Investigation of the effect of television on student achievement

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Investigation of the effect of television on student achievement

Abstract
It has been observed by the researcher that during "sharing time" (activity where children bring things to show and tell about or share their experiences) many of the low achievers tell about television shows with much more frequency than high achievers. These accounts consistently deal with noneducational or commercial television. This led to the hypothesis that a negative correlation existed between noneducational television and student achievement. Concerning noneducational television, Schramm states that major studies show that television viewing tends to be associated with lower-than-average achievement. Television reduces reading time, social interaction time, and the opportunity to practice certain skills necessary to academic excellence. It tends to reduce the average level of intellectual stimulation available to a child after the age of about nine.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF TELEVISION VIEWING ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A Research Paper
Submitted to
The Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by
Charlotte A. Fiser
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On Student Achievement

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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July 14, 1983
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July 15, 1983
Date Approved

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And Instruction
CONTENTS

I. THE PROBLEM
Introduction......................................................... 1
Statement of the Problem........................................... 2
Procedures in Obtaining Literature................................. 4

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Effect of Television Viewing on Student Achievement........... 5
Using Television Viewing in the Elementary Curriculum........ 16
Television Units...................................................... 21

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.................................... 27
The Problem

Introduction

It has been observed by the researcher that during "sharing time" (activity where children bring things to show and tell about or share their experiences) many of the low achievers tell about television shows with much more frequency than high achievers. These accounts consistently deal with noneducational or commercial television. This led to the hypothesis that a negative correlation existed between noneducational television and student achievement. Concerning noneducational television, Schramm states that major studies show that television viewing tends to be associated with lower-than-average achievement. Television reduces reading time, social interaction time, and the opportunity to practice certain skills necessary to academic excellence. It tends to reduce the average level of intellectual stimulation available to a child after the age of about nine. The trend, indicated by the evidence, is for television viewing patterns to be associated with a group of variables that interact with each other, and with school and test performance - probably with negative effect. (Schramm, 1976)

Teachers report that many children arrive at school exhausted. Those who watch 'Charlie's Angels' from 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. and get up in time for an hour of TV before boarding the school bus are only half-awake when they arrive at school. Some
children put their head down on their desks and have a quiet nap; others seem to sleep with their eyes open.

(Larrick, 1979:44)

Among the children who are awake, attention spans are shorter than in years past. Eight or ten minutes seems to be the longest time children can stay on task. Children read only a page or two of a book and then quit. They give up, not because the book is difficult or the subject unappealing, but according to teachers: "The children just don't finish things that require more than a few minutes. They would rather sit and do nothing. They expect to be entertained." (Larrick, 1979:45)

In a study concerning the television viewing habits of 202 kindergarten children from two suburban school districts north of Chicago, Perney found that there was a slight overall positive relationship between early school achievement and amount of time devoted to educational television. The correlations found between the amount of time spent watching Electric Company and both quantitative and verbal ability for the boys ($r = .19$ and $r = .11$, respectively), and to a lesser extent for the girls ($r = .11$ and $r = .03$, respectively).

(Perney, 1976)

Statement of the Problem

Young people watch thousands of hours of television. Over the past twenty-five years, the influence of television on young children in the United States has increased dramatically. The medium of television has changed childhood more than any other social innovation in the history of the world. (Lubin, 1976) It is probably the greatest
source of common experience for children. Networks give children in New York an all-at-once connection with peers in Portland, Oregon. (Haney, 1971) Preschool children are the largest television audience in America, spending a greater number of total hours and a greater proportion of their waking day watching television than any other age group. According to one survey made in 1970, children in the 2-5 age group spend an average of 30.4 hours each week watching television, while children in the 6-11 age group spend 25.5 hours each week watching. (Nielsen, 1970) The weekly average for adult viewers in 1971 was 23.3 hours. (LoSciuto, 1971) Another survey, made in 1971, documented a weekly viewing time of 34.56 hours for preschool boys and 32.44 hours for preschool girls. (Stein and Friedrich, 1971) Kaye estimated that children under five watch an average of 22 to 25 hours of television each week. (Kaye, 1974) Even the most conservative estimates indicate that preschool children in America are spending more than a third of their waking hours watching television. Television has become a third parent to some children.

