

SUMMER 1997

infoActive KIDS™

A Field Guide to the Children's Television Act

● CME's Campaign for Kids' TV

This issue of *InfoActive Kids* is designed to tell you about what to expect on your TV screens starting in the fall, as a result of the new three-hour rule on the Children's Television Act. It will help you learn about many of the "educational and informational" programs available for your child that are about to debut, when they are likely to be aired, and what each network is doing to meet its new obligation.

It also provides information about how you can get involved, along with the Center for Media Education and other groups, to make sure this important new policy works. Whether these shows succeed depends in part on the public. Parents and child advocates need to watch these programs, encourage their children to watch the best ones, and praise the sponsors and stations. You also need to make sure that stations are doing what they promised by getting involved in helping make the law work.

A major change in how broadcast television serves young viewers is about to take place.

This fall — on September 1 — every commercial broadcast television station will be required to air several hours of educational and informational programming "specifically designed" for children between the ages of two and sixteen. Most stations, including those owned by the big four networks — ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC — will air at least three hours a week. This new public interest requirement for broadcasters is part of the new rules strengthening the implementation of the Children's Television Act of 1990.

For years, parents, teachers and media experts have criticized the lack of quality fare for children on commercial television. This concern has been fueled by a growing awareness that television plays a major role in helping shape a child's world. TV viewing constitutes an average of three to four hours of children's daily routine. For the first time, all those concerned with ensuring better television for children have a new opportunity and a responsibility. The three-hour programming requirement is part of a set of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules passed last year to make the Children's Television Act a more effective law for child viewers. However, it will take the concerted effort of all those who care for children and the media environment in which they are developing to make the new rules work.

Some of these new rules on children's television are designed to give more public information to parents, teachers, and health professionals so they can learn more about the new educational programs airing on local stations. The FCC hopes parents will moni-

-continued on page 2

INSIDE

Why A CTA?2

The Fall Line-Up8

Grading Station Compliance10

"E/I" Logo Logistics14



Why a CTA?

It was clear to child advocates, educators and most parents that the commercial broadcast marketplace did not work when it came to educational programming. Networks and station executives would not support the creation of such shows, preferring to televise fare capable only of attracting larger audiences from a wider range of ages. Educational programs would likely attract only an audience intended for its educational message (such as a program clearly targeted at elementary school age children or pre-school), giving them a lower rating. Only when the public applied pressure, through policymakers for example, were there periods when stations would air a greater diversity of children's programming. But educational and informational programming had become an extinct species on commercial broadcast TV by the end of the 1980s. Congress had to intervene, child advocates argued, to help make a place on the schedule for such shows. "Activists hoped that having a law requiring educational programming would force the networks to give these programs a chance to work in the marketplace," says Kathryn Montgomery, president of CME.

Children's programming is big business and getting bigger everyday. Networks and advertisers vie to attract children and teens to their programs — which usually have lucrative tie-ins to toys, games, fast-food, theme parks, and video games. According to *Business Week*, children under 14 now spend \$20 billion of their own money and influence the spending of another \$200 billion. The huge clout child consumers have is one reason why Rupert Murdoch recently purchased The Family

A Field Guide

-continued from page 1

tor the new programs and inform the Agency how local stations are meeting their new requirements.

The new Children's Television Act rules provide the public with an unusual opportunity to improve the state of programming for children. The rules include tools to enable parents to monitor their child's viewing, evaluate the quality of educational programs, provide feedback to the TV industry, and file their comments, concerns and suggestions with the FCC.

Fighting to Improve Children's TV

The Children's Television Act (CTA) was passed by Congress in 1990 in response to the failure of the broadcast television industry to serve the educational and informational needs of children. Saturday morning, when most networks program for children, had come to epitomize the phrase "junk food for the mind," and featured many shows that were thinly disguised commercials for action toys and other prod-

ucts. The lack of better programming for children resulted from the erosion of public inter-

est policies at the Reagan-era FCC, which tended to regard television as just another "appliance," "a toaster with pictures."

Peggy Charren, head of Action for Children's Television, the country's leading media advocacy group at that time, asked Congress to intervene. Assembling a huge coalition of groups — including the National PTA, the National Education Association (NEA), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) — Charren eventually saw the passage of the 1990 law, which required stations to demonstrate how they were serving the educational and informational needs of children. Under the CTA, some of this programming had to be "specifically designed" to educate. Stations were obliged to inform the FCC, as part of their license renewal process, how they were fulfilling this new mandate. (Another part of the CTA placed some limits on the amount of commercials that could air on children's television.) Every eight years, stations are required to report to the FCC how well they have served the public in order to have their free licensed use of the airwaves renewed.

Charren and the other activists hoped that the broadcast industry would take this new obligation seriously, and that there would be an

"FCC-friendly" programs, as the TV industry called them, were often scheduled in pre-dawn time slots when few people were likely to be watching.

explosion of creative and highly imaginative children’s programming on commercial television. Unfortunately, for the most part, these hopes were not fully realized. In 1991, the television industry convinced the FCC to craft rules for the CTA that significantly weakened its effectiveness. In the absence of a specified number of educational programs that were required, broadcasters were allowed to air as little as 30 minutes of such programming.

Determined to help make the new law work, the Center for Media Education (CME), in partnership with Georgetown University School of Law’s Institute for Public Representation, conducted a study in 1992 examining how TV stations were responding to the law. In “A Report on Station Compliance with the Children’s Television Act,” CME documented that stations were re-labeling old reruns such as *The Jetsons*, *The Flintstones*, and *Leave it to Beaver* as “educational.” (*The Jetsons* was described by one station as an educational program that “teaches children what life will be like in the 21st Century.”) Other stations claimed that raunchy afternoon talk shows were serving educational needs. “FCC-friendly” programs, as the TV industry called them, were often scheduled in pre-dawn time slots when few people were likely to be watching. CME called on the FCC to revise and strengthen the Agency’s rules on the CTA.

