



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades K to 8
About the Author:	By Jill Gollick, author of <i>Government in Action</i> (Gage 1990), <i>Junior Thinklab</i> (SRA), and children's television script writer. Reprinted with permission from <i>TEACH</i> magazine, Quadrant Educational Media Services, Toronto, Ontario, October, 1993.

The Broadcast Project

This unit is appropriate for the following curriculum areas:

- Language Arts
- Literature
- Media Studies

Overview

Imagine deciding what goes on television and radio. How would you choose to fill the airwaves? How would you balance the wishes of the audience, the needs of your advertisers and your own personal tastes? In this lesson, students can explore these and other questions as the activities which follow give them the opportunity to program a block of television or radio time.

The Broadcast Project is organized into five steps:

Step 1: gives students an opportunity to begin to form ideas about what they would broadcast if the choices were theirs to make. (Steps 2 and 3 focus on research.)

Step 2: students gather information as to their own viewing and listening habits and those of others.

Step 3: students study various aspects of a single program in an effort to learn more about the way in which it attracts an audience and advertisers.

Step 4: students create a schedule of programs to fill a block of time with audience and advertisers in mind.

Step 5: the class will select criteria for evaluating the program schedules and then evaluate them.

Adapting the Project to Different Grade Levels and Skills

Adapt the activities to the skill levels of your students with the level of independent effort you expect and the number of variables you introduce. In the primary grades, work on the activities with the whole class. By grade 3, many students will be able to complete the activities working in small groups with access to teacher assistance. Groups of older students will require less and less teacher involvement. Most grade 8 students will be able to complete these activities independently.



With very young students, you may only want to consider their own viewing habits. Ask young students to name shows and note the absence or presence of advertising. Add complexity by introducing the concept of genre, categorizing the products advertised and analyzing the sales techniques used. Invite older students to analyze different parts of the program schedule (morning, afternoon, prime time, late night, weekend) and compare different channels and stations. How do they meet the needs of different audience segments?

Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- awareness of the role of broadcasting in their lives
- understanding of how they consume broadcast material
- awareness of trends in consumption of broadcast materials
- understanding of the business of television and radio
- awareness how program time is spent
- awareness how advertising targets specific audiences
- beginning critical analysis of the programs they watch
- understanding of the role played by audience in program planning

The Lesson



Thinking About Broadcasting

Dream and Discuss - My Own Station

If it was up to you, what would be on the radio? On television?

Invite students to imagine that they are running their own radio or television station.

- How would they fill the airwaves?
- What programs would they put on?
- What would they cancel?



- What new programs would they create?
- What about advertising, violence or reruns?

Ask students to think about what factors might shape their decisions about program content. For example:

- Would they make all their program choices based on personal taste or consider what others enjoy?
- Would they choose programs they think are good for people, like news shows and educational programs?
- Would they choose programs that they don't like but that might attract advertisers?
- What kind of advertising would they accept?

Note: Many of these activities refer to both radio and television, but you may wish to have your students examine just one of these media if you prefer. Or you can have some students study radio and others, television.



Gathering Information About What We Watch and Listen To

In this section students will have an opportunity to gather information about the impact of radio and television in their own lives. They will collect data about what, when, and how they watch television and listen to radio. Then they will organize the data.

Discuss and Discover: How Do Radio and Television Programs Reach You?

With the class as a whole, discuss when and where students listen to radio and watch television. The list may include, at home, in the car, at a friend's place, on the bus or in school. For example, is the transmission received by antenna or dish or via cable attached to the television? A signal recorded on a video cassette can be played back on a VCR. The image appears on the TV screen. Ask students to check for the source of the signal each time they watch or listen over the following week.

Discuss and Predict: What Do We Watch and Listen To?

- What does the class watch and listen to? How often?
- What are the favourite programs?
- Discuss what students like on the radio. Make a list of radio stations and the names of disc jockeys or programs they prefer.



Have students estimate how much time they spend listening to the radio every day. Record the estimates.

Collect similar information for television. List the programs students watch and gather estimates of how much time they spend tuned in each day. Have students graph the time estimates for radio and television. Label each graph as "estimate." Keep the graphs and lists to compare data collected in diaries (next activity).