For many children television is the only sure companion in the home - the one who greets them after school, the one who says good night, and the one who sends them off in the morning. Children watch television alone or in small silent groups for more hours than they spend in school. They elect to work alone at school, perhaps because they can't relate to others. Television is their buddy. (Larrick, 1979:46)
Through a review of the related literature, this paper will investigate the relationship between television viewing and the achievement of elementary children. It will demonstrate that by interviewing students concerning their television viewing habits and interests, soliciting the help of parents, and researching television content through viewing and written reviews, the teacher can become a model of active critical response. Certain "television objectives" can be established to be achieved through a television unit encompassing such content areas as science, arithmetic, social studies, language arts, and reading.

**Procedures in Obtaining Research Literature**

In order to obtain necessary related literature, the researcher made extensive use of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) documents. This entailed an ERIC computer search undertaken through the facilities of the University of Northern Iowa Library. The sources listed were referenced in either Resources in Education (RIE) or the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). The materials cited in the computer search were then obtained at the University of Northern Iowa Library.

Research studies reviewed by various authors provided reference to original sources which the researcher then obtained. Information gathered from these sources was organized into an investigation of the following major areas related to the problem: the effect of television viewing on student achievement, and using television to enrich the elementary curriculum.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Consider these statistics from the July 29, 1979 Des Moines Sunday Register:

1. At midnight, approximately two million children in the United States between the ages of 2 and 11 are watching television.

2. Children of nursery school age average 29 hours of TV a week.

3. By the time that person is 18, he will have had 15,000 hours of TV, 11,000 hours of school, and 1,500 hours of religious education.

4. This teen will have spent the equivalent of one-and-a-half years of eight-hour days watching commercials. (Shanley, 1979) Such statistics are moving people to take a closer look at the viewing habits of America's children.

Parents who now have children enrolled in the public or private schools were asked to give an estimate of the time spent, on a typical school day, by their eldest child on television, homework, and reading. Since time spent is likely to vary with age, the results were reported separately for children 12 years of age or younger and those 13 years of age or older.

The first question: "(For eldest child) About how much time does he/she spend looking at television after school hours and until he/she goes to bed, on a typical school day?" (Gallup Poll, 1977) See Table 1.
### Table 1

Percent of Children Televiewing For Given Period of Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Based on those responding)</th>
<th>By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger</th>
<th>By Children 13 Years of Age And Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 hour</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1 hour to 2 hours</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 2 hours to 3 hours</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 3 hours to 4 hours</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 4 hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. From "Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools," September 1977.*

The second question: "And about how much time on school homework on a typical school day?" (Gallup Poll, 1977) See Table 2.
Table 2
Percent of Children Doing Homework
For Given Period of Time

(Based on those responding) | By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger | By Children 13 Years of Age And Older
--- | --- | ---
No time | 24 | 15
Up to 15 minutes | 3 | 3
16 to 30 minutes | 22 | 10
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour | 29 | 30
Over 1 hour to 2 hours | 17 | 32
Over 2 hours | 5 | 10

Note. From "Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools," September 1977.

The third question: "And about how much time on reading - not connected with school work - on a typical school day?" (Gallup Poll, 1977)

Table 3
Percent of Children Reading
For Given Period of Time

(Based on those responding) | By Children 12 Years of Age And Younger | By Children 13 Years of Age And Older
--- | --- | ---
No time | 12 | 28
Up to 30 minutes | 43 | 24
Over 30 minutes to 1 hour | 33 | 28
Over 1 hour | 12 | 20

This indicates that for children 12 years or younger, the typical child spends approximately two hours viewing television on a typical school day, 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and 45 minutes doing homework.

Among children 13 years of age or older, the typical child spends approximately two hours viewing television, 30 minutes reading (not schoolwork), and one hour doing homework. The only time difference between the two groups is 15 minutes more on homework for the older group.

