

Friday, November 6, 2009

Dear Parents:

The first trimester of school ended today. I have spent this entire week conducting formal and informal assessments of the children's progress. I will be filling out their report cards next week. Conferences are scheduled for the week of Nov. 16-20. Look for a note to coming home with a scheduled time for our Parent/Teacher conference. If you cannot attend at the scheduled time, please call the office and the secretary will assist you in making a new appointment. I am looking forward to meeting you and discussing your child's progress.

Next week we will resume our regular schedule of instruction. The letter of the week will be B and the Alphafriend will be Benny Bear. You can already find his song on Mr. Lentz's web site.

I want to share a very disturbing statistic this week about the number of children who have television sets in their bedrooms. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that no child under the age of 16 have a television set in their bedroom. They also recommend that **no child under the age of 2 watch television at all!**

To quote, "Children of all ages are constantly learning new things. The first 2 years of life are especially important in the growth and development of your child's brain. During this time, children need good, positive interaction with other children and adults. Too much television can negatively affect early brain development. This is especially true at younger ages, when learning to talk and play with others is so important.

Until more research is done about the effects of TV on very young children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend television for children age 2 or younger. For older children, the Academy recommends no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of educational, nonviolent programs."

"Television affects how your child learns. High-quality, nonviolent children's shows can have a positive effect on learning. Studies show that preschool children who watch educational TV programs do better on reading and math tests than children who do not watch those programs. When used carefully, television can be a positive tool to help your child learn." Check out programming on Channel 13, KEET-TV.

As a parent, there are many ways you can help your child develop positive viewing habits. The following tips may help: (See back of page.)

1. **Set limits:** Limit your child's use of TV, movies, and video and computer games to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day. Do not let your child watch TV while doing homework.
2. **Plan your child's viewing:** Instead of flipping through channels, use a program guide and the TV ratings to help you and your child choose shows. Turn the TV on to watch the program you chose and turn it off when the program is over.
3. **Watch TV with your child:** Whenever possible, watch TV with your child and talk about what you see. If your child is very young, she may not be able to tell the difference between a show, a commercial, a cartoon, or real life. Explain that characters on TV are make-believe and not real. Some "reality-based" programs may appear to be "real," but most of these shows focus on stories that will attract as many viewers as possible. Often these are stories about tragedy and violence. Much of their content is not appropriate for children. Young children may worry that what they see could happen to them or their family. News broadcasts also contain violent or inappropriate material. If your schedule prevents you from watching TV with your child, talk to her later about what she watched. Better yet, videotape the programs so that you can watch them with your child at a later time.
4. **Find the right message:** Even a poor program can turn out to be a learning experience if you help your child find the right message. Some television programs may portray people as stereotypes. Talk with your child about the real-life roles of women, the elderly, and people of other races that may not be shown on television. Discuss ways that people are different and ways that we are the same. Help your child learn tolerance for others. Remember, if you don't agree with certain subject matter, you can either turn off the TV or explain why you object.
5. **Help your child resist commercials:** Don't expect your child to be able to resist ads for toys, candy, snacks, cereal, drinks, or new TV programs without your help. When your child asks for products advertised on TV, explain that the purpose of commercials is to make people want things they may not need. Limit the number of commercials your child sees by watching public television stations (PBS). You can also tape programs and leave out the commercials or buy or rent children's videos.
6. **Look for quality children's videos:** There are many quality videos available for children that you can buy or rent. If you have questions about children's videos or just want some suggestions, contact The Coalition for Quality Children's Media at 505/989-8076 or visit their Web site at <http://www.cqcm.org>.
7. **Give other options:** Watching TV can become a habit for your child. Help your child find other things to do with his time, such as the following: Playing, Reading, Activities with family, friends, or neighbors, or learning a hobby, sport, instrument, or an art
8. **Set a good example:** You are the most important role model in your child's life. Limiting your own TV viewing and choosing programs carefully will help your child do the same.
9. **Express your views:** When you like or don't like something you see on television, make yourself heard. Write to the TV station, network, or the program's sponsor. Stations, networks, and sponsors pay attention to letters from the public. If you think a commercial is misleading, write down the product name, channel, and time you saw the commercial and describe your concerns. Call your local Better Business Bureau, or send the information to: Children's Advertising Review Unit, Council of Better Business Bureau, 845 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022
Encourage publishers of TV guides to print ratings and feature articles about shows that are educational for children.
10. **Get more information:** The following people and places can provide you with more information about the proper role of TV in your child's life: Your pediatrician may have information about TV or can help you get it through the American Academy of Pediatrics. Ask for the AAP brochure Understanding the Impact of Media on Children and Teens, Public service groups publish newsletters that review programs and give tips on how to make TV a positive experience for you and your child. Check with your pediatrician, Your local Parent/Teacher Association (PTA), Parents of your child's friends and classmates can also be helpful. Talk with other parents and agree to enforce similar rules about TV viewing.