

Letter to the Media

We parents in America have a fear of teaching reading to our children. We feel secure and able to teach our children to talk, to walk, to ride a bicycle, yet, we feel we must let the school teach our children to read. Why not use television to aid us in teaching our children reading?

Why don't we prepare our children, teach them to read, as we do with speaking, walking, manners, toilet training? We all want the greatest opportunities, successes, and happiness for our children.

Reading is the pivotal gateway to school and learning in our civilization. Every ordinary school subject is based on reading, that is, decoding patterns of letters to communicate ideas.

A child's memory is superb at ages 3 and 4; he learns how to speak some 4,000 words by school age. He learns words by hearing. Why not also teach him words by seeing, reading. Words are the basics of our language. Instead of just teaching "Mary Had A Little Lamb" in an auditory manner, by ear, why not also teach the nursery rhyme in a visual way, by sight, reading. And for a 2- or 3-year-old, make the words big. Maybe even 2 inches high, a word at a time, using repetition. After all, repetition is how human beings learn speech and reading, manners and toilet training, and all facets of our civilization. Mommy, Daddy, baby, is said over and over again; a violin song is played over and over again to learn it.



I am writing to television producers and programmers nationwide in an effort to massively introduce reading on television. I shall write as often as necessary to establish communication with President Clinton. I wrote to President Reagan and received a form letter back during his Presidency. I propose that written words on television programs be added for almost all speech. Literacy is so important to the individual in our society. To be literate, we must practice reading daily. What better place to see words, to read, than the television screen!

Literacy

"Titles For Television"

The lower or upper segment of television screens can readily be adapted for words. This will not only help children to learn to read, but also will help the hearing impaired. There will be English titles such as those on the Disney Sing-Along Tapes.

Children's animated cartoons can easily be adapted to written words. Don't you think that parents and teachers will feel better about letting their children watch television if there is some educational element of teaching involved. As it is, children certainly watch enough television. Through the repetition of reading words on the television screen, children's ability to read and understand will increase.

Frighteningly, there are forty million illiterate adult Americans. It is time to make a meaningful difference. If the parents don't feel qualified to teach reading, let television lend a masterful hand. Sesame Street just does not do enough in this regard. For all the hours that pre-school children watch the Public Television series, they could learn so much more. Even Reading Rainbow, another PBS youth television program, should put written words on the television screen. Then it would truly be a reading rainbow, and not just a show about books and things without words and reading.

Like playing a musical instrument, reading is a skill learned through practice, practice and more practice. My daughter read words at age 2, a complete children's book at age 4. It was not magical; I taught her, just like I taught her to say "Shoe." For example, when I taught her to say "Shoe," I also taught her the written word for shoe on a big index card. I taught her to speak as all parents do, but I also purposefully taught her to read.

Children from birth to age six undergo the fastest and greatest brain growth of their entire lives. Brain function grows by its continued use. Insure success of our children by exposing them repeatedly to reading. Make television give something back on a regular basis to our youth and to adults alike: the skill of reading: "Star Trek" with titles, "Superman" with titles, "The Cosby Show" with titles, "Wild Kingdom," variety shows, interview shows, news shows, all with titles.

Help Americans be literate. Make a difference. Innovate. Start the reading program on your network. Contact [REDACTED] Montague, New Jersey 07827.
Telephone: [REDACTED]

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Please respond personally.
Thank you. [REDACTED]

Montague, NJ 07827



C-Span/C-Span II
400 N. Capital St. NW Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20001

Attn: Brian Lamb, Pres./coo