Because the attraction of television is so great for children in most families, many educators conclude that definite limits should be placed on the amount of time that parents permit their children to view television during the school week. (Today's Education, 1977) To discover how many parents already impose such rules, this question was asked (about the eldest child): "Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your child spends viewing television during the school week?" (Gallup Poll, 1977)

Table 4
Percent of Parents Placing Limits
On Television Viewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 12 Years and Under</th>
<th>Parents Whose Eldest Child Is 13 Years and Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, have definite time limit</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/no answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From "Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," September 1977.
Many studies have been conducted regarding the amount of televiewing and school achievement. One of the first investigations was undertaken in 1951 by Clark. Almost a thousand children in the sixth and seventh grades of sixteen public and parochial schools were selected as subjects for the study. He correlated children’s mental age, achievement in school, and number of hours of television watched. The study revealed no significant difference in comparing the achievement of televiewing with that of the non-televiewing children. He went on to report, however:

But it would be a gross misrepresentation of the data to hold that in the case of a given child his habits of watching television could not affect his school achievement. The data showed that poor television habits, lower IQ’s, lower parental control, and poorer school achievement tend to be found in the same child. (Clark, 1951)

In an investigation of children in grades 3 through 6, Witty found that intelligence was unrelated to the amount of time spent watching television. When comparing students whose IQ’s were in the upper and lower quarters of their classes, he found significant differences. The mean educational quotient measured by standardized achievement tests for the highest fourth was 123, and the average number of televiewing hours/week was 20. The standardized score for the lower quadrant was 89, while the number of televiewing hours/week increased to 26. “Thus,” he concluded, “excessive viewing of TV may be associated with somewhat lower academic attainment.” (Witty, 1951)
In 1950 Greenstein conducted a study of sixth grade students. He did not find significant differences when he investigated the effect of varying numbers of televiewing hours upon grades. He did find, however, that those students who watched less than the daily mean of 3.9 hours did have a higher mean grade point than those who watched more than the mean. Thus, his conclusion indicated a negative relationship between television viewing and grades. (Greenstein, 1959)

In 1954 Scott studied elementary school children in order to determine the relationship between the amount of television viewing and achievement in school. He found that fewer hours viewed had a positive correlation with higher achievement scores. There was a significant difference in many of the subject areas and also total achievement. He used IQ as a dependent variable. There was a significant difference between the language section and total IQ: those who watched less, again obtained the higher mean grade point average. (Scott, 1956)

Himmelweit found no significant difference between a control group and heavy television viewers. She did find that those who did not watch generally had better school performance than those who did watch television. The effect of numbers of hours watched was not investigated. (Himmelweit, 1958)

Marie Winn, author of The Plug in Drug, stated that for children who have difficulty with reading, television plays a profoundly negative role in intellectual development, since it is only by reading a great deal that they can hope to overcome their reading problems. This point frequently is raised by teachers and reading specialists when discussing
the effects of television viewing on children's reading. Television watching does not prevent normal children from acquiring reading skills (although it may cause them to read less). However, it does seem to compound the problems of children with reading disabilities, because it offers them a pleasurable nonverbal alternative and thus reduces their willingness to work at reading in order to find vicarious pleasures. (Winn, 1977)

In a 1973 study, middle elementary pupils (N = 100) were selected as subjects. They were administered a questionnaire designed to assess quantity and quality of televiewing. Information such as GPA (grade point average) for grades 4 and 5, Lorge-Thorndike IQ scores, and IBS (Iowa Basic Skills) scores as well as number of televiewing hours daily were obtained for each student. No significant relationship between the number of televiewing hours and GPA was found. It was observed, however, that although television was not significantly related to grades, whatever effect there was tended toward the negative side (see Tables 5 and 6). The following models were run: hours of television watching were correlated with GPA, IQ, and IBS; GPA was correlated with IQ, IBS, and hours of TV viewing; GPA was correlated with IQ, IBS, and hours of television viewing each taken independently. In each case any correlation between viewing hours and any of the other variables, taken together or separately, was negative. (Childers, 1973)
Table 5

Relationship Between Televiewing Hours
And GPA, IQ, and IBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Daily Viewing Hours</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial r</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Significant Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBS</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Multiple r = .396, F = .95, significance level = .419


Table 6

Relationship Between GPA
And IQ, IBS, and Viewing Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial r</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Significant Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>1.232</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBS</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>108.715</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours Viewing Time</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. r = .816, F = 49.24, significance level = .000

