



February 2012



King Street  
Cooperative  
Preschool

# Raising a Child in the Age of Information

## Helping Children Develop Thoughtful and Responsible Media Habits

By Aaron Carasco

My favorite television show growing up was Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. It taught me some valuable lessons. Because of that show I still love tying my shoes and saying hello to the postal worker. But today, there is so much television available to our children to watch. And not only television, but computers, tablets, and smartphones are things children see on a daily basis. But what's too much? What's healthy and what's harmful to young children? How do we empower them and ourselves to be responsible with media?

We know based on research that television is very prevalent in the lives of young children. 43% of children under 2 years old watch television every day. Children under 6 spend two hours a day with screen media. Over the last three decades, much research has focused on young children and the effects of media. While the research is far from over, it shows that excessive exposure is harmful to the healthy development of a child.

Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.

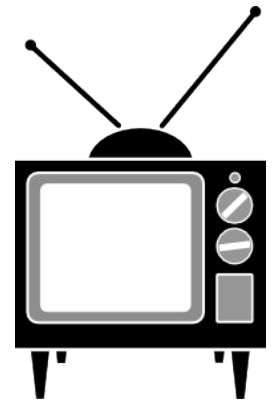
— *Mister Rogers*

Excessive screen time can lead to a smaller vocabulary and can decrease attention spans. It can affect children's sleep and put them at greater risk for attention deficit disorder and obesity. Excessive screen time also makes it harder for children to develop relationships. They have less time to spend in the real world on their own ideas, friends, and family.

Their ability to play is limited, too. They may imitate what they see on screen instead of using more creative outlets from their own imagination during pretend play. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against television viewing for children under the age of two. Babies and toddlers have a critical need for direct interaction with caregivers. However, for children older than two, what they watch is important too. Help children develop thoughtful and responsible media habits. There are many things you can do together as a family. Limit screen time and decide on what rules and routines for screen time. For example, no screen time on weekends or only one hour of screen time per day. Be sure to decide what programs are acceptable for your children and which ones aren't. What-

ever media devices you use, be sure to keep them in a shared space and not in a child's bedroom. When you're using media, have a discussion about what you're watching together as a family. Research shows that children respond to media in a healthier way when their parents watch it with them. Don't lecture about what you see, but rather discuss it. Ask questions. Listen to what your child tells you.

As adults, you should be aware of your own media too. When children are in the room (or in a nearby room), what they see or hear affects them too. Children can understand television at a very young age. A study found that even one-year-olds avoided an object they saw an actress on television react negatively to. Research found that children who live in "heavy-television households" watched TV more and read less. Many studies have found this correlation of reading and television. Many children watch more TV than they read books. Know this and think about how much time your child reads or is read to.



Remember to encourage children's skills and interests beyond electronic media. Promote play where children control what happens instead of imitating what they see on a screen. When you and your child engage media together, use it to spark imagination. Ask questions like "Why do you think that character felt excited to go into the castle?" or "If you told the story, how would you change the ending?"

Know also that children's media often promotes and reflects stereotypes that limit how a child understands his or herself and how he or she understands and treats others. When those moments arise, ask questions and help engage your child so they think critically about what they are watching. For example, if a girl is pretending to be Spiderman and a boy says "you're a girl, you can't be Spiderman!" You might say "I think it's fine for boys and girls to try lots of things. What do you think? What do you like about being Spiderman?" Keep questions open ended and make sure your child knows you won't be angered or frustrated by what they say, but rather will support them and listen to what they have to say.

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Here are some talking points from **Remote Control Childhood** by D. Levin:

**Talk about your reactions to what you saw.**

- What did you think about that show/game?
- Did you like it when \_\_\_\_\_ happened? Why do you think it happened?
- I didn't like it when \_\_\_\_\_. I wish they didn't have to hurt each other.

**Help sort out fantasy from reality.**

- What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?
- Help clarify confusion by saying things such as, "In real life things don't work that way."
- I wonder how they made \_\_\_\_\_ happen on that show.
- How can we tell the difference between these advertisements and the show?
- I wonder why they made the ad like that?
- Can you remember a time when we bought something and it wasn't like the ad?

**Compare what your child saw to their personal experience.**

- Could anything like \_\_\_\_\_ happen to you? When? How could it be the same/different?
- What would you do if you were in that situation?

**Discuss any violence or mean behavior.**

- What do you think about how \_\_\_\_\_ solved their problem?
- If you had a problem like that what could you do or say?
- Can you think of a way to solve that problem where no one gets hurt?

