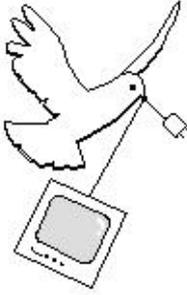


EDUPAX



Press release

**Students from 11 schools, from K to 6,
survived 10 days without TV and
videogames.**

**This morning, they meet for the launching
of a new video**

“The 10-Day TV & Videogame “Free “ hallenge”



In April 2003, the Parents' Association of Quebec and Chaudiere-Appalaches, two regions surrounding Quebec City, Canada, challenged its 520 schools to participate in “The 10-Day Challenge”, asking students to stop watching TV, playing videogames and chatting on the Internet. Eleven schools answered the call. (List available)

Today, March 30, 2004, almost one year later, the Parents' Association is proud to launch the video filmed during the Challenge, in front of an audience of 100 students, parents and teachers who survived 10 days away from the screen.

A video telling the story behind the Challenge

Today's children are glued to the tube more than 20 hours a week. More than half have their own sets in their bedroom. One can easily imagine that going on a screen diet is similar to setting an Olympic record. Informed about hundreds of studies about the influence of TV violence (see addendum) and curious to see if that influence is reversible, Tom Robinson, teacher at UCLA, conducted a research with elementary school children in San Jose to see who would stop or reduce TV and video game use for 10 days. The results were amazing. Verbal violence was reduced by 50%, physical violence by 40%. The most aggressive kids made more progress than others. Bonus: Robinson noted a significant reduction of obesity.

Possible in Quebec?

The video shows us students, parents, teachers, principals, and community members getting ready before for the Challenge, living the Challenge and pulling lessons from their experience. Each school tabulated the time saved by children. 80% of students participated in the Challenge reduced their consumption. 20% stopped completely for the whole 10 days. The Parents Association is happy to announce the total time taken away from the screen:

**1 354 children from 11 schools have saved a total of
19 377 hours and 20 minutes**

That represents an average of 14 hours per child. The Challenge was not received the same way in all classes. In sum, participation reached over 80% of families.

Partnership between families, schools and community

In all schools, parents got involved and formed task force teams to offer activities that will help them stay away from the screen. Some organizations like "Québec in shape" invested time and energy. The Knights of Columbus joined in with the Optimist Clubs, the municipality, library, the ice arena, teens organizations, boy scouts, etc.

« Violence was not eradicated », says Celine Bilodeau, coordinator of the Challenge, « but a majority of families heard the alarm bell about the damages of TV, videogame and computer

consumption. Since they consume so much time in family life, the experience was useful for all.»

The video offers moving testimonies:

Families who participated noticed

- Better relationship between kids and parents,
- Improved relationship between brothers and sisters,
- Better reputation of the school in the local community,
- Community mobilisation to support kids,
- Improved critical viewing skills and more care about the bacterias carried by TV and videogames,
- Long term care for reduction of consumption 3 months and 11 months after the Challenge.

« When the school gets more attention and support in the community, it plays an important role in the sense on belonging, » says Denis Shaink, president of ACP. « Children who prove to be stronger than the tube improve their self esteem and receive admiration from people around them ».

Parents initiative

The fact that the Challenge is a parents' initiative is important in the success of the experience. The Challenge is then perceived as an adults' effort to support children's decision to face it. Denis Shaink is happy to celebrate the participation of 11 elementary schools. « The Challenge provides parents with a wonderful opportunity to mobilise and reconnect with the Family Government responsibility. »

In secondary schools, how will students participate ?

The Louis-Jacques-Casault School, in Montmagny, one hour away from Quebec City, is the first secondary school offering teenagers to face the Challenge. Parents and community organisations have put up a program to help teens succeed. Johanne Talbot, president of the School Council, cannot predict if « teens will consider the Challenge as an intrusion in their freedom or an opportunity to question their addiction ». « Even if our council endorsed the Challenge, we cannot predict what will the students reaction be », says the president of the Students body, Andreanne Caron, « so, we cross our fingers. »

“urvivors’ pride

The parents Association congratulates children who participated in the Challenge and give each school

- a laminated certificate honouring their participation,
- a copy of the video « The 10-Day Challenge »,
- a souvenir poster for each classroom.

The parents Association also thanks members of the squad who helped parents, kids and teachers getting ready for the Challenger. Mrs Celine Bilodeau, regional coordinator, and Johanne Arseneault, executive director of PEACE, “Positive Entertainment Alternatives for Children Everywhere”.

The Challenge received funding from the National Strategy for Crime Prevention of Canada, with the collaboration of the Public Safety Department of the Province of Quebec.

Copies of the video are available at www.EDUPAX.org

Source :

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Addendum 1

Why target TV and Video Games?

Amendment 17 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Children* mentions that all signing States commit to protect children from harmful productions.

The increasing number of children with behaviour problems combined with the increase of violent crime committed by youth (1) has favoured, all across North America, the implementation of many violence prevention programs. Quebec schools participated in this effort. One of these programs, EDUPAX, has targeted the influence of television as a major factor in the increase of physical and verbal violence.

In an article from the *Monde diplomatique*, "Discomfort In Education", one can read: "The feeding of children with television starts very early. Before they start attending school, kids have often been force-fed with TV since their early years, (...) up to 5 hours per day, (...) before they can even start speaking. The flood of the family space by this tap constantly open, from which a non-stop flow of images comes in, does not happen without tremendous impact on the formation of the future adult subject". (2)

According to studies by 2 researchers from Laval University, in Quebec City, TV violence carried by privately owned Canadian networks has increased by 432% during the last 8 years. TV carries more than 50 acts of aggression per hour. Children programs carry even more. 80% of violence is now showed before 9 PM, in Canada. With videogames, kids not only watch violence, they commit it. For Dave Grossman, founder of the Killology Research Group and retired psychologist from the US Army, videogames provide children "the will, the skill and the thrill to kill". Should adults worry? Feeding kids brains with programs, films and videogames interferes with their development and will leave lifelong traces. TV shows heroes who solve conflicts with violence only. TV violence consumption influences the kids' perception of life and the world they live in. The impact takes many forms, it is well known, measured scientifically and fully documented (3). The growing power of the small screen destroys teachers' efforts to develop social skills, it reduces parents' authority and children's power of empathy. Not surprisingly, many adults feel bypassed and overwhelmed.

(1) Youth violent crime rate is twice as high as adults'. (Public Safety Department of the Province of Quebec, Statistics 2001, page 24)

(2) Le Monde diplomatique, November 2001 :
http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2001/11/DUFOUR/15871?var_recherche=t%E9%E9+violence

(3) Documentation on the influence of TV and videogame violence is available on Quebec School Boards Federation's website
http://www.fcsq.qc.ca/Dossiers/ViolenceTV/_doc/argumentaire.doc
and at www.edupax.org (documentation).