



TV and children - new studies

Two new US studies have focussed on children, television, usage and content.

Following on a number of studies that have found evidence that too much television is bad for children's development, even when it's playing in the background, a new study has tracked just how much background TV children are exposed to.

The study, published in the journal *Pediatrics*, was conducted using a nationally representative telephone survey of 1,454 parents with at least one child between the ages of 8 months and 8 years old. Questions included, how often TV was on when no one was watching; whether children had a TV in their bedroom and the number of TVs in the home.

Researchers found that in addition to actual TV viewing, American children are exposed to nearly 4 hours worth of background television every day. Children under age 2 and African-American children were exposed to an average of 5.5 hours a day of a TV playing in the background; children from the poorest families were exposed to nearly 6 hours per day. The study notes that background television exposure has been "linked to lower sustained attention during playtime, lower quality parent-child interactions, and reduced performance on cognitive tasks."

Lapierre, M et al (2012) Background Television in the Homes of US Children. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/09/26/peds.2011-2581.full.pdf+html>

Another study looked at social, as opposed to physical, aggression in TV watched by children. A content analysis was conducted to examine the portrayal of social aggression in the 50 most popular television programs among 2- to 11-year-old children. Results revealed that 92% of the programs in the sample contained some social aggression. On average, there were 14 different incidents of social aggression per hour in these shows, or one every 4 minutes.

Compared to the portrayals of physical aggression, social aggression was more likely to be enacted by an attractive perpetrator, to be featured in a humorous

context, and neither rewarded or punished. In these ways, social aggression on television poses more of a risk for imitation and learning than do portrayals of physical aggression.

The researchers warn that parents should not assume that a program is okay for their child to watch simply because it does not contain physical violence, saying that, "Parents should be more aware of portrayals that may not be explicitly violent in a physical sense but are nonetheless antisocial in nature. Such content may be encouraging children to engage in behavior that is destructive and cruel."

Martins, N; Wilson B (2012) Mean on the Screen: Social Aggression in Programs Popular With Children. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01599.x/abstract>

R18+ for computer games.

New Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games were released on 12 September 2012. The Guidelines will come into effect on 1 January 2013.

Minister for Home Affairs and Justice Jason Clare said that the creation of an R 18+ category for computer games will bring the classification categories for computer games into line with existing categories used to classify films. He noted that it was an important reform of the classification system.

States and Territories are in the process of passing their own complementary legislation to ensure that R 18+ computer games are appropriately regulated.

Copies of the new guidelines are available at www.classification.gov.au

See P2 for an editorial on this topic

Video games: The good, the bad and the gory

Come and hear the latest findings about the influences of games on children. Learn how to help children benefit from video games and avoid the negative impacts.

Dr Wayne Warburton, Macquarie University, NSW

"Grand theft brainspace: What science tells us about the impact of violent media on children"

Professor Elizabeth Handsley, Flinders University SA

"New video game guidelines: be careful what you wish for"

Janet McDowall, UniSA, with Lily Gower and Leigh Newton

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EDITORIAL

R18+ rating added for videogames ... but are children protected?

This piece by ACCM President, Professor Elizabeth Handsley, is adapted from one that originally appeared online on The Conversation website at <http://theconversation.edu.au/r18-rating-added-for-videogames-but-are-children-protected-9716>

New guidelines for the classification of videogames have been released and, despite being a step in the right direction, the revisions are largely disappointing and a missed opportunity.

The guidelines - which were revised to account for the introduction of an R18+ classification - are an important step towards the enhanced protection of minors. Under the existing system, the highest legal classification a game can be given is MA15+.

This year the Parliament has amended the law to allow an R18+ classification, in response to community concerns that the strong, contextually justified violence available in MA15+ was not suitable for anybody under 18. However it was necessary to change the guidelines to ensure that level of violence would no longer be available at MA15+.

While the revised guidelines show an obvious intent to meet community expectations about enhanced protection for minors - by tightening up the level of violence permissible at MA15+ - there was a disappointing lack of public consultation during their creation.

Nor does there appear to have been any proper legislative drafting process; rather the guidelines were passed around for individual ministers to make their own changes and additions. The result is a patch-up job with minimal substantive changes. Worse, some of the wording is awkward and unclear.