Radio and Television Diary

Have each student keep a diary for one week.

Each time students watch television or listen to the radio, they should record the following information: day, time, program name/disc jockey, how long they watched/listened.

Older students may also keep notes on whether they were alone or in a group, how often they switched channels and other activities i.e., eating, homework, talking on the phone etc. at the same time.

This data can be organized and manipulated in a variety of ways.

- Time data for the whole class may be charted and graphed. You may want to look at averages and popular times for listening/viewing.
- The program data can be sorted by genre (comedy, drama, sports, music etc.) , by length, or by channel number.
- You can chart and graph programs by the number of students who tuned in.
- You may also look at time and program information together. Compare how different students occupied themselves during the same block of time, for example.

Collages: Genres

- Introduce the idea of genres.
- Explain that some programs, stories, magazines, movies and so on, can be classified.
- Provide some categories such as, comedy, sports, animation/cartoons, and music.
- Invite students to suggest examples of movies, television shows, stories etc. that fit each category. Some may fit two categories.
- Working in groups or individually, have students use pictures and words to make a collage that illustrates each genre. Include a list of stories, shows and movies that belongs to the genre.

Survey and Graph Favourite Shows

The objective of this activity is to get an idea of what the school likes to watch on television. Have the class survey the school to find out. Point out to students that they don't have to ask every student in the school. In a survey or poll, some people are asked questions and their answers are used to predict what everyone would have answered. Ask how many students need to be polled to make up a representative sample of the whole school. Allow students to determine the parameters as far as, numbers questioned from the same grade, male-female ratio and whether teachers should be included in the survey. A chart may be developed for recording survey information. Encourage the class to collect data about grade and sex so the data can be looked at in a variety of ways. Students should work in pairs to collect survey



information. The class may figure out how many students each survey pair must question to collect all the necessary data. Possible locations for surveying include corridors, the library and the playground.

Students may organize the survey data in a number of ways: top five shows for the whole school, top five shows by grade, according to girls and according to boys.

What We Watch: Genres

Using the data from the survey, classify each program mentioned by genre. Use charts and graphs to discover what genres are preferred by the whole school, each grade and each sex.

What's On: Genres

Choose a block of time when many students watch television. Using the television listings, have students make a list of all the programs broadcast during this block of time. Ask students to organize the data, first classifying the programs by genre, then using a bar graph to compare the number of programs in each genre. Invite students to draw conclusions.

- During a popular viewing time for students, do broadcasters offer them a wide range of programs?
- Are they the programs kids like?

Channels

Using the data from the school survey or the class diaries and the TV listings from the newspaper, find out what television channels are most watched.

- Select a show.
- Using the listings, have students find and record the channel the show is on, and the time and day it airs. Some programs may be shown on more than one channel and at more than one time.
- Have students use the data to find out which channels are watched most overall and which channels are watched most at individual times.
- Organize the data into a timetable or chart.
- Choose five shows. The five most popular in the school, or the five most popular in class or one student's favourite five.
- Ask students to use a chart or timetable to illustrate when the shows are on television.

Looking over the data, ask students if the broadcast times are convenient for students to watch. Do they think that the times contribute to the popularity of the shows?

During the Analysis Stage students will examine one program in depth. At the primary level, the entire class may work with the same program and many of the activities can be pursued by the whole class together. Students in grades 3-6 may work on the activities in small groups. Students in grades 7 and 8 can work independently.





Program Analysis

Selecting a Program

Explain to the students that they will be examining one program. They must watch or listen to it several times and think about it in a variety of ways. They may choose a radio or television show and one from any genre. Before the selection, students must be certain they are able to monitor the program several times. After the selection, students should record the program name, its genre, day(s) and time(s) broadcast, and channel. Students should briefly explain their choice.

Time Slot: What Does It Mean?

- In consideration of the time a program airs, ask students who comprises the show's audience: kids, teenagers, adults?
- How often is the show on?
- What effect does the frequency have on viewing habits?
- What happens if an episode of the show is missed?

Time: How Is It Used?