Prompted by the report, the FCC conducted its own examination, which confirmed CME’s findings. While the Clinton Administration FCC was more sympathetic to this issue, the TV industry’s powerful Washington lobby continued to resist any changes to the CTA rules. Thus the new FCC Chair, Reed Hundt, began his own campaign to make the CTA more effective.

In 1994, CME released a second report, “The Impact of the Children’s Television Act on the Broadcast Market,” which indicated that programming created in response to the CTA was being inadequately funded and promoted. In addition, the report found that these educational programs continued to be scheduled in early morning time slots or at times when they were likely to be preempted by Saturday sports programming.

CME formed a new coalition of groups pressuring the FCC to act on its petition to change how the CTA was implemented. In addition to the National PTA, NEA, and AAP, such groups as the National Black Child Development Institute, the Children’s Defense Fund, the American Library Association, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Council of La Raza worked tirelessly to convince the FCC that it was time to act. Finally, in 1996, with the support of President Clinton, new rules were negotiated by the children’s advocacy groups (represented by Peggy Charren and CME), the broadcasting industry, and the FCC.

-continued on next page

Why CTA?

-continued from page 2

Channel for almost \$2 billion. He intends to transform the service into a showcase for Fox’s children’s programs.

A more recent trend is to encourage child viewers to become loyal at a young age to a particular brand — such as a Nickelodeon or a McDonalds. TV and advertising executives now work to encourage the development of brand loyalty that can be continued throughout a person’s lifetime and even passed on to future generations.

● Harvard’s Project Zero Meets Jumbo Pictures

It was “the TV people” vs. “the eggheads” last November when production company Jumbo Pictures and the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Project Zero Cognitive Skills Group began to work together on *101 Dalmatians*.

“The big fear,” executive producer Jim Jinkins said, “is that educators come in with their passion for education and turn your show into ‘broccoli television.’” In the early stages of the process, producers suffered moments of acute anxiety. “Project Zero emphasized thinking about thinking,” said Jinkins. “If you’re thinking about thinking, there’s a lot of verbal and no action, which makes TV people freak.”

Project Zero staff well understood the need to entertain, but their standards were high. “The script had to be

-continued on next page

Harvard's Project Zero

-continued from page 3

developmentally appropriate, pro-social and teach thinking skills," said Heidi Goodrich, Project Zero research associate. "Jumbo said to us, 'What if the show is just pro-social and developmentally appropriate?' For us, that wasn't enough."

Because Project Zero consultants were brought in to the process relatively late, several episodes of the series were already in production. On a few of those scripts, Jinkins decided that doing a "retrofit" would be too expensive.

That was okay with Project Zero staff. They just wouldn't give the episode their stamp of approval. Ultimately, at least 13 of the episodes will bear Project Zero's official imprimatur. Those episodes will air on ABC this fall. The remaining 39 will be sold in syndication by Buena Vista Television without the E/I qualifier.

Jinkins said that the episodes with and without Project Zero's approval will look alike. "When you line them up side by side," he said, "they're going to look very similar. One just went through an extra set of hoops."

As consultants, Project Zero staff provided notes on first and second draft scripts. "That gives us a chance to incorporate some of the messages we want to see in the script and take out others," Goodrich said. "Jumbo has been surprisingly good about taking our suggestions."

Despite the mutual respect that has evolved, the collaboration has sometimes been bumpy, as two cultures wildly unfamiliar with one another collided. "I was talking to somebody at Jumbo about the script-writing process one day," Goodrich recalled.

A Field Guide

-continued from page 3

The FCC Ruling

In the summer of 1996, the FCC crafted new rules that strengthen and clarify how broadcasters are expected to comply with the Children's Television Act, covering the definition of educational programming, the minimum amount of such programming required each week, on- and off-air labeling of educational children's programs, and new mechanisms for public accountability.

Core educational programming: The FCC has defined educational programming as "any television programming that furthers the educational and informational needs of children 16 years and under in any respect, including children's intellectual/cognitive or social/emotional needs."

The revised rules now require TV stations to air *core educational programming*. To qualify with the FCC's new requirements, a core program must:

- have a "significant purpose" of educating children 16 and under;
- have a clearly stated, written educational objective;
- have a target age group as the intended audience;
- be at least 30 minutes in length;
- be regularly scheduled; and
- be broadcast between the hours of 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM.

Three-hour minimum: For the first time, the FCC has quantified the amount of programming stations must provide to comply with the law. Beginning September 1, 1997, stations that want automatic renewal of their licenses are required to broadcast a minimum of three hours of core educational programming each week. TV stations that air "somewhat less" than the three hours may still meet this requirement by providing an additional package of specials, short-form programs, etc.

Program labels: Stations must also provide "on-air identification" of their educational children's programs, which should help viewers recognize and look for educational children's programs. The designation "E/I" is frequently used as an icon on the TV screen to denote core educational and informational programs. In addition, broadcasters are required to provide TV listings services, such as *TV Guide*, with information about their children's educational programs. (See sidebar: "*E/I*" *Logo Logistics*.)

New mechanisms for public accountability: The new rules also created a number of public accountability mechanisms designed to

provide more information to parents about how they can get involved in making the law more effective:

- **Public files.** The FCC requires stations to place in its public file a completed Children’s Educational/Informational Television Report to reflect the station’s efforts in the preceding quarter as well as efforts planned for the next quarter to serve the educational and informational needs of children. The Reports must be filed by the 10th day of the succeeding quarter (April 10, July 10, October 10, January 10). The objectives and target audience of the children’s programs are also to be specified in the report. Stations must publicize “in an appropriate manner” the existence and location of these Children’s Educational/Informational Television Reports.

