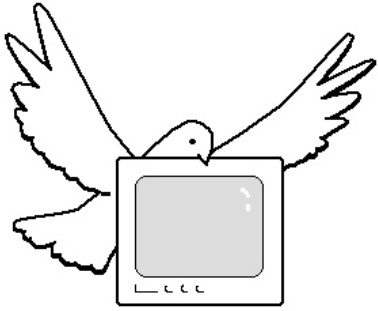


**EDUPAX**



## **Surviving a 10Day Strike**

**Against TV and Video Games  
Evaluation of the 10Day Challenge  
By high school students, parents  
and teachers**

**In April 2004, for the first time, a secondary school proposed a particular type of strike to its 950 students. Students from Louis-Jacques-Casault high school in Montmagny, Quebec, were offered an opportunity to participate in the "10 Day Challenge" TV and video games free. A 10 day strike against violent entertainment was similar to setting an olympic record. Plugged into the small screen between 15 and 35 hours a week, North American teens are a target of marketing agencies from which young human souls have not the smallest secret. Marketing experts know how to take advantage of teens' vulnerability, they know how to cultivate addiction. All strategies are allowed to them, even the most perverse. Would teenagers dare oppose such a powerful industry? Why would the 10 Day Challenge deserve their interest?**

### **Impact on Teens**

**The student body approved the Challenge with enthusiasm, the parents council also. A mobilization team was formed by parents who recruited over 150 volunteers and representatives from community organizations to plan activities that could attract students away from the tube. Parents always had one question in mind: would teenagers consider the Challenge as an intrusion on their freedom or an opportunity to question their own addiction to our consumer society? 522 students participated in the evaluation; 168 parents and 32 teachers also participated. 78% of students say they participated in the Challenge. 6% of students shut TV and videogames down completely for the whole 10 days; 23% say that they reduced consumption by 75%, 36% by half and 35% by a quarter. Evaluation showed that teens succeeded an average of 4.8 days of strike. Four out of 5 said that the Challenge was very or quite useful, and that includes students who did not participate in the turn off. Preparation reached all students and media literacy sessions helped them obtain some benefits, as the answers show. Two thirds of parents found the Challenge very or quite useful. All teachers (100%) found the Challenge very or quite useful. 86.2% of staff considered the profit very or quite important.**

### **The Outcome**

**Time spent on electronic entertainment deprives youth of time that they could use to develop social skills. Fast of such entertainment during a 10 day period has an impact on the quality of life of teens. The Challenge has favored the increase of ...**

- \* physical activities for half of teens,**
- \* time spent with friends for 45% of them,**
- \* time spent with parents for 25% of them,**
- \* help for tasks at home for one quarter of them.**

**We conclude that a significant improvement of their social relationship and family links seems to have been improved.**

### **What Teens Witnessed**

**Evaluation allowed measuring some other benefits.**

- Violence in school. Physical violence went down according to 32% of students and verbal violence as well for 27%.
- Violence at home. The Challenge generated a decrease of verbal violence (39% of answering students) and of physical violence (38%) in their family. That is more than one third.
- Critical sense was sharpened for 65% of teens, mostly girls. This element is the most improved with teens. Six parents out of 10 (59%) say that they witnessed the improvement of their child's viewing skills; the staff says the same, 9 out of 10.
- The influence of TV. 76% of parents say that they are conscious of it.
- New dynamics in the school. 63% of teens say that the Challenge improved it. Majority were girls. This element was the 2nd most improved by the Challenge.
- New dynamics in the community. 58% of teens say it improved, mostly girls. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> most improved element witnessed during the Challenge.

### **Would Teens Strike Again?**

Few students considered the Challenge an intrusion into their privacy. Not many since almost 3 quarters of them (72%) say they want to do it again. That wish is stronger in this high school than in elementary schools participating in the Challenge. The majority of teens who want to repeat the Challenge are female students (222/371) while the majority of those opposing are males (73/141). Violent entertainment attracts boys more strongly, showing that the pedagogical approach should focus more on their influence on masculinity. 8 parents out of 10 (79%) recommend other schools to try the Challenge. Answers from students, parents and teachers all show strong support for repeating the Challenge. Maybe not each year, most probably every other year. Despite turbulence of the Challenge for teachers' planning, the staff is very supportive of repeating it (89.7%).

### **Parents and Community**

Many parents, with the help of volunteers and community activists, got involved. Groups promoting physical activity brought lots of help. All teens and most parents heard the alarm bell about TV violence. The Challenge reached many families, including those who did not participate. Parents and teens noticed closer relationship between parents and children. The Challenge improved the reputation of the school in the community. More, students and parents got attention from the media. All had nothing but good words for the action. Teens not only improved their self esteem for questioning their addiction and performing their strike against TV, they also obtained admiration from relatives and the whole community. Interestingly, the media covered the teens' strike with very supportive comments by reporters and the public. Getting ready for the strike, learning more about the influence of the media in their lives, joining forces with other students, parents and teachers to organize and mobilize, increasing time for reading, social activities and exercise, many elements in the 10Day Challenge should feed every adults' hope to prevent violence and crime in a successful manner for the years to come.

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### **Some facts**

**Children spend an average of 25 hours a week in front of the tube. TV programs for kids carry 3 to 6 times more acts of aggression than adults'. Doses of TV violence were increased by 432% by privately owned Canadian broadcasters between 1995 and 2003 (8 years). TV violence is used intentionally to hook kids and teens.**

**10 hours of TV weekly affect school results negatively, it has been proven.**

**An average child watches an average of 30,000 ads per year. By the age of 65, they will have absorbed 2 millions ads from TV.**

**Each day, we (in the U.S.) rent twice as much video than we borrow books from libraries.**

### **Why Help Teens Reduce The Use Of TV and Videogames?**

**Many hundreds of studies have shown that students who spend less time with the small screen have higher scores. They learn to read and write better and easier when watching less TV.**

**Ads make kids request always more toys and food. Kids end up believing that they need more and more. They never have enough. Ads are built to make them wish for always more.**

**Exposure to violent programs, films and video games make kids more aggressive and teach them that violence is a legitimate way to solve conflicts.**

**Children who watch lots of TV spend less time developing social skills.**

**Life shown on TV is unreal. Heavy consumers do not discover the world as it is.**

**The more you watch TV, the less in shape you are, the more risk you are to gain excess weight.**

**By constantly showing kids and teens characters who look attractive, rich and happy, TV lowers their self esteem and increases their feeling of disempowerment.**