The new guidelines also contain a restriction on depictions of "actual" sexual activity, thereby failing to recognise that nothing in a game is "actual". The word, I imagine, was chosen to make a distinction from depictions of "implied" sexual activity, but if this was the case, a drafter would have known that the appropriate word would have been "explicit".

Perhaps more importantly, the new guidelines contain more changes on sexual activity, nudity and drug use than they do on violence. It was violence driving the push for an R18+ classification in the first place and violence should have been central to the changes. Rather, the violence-related changes come across as an afterthought; for example, all classification levels contain changes relating to sex, drugs and nudity but the criteria for non-sexual violence change only at G and MA15+.

I have been disappointed (but not surprised) to see a renewal of claims by the gaming industry of an absence of evidence violent interactive games (by demanding active engagement) can have a stronger influence on users than film (which demands only passive engagement).



Prof Elizabeth
Handsley

Interactive games may not have been around long enough for there to be conclusive evidence about enhanced impact through interactivity, but we do have plenty of evidence that children learn better by doing than by watching, especially through repetition and rewards.

Of course the comments sections of articles and online forums are still full of pundits protesting about an alleged lack of evidence that violent media of any kind can have an influence on its users.

These claims sound strange coming at the end of a lengthy campaign for an R18+ classification that was driven by hand-wringing about all the inappropriate material currently available to minors at MA15+. I've yet to meet anyone who disagrees some games are inappropriate for minors - the problem is that some people are happy to reach that conclusion based on a moralistic assessment of the material, or on gut-feeling and guesswork, or on the intent of the developer, rather than on the weight of the scientific evidence that exists as to how violent media can influence people's thoughts, attitudes and behaviour.

People who weigh in to the debate over the appropriate role of this evidence in policy formation nearly always presume that the main, or only, question is whether violent media begets violent behaviour.

Desensitisation to violence is at least as big a concern for the future of our society as increased tendencies to aggressive behaviour. Possibly more so because, while parents and carers have some opportunity to notice and address behavioural changes, attitudinal ones might go unnoticed and unchecked until it is too late.

The revised guidelines for videogames are another lost opportunity for a root-and-branch, considered review to base the classification system on the science, rather than on guesswork and moral judgment. If we are going to have a classification system based on the wide recognition that media content can be harmful to minors, it's imperative that we take seriously the evidence about what is harmful, and build the criteria around that.

The new guidelines and media release about them are available on the Classification Board website at <http://www.classification.gov.au/>

Parents seeking online information

Cyber safety fears growing

DEMAND for cyber safety courses and information has soared in line with community concern about the dangers posed by the widespread use of social networking sites.

The Federal Government's free Cybersmart service, which delivers web-based counselling and resources, as well as running a national outreach program into schools and libraries, has seen a huge spike in traffic to its web site.

Since January, there have been 1 million visitors to cybersmart.gov.au, doubling the traffic recorded since the site was launched in 2009.

Sonya Ryan, whose daughter Carly was murdered by a man who befriended her online using a false identity, says she has been inundated with requests to the foundation that bears Carly's name.

Ms Ryan estimates that she has personally presented cyber safety

The Advertiser, 1 September 2012



DEBORAH BOGLE

seminars to about 140,000 people at up to 400 schools and organisations over the past 18 months in South Australia, Victoria and NSW. She has also taken her message to the US and has plans to travel to the UK.

"I can't keep up with it," Ms Ryan says.

In an average week, she gives four one-hour presentations.

A 16-year-old girl whose story of being stalked by a Facebook "friend" is told in *sawekend* today, said despite cybersafety sessions at school, "I never thought it would happen to me". "Once a term there's this talk on cyber safety and everyone's so

over it... they turn off because they've heard it a hundred times," she said. Ms Ryan believes that because hers is "a real life story" the message penetrates.

She is gathering signatures for a petition to re-introduce to Federal Parliament legislation to make it a criminal offence for adults to lie about their age to minors. The so-called "Carly's law" was voted down by the Senate last month.