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- **Children’s liaison.** To make it easier for the public to obtain information from the station about its educational children’s programming, the rules also require all stations to designate an

individual on staff to be the “children’s liaison” with the community. This person should be available to explain the information in the public files, to discuss how the station is meeting the requirements of the CTA, and to receive feedback from the public.

Shared Responsibility

These rules have created, in effect, a new social compact between the television industry and the public. For their part, television stations receive free use of the public airwaves in exchange for a commitment to serve the public interest. (The CTA rules are, in fact, the *only* public interest programming obligation clearly defined by FCC rules). The new programming requirements have been carefully crafted to balance broadcasters’ free speech rights with their obligation to serve the educational and informational needs of the child audience. The rules leave it to the discretion of individual stations to decide which educational programs to air.

At the same time, the FCC has also made it very clear that community members are expected to evaluate the educational merits of these programs and to offer their feedback, not only to the television stations but to the FCC as well. As the agency said in its rules, “Our entire licensing scheme is premised on providing adequate information to the public to enable the public to exercise its statutory right to participate in our renewal proceedings.”

Here, finally, is a form of “interactive television” worthy of the name. It has nothing to do with home shopping, arcade games, or video-on-

-continued on next page

Harvard’s Project Zero

-continued from page 4

“I said, ‘Well, you figure out what you want to teach and then you write the script.’ And the writer said, ‘Oh, you mean you think about what you want to teach first!’”

In addition to helping define the educational objectives of each episode, Goodrich and other Project Zero consultants have been sensitizing writers to how characters model behavior. “In the beginning,” she said, “there were no consequences for bad behavior. The puppies just got lucky. That sends the wrong message. It’s not just luck. It’s skill and effort to work through problems. Kids will learn from those subtle implied messages, the between-the-lines stuff,” she said.

Goodrich regrets that Project Zero was not brought into the process sooner. Jumbo Pictures producers and Project Zero educators are currently discussing plans to develop a new series from scratch.

“If we had been involved from the beginning,” Goodrich said, “kids would learn much more. The messages would be more coherent and consistent within a show and across shows. Modeling pro-social behaviors would be more explicit. The educational leverage that would provide would be pretty powerful.”

The Most Effective Way to Make TV a Positive Force in Children's Lives

by *Bobbie Eisenstock, Ph.D.,
Coordinator, The California Campaign
for Kids' TV*

Local groups are joining the national dialogue about children's TV by helping parents take more control of television in the home and in the community.

Launched last spring, The California Campaign for Kids' TV is a regional effort to educate, inform and involve the community in promoting quality children's programming in the Orange County and Los Angeles area. The Campaign is a joint partnership of the Center for Media Education, Pacific Mutual Foundation, Children's Hospital of Orange County and Safe Moves. It was brought to Southern California by Pacific Mutual Foundation, which is providing the funding.

To accomplish its goals, the campaign involves a two-pronged approach: (1) public education about children's TV habits and the public-health risk factors of television's impact, and (2) community participation in monitoring TV stations for compliance with the Children's Television Act to ensure quality children's programming.

Educating and informing the community is the first priority. The Campaign has developed tools for parents, educators, health professionals and other child advocates to help them help children make smart TV choices. TV Fact Sheets about healthy viewing habits, commercials, and violence, and *A Parent's Guide to Kids' TV* are available in English and Spanish.

Nearly one million families with school-aged children will receive TV Fact Sheets. The Campaign is distributing materials to students in elementary schools to take home to their parents. *A Parent's Guide to Kids' TV*, along with TV Fact Sheets, are

A Field Guide

-continued from page 5

demand, but everything to do with one of the most profound influences on the nation's young people. The FCC, in setting new ground rules for the fulfillment of the CTA, has created a forum in which concerned citizens can help shape the media environment that literally pervades our culture. Armed with an understanding of what the new rules require, and provided with an opportunity to make their voices heard, parents and others can make a real difference in the kind of programming that is available to children on broadcast television.

Will the New Rules Bring Change?

The stronger CTA rules have the potential, at least, to usher in a new era of quality, innovative programming for children on broadcast television. The fall 1997 television season is beginning to reflect these changes, although there are a number of obstacles within the industry that will need to be overcome if we are to see positive long-term improvement.

Even before the new rules were put in place, broadcasters had added new educational programs, reacting to increasing pressure from parents groups and policymakers. Series like *Beakman's World*, *Bill Nye, the Science Guy*, and *Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?*, for example, were put on the air in direct response to the FCC's moves to strengthen its regulations.

But when the new fall schedules were first announced in February, *New York Times* reporter Lawrie Mifflin observed that very little had changed from previous years, despite the new rules. "... no new art form was on view. In fact, some very old shows have been trotted out to meet the Federal mandate — a sign of either cynicism or economic desperation." While this judgment may have been a bit premature, it is clear that the picture is mixed. Some TV networks are overhauling their schedules and adding several new programs, it is true, but others have made only minimal changes.

The four major commercial television networks — ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC — will be primarily responsible for producing most of the programming designed to meet the CTA. Two newer networks — WB (Time Warner) and UPN (Viacom-Paramount) — are also providing some educational programs to their affiliates. Many stations, including those unaffiliated with any network, will acquire CTA-eligible

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shows from independent producers and studios. While technically it is up to the individual station manager to decide what shows to air, in practice, most programming is supplied by the network.

Here is a snapshot of how the broadcast networks are responding to the new CTA rules. (see *Fall Line-Up* on pages 8-9.)

