

The Ten-Day Television and videogame Challenge

Tools for Change webinar, May 2008

The Effect of reducing exposure to Media Violence

Jacques Brodeur, www.edupax.org
April 2008

Youth violence

- School are the scene of violence, not the cause. When asked, students see violence in sports, home, street, media more than at school.
- School shootings are the small point of the iceberg.
- More frequently, schools are the scene of vandalism, cruel humour, non tolerance, bullying and intimidation, racket, verbal aggression, name calling, rejection, bitching, threats, offensive language, sexual assault, sport violence, harassment, sexual harassment, gangs, physical fights, threats against staff, fear to take the bus, parents' feeling of insecurity, opposition, disrespect, ...
- Results of these forms of violence include distress and depression, suicide and attempts of suicide, lower self esteem.

Youth violence is increasing in Québec

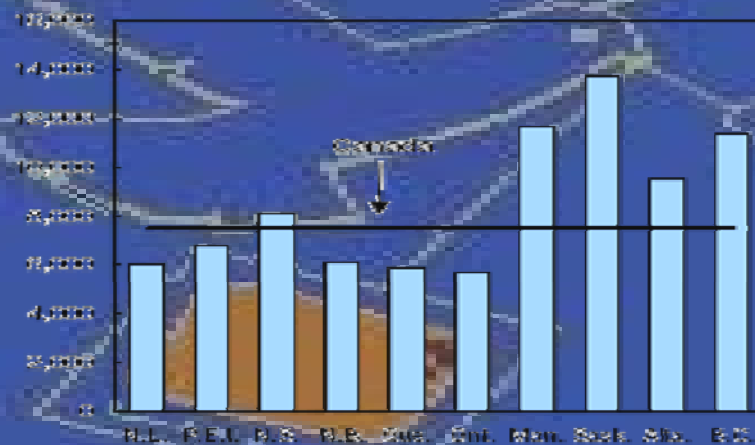
- In the province of Québec - population 7 millions - the number of elementary school students with behavioral difficulties increased by 300% between 1985 and 2000 (CSE du Québec, Feb 2001)
- Violent crime rate of 13-17 years old teens is now twice as high as any other adult age group (Public Safety Dept of Québec)

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Crime rates by province in 2006

Crime rates by province, 2006

Index per 100,000 population



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Crime Rate in Canada, 2006

Ron Melchers, Criminology Professor, Ottawa University

- There are some disturbing trends; although minor assaults were down, the more serious ones — including those with weapons — have climbed.
- More disturbing yet, they're going up among young offenders who are 12 to 17 years of age.
- The rate of youth crimes rose by 3% in 2006.
- The rate of young people accused of homicide was also the highest since 1961, when statistics were first collected.
- Aggravated assaults increased even more.

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Non violent and violent crime rates in 2006 (statcan)

- Canada's overall national crime rate hit its lowest point in over 25 years.
- Youth violent crime rate hit its highest point in 45 years.

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Options when facing youth violence in schools

- **More punishment, zero tolerance.**
- **Suspension, expulsion**
- **Special classes and special schools**
- **Cameras and metal detectors**
- **More staff and more specialized personal**
- **Emphasis on respect and politeness**
- **Security and police presence in schools**

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Causal factors for the increase of kids with troubled behavior

- **Structure of family more fragile**
- **Decrease of parental guidance**
- **Massive exposure to violent entertainment**
- **Poverty and others (guns, gender, ...)**

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Violent entertainment includes:

- **TV more violent : between 1994 and 2003, the number of aggressions carried by private television broadcasters rose from 10 to 52 per hour (+432%).**
- **TV programs for kids include 4 to 10 times more violence than others : GI Joe, Transformers, Ninja Turtles, Power Rangers, Pokemons, X Men, ...)**
- **Videogames (FPS) give kids and teens the skill, the will and the thrill to kill. Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, retired psychology teacher from the U.S. army.**
- **Music: hate propaganda against women is now commonly used by the music industry as a commercial ingredient.**
- **The Terminator was identified as the no 1 hero for boys across the world in 1998.**
- **Radio: verbal violence is commonly used.**

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Censorship

- **Media violence has nothing to do with freedom of expression or artistic freedom.**
- **It is the result of de facto censorship by media corporations who use it to attract children, capture the audience and cash profit.**
- **It is a modern, sophisticated and cruel form of child abuse.**

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Effect of exposure to media violence

- Imitation
- Dishinibition
- Approval for violent behaviour
- Desensitization (reduction of empathy)
- Conditioning reflexes (videogames reward kids for acting without thinking)

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Efforts by Civil Society

- For over half a century, parents, teachers, scientists, health professionals, academics and activists have researched, documented, petitioned and requested legislation to stop or regulate the use of media violence to entertain (abuse) children.
- As in most fields of human activity, (food, drug, water, air) legislation seemed to be the most efficient and direct way to reduce pollution and ban child abuse.
- Why have most efforts been countered, silenced, ignored and disempowered ?

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The media industry has become powerful enough to neutralize public deciders action

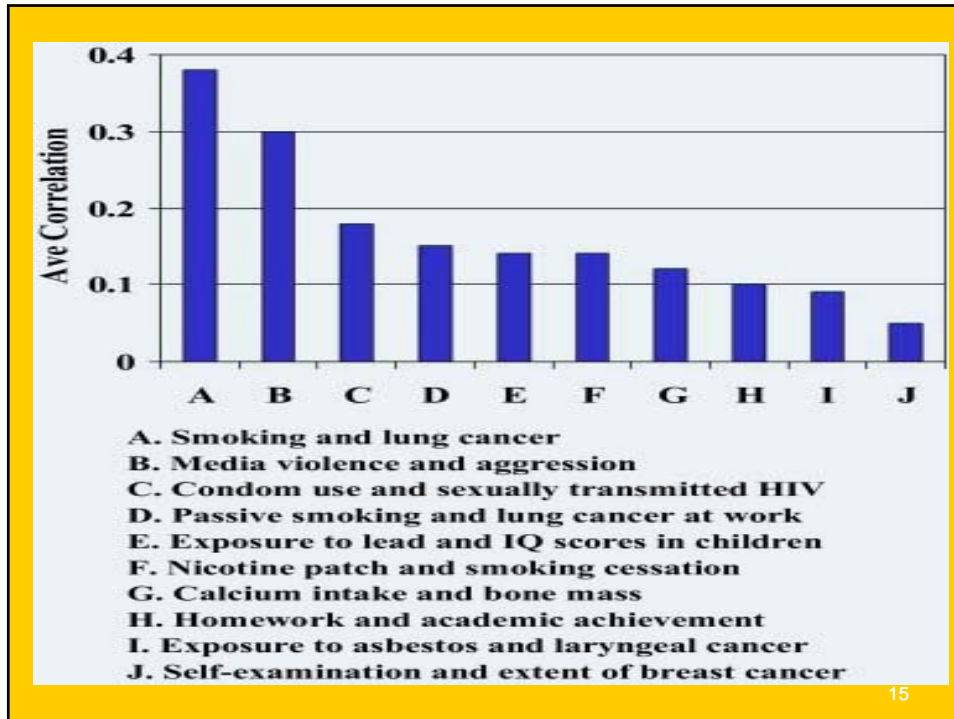
- **By lobbying and bullying public deciders through groups like CBSC, CRTC, FCC, etc.**
- **By accusing opponents of favouring censorship and endangering freedom of expression**
- **By promising codes of conduct & self regulation as smokescreen while they increase toxic doses**
- **By using the V-Chip as a way to transfer responsibility for monitoring public airwaves to (individual) parents alone**
- **By funding media literacy organisations as part of a strategy to protect its corporate image and countering independent media education initiatives**
- **By blaming parents for not raising their kids**

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By hiding the truth about research or calling the issue controversial

Effect of media violence has been measured and correlations have been compared

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In 1996, Dr Thomas Robinson from Stanford University created the SMART program

- **Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television**
- **18 lessons for 4-5th graders in San Jose, California**
- **Results were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2000**

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Results obtained by SMART showed that reduction of exposure to television and videogames...

- Helped decrease physical and verbal violence by 40 and 50%
- Helped decrease obesity
- Helped decrease kids' request for toys (nag factor)

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The SMART program from Stanford University School of Medicine ...