Other studies dealt with the relation between television and cognitive learning. In an investigation by Cohen, preschool teachers found an increase of letter recognition as a result of "Sesame Street," but teachers also reported a number of negative effects: decreased imaginative play, increased aimless running around, low interest in play materials, low frustration tolerance, poor persistence, and confusion about reality and fantasy. (Cohen, 1972)

Leibert reported that "Sesame Street" had a favorable impact on learning for most preschoolers. The study involved pre- and post-tests for 950 children, and parent interviews. The research indicated that children who watched Sesame Street extensively were better prepared for school than either infrequent or non-viewers of "Sesame Street." (Leibert, 1973)

A study by Furu was devised to investigate the function of television in children's leisure time. Subjects were 3000 school children in a suburban area of Tokyo. From the children's responses to questionnaires, subjects were separated into TV-type (heavy TV viewers and light print media users) and print-type (light TV viewers and heavy print media users) groups. The data for these two groups were compared across age groups. The findings indicated that print-type children are superior in intelligence, creativity, positivity, and adaptability and were also more future-oriented. However, children who were heavy TV viewers and who were also high print media users had a wider range of interests than low users. Results also suggested that the school achievement of TV-type children were inferior to those
of print-type, (although this difference was ascribed to different intelligence rather than viewing levels). When heavy and light viewers were compared, clear differences in academic achievement were not found, although most children thought they should cut down their viewing of TV. It was recommended that children be trained to be selective viewers. (Furu, 1971)

The previous statement is prevalent in much of the literature. Extensive research needs to be undertaken at the elementary level where reading and the skills are essential to later school achievement. If enough statistical significance exists between television viewing and achievement at this level, parents and educators need to provide guidance in television viewing and selection.

Since much of the research indicates that correlations do exist between television viewing and achievement, it is the responsibility of schools and parents to help students alter viewing habits to provide for greater school achievement.

Television does serve an important educational function. Few people would question the tremendous knowledge a child acquires from TV. It promotes an awareness of the world that children twenty years ago did not have an opportunity to develop... Youngsters everywhere develop real and personal concerns about the treatment of minority groups, the causes of pollution, and the fighting of wars. (Haney, 1971)

In addition it may be noted that "characters in situation comedies and dramatic programs wrestle with the same problems we face: family
relationships, teenage alcoholism, peer pressure." (Kahn, 1979)

Kahn continues to observe that:

Whenever the set is on, the viewer is being influenced.

Most of the time the effects are subtle: a phrase repeated, a character emulated. It is almost impossible for us to shield ourselves from TV; but it is not impossible for us to develop an awareness of how we are influenced by television. (Kahn, 1979)

A force as powerful, omnipresent, informative, socializing, and mobilizing as television could not long remain outside the school. It was first used as a "window on the world." Classroom sets brought in scenes of space shots, presidential inaugurations and funerals of national leaders. (Haney, 1971)

One writer states that, although the classroom use of television is waging a losing battle, the use of television at home is an American and fast becoming a worldwide institution. This at-home use of television is what is going to reshape our educational system. (Scanlon, 1973)

"... Formal education is, in an important sense, outmoded. Students learn outside schools, in ways which differ radically from the ways they learn inside school." (Cattengo, 1970) Cattengo makes a similar comment on the present school organization. He suggests that a more creative use of television in education "... may lead our humanity to a conception of education much more significant than the deadening intellectually insignificant exercises of today." (Cattengo, 1970)

Radio, television, and motion picture technologies seem to have
potentials and promise beyond the level of their present acceptance for formal instruction. The growing needs and demands for education, generally, tend to exceed the capabilities of organized educational institutions. (Carpenter, 1970) At home TV viewing is an exploitable teaching tool. Used wisely, it provides a wealth of information, helps form concepts and attitudes, exercises the imagination, and generates creative ideas. It is also an activity which is highly appealing to children. (Hatchett, 1971)

Research has shown that television can be an effective teaching tool. The classroom teacher is responsible for the students’ reaction to this powerful force. "When teachers use TV as a resource to build basic skills in language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics, hours of passive viewing can be turned into active learning experiences." (Kahn, 1979) Teachers must develop new patterns of presentation, increase pupil participation, and refine techniques that maintain attention.