Fox

Margaret Loesch, chairman and chief executive officer, Fox Kids' Networks Worldwide, claims that because the network has always provided educational programming the new rules will not require them to make many changes. Two-thirds of Fox's educational and informational programming will be made up of the long-running cartoon series *Bobby's World*. Four half-hours of *Bobby's World* will air Monday through Thursday mornings. Two additional cartoons already on the schedule, *C-Bear and Jamal* and *Life With Louie*, will round out the network's educational fare. As Loesch explains, "We made a commitment when we started this network in March 1990 to do educational TV as part of our schedule."

During its first season, Fox Kids' Network aired three hours of children's programming, including a half-hour series that the network considered educational. "We didn't call it educational TV but we met with our advisory panel and produced *Bobby's World* as early as year one. We dealt with being afraid of the dentist. We dealt with death. We dealt with a lot of tricky issues," Loesch said, noting that the series has since added closed-captioning, which builds reading skills.

In addition, Loesch said, Fox enlists "a battery of teachers" who suggest stories, read scripts, and look at shows. On re-reviewing several previous episodes of *Bobby's World*, teachers decided the programs did not have enough educational content, she explained, so "we've put them on the shelf."

"Now that we're calling the programs educational," she continued, "the teachers are doing more than consulting. They are the essence of the show. They're involved with every step of the process. I don't leave it to me or my creative staff," she added. "If a teacher says to me, 'No, I don't see educational value,' then we don't call it educational."

Fox has ordered only 10 new episodes of *Bobby's World* for next season. Many Fox stations are also likely to air *Student Bodies*, produced by Fox studios as an educational program for the syndication market. (Syndicated programs are sold on a station-by-station basis, as opposed to a network-produced show that is available to all of its network-affiliated stations.)

-continued on page 10

The Most Effective Way

-continued from page 6

available community-wide to parents, educators, physicians, child-care workers, business leaders, libraries, local groups and at community events and conferences about families and children.

Meeting community leaders and speaking to local groups is another focus of The Campaign's public education effort. The first two in a series of community meetings were organized by the Violence Prevention Coalition of Orange County and by the Crime Prevention Office of the San Clemente Police Services of the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Discussions focused on the key Campaign issues, including the ways that children can become critical TV viewers; the negative effects of media violence, commercials, and inappropriate sexual content on children's development; and how to optimize the positive benefits of television. Subsequent meetings and speakers are being scheduled at the request of local groups.

To ensure an on-going education program for the community, The Campaign is training volunteers to be a part of a Speaker's Bureau. A Speaker's Kit has been developed for the training that provides background information for campaign materials.

The second step in The Campaign is to help community members participate in the process of promoting quality children's programming. This effort is organized around the Children's Television Act of 1990. The Campaign will train volunteers how to monitor programming and evaluate TV stations' performance in serving children's educational and informational needs. The goal is for the community to work collaboratively with local broadcasters to bring out the best in children's programming.

Resources

Federal Communications Commission

The full Report and Order on Children's Programming can be found at: <http://www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/MassMedia/Orders/1996/fcc96335.htm>
To see what commercial TV stations have filed electronically with the FCC to fulfill their obligation under the CTA, visit the FCC's Web site at: http://dettifoss.fcc.gov:8080/prod/kidvid/prod/pub_info.htm

For more information:
Federal Communications Commission
Video Services Division
1919 M Street., NW, Rm. 702
Washington, DC 20554
Tel: (202) 418-1600
or (888) 225-5322
Web: <http://www.fcc.gov>

National PTA

National PTA Critical Viewing Library offers information, activities and links to help guide parents and other child advocates interested in children's television. This can be found at: <http://www.pta.org/programs/viewlibr.htm>

For more information:
National PTA Headquarters: Chicago, IL
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E-Mail: info@pta.org
Web: <http://www.pta.org>

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1090 Vermont Avenue, NW
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Tel: (202) 289-6790

THE FALL LINE-UP

ABC Saturday Morning

Show	Time	Target Age	Description	Educational Objective	Producer
<i>Disney's 101 Dalmatians: The Series</i>	8:00 AM	7-11	Picking up where they left off in the movies, the Dalmatians and their owners move to a farm next to Cruella de Ville	Teach strategic thinking, creative problem-solving, learning through experience	Walt Disney Animation with Jumbo Pictures
<i>Disney's One Saturday Morning: Brand Spanking New Doug</i>	8:30-10:30 AM	8-12	12-year-old Doug and his daily adventures	Deal with issues of responsibility, sibling and peer conflicts, the value of reading, writing and artistic expression	Walt Disney Television with Jumbo Pictures; Executive Producers: Jim Jenkins and David Campbell
<i>Disney's One Saturday Morning: Pepper Ann</i>	8:30-10:30 AM	9-12	Pepper Ann rides the emotional roller coaster of adolescence in the eternal quest to be cool	Deal with issues of self-acceptance and self-esteem, perseverance, relationships with parents and peers	Walt Disney Television Animation; Executive Producer: Sue Rose
<i>Disney's One Saturday Morning: Recess</i>	8:30-10:30 AM	8-12	An eclectic group of fourth graders navigate the school yard within that sacred time known as recess	Deal with issues of cooperation, peer pressures, facing fears	Walt Disney Television Animation; Executive Producers: Paul Germain and Joe Ansolabehere
<i>Jungle Cubs</i>	11:30 AM	5-8	The adventures of animated characters from Disney's <i>The Jungle Book</i>	Deal with issues of loyalty, friendship and cooperative behavior	Walt Disney Television Animation; Executive Producers: Ted Anasti and Patsy Cameron
<i>The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh</i>	12:00 PM	3-6	The adventures of animated characters based on the books by A. A. Milne	Teach responsibility, honesty, cooperation and conquering childhood fears	Walt Disney Television Animation
<i>Science Court</i>	12:30 PM	7-11	Scientific learning and improvisational comedy combine in courtroom setting	Teach scientific concepts and methods	Tom Snyder Productions