- Includes 18 lessons to help motivate and empower children & parents
- Lessons are given by regular teachers
- Children are prepared to turn-off TV and videogames for 10 days after only 5 lessons
- Motivated to keep exposure below 7 hours per week for the following months

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The Ten-Day Challenge was created in Québec in April 2003 (inspired by SMART)

- **Public Safety Departments of Canada and Québec funded the «Association des comités de parents de la Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches»**
- **11 schools agreed to experiment the 10-Day Challenge in 2003-2004, including one secondary school**
- **Evaluation by parents, students and teachers was made public in June 2004**

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The winning strategy

- **Bringing teachers and parents to adopt a concerted game plan to develop 3 competencies with children**
- **Capacity of expression (emotions and opinions)**
- **Critical viewing skills**
- **Empathy (power of)**

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Preparation for the Ten-Day Challenge requires:

- 3 months training
- 3 workshops with all students
- 3 presentations with teachers + other staff members
- Follow up activities by teachers with their class (3 series)
- 3 conferences to parents
- Outreach by parents with community to help school become the center of the earthquake (mobilisation)

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With K-3rd grade students workshops include:

- 4 exercises to become BRAVE : tell (fear, anger, pain) console, answer, click fear out
- Follow-up by teachers (everyday practice, each morning and after recess)
- Class activities (drawing a movie scene that scared me, drawing myself exercising to become brave)
- Cooperation between older and younger students

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Workshops with 3rd-6th graders

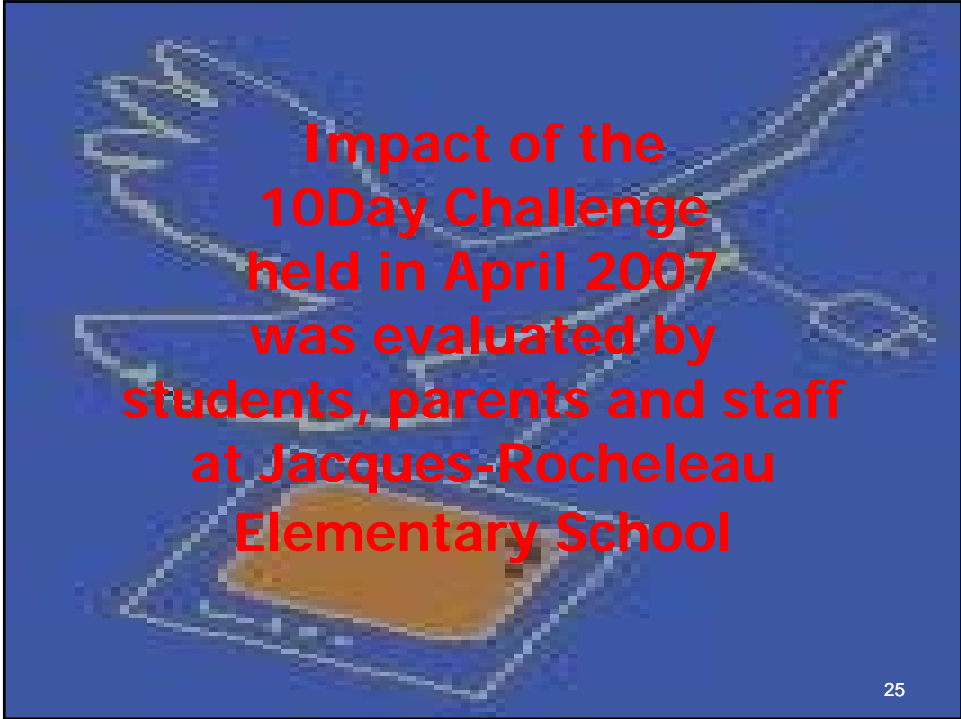
- **Analogy between bacteria carried by food and by media: television, videogame, music videos, film videos, songs.**
- **Introducing 3 major bacteria : V V, P V, Fear: How do they find their way into us ? Where do they hide ?**
- **Students search for intoxicated productions in 4 categories and pick the most influential in their own school & community**
- **Students offered to classify some of media teachers such as : Howard Stern, Jackie Chan, Jerry Springer, Jackass, Rambo, 50 Cent, Bart Simpson, Terminator, Snoop Dog, Britney Spears, Eminem, South Park, American Pie, etc.**
- **Workshops include frequent pauses allowing students to talk & write their own answers**
- **Students write the most frequent hurting words heard everyday in their own school resulting from desensitization by MEVE**
- **Students search for & give examples of children, teens and adults imitating models used by media to attract viewers (language, behaviour, clothing, food, alcohol & smoking, etc.)**
- **What could a bystander do if not desensitized ?**

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Workshops with 7-12 graders include

- a) **Analogy between Titanic and human brains**
- b) **Underestimating the non visible part of iceberg (power of media) and overestimating the resistance of shell (your brain)**
- c) **Media include television, videogame, music video, movies, radio, advertising, etc.**
- d) **Introducing 3 major bacteria carried in kids: V V, P V, Fear: how did they find their way into us, where did they hide ?**
- e) **Introducing 3 more bacteria with teens : sexism, racism, consumerism**
- f) **Students search for intoxicated productions in 4 categories and name the most influential**
- g) **Students offered to classify Howard Stern, Jackie Chan, Eminem, South Park, Jerry Springer, Jackass, Rambo, 50 Cent, Terminator, Snoop Dog, Britney Spears, Visa ads, WWE, etc.**
- h) **Workshops include frequent pauses allowing students to talk & write their own answers**
- i) **Students write the most frequent hurting words heard everyday in their own school resulting from desensitization**
- j) **Requests for students giving examples of children, teens and adults imitating models used by media to attract viewers (language, behaviour, clothing, food, alcohol & smoking, etc.)**
- k) **What could a bystander do if not desensitized ? Give your advice to characters : aggressors, targets, bystanders, teachers, principal, police.**
- l) **What could our school choose to do to improve empathy ?**
- m) **How could we, as a community, oppose the commercial culture used to abuse children and reduce empathy in society ?**

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**Impact of the
10Day Challenge
held in April 2007
was evaluated by
students, parents and staff
at Jacques-Rochelleau
Elementary School**

