

## ***Update About Smart***

By Lt. Col. Dave Grossman  
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Here is an update on what is happening with the SMART curriculum in Escanaba, Michigan. They have just received a 2.3 million dollar federal grant to be the national distributors of this info.

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I remember when my 1st grade teacher told us that cigarettes can kill people. My dad smoked ! I loved my dad and didn't want him to die. So I hid his cigarettes. He convinced me that that was not a good idea, but the generation that was taught in elementary school about the health risk of tobacco is the generation that grew up and played pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey with the tobacco industry.

Now we are on the threshold of a generation that will be informed about the health impact of media violence, and the result will be a major victory for our children and for our civilization.

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The Delta-Schoolcraft school district, based in Escanaba Michigan, was the first school district in the world to use the Stanford 'SMART' (TV/video game turnoff) curriculum across the entire district. The pilot study was done in one school in the fall '04. They initiated the curriculum which culminated in a 10-day TV/video game turnoff which resulted in an 80% reduction in violence in that school after the 'detox' or cold-turkey period. In the spring '05 semester most of the district participated in the program. They received a statistically significant reduction in violence and bullying across the entire school district. The five schools who put the program in place before the state standardized tests received a 15% increase in math scores and an 18% increase in writing scores as compared to the seven schools which did not have the program in place at that point.

This was the first district-wide application of the Stanford University "SMART" Curriculum, which was demonstrated to be effective at reducing violence in a double-blind, controlled experiment conducted by Stanford Medical School. This school district has received a US federal government grant to be the national distributors of this information. In Oct 2006 they will have their fourth international conference to teach educators about the curriculum. All attendees will be provided with the curriculum, and they will be given instruction in the implementation of the curriculum by educators and administrators who have had first-hand experience with it. (For more info on this conference, see the front page of the [www.killology.com](http://www.killology.com) web site.)

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Bottom line is that we are going to treat adult rated (M = NC-17 = X) video games like we treat pornography, alcohol, tobacco, firearms, automobiles, sex and

drugs: something that adults can have, but if you sell it to kids you are a criminal. The video game industry says it is the parent's job. Imagine any other industry (guns, alcohol, etc) trying that line? "I know that kid was 10, and yes he walked into my pawn shop, bought a fifth of liqueur and a gun, but where were the parents? It's the parent's job to keep him out!" No other industry would try that line. The only other group of individuals who would say that are child abusers: "I know that little girl was 8, but it's the parent's job to keep me away from her." This industry is functioning with child abuser logic, and they will pay a profound price for it.

Every new piece of technology has to be digested. Repeating firearms were in existence for 100 years before we regulated children's access to them. Cars were around for 50 years before we regulated kids' access to them. Tobacco was sold to children for well over 100 years before we reeled in that industry. Basically, the video game industry can chose to be like the automobile industry, and embrace the regulation of their product when it comes to kids, or they can be like the tobacco industry and fight to sell their product to minors. Clearly they have chosen the tobacco route, and they will pay the same kind of price that we have seen in the tobacco industry. The video game industry's future is the same as that of the tobacco industry, almost exactly, step by step, and they have chosen that fate for themselves.

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### **Michigan kids urged to kick the TV habit**

By John Flesher, Associated Press Writer, Tuesday, February 28, 2006 · Last updated 1:06 a.m. PT

Jessica Beauchamp, 11, a fifth-grader at Lemmer Elementary School in Escanaba, Mich., talks Nov. 11, 2005, about how she has cut back her television time by an hour a day, and spends the time playing with her sister. (AP Photo/John L. Russell)

ESCANABA, Mich. -- Principal Mike Smajda was horrified to learn that one of his first-grade pupils at Lemmer Elementary School had watched "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre."

Not long afterward, the boy was playing in a leaf pile with a girl when he suddenly began kicking her in the head. Another boy joined in.

"They felt it was part of the game," Smajda said. "They both kicked her until her head was bleeding and she had to go to the hospital."

Smajda can't prove the R-rated slasher movie provoked the child. But the November 2004 incident reinforced his commitment to an anti-violence program getting under way at his school.

It challenged students to do without TV and all other screen entertainment for 10 days, then limit themselves to just seven hours a week. The district's other schools joined in over the next year.

Administrators and teachers say short-term results were striking: less aggressive behavior and, in some cases, better standardized test scores.

Officials in the Delta-Schoolcraft Intermediate School District in Michigan's rural Upper Peninsula are so enthusiastic about the program they sponsored a national conference last spring and plan another for April.

Designed by child health specialists at Stanford University, the program was intended for third- and fourth-graders, but Delta-Schoolcraft tailored it for kindergarten through eighth grade.

"I don't know of any other school district that has gone as far with this," said Lt. Col. David Grossman, a former West Point psychology professor and youth violence expert who introduced the program, called Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television.

More than 1,000 studies have established a connection between violent entertainment and youthful aggression, but other factors such as family breakdown and peer influence might share the blame, the American Academy of Pediatrics has said.

The Stanford researchers wanted to determine whether significant cutbacks in television and video would make children less prone to violence. A trial run of their program in San Jose, Calif., had promising results, they said.

"I can't speculate on every individual violent act, but we do know that exposure to violent content does cause more aggressive behavior overall and that reducing screen time does reduce aggression overall," research team leader Dr. Thomas Robinson told The Associated Press by e-mail.

Smajda announced the TV turnoff during an assembly at Lemmer Elementary in Escanaba, a Lake Michigan shoreline town of 13,000 where lounging in front of the tube rivals snowmobiling and ice fishing as means of coping with long, bitter winters.

"Oh my lord, I thought they were going to chase me out of the gym," he said, recalling the boos and hisses. Still, about 90 percent of the 400-plus students took part to some extent.

"It was so boring, it was miserable," said 9-year-old Sydney Hardin, who nevertheless stuck with the program - as did sisters Sara, 13, and Emily, 5. They found other things to do: reading, playing outside with friends, riding bikes. As other schools got involved, the community pitched in. The YMCA offered free temporary memberships; the city library organized card games and knitting classes.

At Rhonda Walker's home, TV screens went dark and video games with even mild violence were outlawed for her sons, ages 6 and 10. Since then, the older boy's reading has improved and the family does more things together.

"We just played 'Clue' for an hour last night because they want to spend time with me," Walker said.

Observers charted aggressive playground incidents - shoving, hitting, obscene gestures, name calling - at eight elementary schools immediately before and after the program. The totals dropped at every school but one. Overall average decline: 52 percent.

The district also compared scores of fourth-graders who took standardized tests

during the turnoff in January 2005 with scores of fourth-graders tested before the turnoff. Math and writing scores made double-digit leaps.

"Even more positive results than we'd hoped for," said Kristine Paulsen, the district's general education director.

But will they last? Robinson, the Stanford researcher, is studying his program's long-term effects in California but hasn't reported results.

Smajda plans to continue the program at his school, but says its success will depend more on what happens at home.

"We're trying to educate parents to monitor what their kids are watching," he said.

"Many of them don't have a clue."