The time has come for teachers to tune in to what children are viewing on television, to become more TV-aware. Many teachers have no idea which television programs their students watch, even though much of the initiative for insuring a positive effect of television on children must be assumed by them. They need to discuss the values which specific programs espouse. They should also acknowledge activities from TV which children bring to their dramatic play, social skill, and modeling. (Quisenberry, 1978)

To assure the successful integration of television in the classroom, teachers must redefine their role. Since the communicative power of
television is undisputed, it can become a dispenser of information. The teacher's role is essential to beneficial utilization of television as the teacher observes, diagnoses, counsels, motivates, and evaluates the students who receive the information. Time is required to work with each student - to strengthen, reinforce, and explain concepts presented. Used effectively, this mass medium can paradoxially be the key to individualized instruction. (Haney, 1971) The teacher serves as a model of active critical response; a model whose influence would serve as a reminder to students to respond critically outside the classroom. It is important that teachers begin to act as such models, recognizing the powerful influence television exerts on lives. (Beach, 1974)

The teacher should view programs and become familiar with those preferred by students. Children should be surveyed about their viewing habits, using an inventory similar to the following:

TV Interest Inventory

1. What kind of television program do you like to watch best?

......western
......mystery or police
......music and variety
......game shows
......space
......comedy
......doctor
......news

2. Do you watch any educational TV shows? Which ones?
3. How many hours each school day do you watch TV?

4. How many hours on Saturday and Sunday do you watch TV?

5. Did you see anything on television this week that you would like to read about? What was it?

6. What are your three favorite TV shows?

7. Do you watch the news on TV at least once a day?

8. Does your family watch television together?

9. Are there any shows your parents do not let you watch?

10. Since school began this year, have you seen any programs about subjects you have studied in school?

11. How often do you check a book out of the library?
    ......once a week
    ......every other week
    ......once a month
    ......only when the teacher asks for a book report

12. What was the last book you read? (Smith and Hawkins, 1978)

The teacher should become aware of programs that originate from books. "Little House on the Prairie" is based on the Laura Ingalls Wilder books. "The Waltons" is based on The Homecoming by Earl Hamner. Also many television programs result in books. Some examples are "Star Trek," "The Six Million Dollar Man," "The Brady Bunch," and "The Partridge Family." (Smith and Hawkins, 1978)

Students should be helped to realize that what they are viewing can also be found in written form. They can then be encouraged to enjoy a story both ways, and to analyze and compare them. (Smith and Hawkins, 1978)
Teachers need to provide guidance for parents by recommending programs their children should watch, and even suggesting time limits on viewing. (Quisenberry, 1978) The classroom teacher should plan differently when giving television viewing as a homework assignment.

Viewing assignments must be flexible since all students may not be able to watch the same program. Some students may miss a particular episode of a TV show, but they will generally be familiar enough with the characters to participate in class discussions. Alternate homework and viewing assignments should be available nonetheless. Send a letter home encouraging parents to watch the programs and to discuss the viewing assignments with their children. (Kahn, 1979)

With such home-school cooperation, a more positive learning environment can be created. (Quisenberry, 1978) Teachers can be extremely effective in helping parents become "intelligent TV consumers." With proper guidance, parents can participate in television homework assignments and interact with their children, reinforcing classroom activities. (Mills, 1976)

Parents can turn television into a meaningful learning experience by watching and discussing programs with their children. Television could, in fact, be a stimulus to reading if book lists, relating to program content, were made available. Discussions and further reading are not limited to "specials." News broadcasts, commercials, even "police" shows transmit messages subconsciously. Why not deal with these messages consciously, discussing and analyzing them? (Mills, 1976)
Character development, study of setting, and main idea can be investigated using many types of programs. First efforts should involve programs that were indicated on the student survey. Viewing of specific programs which lend themselves to group study can be encouraged and involve family viewing. (Smith and Hawkins, 1978)

The next step is to categorize and analyze six areas in which viewing by the child can result in negative or positive learning and behavior. These areas are: fantasy-reality differentiation, emotional-attitudinal development, modeling, aggression, prosocial behaviors, and stereotyping. (Quisenberry, 1978) When teachers can recognize the effect found in these areas, they can better help their children understand what is and is not real. For example, "Star Trek" or "Lou Grant" or "Charlie's Angels" may be analyzed. In studying nationalities, teachers can help children recognize that some of the stereotypes seen on television are unreal. (Quisenberry, 1978)

As the teacher begins to involve children in classroom activities that draw upon home TV viewing, certain class objectives can be achieved:

To become discriminating viewers; to distinguish between fact and fantasy.