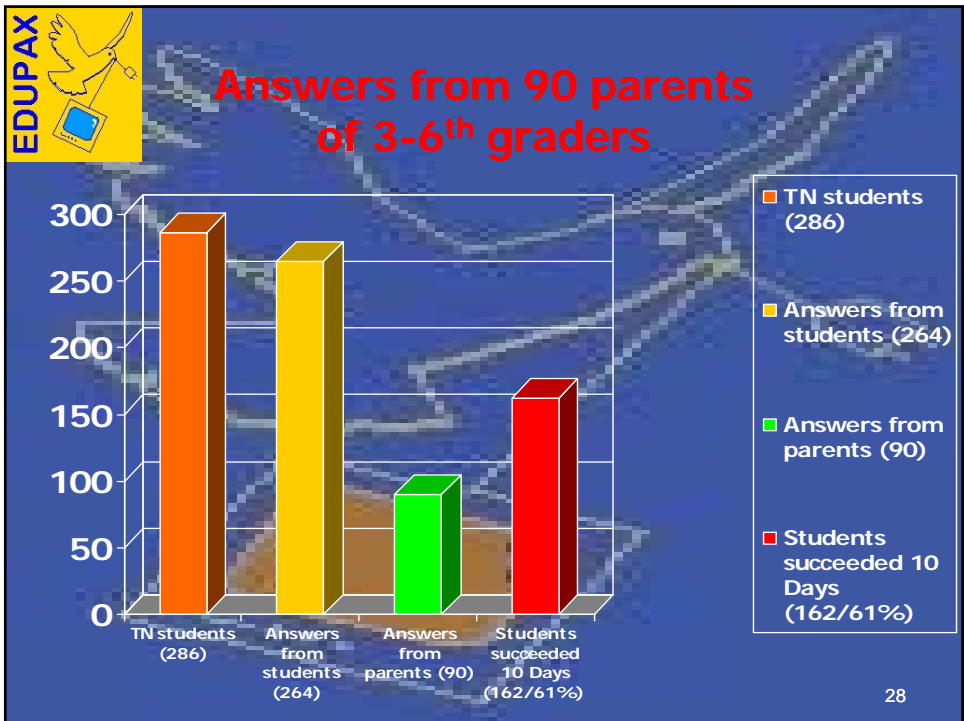
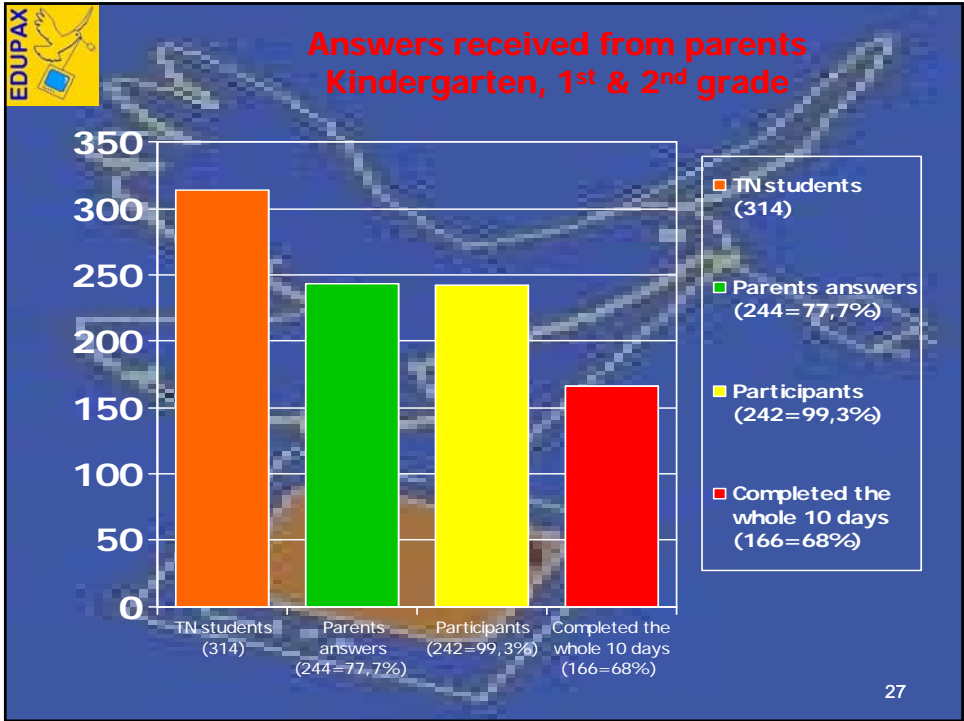
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Number of answers

- 653 children attended Jacques-Rochelleau (public) Elementary in 2007
- Kindergarten : 159/180 parents answered
- 1st & 2nd grade : 97 parents
- 3rd & 4th grade : 43 parents, 133 students
- 5th & 6th grade : 53 parents, 116 students
- Total : 352 parents, 249 students, 41 staff members

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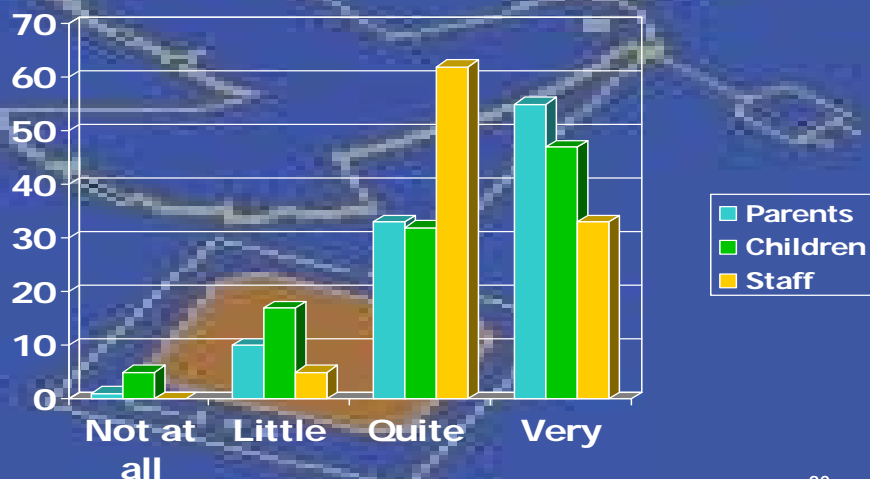
Participation in the Challenge and success in the turn-off

- 96,5% of students participated in the turn-off
- The average performance in the turn-off reached 8.8 days according to parents, 8.9% according to 3-6th grade students.
- Two thirds of children succeeded in turning off all screens for 10 days

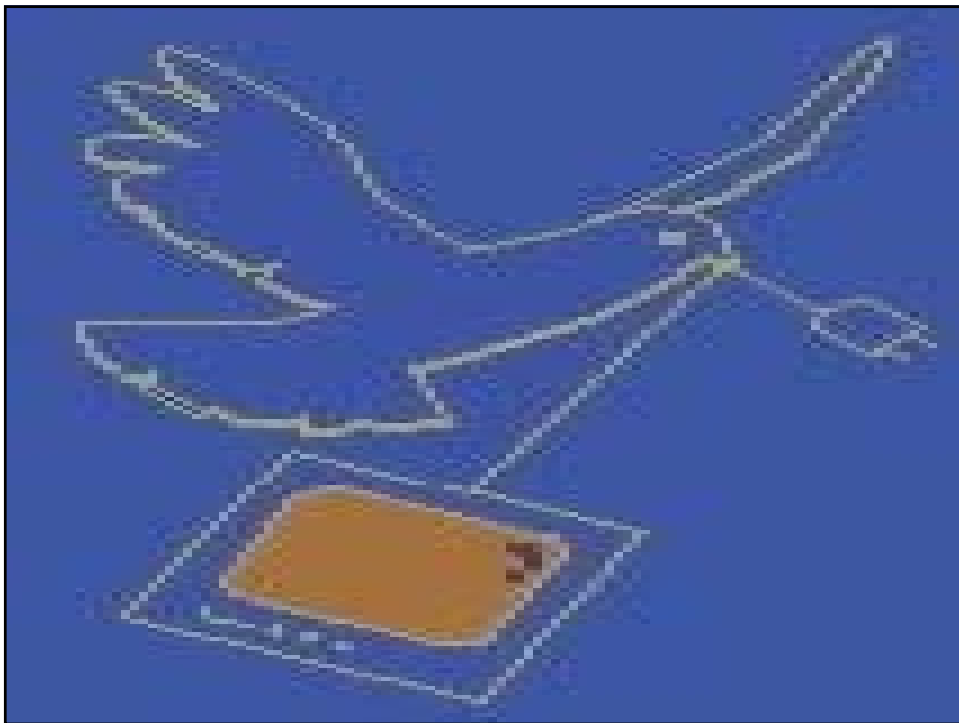
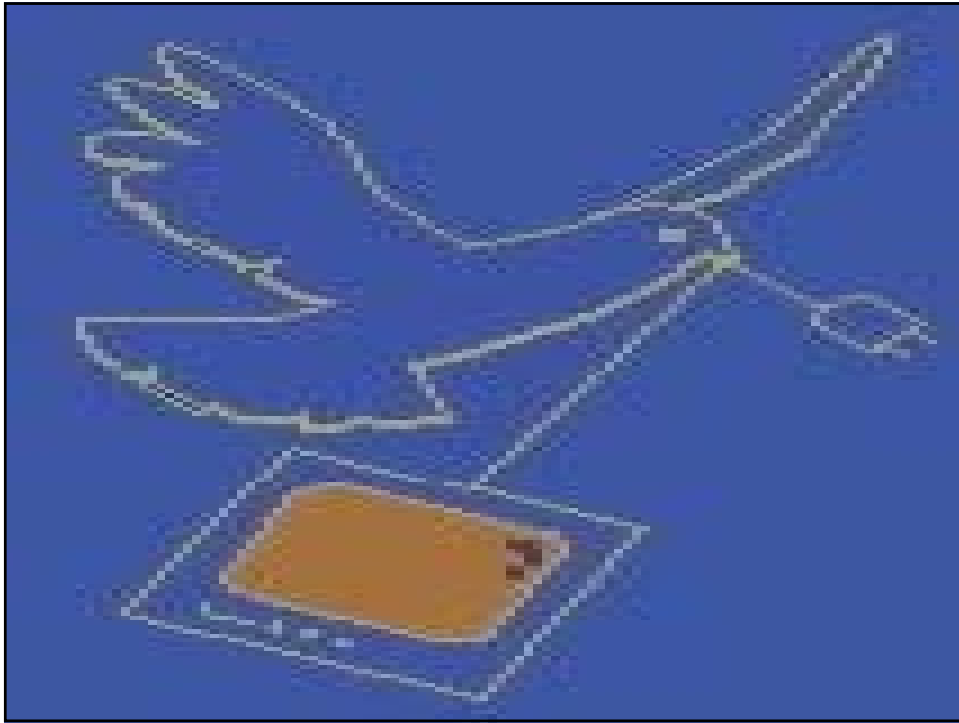
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Was the Challenge found to be useful ?