CBS Saturday Morning

Show	Time	Target Age	Description	Educational Objective	Producer
<i>Beakman's World</i>	7:00 AM	6-11	An inquisitive scientist responds to children's questions and performs experiments	Explain science	Columbia Pictures Television, Columbia Tri Star Television Distribution, Universal Belo Productions; Executive Producer: Mark Waxman
<i>Fudge</i>	7:30 AM	5-9	A close-knit family seen through the eyes of an adolescent, based on Judy Blume's books	Present personal and social issues in an urban family	Universal Television Entertainment, Amblin Entertainment
<i>The Ghostwriter Mysteries</i>	8:00 AM	7-11	Three children and a ghost solve mysteries using reading, writing and problem solving skills	Bring social issues into focus and help children see how literacy connects with their lives in and out of school	Children's Television Workshop; Executive Producer: Ned Kandel
<i>Wheel of Fortune 2000</i>	8:30 AM	7-11	Children spin the wheel to solve work and language puzzles and face physical challenges	Encourage critical thinking skills and language arts development	Columbia TriStar Television; Executive Producer: Scott Sternberg
<i>The Sports Illustrated for Kids Show</i>	11:00 AM	7-11	Famous sports personalities guest host with regular teen hosts/reporters	Use popular sports as metaphors for developing life skills and encourage positive value	Sports Illustrated Television, EYEMARK Entertainment, CBS; Executive Producer: Paulette Douglas
<i>The Weird Al Show</i>	11:30 AM	7-11	"Weird Al" Yankovic hosts the live-action/mixed media series	Help children respect one another's differences, think for themselves and teach goal-setting	Dick Clark productions; Executive Producers: Dick Clark, Al Yankovic, Jay Levy

Resources

-continued from page 8

Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

As part of its research initiative on “Media and the Developing Mind,” the Center recently released a four-part study on children and television:

1. *The 1997 State of Children’s Television Report*
2. *Television in the Home: The 1997 Survey of Parents and Children*
3. *Newspaper Coverage of Children’s Television: A 1997 Update*
4. *Children’s Educational Television Regulations and the Local Broadcaster*

For more information, or to request copies of the reports, contact:

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NBC Saturday Morning

Show	Time	Target Age	Description	Educational Objective	Producer
<i>Saved By The Bell: The New Class</i>	9:30 and 10:30 AM	13-17	The exploits of a group of Southern California high school students	According to NBC, each episode has a unique educational objective	Peter Engel Productions, NBC Studios; Producer: Chris Conte, Tony Soltis
<i>City Guys</i>	10:00 AM	13-17	A buddy comedy starring a street-smart African-American and a preppy Anglo	According to NBC, each episode has a unique educational objective	Peter Engel Productions, NBC Enterprises; Producer: Ilunga Adell, Mathew Morgan
<i>Hang Time</i>	11:00 and 11:30 AM	13-17	Follows the adventures of a small town’s basketball team	According to NBC, each episode has a unique educational objective	Peter Engel Productions, NBC Studios; Producer: Richard Albrecht, Casey Keller
<i>NBA Inside Stuff</i>	12:00N	13-17	News magazine featuring off-court activities of sports figures	Developed for each episode; based on curriculum inspired by the U.S. Dept. of Education	National Basketball Association

Fox

Show	Time	Target Age	Description	Educational Objective	Producer
<i>Bobby’s World</i>	Mon-Thur 7:00 AM	2-11	Combines a 4-year-old boy’s observations on life with the comedy of Howie Mandel	Teach life lessons and traditional family values	Film Roman; Executive Producers: Phil Roman, Howie Mandel
<i>C-Bear and Jamal</i>	Friday 7:00 AM	2-11	10-year-old Jamal deals with life’s ups and downs with help from his teddy bear	Combine lessons of life, responsibility and friendship with the humor of rapper/actor Tone Loc	Film Roman; Executive Producer: Tone Loc
<i>Life with Louie</i>	Saturday 9:30 AM	6-11	The adventures of 8-year-old Louie and his family, based on the childhood of comedian Louie Anderson	Lessons about growing up and life experiences	Hyperion Studios; Executive Producers: Louie Anderson, Ahmos Hassan, Willard Carroll, Thomans Wilhite

WB

Show	Time	Target Age	Description	Educational Objective	Producer
<i>The Adventures of Captain Planet</i>	Mon-Fri 7:30 AM	2-12	Superhero Captain Planet and the Planeteers fight eco-villians to protect the spirit of the Earth	Educate children about environmental issues	TBS Productions, DIC Enterprises, Hanna-Barbara
<i>Ump tee-3 TV</i>	Saturday 8:00 AM	2-8	The adventures of children who take over a television station	Explore subjects ranging from science and geography to values and attitudes	Enchante/George Company, Act III; Executive Producers: Norman Lear, Jim George

UPN

UPN will not be airing any children’s shows specifically designed to be educational/informational. The fall line-up, as it stands, is intended to “entertain.” Any educational material that may be included in the shows is “secondary.”