**Ask questions about stereotyped behavior.**

- I wonder why it's always men with big muscles who go to \_\_\_\_\_. Did you notice that? What do you think about it?
- It seems like the women always need to get rescued by the men. Have you noticed that?
- I wonder why the "bad guys" have foreign accents, always wear dark colors, and have darker skin.

Finally, talk to other parents and build a community awareness about media. Know what your child watches at other parents' houses when they have a playdate. Work out with families about how you'll deal with television and other media. Use information to spark conversations with people in your community. Build knowledge and advocate for your children.



## Fundraising Corner

We are one month away from the auction! Procurements are rolling in. We have a donation of a doll and book from American Girl, a year's worth of products from Organic Valley, a donation of dinner for two and an evening of bowling or pool from the Garage, a family film membership to NW Film Forum, and a SeaFair package to attend the airshow this summer, souvenirs included! And that's just for starters. We have some truly unique and fabulous procurements arriving in the coming weeks. We'll send those out via email to the school, or you could always check our running tally on the KSCP yahoo group file. Eve, (Ian M's mom), our auction marketing coordinator, is working on magical descriptions of these items.

How are your **procurements** coming? Each family needs to procure three items and have them turned in by March 1. We have set up a white basket to collect procurements in the snack room, near the teachers' closets. If you're concerned about a valuable procurement being left out in the open, you may make arrangements with Gwen (Annika's mom), our procurement coordinator and spreadsheet guru, to get them to her.

Have questions about **how to procure an item**? Unsure how to approach a business? Wondering if there's a way to use your own creativity to create an item or activity? Talk to Dana (Rose's mom), our fundraising chair. We can brainstorm together. There are email templates on the web, letters pre-written, and donation forms all available for download from the KSCP Yahoo group files.

Are you drooling over our **fabulous raffle prize** this year? You or a friend could win an Orcas Island Getaway!! Each family is responsible for selling 10 raffle tickets for \$5 each. Need more tickets? Please contact Sara (Theo's mom), our tireless raffle ticket and thank you note coordinator. Win an overnight at the Orcas Hotel, \$50 gift certificate to Octavia's Bistro, and a \$100 voucher towards a whale watching trip with Orcas Island Eclipse Charters. There are no blackout dates on this prize! We're waiting for a few more procurements to come in before deciding which ones are going into the raffle, but we will be notifying by email soon. Due to a misprint, all families are asked to add an extra "p" to the website for each ticket stub sold.

Have you had the chance to put up your marketing **posters**? Each family is asked to put up two posters advertising our marketing. It's easy to ask your local grocer, favorite barista, library, community center, or other local business for some space on their community bulletin board. We also have small cards for distribution or to pin to your best friend's fridge. There are PDFs available on the KSCP Yahoo group files that you are welcome to email to your friends, or throw up on your facebook page (or link to our KSCP auction webpage through your facebook or blog page). Special thanks to Tove (Rowan's mom) for designing this colorful flyer.

Please sign up for a **parent job at our auction** through Anneleen (Alex and Reese's mom), our energetic volunteer and décor coordinator. Give her your top three choices for jobs and times. If not, a chore will be assigned to you! Each family is required to work the day of the auction. This year, we will again be using volunteers through the local nonprofit, SeattleWorks, to supple-

ment our positions, and may be utilizing volunteers from other sources, as well. Hopefully we'll have so many jobs filled that folks will just be dancing and bidding the evening away!

**Our evening's meal** will be cooked by Eric (Kaz's dad). We are so grateful for his stepping up to help after the position of food and beverage coordinator was vacated. His help is invaluable! After tasting his paella on the KSCP camping trip this summer, we are very excited to have him join the team for this event.

And a few more **shout outs** – thank you to our fabulous fundraising floats, Shava (Maxine's mom) and Kelly and Kevin (Olive's parents). They are sent scrambling with a wide variety of tasks to support marketing, procurements, décor and anything the Fundraising Chair drops.

Are you reading for bidding? Ready for dancing? Eating? Pajama Partying? We'll all have a fun time at the annual Family Night Out on Saturday, March 17, from 4:30 – 8pm at Mt. Baker Community Club. Each family will need to purchase entry tickets.

Adults are \$12, kids are \$6, with tickets available at the door. Raffle tickets will also be available for \$5 each at the event. Everyone is encouraged to bring friends, wear pajamas or loungewear, and get your groove on to Recess Monkey.



## Important Dates

Feb 15: Parent meeting 7-9 p.m.

Feb 20-24th: Mid-winter break  
(no school)