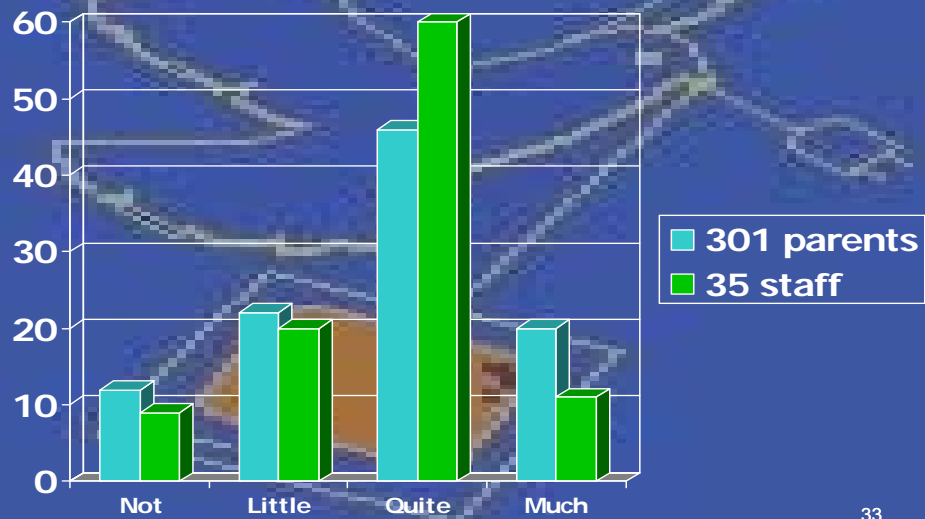
(N = 336 Parents, 243 children, 39 staff)



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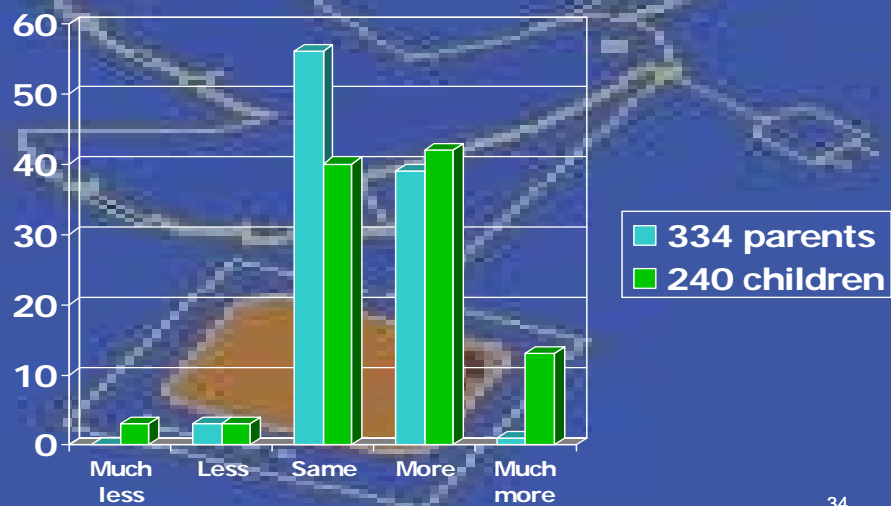


Have parents and staff (%) noticed improvement of children's health and well being ?

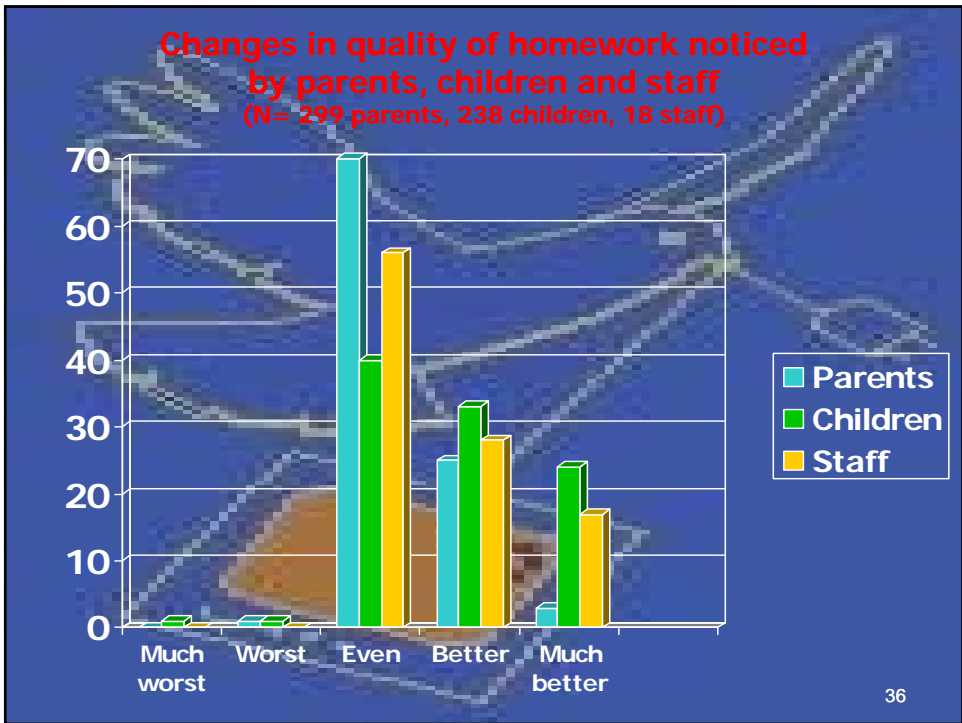
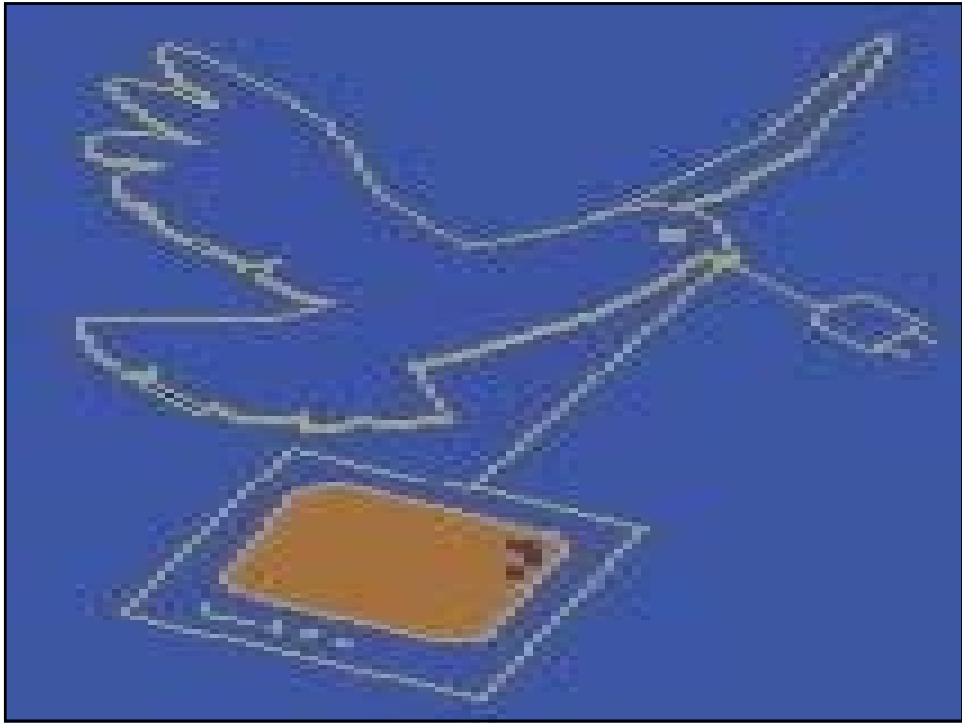