● Grading Station Compliance with the CTA: A Report Card for the Public

The FCC has encouraged parents, teachers, health professionals and child advocates to help take responsibility to ensure that the CTA is enforced. To play a more active role in promoting and enforcing the CTA, members of the public need to understand local broadcasters' programming efforts. Then they can work with individual broadcasters to evaluate each TV station's performance in order to develop effective educational and informational (E/I) programming that serves the needs of children. Here is a checklist to use in evaluating how well the broadcasters in your community are complying with this law:

The Broadcaster's Responsibilities

- ▶ How many total hours of programming "specifically designed" to educate and inform children is available every week on this TV station?
- ▶ What types of E/I programming are available to children — regularly scheduled 30-minute programs, specials, PSAs, short-form programs or regularly scheduled non-weekly programs?
- ▶ Are E/I programs clearly designated by broadcasters with an indication of the target-age group and identified on air at the beginning of the program and in the TV program guide?
- ▶ Are the educational and informational needs of all age groups of children — preschoolers (age 2-5), school-aged (ages 6-11) and young teens (ages 12-16) — being served by the broadcaster?

A Field Guide

-continued from page 7

NBC

Unlike Fox, which programs children's shows on weekday mornings and afternoons as well as Saturday morning, NBC airs children's programs only on Saturday morning. The network's entire Saturday morning schedule is billed as "educational and informational." (All of the educational programming on CBS and ABC also will be scheduled exclusively on Saturday morning.)

In fact, NBC's Saturday morning, which is oriented toward teenagers rather than younger children, will look a lot like it has the last several seasons. The network promotes it as "TNBC," which stands for TeenNBC. NBC will air two episodes of the long-running comedy "adventure series" *Saved By The Bell: The New Class*, the first at 9:30 AM and the second at 10:30 AM, separated by a new half-hour "buddy comedy" called *City Guys*. In addition, NBC will air two episodes back-to-back of the sports comedy, *Hang Time*. NBC's Saturday morning educational programming will conclude with a half-hour sports show called *NBA Inside Stuff*, produced by the National Basketball Association's entertainment division.

Since 1994, according to NBC, the network has incorporated pro-social messages in every episode of *Saved By the Bell*, to help make the case that the series qualifies under the CTA. But NBC's teen-friendly educational schedule has come under criticism from some experts and advocates who question its true educational value. Last August, for example, *The Los Angeles Times* reported that even NBC executive vice president John Miller was surprised that *Saved By The Bell* would qualify as an "FCC-friendly" show.

CBS

CBS's plans for the fall reflect the network's 1995 agreement with CME and other groups to air three hours of educational programs. In September 1995, CME, along with the United Church of Christ and Black Citizens for a Fair Media, filed a petition with the FCC asking that the proposed takeover of CBS by Westinghouse be denied, based on the poor performance serving children by Westinghouse affiliates in the past. The petition was withdrawn after CBS made a public commitment to begin airing three hours of CTA programming. The agreement helped pave the way for the subsequent FCC rulemaking.

CBS signed a contract with Children's Television Workshop, the producers of *Sesame Street*, for the development of at least three

half-hour Saturday morning series. The first of the CBS-CTW series, *Ghostwriter Mysteries*, a spin-off of the successful PBS series *Ghostwriter*, will debut in the fall. CBS's Saturday morning educational and informational programming will also include *Fudge*, a series based on Judy Blume's popular children's books previously aired by ABC; the critically-acclaimed madcap science series *Beakman's World* (which has been running on CBS since 1993); and three new series: *Wheel of Fortune 2000*, *The Sports Illustrated for Kids Show* and *The Weird Al Show*, starring Weird Al Yankovic.

In CBS's promotional materials, *Sports Illustrated for Kids* is described as using "popular sports to learn positive values as well as build awareness of how sports embodies health, nutrition and the natural sciences." *Wheel of Fortune*, the network explains, will "encourage critical thinking skills and language arts development"; while *Weird Al* helps "children respect one another's differences and think for themselves in various social situations and teaches goal-setting."

"With the FCC mandate," explained Lucy Johnson, CBS senior vice president for daytime/children's programs and special projects, "we're turning up the volume on the 'take-away value' of what a kid could learn." The ruling meant "adding a certain depth to any given

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idea. Everyone assumes that every show is going to be a *Beakman's World*. The FCC never said that a program had to be dead-on teaching and therefore we have the freedom to do comedy or drama or music or whatever." CBS has also formed an advisory council for children's programming.

The way some of its educational programs are scheduled could present a problem, however. The Saturday morning children's schedule will be interrupted this season by a two-hour block of adult news programming. *The Sports Illustrated for Kids Show* and *Weird Al* will not be on until 11 AM. By this time, most child viewers may have migrated to children's programs on other channels and would be unlikely to come back to CBS for these shows.

ABC

Now that the ABC network is owned by Disney, it is expected to make a major commitment in the children's area. The network will

Grading Station Compliance

-continued from page 10

- ▶ Does the TV station have a designated children's liaison who oversees CTA responsibilities and serves as the broadcaster's contact for parents, educators, health professionals, child advocates and researchers about children's programming?
- ▶ Is the broadcaster willing to discuss and meet with representatives from the community to evaluate their CTA performance and ensure that programming serves children's educational and informational needs?
- ▶ If the required three hours per week of educational and informational programming is not aired, does the broadcaster sponsor E/I programs on other stations in the market and/or demonstrate involvement in special nonbroadcast efforts?

Individual Programs

- ▶ Is the educational and informational objective of the program and the target child audience clearly described by the broadcaster in the quarterly Children's Educational/Informational Television Report available in the station's public inspection files?
- ▶ Does the program have clear educational value for the child audience it is specifically designed to reach?
- ▶ Is the E/I message a necessary and integral part of the story telling? Or is it a minor or incidental story element that would not essentially change the storyline if it were not included?

-continued on next page

-continued on next page

Grading Station Compliance

-continued from page 11

- ▶ Does the program address age-appropriate interests, knowledge, vocabulary and other abilities of the intended audience?
- ▶ Does the program incorporate messages, situations and skills that benefit the social and emotional development of the target-age audience and applicable to their experience?
- ▶ Is the E/I message presented in a way that the intended child audience can understand? Or is it too difficult? Too easy? Too unclear?
- ▶ Is the program aired at the time of day when the intended target-age viewer is likely to be watching?