To sign the petition follow the link from carlyryanfoundation.com



Unhealthy message

AT TUESDAY evening's Melbourne Spring Fashion Week designer series catwalk show at Melbourne Town Hall, I was shocked at the skinniness of all 33 models. None could have weighed more than 50 kilograms; they looked like emaciated clones of each other. Most of the audience were young girls and women. I wondered about the silent message they were receiving — that to look good, you need to look anorexic. My 22-year-old size-eight daughter commented afterwards: "Did you find that you felt a bit overweight after watching the models and even the girls in the audience?" I'm sure she had articulated what many may have been thinking. Until this unhealthy modelling culture changes, girls and women will continue to struggle with body-image issues.

Vicki Singleton, Upwey

The Age, 17 September 2012

DreamWorks goes to war with 12 new tales

The studio is taking on rivals with three films a year for four years

ERICA ORDEN

ANGLING for an edge in the increasingly competitive field of family-oriented animated films, DreamWorks Animation has said it will release three movies a year for the next four years, staking out opening dates well in advance for all 12 titles.

The projects include eight original, non-sequel films —

among them the studio's first Bollywood-style musical — a film about the mythology behind the Troll dolls and a movie about the world of shadows, combining computer-generated and traditional animation techniques.

The studio's slate from next year to 2016 accounts for nearly the entire span of DreamWorks' five-year distribution deal with Twentieth Century Fox, unveiled last month. The schedule is designed to complement Fox's animation efforts, though DreamWorks had long planned to boost production to three films a year, from two in most previous years,

said chief creative officer Bill Damaschke. "You don't do this overnight," he said.

DreamWorks' rivals include stalwarts such as Walt Disney's Pixar Animation Studios, along with two relative newcomers: Illumination Entertainment, the studio behind the hit *Despicable Me*, and Paramount Pictures' new animation division, which was formed last year following the studio's animated hit *Rango*.

Fox also has its own robust animation pipeline, through Blue Sky Studios, which has produced the *Ice Age* series, one of Hollywood's most successful animated

franchises, as well as *Rio* and the coming *Epic*, voiced by Amanda Seyfried, Beyonce Knowles and Colin Farrell. News Corporation owns Fox, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Australian*.

Family-oriented animated films have been more resilient than other genres in the face of flattening domestic ticket sales and a declining DVD business. Six of last year's 20 top-grossing films were animated, including Fox's *Rio* and DreamWorks' *Kung Fu Panda 2* and *Puss in Boots*.

The distribution deal calls for DreamWorks to pay Fox 8 per cent of gross receipts for theatri-

cal and home-video distribution, the same it now pays Paramount. Fox will collect 6 per cent of gross receipts for certain digital rights, including paid online downloads and video-on-demand viewings, less than the 8 per cent Paramount received for those rights.

One of the first releases will be *Turbo*, set for next July 19, about a snail who sets out to win the Indianapolis 500 after an accident gives him extraordinary speed. A spinoff of the popular *Madagascar* franchise, *The Penguins of Madagascar*, is slated for release on March 27, 2015, followed by the *Trolls* film on June 5, 2015.

The Australian, 11 September 2012

Social media addiction calls for intervention

SOCIAL media addiction is spiralling out of control and the Government needs to step in to enforce mandatory education, according to a leading Adelaide psychologist.

Dr Darryl Cross of Crossways Consulting says his profession has an "avalanche rolling down on us" as professionals seek to treat Australians' growing reliance on these technologies.

He says the situation is particularly dire when it comes to adolescents.

"I'm sick of hearing that it's a phase they are going through," Dr Cross told *The Advertiser*.

"Get real, this is not a phase; it's an addiction of some magnitude that will have a profound effect on someone's life."

Dr Cross advocates intervention at a government level aimed at educating parents about the dangers.

"We need parents to undertake mandatory education



JESSICA LEO

classes on social media skills. There needs to be a massive push on the part of the Government to say we're offering these classes... parents must attend."

Dr Cross says adolescence is about discovering one's identity, and with the advent of social media Australian teens have not one but two of these to navigate – their real-life selves and their "digital identity".

When the latter starts to take precedence, it can cause life-long issues, he says.

"If you don't have effective communication skills in the workplace you're not going to get a job or get promoted," Dr Cross says.

