

Danielle Murakami

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Assignment 2

Cartoons Makes Kids Less Intelligent

There they go again, all huddled up in front of the TV, watching some show about a kid and their dog. The show seemed innocent enough with its bright colors and quirky animation. That is, until you find that “innocent” show has done more damage than you’d know.

According to Speech and language expert Dr. Sally Ward, 20 years of research show that kids who are bombarded by background TV noise in their homes have trouble paying attention to voices when there is also background noise. TV viewing also takes away time from improving reading skills through practice which makes kids less likely for them to start reading books or other printed material. Kids who watch a lot of TV have trouble paying attention to teachers because they are accustomed to the fast-paced visual stimulation on TV. Kids who watch TV more than when they talk to their family have a difficult time adjusting from being visual learners to aural learners (learning by listening) and have shorter attention spans. When doing homework with TV on the background, kids tend to retain less skill and information and work less on homework or other school assignments. When they lose sleep because of TV, they become less alert during the day, resulting in poor school performance.

Dr. Dimitri Christakis, director of the Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development at the University of Washington in Seattle and author of an editorial in Pediatrics says that when children's brains, which are still developing, are bombarded with too much stimulation, it can interfere with their ability to learn to focus properly. He suggests that parents keep an eye on what their children are watching. A test was conducted from the University of Virginia by Christakis and other researchers on children’s memory and thinking skills by comparing the data from the group that watched TV and the ones that did not. The group of kids that had watched TV prior to the test had done worse than the group who did not watch TV.

"The point of this study and a lot of other research in media is that what your kids watch is as important as how much they watch. It's not just about turning off the television, it's about changing the channel," says Christakis.

Through the many bad features that cartoons has to offer, parents are given crucial advice on how to handle their child’s TV viewing. First, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has recommend that parents limit their children’s entertainment media time to no more that 1 to 2 hours per day. At the same time, parents with children younger than 2 years should discourage them from television viewing entirely.