

NOVEMBER 2010

Young children's television viewing has received limited research attention in Australia. However, what is known is that children start watching television soon after birth and considerable time on a daily basis is allocated to the activity.

In addition, children aged 0-4 years spent an average of 154 minutes (2.5 hours) watching free-to-air television (Australian Communication and Media Authority, 2007a, P5). With subscription television, viewing was conservatively estimated as 44 minutes per day for the average four month old infant and averaging 194 minutes, or more than three hours per day for the 0-4 years age group (Australian Communication and Media Authority, 2007a). It was reported that "programs specifically made for children dominated the viewing habits of the 0-4 age group" with "47 of the top 50 programs watched by 0-4 years group categorised as children's programs. All of these programs were broadcast on the ABC (Australian Communication and Media Authority, 2007a, p.7).

THE TOP FIVE VIEWED TELEVISION PROGRAMS BY CHILDREN AGED 0-4 DURING 2006 WERE

- Bob The Builder Special – Bob Snowed Under
- Ice Age (movie)
- Thomas and Friends
- Rubbadubbers
- The Biggest Loser

(Australian Communication and Media Authority, 2007a, p.50).

FOR 5-12 YEAR OLDS, THE TOP FIVE VIEWED TELEVISION PROGRAMS IN 2006 WERE

- 2006 Opening Ceremony for the Commonwealth Games
- The Biggest Loser – Finale
- Futurama (Episode 1)
- Big Brother Launch
- Futurama (Monday nights)

(Australian Communication and Media Authority, 2007a, p. 53).

It seems that children do not exclusively or even preferentially watch programs that are classified as children's programs. The amount of time the television is on may also contribute to increased television viewing habits. In 2008, it was reported that around 30% of children live in households that have television on all the time. It appeared as background entertainment. In these households, television was used as a baby sitter, even from earliest infancy (Edgar & Edgar, 2008).

30% of children live in households that have television on all the time

...no positive value in viewing television for children under two years of age

the content of the program being watched is more critical than the act of watching itself

Do we really know what young children are watching?

What can we, as teachers, do to help young children critique the content they see within the television shows?

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