● Ten Steps You Can Take in Your Community to Make the CTA Work

There are many things you can do to help make the new rules work for children. Here are just a few. Please let us know at CME your ideas, suggestions and concerns about how the CTA is being implemented by stations in your community. Come to our Web site (www.cme.org/cme), E-mail us, or drop us a line.

1. Check your local television guide for the E/I icon next to the educational program listings. If you don't find the icons, call or write the publisher and ask them to be included.
2. Watch TV with your children and teach them how to identify E/I programs. Create your own "Family TV Guide" of E/I programs for your family to watch.
3. Call your local station and ask to

A Field Guide

-continued from page 11

begin airing an unusual two-hour block of programs (8:30-10:30 AM) in the fall called *One Saturday Morning*. Featuring a host and studio audience, *One Saturday Morning* will contain three children's TV series along with short-form "interstitial" programming.

According to Geraldine Laybourne, former head of Nickelodeon who is now at Disney/ABC, the block will have a "live and unpredictable presence," with individual programs beginning at staggered times.

ABC's other educational and informational series will include *Pepper Ann*, an animated series about a quirky seventh-grade girl; *Recess*, which features a group of fourth graders on their school playground; *101 Dalmatians*, based on the Disney film of the same name; a science series called *Science Court*; as well as three established ABC series, *Brand Spanking New Doug*, Disney's *Jungle Cubs*, and *The New*

Adventures of Winnie The Pooh.

In addition, ABC has hired two prestigious consultants for its series. Project Zero, a research and development group at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, is consulting on *101 Dalmatians* (see sidebar: *Harvard's Project Zero Meets Jumbo Pictures*), while The Archer School for Girls, a Los Angeles private school, is consulting on *Pepper Ann*.

"Among the many show ideas being tossed around, science programs are being developed in greatest number because it's easy to see that science will qualify."

WB and UPN

As for the fledgling WB and UPN networks, Kids WB will provide three hours of educational and informational programming that includes weekday morning re-runs of *The Adventures of Captain Planet* and a new half-hour series on Saturday mornings produced by Norman Lear (producer of the 70s sitcom *All In The Family*) called *Umptee-3 TV*.

In contrast, UPN is not scheduling any network educational or informational programs, but will give its affiliates the option of airing one half-hour science series called *ALGO'S FACTory*. The balance of the three-hour requirement will have to be filled by UPN's affiliates with either locally produced shows or programs in syndication.

ALGO'S FACTory executive producer and creator Rip Riordan acknowledged the role that the FCC played in generating interest in

the series, which Riordan created four years ago. “Odds are the series wouldn’t have gotten the interest now if it wasn’t deemed educational,” he said.

Challenges: Real and Imagined

The stronger CTA rules have forced the industry to rethink the way it does business. Many programmers and producers are struggling to find ways to respond to the new mandate. Some complain they are still confused about what the FCC would consider “educational.” Robby London, executive vice president of creative affairs at DIC Entertainment (producers of *Where On Earth Is Carmen San Diego?*) told *InfoActive Kids* that he wishes the FCC would clarify what it wants. “When it comes time to produce a series that is intended to fulfill the requirement, what constitutes fulfillment?”

Others express resentment about having to create educational programs that they fear will not be as profitable as pure entertainment “kidvid” programming. Some executives are making dire predictions about the impact of the Children’s Television Act. According to the trade magazine *Electronic Media*, Jean MacCurdy, president of Warner Bros. Animation, recently warned that “there’s a strong likelihood that in fact as the government mandates programming that it will drive kids away to cable. We may indeed go out of business because of it.”

Donna Mitroff, president of the educational consulting firm Mitroff Media, who has a background in public television, finds that the uncertainty over what constitutes educational programming is making some producers and broadcasters overly cautious. Production companies and potential buyers are concerned that if ideas are not close enough to conventional notions of educational TV, they will not pass FCC muster. “As soon as it is called educational, we think curriculum,” she said. “I’m concerned that it not be defined only in terms of the basic school curriculum.” Among the many show ideas being tossed around, science programs are being developed in greatest number because it’s easy to see that science will qualify, she said. “It’s much harder to determine whether something in a more literary vein will be acceptable.” Mitroff worries that “now that producers are trying to implement it, the creative community needs a better set of guidelines that give them greater latitude than they think they have. Production companies need to have a sense that it’s okay to be broader than reading, writing, science and math.”

Recognizing the need for more clearly defined criteria with which to evaluate these programs, the Center for Media Education, has formed a partnership with Mediascope, a Los Angeles-based

Ten Steps You Can Take

-continued from page 12

speak to the children’s programming liaison. If they don’t have one, ask the station manager why. Invite the liaison to speak at a PTA meeting or other community organization about how the station is complying with the new regulations for children’s programming.

4. Ask your local newspaper TV critic or the person who writes about TV to do a story about how local stations are fulfilling the CTA mandate.

5. Visit your local TV stations and take a look at their public files on compliance with the Children’s Television Act. If the station has a Web site, ask that the CTA information be listed there as well. Is the station filing its quarterly reports electronically to the FCC so they are available on the Internet? If not, ask that the station do so.

6. Ask each station how many hours of CTA programming it is airing. Publicly praise stations that air more than the 3-hour minimum.

7. Write letters with your children to compliment advertisers who sponsor E/I programs. Encourage advertisers whose products you purchase to support your favorite children’s educational program.

8. Enlist your local PTA, church, or other community organization to create a community TV guide of recommended children’s educational programming. Make it available through local groups, libraries, schools, churches, physicians’ offices, and boys’ and girls’ clubs.