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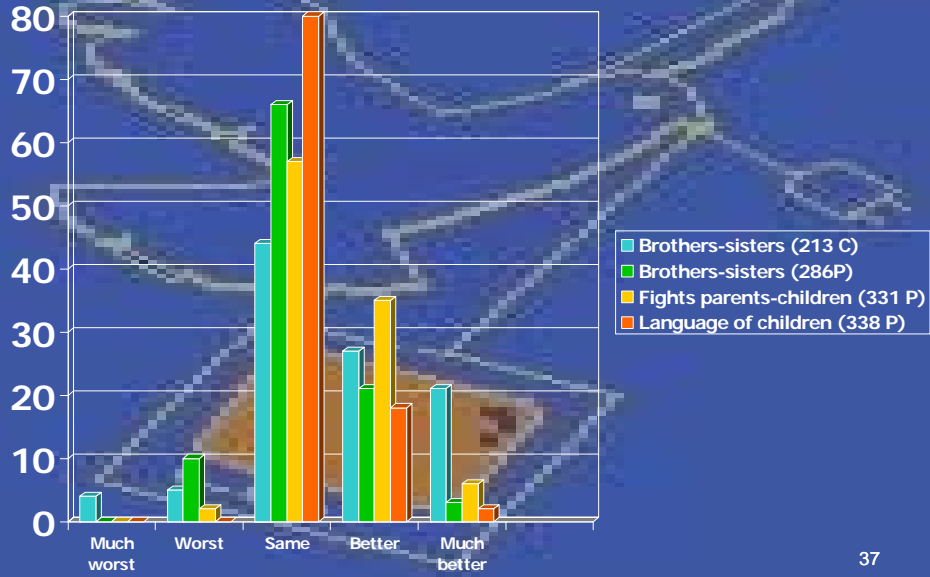
Did the Challenge modify children's involvement in family chores ?



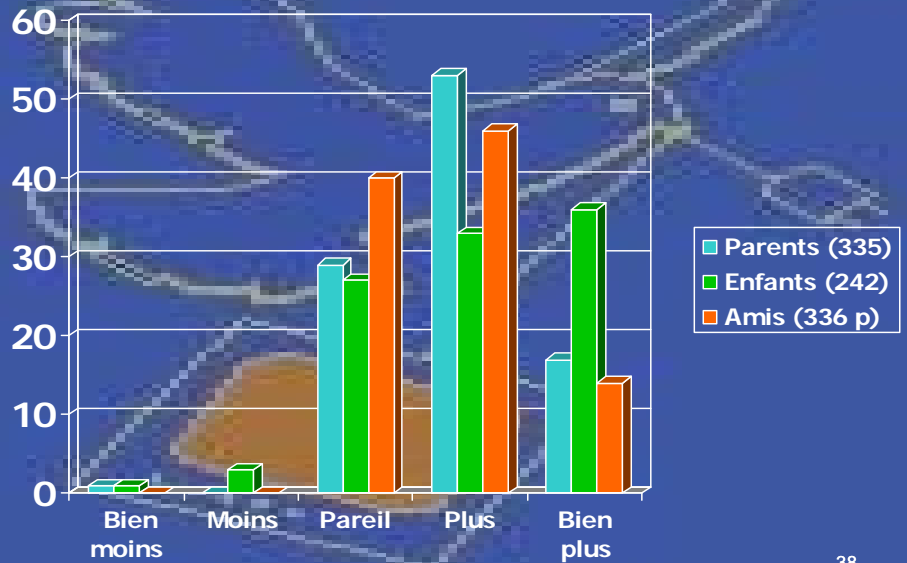
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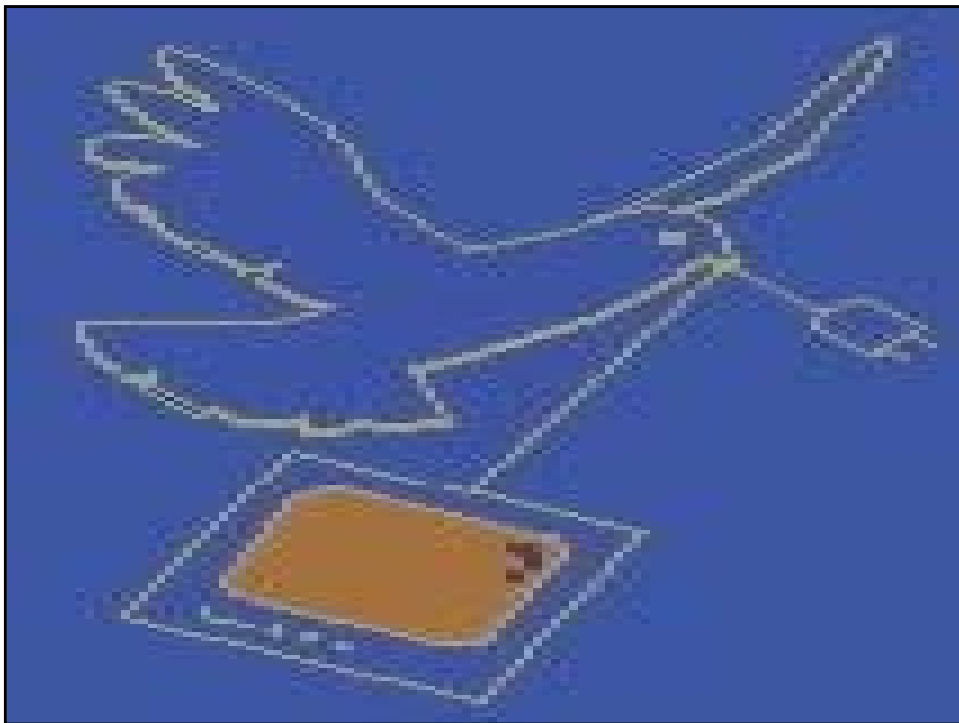
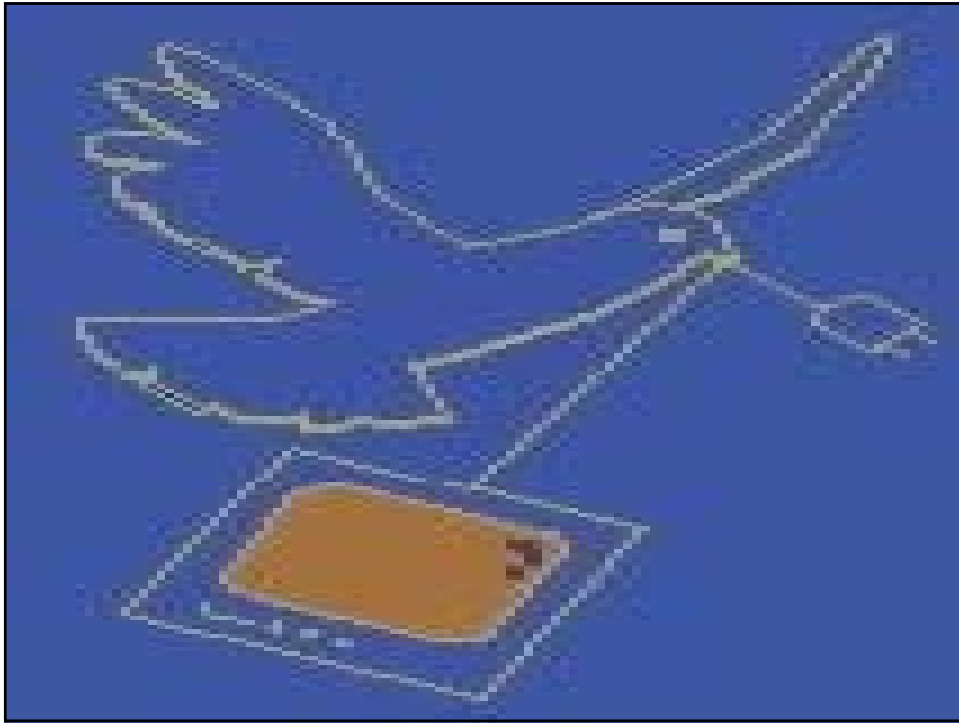