Television and radio programs often use the same pattern to fill up their time in each episode. A half hour television show might begin with a short teaser (see explanation next paragraph), followed by commercials, the titles, one third of the story, more commercials, second third of the story, more commercials and then the final third of the story. Hour long soap operas are generally divided into six acts separated by commercials. In a game show, they might play a round, break for ads, introduce the contestants, introduce the prizes, show more commercials, play more of the game, break for commercials, play the final round, then present the winner with fabulous prizes.

- Have students discover the pattern behind their chosen program.
- Ask students to outline an episode while they are watching or listening to it. The outline should indicate from where titles, credits, commercials and other features originate. It isn't necessary for students to keep an outline of the plot or contents, but they might take note of whether the show makes use of teasers or cliff-hangers. A teaser is a short scene that comes before the title of the show and gives viewers a taste of what is to come. A cliff-hanger is an ending that is not really an ending. It leaves viewers in suspense until next time.



Content

Have students write a short synopsis of the story or content of one to three episodes of their selected show. They may generalize about the kind of content the show uses. For example things that happen to families, controversial sports events, life in a small town, information about animals or true stories about daring rescues. To whom does this content appeal? Who enjoys this type of program?

Who

Have students list the main characters or hosts. Ask them to write or describe such characteristics as age, sex, human or not, personality etc. Taking a character from the show, have students describe ways in which they are different from the character and ways in which they are the same.

Commercials and Advertising

- While watching or listening to the show, students should note the advertising. Ask them to record the number of ads and the products that appear.
- Do students need these products?
- Do they want these products?
- Had they heard of the products before watching the show?

Students may break down the list of advertisers into categories, for example, food, store (retail) and toys. This data can be organized into a bar graph. Ask students what the organized data tells advertisers about who they think are watching the show.

Analysis Report

Ask students to sum up the analysis with a report. Depending on the students' level, the report may include such things as, what they like and dislike about the program, who the intended audience is, whether it appeals to that audience or not and why, why the program appeals to advertisers and whether the show is appropriate for its time slot.



Create Your Own Program Schedule Content



Have students create their own programming schedule. Make the task as complex as is appropriate for your students by considering the following variables:

- **Time:** The amount of time students can schedule may range from an hour or two for primary levels, the block after school to bedtime for grades 3 to 6, an entire day for grades 7-8.
- **Audience:** The youngest students may choose programs to suit their own tastes. For older students, broaden the audience they must consider to include some or all of the following: the class, the school, the family, people of all ages, sexes, ethnic backgrounds, ability levels, geographic locations, interests etc.
- **Advertising:** Primary students may simply indicate whether commercials are present. With age and ability, students will be able to target advertisers and products for the various shows in their schedule. Consider how many advertisers they'll need, and how much time should go to advertising. At the highest level, students should be able to connect the audience with advertising, establishing what audiences will be attracted by the programs and what products those viewers might buy.
- **Genres:** After grade 3, you may ask students to indicate the genres of their program selections. Older students may create schedules that reflect a diversity of genres or ask them to meet quotas like 30 per cent comedy or having six genres reflected.

Form

Students can present their ideas in a variety of ways. Allow older students to find a method they think is appropriate for presenting their work. Students needing more direction, may require a format that emphasizes writing, use of charts, art or some combination. The final presentation may be an essay, chart, timetable, or drawing. Very young students can be asked to complete a drawing that shows the outlines of a television and a clock. The student may then draw in hands to show time and a picture on the screen to depict the program that was watched.

My Program Schedule			
Time	Program	Audience	Advertisers
5:00-5:30	Lamb Chops Play Along	3-9 years	diapers, cereals, toys
5:30-6:00	Full House	5-11 years	cereals, toys junk food
6:00-6:30	Missing Treasures	7-13 years	junk food, clothes, stores,
6:30-7:00	Northwood	9-16 years	junk food, clothes, stores, music,



Evaluating the Schedules

- Set up small panels of students to evaluate each program schedule.
- Ask each student on the panels to play the role of an audience member, an advertiser or a broadcaster.
- Have each consider the needs of their character when they determine whether the programs suit their needs.

Have the students present their schedules to a panel. The panel members may ask questions. Students must justify their choices.