9. Involve the school community in evaluating how your local broadcasters are meeting the CTA requirements. Create a class project for stu-

-continued on next page

-continued on next page

Ten Steps You Can Take

-continued from page 13

dents to grade the educational/informational programs and assign them report cards. (See sidebar: *Grading Station Compliance with the CTA.*)

10. Develop a community awards program to honor the television station whose programming best serves the educational and informational needs of children.

● "E/I" Logo Logistics

The "E/I" designation is beginning to be made available to newspapers and other listings services, although its use is not widespread. *TV Guide* began to carry the E/I icon in early March. Tribune Media Services, one of the country's two major listings services providing TV listings to many of the country's daily newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Los Angeles Times*, began to provide the icon designation to clients in mid-May. TV Data, the other listings service, whose clients include *The Washington Post*, *The New York Daily News*, and *The Chicago Sun Times*, currently offers the designation to clients who want it.

But not all clients want it. Case in point: *The Washington Post's* Michael Hill, editor of *The Post's* Sunday supplement "TV Week," said that while the new E/I designation was under active consideration, *The Post* was not currently carrying either the "TV Parental Guidelines" (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, etc.) or the E/I designation.

Logistically, the E/I designation poses a particular problem, Hill explained, because space on the Saturday TV

A Field Guide

-continued from page 13

research organization, and the Children's Action Network to bring children's TV programmers and producers together with educational advisors to develop some voluntary guidelines. These guidelines, it is hoped, will assist the industry in responding more effectively to the new mandate.

The demands of the commercial marketplace have created other challenges to producers who want to create educational and informational programs for broadcast TV. While the new rules have stimulated interest in such programming, the response has neither been as enthusiastic nor as widespread as many had anticipated. "People thought CTW phones must be ringing off the hook," explained Dolores Morris, Children's Television Workshop vice president of program development. "It's not as frenzied as people would have hoped."

If educational programs are going to succeed in this highly competitive environment, they will need additional support. Executives need to show patience while a program attempts to build an audience. Creating quality educational programs may require more money as well. Educational consultants, who possess the expertise needed to ensure that the programs will serve the developmental needs of the age-groups for which they are intended, often drive up production costs. Unfortunately, because educational programs are viewed as less profitable than entertainment programs, networks sometimes insist on significantly lower budgets.

In addition to financial hurdles, lack of promotion is likely to continue to hamper efforts to make children's programs successful on ABC, CBS, and NBC. With the exception of Fox, network affiliates and many other stations face a promotional cul-de-sac with children's programming. Because they only schedule children's programming on Saturday mornings, they have no other place on the schedule to promote kids' shows. As a result, Saturday morning series go unpromoted, unnoticed, unviewed, and often unrenewed.

As Lucy Johnson from CBS explains, her network "tries to pick shows that had some self-start elements to them, like big names or instantly recognizable titles." Adds CTW's Dolores Morris, "The market is really in Saturday morning for children's programming and it is drawn by marquee value properties — a movie or a great toy or a great book. That's one of the key reasons for *Ghostwriter Mysteries* being the series CBS chose. It has a built-in audience."

One of the attractions for CBS in working with CTW was that the Workshop has a lot of promotional experience, said Morris. "We're going to do a lot of promotion ourselves. The nets have no idea how to promote off-air. We have five magazines. We have a whole lot of community education services. CBS thought what a great idea to

use the promotional ability the Workshop has because there's no machinery in place at the network."

Educating the Public

Dr. Ellen Wartella, Dean of the College of Communications and the Walter Cronkite Regent's Chair in Communications at the University of Texas, Austin, has a different kind of promotion in mind. She would like to see the broadcast industry publicize the requirements, as suggested in the FCC ruling and as the industry has done with the TV Parental Guidelines.

Such an effort might stimulate public involvement, she believes. But Wartella cautions that individual citizens do not have time to examine stations' public records. Nor are individuals likely to have the expertise to contest what a station may argue is "educational and informational." Therefore, public advocacy efforts and additional research are essential components for any public policing.

While the new rules have stimulated interest in such programming, the response has neither been as enthusiastic nor as widespread as many had anticipated.

CME is engaged in just such an effort to help implement the Children's Television Act, working in cooperation with education, health, and child advocacy organizations across the nation. More specifically, in southern California, CME is involved with

groups of citizens evaluating children's shows next fall as part of the California Campaign for Kids' TV. (See sidebar: *The Most Effective Way to Make TV a Positive Force in Children's Lives.*)

Within the academic community, the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania is in the second of a five-year research project to try to identify how to foster quality educational programs for children. This year, the Center released a number of reports focusing on the CTA. (See sidebar: *Resources.*)

-continued on next page

"E/I" Logo Logistics

-continued from page 14

page is very tight. "There are ways to finesse the other ratings in terms of space," he said, "but because most of the E/I shows appear on Saturday morning it's a question of cramming all the information into the grid. It would really alter the look of the page. We end up having to abbreviate the title of the show beyond recognition."

For an interactive CTA Tool Kit, visit CME on the Web:
<http://www.cme.org/cme>

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A Field Guide

-continued from page 15

The CTA's Promise

The CTA provides a unique opportunity for all those concerned about children — parents, educators, journalists, and broadcasters — to work together to usher in a new era of innovative and positive programming. During the last few years there has been increasing criticism about the negative impact TV has on the lives of children. Concerns over the harmful effects of media violence, for example, have helped fuel the efforts to have ratings placed on all TV programs. But if properly implemented, the new rules on educational programming can help foster a wide range of better viewing options for children. If we all do our part, there should be more programs that help stimulate and entertain our children. That, after all, is the goal of the CTA. With your help, we can make it a reality.