His comments come in the wake of several high-profile Australians paying a high price for their social media use.

Australia's Next Top Model judge Charlotte Dawson was last week embroiled in a very public Twitter drama that landed her in psychiatric care and, while at the London 2012 Olympics, swimmers admitted their reliance on social media could have cost them gold.

Leila Henderson, CEO of Swayve and social media contributor to the soon-to-be-released *Little Red Book of PR Wisdom*, recently surveyed 850 social media users. Twenty-five per cent admitted they were addicted and another 25 per cent said they had had to wind back their time on these sites.

"People tell me that they check their Facebook on their phones before they get out of bed in the morning," Ms Henderson says.

The Advertiser, 8 September 2012

HOW PARENTS CAN CURB SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

■ **Don't** have wireless internet in bedrooms – keep the family home computer on a single cable or switch off wireless when it's time for homework/bed.

■ **Seek** education on social media networks and be informed on how they work.

■ **Spend** time with your children doing something that is not technology related and that gives them a jolt of adrenaline in a more positive way like indoor rock-climbing or karaoke.

■ **Lead** by example – if you are a social media savvy parent, show your children the medium can be enjoyed in moderation.

■ **Police** your children's social media time like you would their TV watching – supervised and time-limited.

The Advertiser, 8 Sept 2012

Screen-time obesity link

The Advertiser, 4 September 2012

SCREEN time has overtaken exercise as the most important factor in childhood obesity and should be limited, a South Australian study has found.

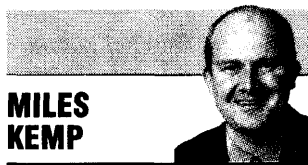
The UniSA study looked at 2200 children aged between nine and 16 and found the length of time they spent in front of television and computer screens was a more likely indicator of being overweight or obese than the amount of exercise they did.

cont

were about 2½ times as many obese study subjects classed in the category of high-screen-time and low-exercise (10.7 per cent), as in the low-screen-time and high-exercise category (4.3 per cent).

Dr Maher said the value of physical activity also should not be underestimated.

"Increased likelihood of a young person being overweight or obese was more strongly and consistently associated with high screen-



MILES KEMP

Study co-author and UniSA researcher Dr Carol Maher said screen time now made up about one quarter of waking time for the age group.

"In the past two decades, young people's physical ac-

tivity behaviour has been the subject of scores of interventions, but in comparison, interventions aimed at reducing screen time have been relatively uncommon," she said.

"Our findings suggest that screen-time reduction may be a more effective target behaviour for intervention studies aimed at reducing overweight and obesity among children."

The study found there studied and they were divided into groups based on high and low activity, as well as on high and low screen use, according to national guidelines.

"Our findings suggest that screen-time reduction may be a more effective target behaviour for intervention studies aimed at reducing overweight and obesity among children."

The study found there studied and they were divided into groups based on high and low activity, as well as on high and low screen use, according to national guidelines.

Low-activity children exercised for less than 60 minutes each day and high-screen-time children failed to meet national guidelines.

"Increased likelihood of overweight or obese was often associated with high screen time," Dr Maher said.

Screen sex

CHILDREN who watch movies featuring sex scenes grow into adults who are more likely to have unsafe sex, research suggests. The study followed a group of US adolescents to see how exposure at a young age to sex in movies was related to risky sexual behaviour — multiple partners and inconsistent condom use — in adulthood. There was a link between watching sex scenes and later risky sexual behaviour, the study online in the journal *Psychological Science* found. *Psychological Science* 2012;doi:10.1177/0956797611435529 (O'Hara R et al)

Weekend Australian, 1-2 Sept 2012

NEW PUBLICATIONS

ADVERTISING

Lochbuchler, K; Sargent, JD; et al (2012)
Influence of smoking cues in movies on children's beliefs about smoking.
Pediatrics, Vol. 130, No. 2, Pp221-227

Yu, Jay Hyunjae (2012)
Mothers' perceptions of the negative impact on TV food ads on children's food choices.
Appetite, Vol. 59, No. 2, Pp372-376