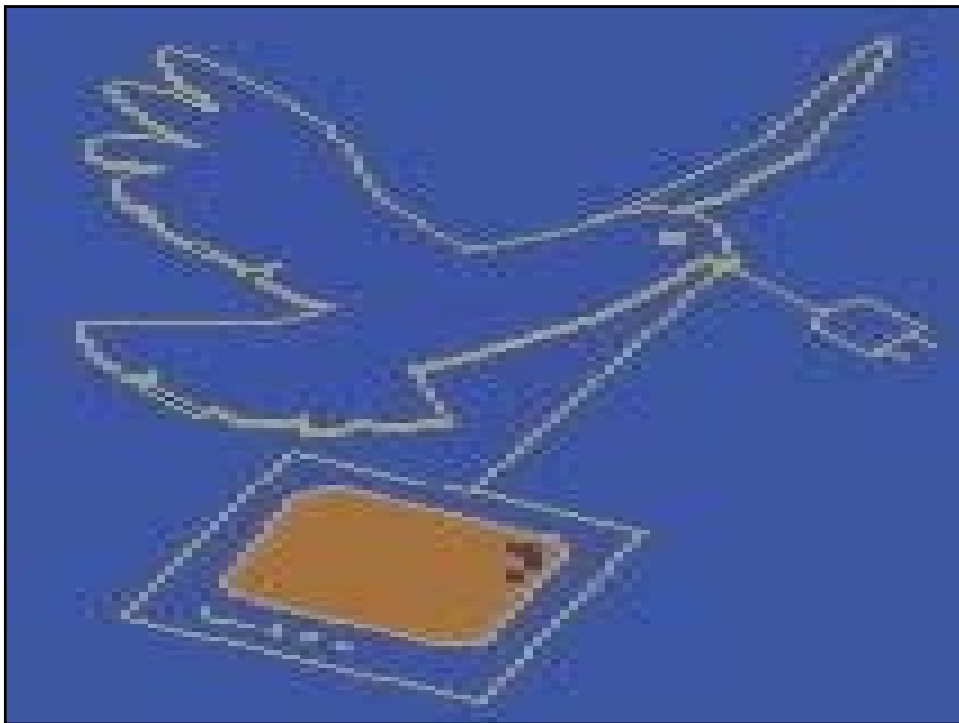
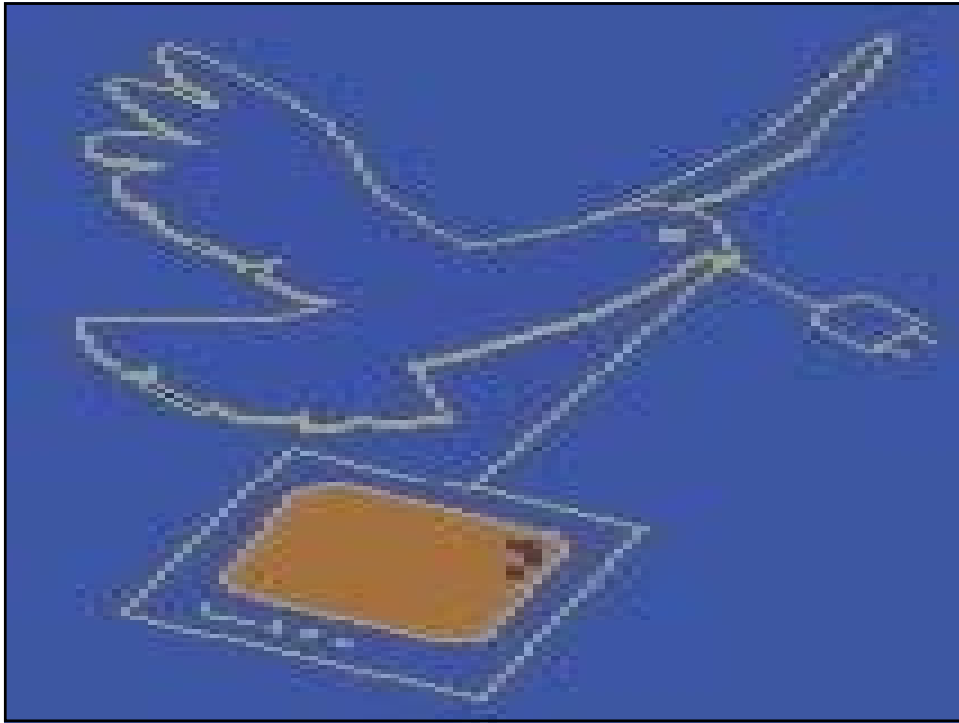
**Relationship brothers-sisters according to children,
 fights brothers w sisters, fights parents w children,
 language of children according to parents**

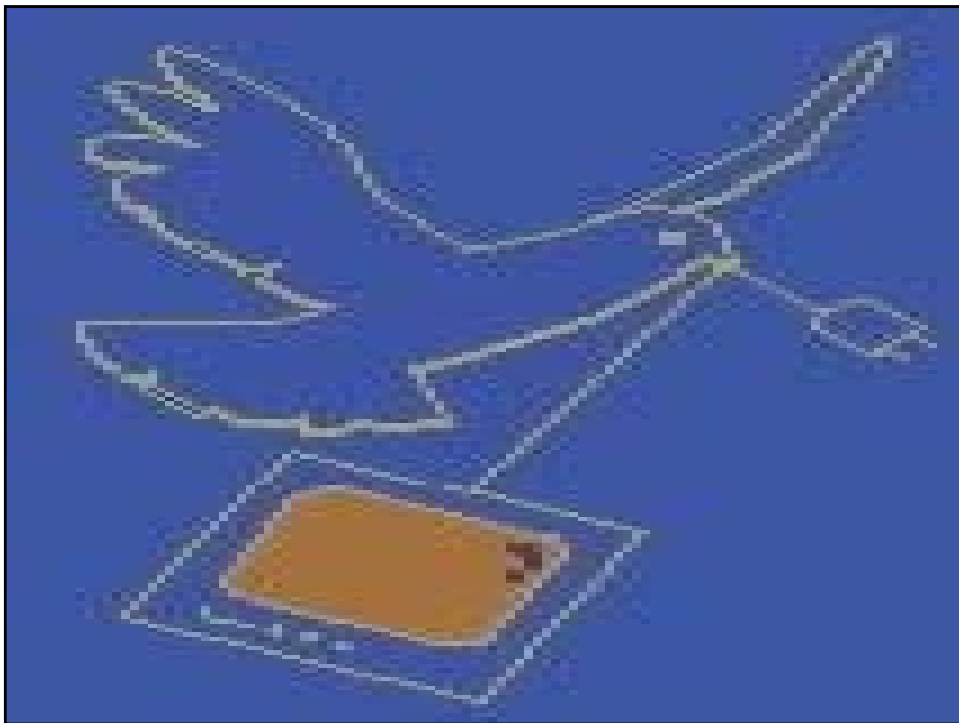
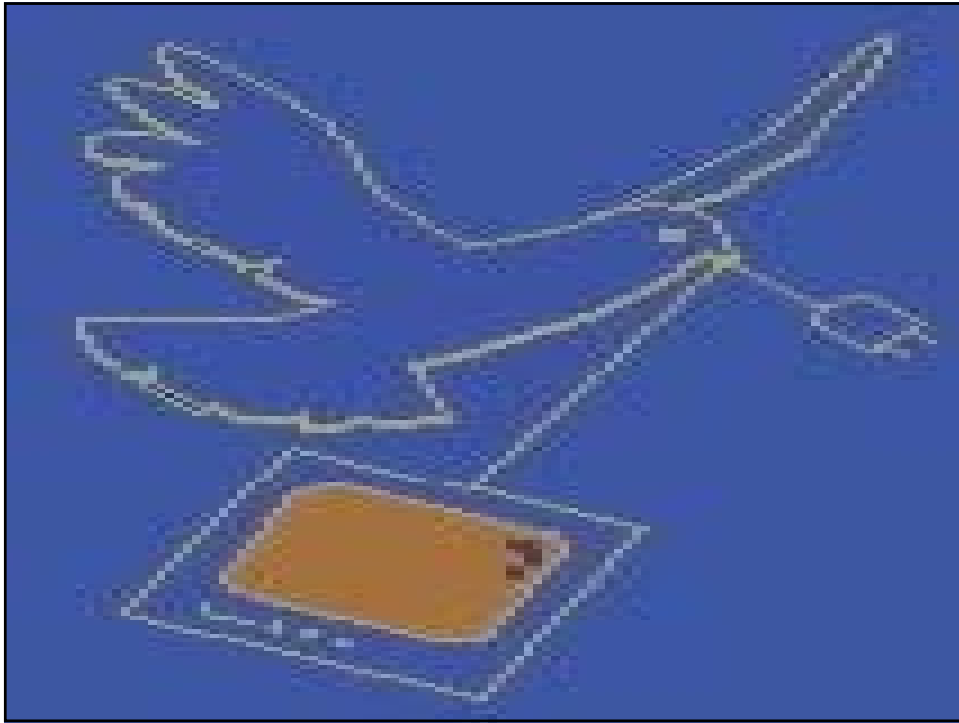