To build problem-solving skills; to analyze and interpret information, concepts, ideas, and attitudes.

To develop an awareness of local and world events and problems.

To gain a better understanding of peoples, races, and nationalities.

To recognize statements of fact and opinion, or prejudice, or propaganda.

To enrich the vocabulary.
To communicate more effectively.
To listen critically and creatively; to note general concepts and details.
To express ideas and feelings creatively. (Hatchett, 1971)

One way television can be used to enrich the elementary curriculum is to provide a unit of study encompassing the content areas in the curriculum. Following is a television unit written by a third grade teacher who took each subject area and planned a series of activities and projects based on television viewing.

**Science**

1. Lead children into electromagnetism, collecting magnets, experimenting with dry cells and wire, making a display of tubes and parts from TV sets.
2. View sound waves on filmstrips. Reports may be organized on sound. Experiments and projects may be worked out with tuning forks and sounding boards.
4. How does instant replay on video-tape work? What is the difference between film and videotape?
5. Keep a chart of daily weather forecasts taken from the 6:00 news. See how accurate they are.

**Arithmetic**

1. Make up a channel game for basic number facts (from 2-13).
   Ask questions using a dial from a TV set (Make of oak tag).
"If you are on Channel 13, how many times must you turn the dial back to get to Channel 4?"

2. Make a chart of TV shows, showing the times they are on. Take a poll of favorite and least favorite shows. Make up a graph to go with the results.

3. Play a clock game. Have two teams and give each a model clock. Have one show the correct time a particular show is on. Members may look at the chart if they want to. The first person to set the hands correctly on his clock scores a point for his team. First team to score 10 points wins.

Social Studies

1. Keep a running check on the 6:00 p.m. news each day. Hold group talks on current events. Construct a news show of your own.

2. Locate in daily newspapers the same events that you heard reported on TV. Do the stories differ? How?

3. Interview people in the family, class, neighborhood, or school about their feelings concerning some current events.

4. Set up a news committee, and have reporters locate news in and around the school.

Language Arts

1. Keep a running display of vocabulary words associated with TV. Add new words as children come across them. Have children choose 10 words from the chart each week for their spelling words.
2. Assign a show to watch for homework. The next day talk about the plot, main idea, and qualities of the main characters. Ask questions. "How would you have ended the show differently? Who in the show would you most like to be (and why)? Could this story have really happened?"

3. Write a screenplay for a TV show you like. Rehearse it with some friends, and put it on either as a short play or puppet show.

4. Discuss commercials. Talk about the gimmicks advertisers use to get people to buy their products. Make up a commercial of your own.

5. Make up reviews of TV shows. Read them aloud or have them printed in a class newspaper.

Reading

1. Keep supplementary reading material available relating to television. Comics, activity books, and library books in paperback are available for many shows.

2. Make up a class newspaper of children's writings from this TV unit. Include reviews, reports, interviews, news, and sports. (Berragozzi, 1978)

Linda Kahn, a director of curriculum units for Prime Time School Television, suggests using a particular show as a theme for using television educationally. Following are units from "Little House on the Prairie" and "Mork and Mindy" integrating all the subject areas:
"Little House on the Prairie"

"Little House on the Prairie" focuses on family relationships. When the Ingalls move from a farm in Walnut Grove, Minn., to a city in hopes of earning a better living, they endure many hardships. The family, however, remains a solid unit. Teachers may wish to compare this show with other family shows.

Social Studies

1. "Little House on the Prairie" is set in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s. The Ingalls move from their farm in Walnut Grove, Minn., to the town of Winoka, Minn., and eventually back to Walnut Grove. On a map of the United States, locate Walnut Grove. Discuss westward movement and expansion in the United States. What are the differences between urban and rural life as they are presented on the program? Consider schools, jobs, individuals' roles within the family. What differences might have students of that period experienced when moving from a farm to a town?