Adamczyk, Amy (2012)
The commercial sexual exploitation of children.
Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Vol. 41, No. 9, Pp1253-1255

Pettigrew, S; Roberts, M; Pescud, M; et al (2012)
The extent and nature of alcohol advertising on Australian television.
Drug and Alcohol Review, Vol. 431, No. 6, Pp797-802

COMPUTERS & INTERNET

Frank, KL (2012)
The cost of virtual status: are you "in" or "out"?
Television, 25/2012/E

Pritchard, J; Watters, PA; Spiranic, C (2012)
Internet subcultures and pathways to the use of child pornography.
Computer Law and Security Report, Vol. 27, No. 6, Pp585-600

Shemesh, DO & Heiman, T (2012)
Parents' and children's perceptions and reactions towards cyberbullying.
Int. Journal of Psychology, Vol. 47, Sp. Iss, SI, Suppl. 1, Pp327-327

Smith, Peter (2012)
Bullying and cyberbullying among children and young people.
Int Journal of Psychology, Vol. 47, Sp. Iss. SI, Suppl. 1, Pp273-274

MEDIA EFFECTS - EDUCATION

Australian Children's Television Foundation (2012)
Oz kids TV.
www.youtube.com/ozkidstv

Fuenzalida, Valerio (2012)
Changes in the children's television landscape: "Baby TV".
Communication Research Trends, Vol. 31, No. 3, Pp4-7

Heintz, KE & Wartella, EA (2012)
Young children's learning from screen media.
Communication Research Trends, Vol. 31, No. 3, Pp22-28

MEDIA EFFECTS - HEALTH

Boulos, R; Vikre, EK; Oppenheimer, S; et al (2012)

ObesiTV: How television is influencing the obesity epidemic.

Physiology & Behavior, Vol. 107, No. 1, Pp146-153
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Early childhood television viewing predicts explosive leg strength and waist circumference by middle childhood.

Int. Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, Vol. 9, No. 87, July 2012

Balantekin, KN; Roemmich, JN (2012)
Children's coping after psychological stress. Choices among food, physical activity, and television.
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Impact of television on sleep habits.
Biological Rhythm Research, Vol. 43, No. 4, Pp423-430

Tandon, PS; Zhou, C; Sallis, JF; et al (2012)
Home environment relationships with children's physical activity, sedentary time, and screen time by socioeconomic status.

Int. Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, Vol. 9, No. 88, July 2012

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Jago, R; Stamatakis, E; Gama, A; et al (2012)
Parent and child screen-viewing time and home media environment.
American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 107, No. 1, Pp146-153

Carson, V & Janssen, I (2012)
Associations between factors within the home setting and screen time among children aged 0-5 years: a cross-sectional study.
BMC Public Health, Vol. 12, Art. No. 539, July 2012

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Young children's responses to media representations of intergroup threat and ethnicity.
British Journal of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 30, No. 3, Pp459-476

Xu, HuilLan & Wen, LiMing (2012)
Screen time and physical activity of young children reflects their mother's behaviours: Findings from the Healthy Beginnings trial.
Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, Vol. 36, No. 4, Pp396

Gotz, M & Lemish, D (Eds.) (2012)
Sexy girls, heroes and funny losers.

ISBN 978-3-631-63319-9 hb. 207pp
(Hardcover)

Beck, D; Hellmueller, LC; Aeschbacher, N (2012)
Factual entertainment and reality TV.
Communication Research Trends, Vol. 31, No. 2, Pp4-27

VIDEO & COMPUTER GAMES

Hasan, Y; Begue, L; Bushman, BJ (2012)
Viewing the world through "blood-red tinted glasses": The hostile expectation bias mediates the link between violent video game exposure and aggression.
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 48, No. 4, Pp953-956

Jeong, EJ; Biocca, FA; Corey, J (2012)
Sensory realism and mediated aggression in video games.
Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 28, No. 5, Pp1840-1848

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Emerging association between addictive gaming and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
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TECHNOLOGY

Giedd, Jay N (2012)
The digital revolution and adolescent brain evolution.
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What Australians think about digital media.
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VIOLENCE

Krahe, Barbara (2012)
Report of the Media Violence Commission.
Aggressive Behavior, Vol. 38, No. 5, Pp335-341

CONFERENCES

The Right to Childhood

Friday 19 October 2012

NSW House of Parliament

9am - 5pm

www.right2childhood.com.au

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WORLD NEWS

Hooking children on mobile games

According to Anton Troianovski writing in the Wall Street Journal, U.S. food companies are reaching children by embedding their products in simple but enticing games for touch-screen phones and tablets.

