Children and Electronic Media: Implications for Child Development and Learning

Key Statistics

• 33% of children ages 0-6 have a T.V. in their bedroom. 23% have a video player

• 37% of school-age children and adolescents have access to cable or satellite television in their bedrooms

Key Statistics

• 31% of school-age children and adolescents have a computer in their bedroom and 20% have internet access as well.

• 18% of school-age children and adolescents have instant messaging capability in their bedrooms.

Key Statistics

• 39% of school-age children and adolescents have their own cell phone. 79% have their own MP3 player (ipod) or CD player

• 11% of school-age children have their own PDAs; 13% have handheld internet access.

Key Statistics

• 55% of school-age children and adolescents have their own personal video game player

Key Findings

• Content matters. It matters more than type of media or time spent using it

• Multi-tasking is at an all time high. Consumption is exponential in its effect. Researchers don’t even have a means to analyze its effects
Key Findings

• Pro-social content does increase children’s social capacities. Conversely, negative content can promote fear and anxiety.

• Children use media mostly to communicate with friends, not strangers.
Key Findings

• Media can have a positive effect on healthful behaviors through social marketing campaigns.

• Media consumption is strongly linked to some risky behaviors. Others are less linked to consumption or require additional research.
Key Findings

• Marketing/Advertising are highly influential because of the amount of media children consume daily and marketing’s pervasiveness within our culture

• Young children believe ads are informational. They don’t have the cognitive ability to understand ads are meant to persuade them
Young Children’s Learning

- Well-designed, age-appropriate educational media content is beneficial to preschool-aged children

- Infants and toddlers may learn better from real-life experiences

  - Some studies suggest T.V. exposure for infants/toddlers results in poorer cognitive development
Young Children's Learning

• Age-appropriate, educational curricula enhance cognitive & academic achievement

• Exposure to pure entertainment (especially violence) results in poorer cognitive development and lower achievement
Young Children's Learning

• Parents, Teachers and Media Producers should take steps to maximize positive effects of media and minimize the negative effects

• Selecting well-designed, age-appropriate programs and using media with young children is critical
Content is critical. Educational media is positively linked to academic achievement. Entertainment media is negatively linked to achievement. Some electronic media (video games) are linked to enhanced spatial skills and may also improve problem-solving.
School-aged Children’s Learning

• Transfer of learning from electronic media to other applications occurs

• Researchers just don’t know how it occurs
School-aged Children’s Learning

• Small links exist between heavy electronic media use and attention problems

• Inconsistent evidence of a link between ADHD and media use
School-aged Children’s Learning

- Multi-media software, gaming and interactive websites offer possible benefits to learning

- Little evidence to suggest electronic media are more effective than other forms of learning
School-aged Children's Learning

• What matters is the way teachers use, present, and teach technology

• Children's use of technology is only as good as the instruction they receive in how to use it
Children's Behavior - The Effect of Media on Aggression, Fear and Altruism

• Children learn about the type and causes of different emotions from watching the emotional experiences of others and experience empathy the same way.

• Media exposure is just another way for children to do this.
Children's Behavior - The Effect of Media on Aggression, Fear and Altruism

- Children's susceptibility to media differs with:
  - Gender
  - Age
  - How realistic they perceive the media to be; and
  - How much they identify with the characters and people on the screen
Children’s Behavior - The Effect of Media on Aggression, Fear and Altruism

• Although research is limited on long-term effects, evidence shows exposure to media with negative or violent themes can contribute to children’s fears and anxieties.

• Themes that upset children will differ according to a child’s age.
Children's Behavior - The Effect of Media on Aggression, Fear and Altruism

- Educational programs and situational comedies with pro-social messages targeted to youth can increase altruism, cooperation and tolerance of others.
Children's Behavior - Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships

- Media communication tools are used primarily to communicate with "offline" friends and romantic partners

- Increasingly, social networking sites are used to gather information about new "offline" relationships and maintain existing ones
Children's Behavior – Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships

• Online communication may have both costs and benefits
• Online communication content can be both positive and negative
• Online communication may be reinforcing peer communication at the expense of communication with parents because of parents lack of skill and knowledge on how to use the tools
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Both parents and schools are challenged to eliminate the negative uses of the Internet and cell phones while preserving their significant positive contributions to education and social connection.
Adolescent Media Consumption and Risky Behavior

Five Critical Areas of Youth Risk Behavior

- Obesity *(moderate effect)*
- Smoking *(strong effect)*
- Drinking Alcohol *(strong effect)*
- Sexual Risk Taking *(insufficient evidence)*
- Violence *(strong effect)*

More Research Needed
Media and Social Marketing

- Can promote healthy behaviors and reduce negative effect of conventional marketing

- “Branding” is the newest health promotion strategy

- “Smart Media Use” as a strategy means helping parents and youth to figure out brands based on personal interaction and avoid those based on “virtual interaction”
Children and Youth as Consumers

• Expansion in the amount and type of media has led to a significant increase in media space just for children/youth and products geared for them

• Increases in youth's discretionary income and their influence over parental purchases makes them an increasingly lucrative marketing segment

• “Stealth Marketing” (embedding products in program content) helps make media more sophisticated and influential and undermines the defenses of older youth and adolescents

• FCC/FTC do provide some regulatory protection - especially over public airways
Take Away Message

Content Matters!
Policy Implications

• More research is necessary, especially on newer forms of media. Additional research on innovative educational uses should be a priority as well as how students can use technology to prepare for a world of work

• Funding and creation of social marketing campaigns can reduce risky behaviors
Policy Implications

• Schools and teachers should implement research-based programs that use electronic media to enhance instruction and teach students to use media constructively.

• Teachers should receive training in technology use and management.
Policy Implications

• Parents can support better content development, creation of meaningful ratings systems & reduction in advertising

• Parents can educate themselves on age-appropriate media use and monitor children’s use
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