2. Research and discuss life in the U.S. at the end of the nineteenth century. How does "Little House on the Prairie" depict each of the following: transportation, occupations, tools and technology, clothes, recreation, and education? Set up classroom displays of old tools, clothes, maps, and magazines. Visit a local museum to see artifacts, historical documents, and art objects of the era.
3. Draw a map of Walnut Grove, Minn. Include the Ingalls' farm and neighboring farms, the Olsen's store, the church, school, post office, mill, and other landmarks.

4. Find a map that shows the U.S. between 1870 and 1880. Compare it with a current map of the country.

5. Using large sheets of paper, create time lines comparing occupations, modes of transportation, clothing styles, leisure activities, teaching methods, tools and technology for the time periods represented by family programs, such as "Little House on the Prairie" (1870-80), "The Waltons" ('30s and '40s), "Happy Days" ('50s), "Eight Is Enough" and "Family" ('70s).

Science

List all the energy resources that are used on "Little House on the Prairie." How do these compare with the resources used today? What additional energy resources are in use today?

Language Arts

1. Read the Laura Ingalls Wilder, Little House on the Prairie series, available in paperback (Harper & Row). These books, first published in 1937, are based on the real experiences of the Ingalls family as it traveled by covered wagon through Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakota Territory, and Kansas.

2. Write a letter that you might send to Laura Ingalls Wilder. Select one aspect of life in the U.S. and describe how things have changed in the last 100 years.

3. Pretend that you have a role in a family TV show. How would you fit into the family? What would your role be?
"Mork and Mindy"

"Mork and Mindy" offers students a refreshing look at life on earth. The program can be a useful starting point for creative drama, writing, science, social studies, and math projects as well as for discussions about values.

Social Studies
1. How do we learn about other cultures? Pretend you are an alien. What impressions of life in the U.S. do you get from watching TV for one day?
2. In groups, your task is to explain a custom or an object to an alien. Choose from the following: Thanksgiving, birthday parties, recess, television sets.
3. Discuss Mork's weekly reports to Orson. What do you learn about life on earth? Consider one report at the end of a show. Would you have told Orson the same things Mork reported? What conclusions would you have drawn if you were Mork?

Science
1. Define the following words and phrases: alien, spaceship, galaxy, planet, star, solar system, outer space, sun.
2. Is there life on other planets? Using scientific data (or your own imagination), write a paragraph or short story in which you describe the kind of life existing in other galaxies or on other planets.

Math
Does Mork know our system of numbers? Does he understand our monetary system? How would you explain money to Mork? Practice counting with a classmate who plays the role of Mork.
Language Arts

1. Make a list of parts of speech in the Orkan language. For example, splink means "to tell a little white lie." Nanu-nanu means "hello" and "good-bye." Write sentences substituting Orkan words for English words.

2. Nanu-nanu has become part of our vocabulary. What other phrases from TV do you use in conversation?

3. Mork frequently talks to things. Write dialogue for Mork speaking to an inanimate object.

4. What is it like to be different? What other TV characters are different from ordinary people? How does each cope with his or her differences?

5. Much of the humor on "Mork and Mindy" comes from Mork's literal interpretations of things said to him. List several expressions that can be interpreted on more than one level. Exp: Go fly a kite! (Kahn, 1979)

The idea of a whole unit encompassing all the subject areas is to help children relate television learning to the life experience. It is hoped they will see the connection between what they have studied in school and the related activities outside of class. (Berragozzi, 1978)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

John B. Haney stressed the importance of television by stating: "Concerning the impact of television on children in the schools, television is their third parent and first teacher." (Haney, 1971)
Ever since millions of Americans discovered the phenomenal capability of radio, educators have had a dream. It was to harness this tremendously powerful mass communications medium - and later that of television - to the service of education. (Steinberg, 1973)

Numerous investigations have been conducted concerning the amount of television viewing on student achievement. Since many of the studies showed a correlation, it is necessary to utilize this educational source. As previously stated, television teaches. Teachers need to become more TV-aware and use the hours children view to their advantage rather than disadvantage. They need to channel the knowledge acquired through television viewing into the classroom. This can be done through a television unit integrating the subject areas. For "one thing is certain - television is here to stay, . . . Make it your ally rather than your enemy." (Quisenberry, 1978)
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