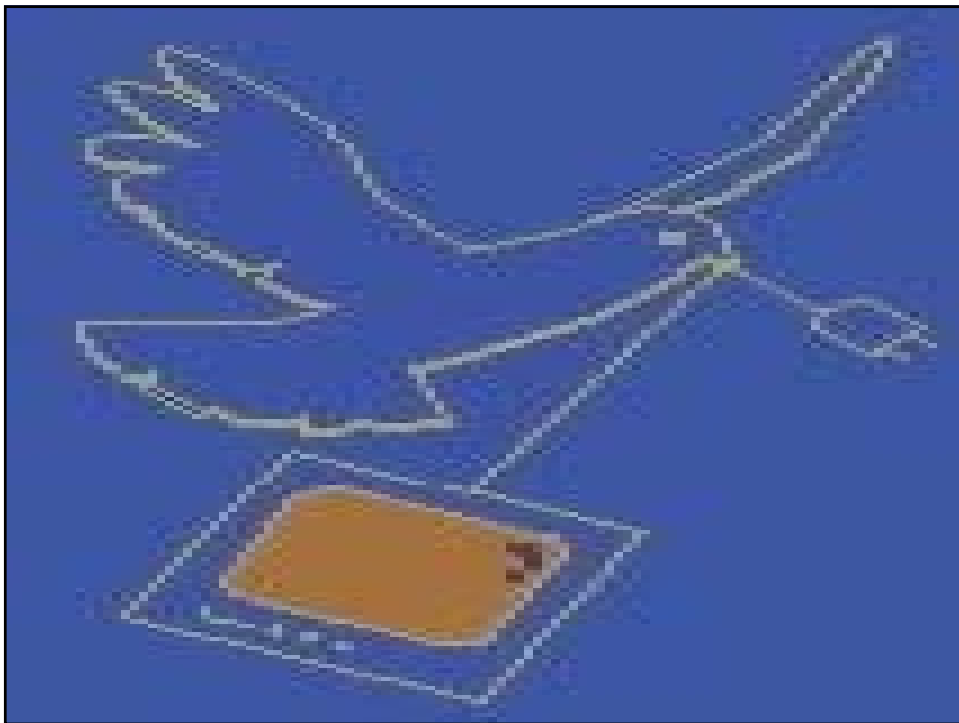
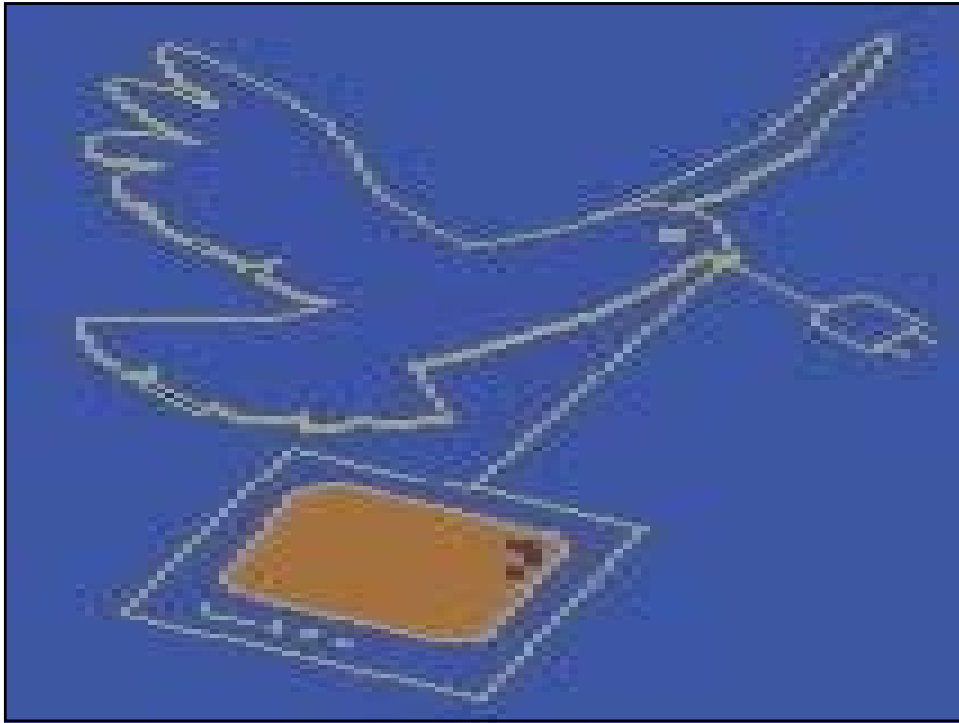
**Increase of time spent by parents w children
 according to P & C, and time spent w friends (P) in %**