Makers of snacks, sweet drinks and sweets have for some time been under government and public pressure to limit advertising to minors on TV and the Internet, so marketers are now finding the unregulated medium of mobile devices an effective way to trigger demand and secure brand loyalty. Companies using this medium include Wrigleys and Kraft.

A recent survey by research firm NPD Group found that 37% of 4- and 5-year-old Americans were using mobile devices such as a smartphone, tablet or iPod Touch, compared with less than a quarter of children that age who used a laptop computer.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444812704577605263654758948.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_LEFTTopStories

Screen time and obesity

A South Australian study published in the latest edition of *Acta Paediatrica*, has found that screen time has overtaken exercise as the most important factor in childhood obesity

The University of South Australia study looked at 2200 children aged between nine and 16 years and found the length of time they spent in front of television and computer screens was a more likely indicator of being overweight or obese than the amount of exercise they did.

Study co-author and UniSA researcher Dr Carol Maher said screen time now made up about one quarter of waking time for the age group. The study found there were about two and a half times as many obese study subjects classed in the category of high-screen-time and low-exercise (10.7 per cent), as in the low-screen-time and high-exercise category (4.3 per cent).

The children's behaviour over 24-hour periods was studied and they were divided into groups based on high and low activity, as well as on high and low screen use, according to national guidelines. Low-activity children exercised for less than 60 minutes each day and high screen-time children were those who exceeded national guidelines.

The researchers suggest that their results indicate that screen time may be an important target for interventions aimed at reducing childhood overweight and obesity.

Maher, C et al (2012) Screen time is more strongly associated than physical activity with overweight and obesity in 9- to 16-year-old Australians *Acta Paediatrica* Volume 101, Issue 11, pages 1170-1174

Bringing Learning to Life

This is the name of a guide produced by the US based organisation, Commonsense Media. It includes recommendations and descriptions of educational media, including apps for children struggling with addition, fluency games for advanced readers, websites to help with social skills, and more.

The guide can be found online at <http://www.common sense media.org/guide/back-to-school-guide>

KIDS' TV

A selection of children's programs screened on TV during the period

ABC 1 (afternoons only)

Play School; Waybaloo; This is Emily Yeung; Gawayn; Best Ed; Naturally Sadie.

ABC 2

I Got a Rocket; Potatoes and Dragons; Bookaboo; Five Minutes More; Bananas in Pyjamas; Zigby; Blinky Bill; The Koala Brothers; The Hive; Pingu; Sesame Street; Thomas and Friends; Fun with Claude; Iconicles; Mike the Knight; Elmo's World; Fireman Sam; Arthur; Grandpa in my Pocket; Hana's Helpline; Plonsters; Timmy Time.

ABC 3

Pat and Stan; Fleabag Monkeyface; Total Drama Action; Stoked!; Move It Mobstyle; Rush TV; BTN Extra; Backyard Science; HotSpell!; Kaeloo; Erky Perky; Stormworld; My Place; Horrible Histories; Deadly 60; Bugged.

SEVEN

Toybox; Spit it Out; The Woodlies; Sea Princesses; Dive Olly Dive!

NINE

Magical Tales; Kitchen Whiz; A Gurls World; Saddle Club; Pyramid; GASP!

TEN

Wurrawhy; Scope.

NICKELODEON

The Fairly Odd Parents; iCarly; SpongeBob SquarePants; Bubble Guppies; Dora the Explorer; Team Umizoomi; Max and Ruby; Robot and Monster; Victorious; Drake and Josh.

DISNEY CHANNEL

Pair of Kings; Radio Rebel; Zeke and Luther; Scaredy Squirrel; Austin & Ally; So Random; Jessie; Shake it Up; Fish Hooks; Kickin' It; Mr Young; Wizards of Waverly Place.