action for Children's Television, is commercial. "Advertisers are ganging up on children," she says. Subliminally, youngsters are always being urged to buy, and the pressure on parents becomes unbearable. One parent estimates he spent \$1,000 on Ninja Turtle products for his son.

Why TV went from shows that instructed our young, like "Captain Kangaroo," to more commercially viable animated series, as Newman so eloquently points out, is this:

When TV started, sets were expensive, and network programmers were reaching a limited, affluent and elite audience. They wanted sets to sell so they put on opera, good drama, fine music, like the NBC Symphony conducted by Arturo Toscanini, and first-rate children's programs ("Kukla, Fran and Ollie," "Howdy Doody," "Captain Kangaroo," etc.) that occupied afternoon time slots. As George Heinemann, an NBC pio-



**WATCHING OUT FOR KIDS:** Host Edwin Newman (l.) chats with guest Kermit the Frog.

neer in children's programming, says: "They wanted young families to buy TV sets."

However, when TV began reaching mass audiences, and children only represented a small percentage of the total number of viewers, networks didn't want to interrupt their afternoon schedule with children's programs. They wanted, as Heinemann points out, "audience flow," i.e., more adult programming to build to the evening news and prime time schedule. Hence, the Saturday morning ghetto of animated cartoons was born.

(But even this picture is changing, as viewers will see Saturday, when NBC, instead of kiddy-type shows, is turning to live-action productions aimed at teens patterned after its "Saved by the Bell." The idea is to draw in as many viewers as possible.)

**T**ONIGHT'S comprehensive PBS hour, which also traces the political maneuvering that finally led to the 1990 bill stabilizing industry standards for children's programs, does not overlook the violence or sex being fed to young minds today. There are 25 violent acts in one cartoon, and 35 sexual scenes per hour in soap operas. As one educator notes, making violence seem normal is dangerous. And still another teacher testifies that when she asks her young students to draw, they're either drawing Ninja Turtles or people with guns in their hands.

Criticized, too, is the way schools and teachers are depicted on TV — as backward and inept.

Between the Communications Act of 1934, which demands stations broadcast "in the public interest, convenience and necessity," and the 1990 Children's TV Bill limiting commercial advertising in kiddy shows, parents have more muscle today to demand quality programs. To this end, Pat Henry, president of the national PTA, has implemented workshops around the country instructing parents on how to make the laws work for them.

# ON TELEVISION: TEACH THE CHILDREN

National PBS premiere September, 1992

*A sound, comprehensive presentation useful to citizens and professionals concerned with improving children's television.*

Aletha C. Huston, Ph.D.  
Center for Research on the Influences  
of Television on Children  
University of Kansas

*I urge anyone concerned about the influence television is having on young minds today not to overlook this important report.*

Kay Gardella  
TV Critic, New York Daily News

*An important education for America's families. If parents and teachers act on its message, television could become a valuable educational tool for young audiences.*

Peggy Charren  
Action for Children's Television

*A superb program concerning television and education...a lucid and powerful exposition of this subject so vital to the nation because children are our future.*

Henry Geller, Esq.  
Former FCC General Counsel

*A provocative summary of what we know....worth watching for all students of media.*

Ellen Wartella, Ph.D.  
University of Illinois

*How is it possible that television, this unparalleled educational medium, could also serve as an instrument of commercial child abuse? This film shows how and suggests the implications for the future of our country.*

Erik Barnouw  
Author, A History of Broadcasting  
in the United States

*TEACH THE CHILDREN can help liberate television from the rule of marketing strategies and help our children learn from those who have something to tell.*

George Gerbner, Ph.D.  
Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania

*\* \* \* \* (Highest Rating) This is a very important video for school and public libraries to own. The critics of television are many, but seldom have their voices been so well collected as in this tape. It's technically excellent and viscerally stimulating.*

Joseph L. Buelna  
Video Rating Guide for Libraries

*Ideal for parents and teachers to view together to become better informed about children's television.*

Childhood Education

*TEACH THE CHILDREN is an extremely useful tool for working with parents and teachers about television's "curriculum" and its influence on our youth....we have seen no other video which better presents the significant issues related specifically to children's television.*

The Media Message

*A valuable resource for schools, PTAs, and public libraries serving groups of concerned parents.*

Laurie Tynan  
Library Journal

*[This] pointed offering gives educators, critics and parents an opportunity to condemn commercial television for treating youngsters as marketable commodities.*

Walter Goodman  
TV Critic, New York Times