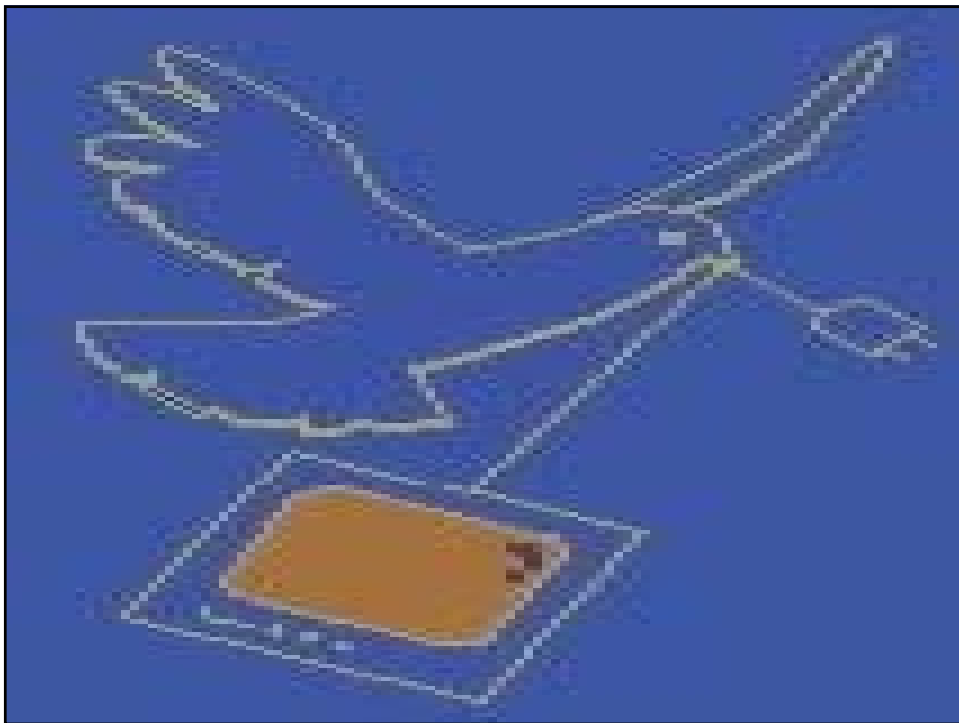
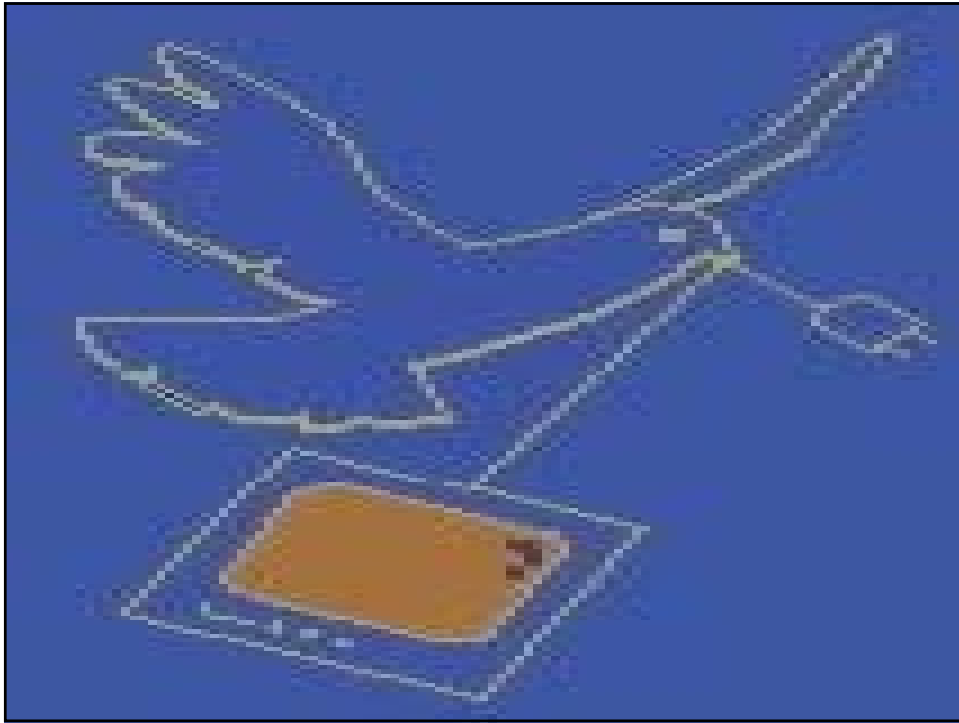


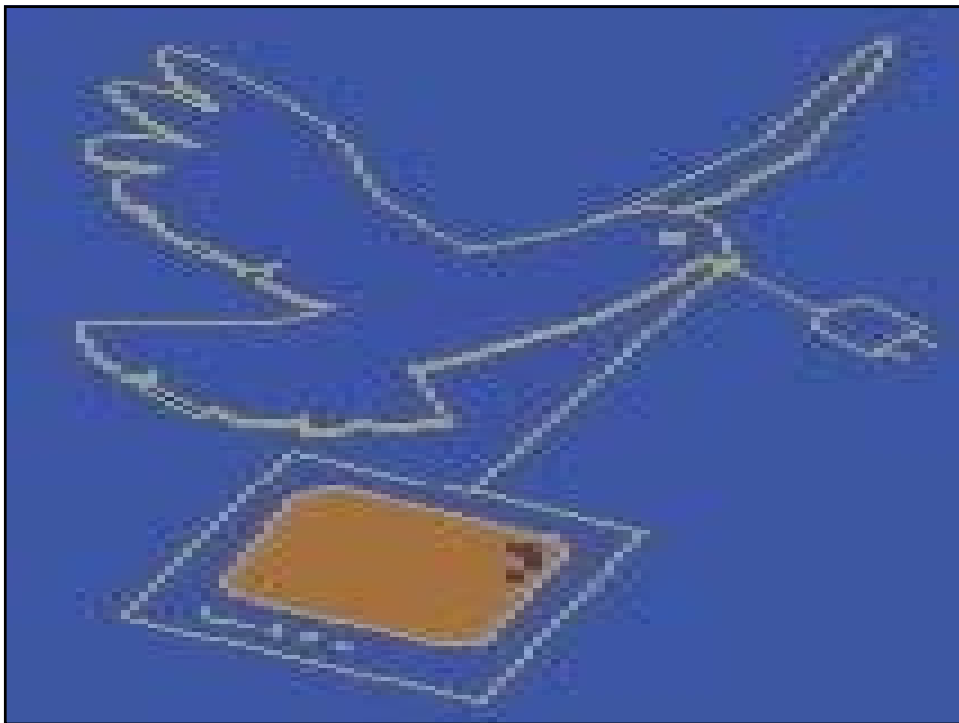
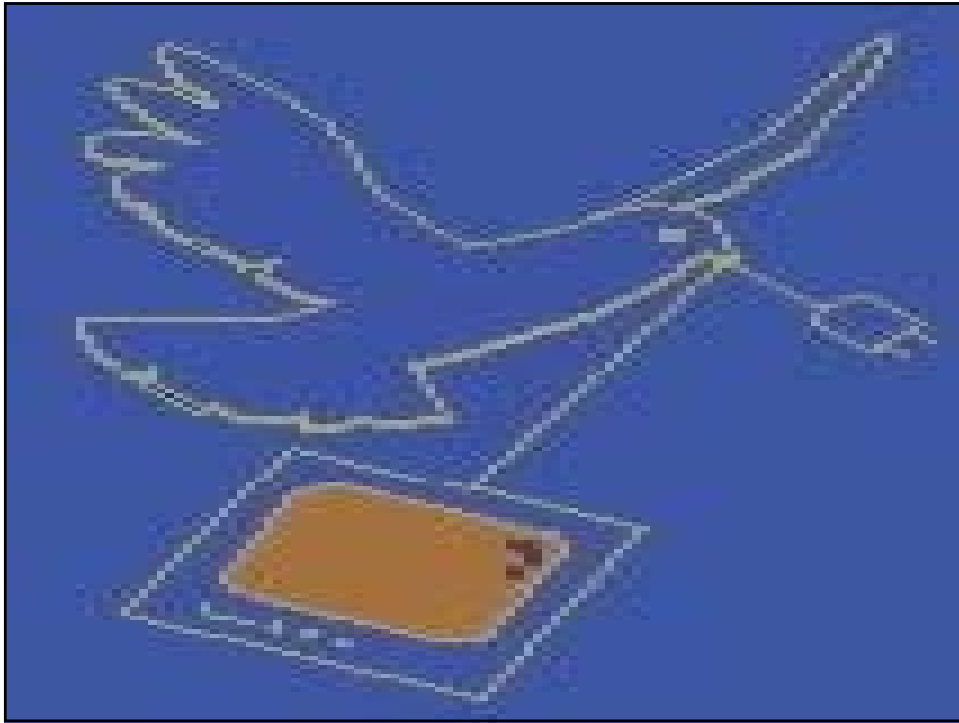












Good news is Good News

- For parents (empowers family government)
- For teachers (increase learning + less time for solving conflicts, better class ambiance)
- For children and teens (better awareness & social skills + self protection)
- For researchers (studies & evidence better known)
- For activists (reduction of toxic influence of media + more responsibility by governments)
- Experience to be shared across North America and Europe

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Media violence is definitely a sophisticated form of child abuse : schools can actually protect children with success whenever & wherever parents and teachers join their efforts to prepare students for the 10-Day Challenge and the SMART Program

Do we now know more about the effect of exposure to media violence ?

Do we know better about solutions ?



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November 19

**World Day for the Prevention
of Child Abuse**

created by WWSF in 2001

www.woman.ch/children/

**Coalition of 786 organisations
in 128 countries in 2007**

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World Day's topic in 2007

**Protect children from
media violence:
reduce exposure and
promote the Rights of
the Child**

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Coalition members in the U.S. included as of October 2007

- American Psychological Association -APA
- Beyond Borders
- Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia
- EPOCH-USA
- Jacob Wetterling Foundation -JWF
- National Secured Access -NSA
- Network for Women's Lives
- Performing and Fine Artists for World Peace
- San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center - SFCAPC
- The Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect

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Thank you

Thanks to Jay Kassirer,
Tools for Change webinar, May 2008

www.edupax.org

Comments and questions on this presentation
are most welcome at

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