

TELEVISION LITERACY AND PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 5, 1993

Reviewed by Board of Managers May 2014

- WHEREAS,** The Children's Television Act of 1990 is now Public Law 101-437, which requires television stations to air shows that serve the educational and information needs of children, and puts a limit on the number of minutes of ads per hour in children's programming; and
- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA believes television programming not specifically designed for children's viewing may prove harmful to their health habits, to their concepts of realistic family relationships, to their attitudes and behavior patterns, and to their self-image; and
- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA believes that censorship is not the solution in addressing the problems that may result from unsupervised children's television viewing, but rather believes that parents must take responsibility for developing television viewing skills for themselves and their children, and for using the power of television as a positive rather than a negative teaching tool; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA continue to urge its units, councils and districts to keep parents informed of the existence and the provisions of the Children's Television Act of 1990; and continue to urge them to hold their local network television stations accountable for the amount and the quality of children's programs they broadcast; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA work closely with allied agencies and organizations in helping to provide current television viewing information and materials to its units, councils and districts; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils, and districts to empower parents by promoting television literacy and critical viewing skills among parents, children and teachers wherever possible, to encourage the promotion of critical television viewing skills within the school curriculum.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Television viewing has become a major factor in the life style of most families. Statistics reveal that in 1989, for example, the average child in the United States still spent more time watching television than any other activity except sleeping. Television's influence on children is a function of the length of time they spend watching and of the cumulative effect of what they see. For some children, the world shown on television becomes the real world. (American Academy of Pediatric News, April 1990)

While much information and documented statistics have been published regarding the effect on children of television programming that places undue emphasis on sexual conduct, violence and unrealistic portrayals of lifestyles, the responsibility for taking action is usually placed on the need to work with television broadcasters, station managers and advertisers to change their methods and to redirect their goals. Over the past number of years, delegates to State PTA and National PTA conventions have adopted resolutions that deal with this issue.

Today, however, the Children's Television Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-437) states that TV stations that do not comply with the provisions of the new law risk losing their licenses. For the law to be effective, citizens must make sure that its provisions are carried out. They cannot rely on corporate compliance or the oversight of regulatory agencies. In addition, the campaign for television literacy in the '90's seeks to encourage viewers—adults and children—to develop their own sensitivities to quality television programming.

The intent of this resolution is to emphasize the continuing need to work in concert with those responsible for television programming, and to empower the California State PTA to urge its units, councils and districts to assist in promoting television literacy among parents so that parents and their children will be better able (1) to make intelligent choices and decisions regarding television viewing habits, and (2) to use the potential power of television in the most productive ways possible.