Before the
Federal Communications Commission

	)	
In the Matter of	)	MB Docket No. 04-261
	)	
Violent Television Programming	)	
And Its Impact on Children	)	

Comments from Tim Collings

I am pleased to submit these comments to the FCC. I have been involved in development and implementation of V-chip technology in North America since 1989. The V-chip can protect children by allowing parents to limit their exposure to inappropriate or potentially harmful programs. It is also a powerful tool that can be used to find programming that has a positive influence on children.

Executive Summary

The control of broadcast and interactive television content can easily be accomplished as long as: (i) programs are encoded with ratings that are applied on a consistent basis, and (ii) the V-chip is available in all electronics used by the child to interact with that content. Small wireless electronics such as cell phones, video players, and vehicular televisions are likely to form the informational, educational, and entertainment environment of the future for children. Ensuring these new technologies meet the intent of the Commission's ruling, which mandates V-chip in all digital television receivers, is essential. DTV receivers with flexible V-chip will soon be able to select programs based on a variety of rating systems. Mandating that all new televisions present a similar V-chip menu to the user when the TV set is first powered on, or whenever new ratings are introduced, will greatly enhance the usefulness of the V-chip.

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NOTICE OF INQUIRY (NOI)

The FCC seeks comment on a number of issues and I will address these in turn.

1. The NOI begins by asking *"…are the ratings system and the V-chip accomplishing their intended purpose, or are there additional mechanisms that might be developed to control exposure to media violence?"*

My work with the V-chip began in response to the violent murders of 14 female engineering students in Montreal, Canada in 1989. News reports that indicated the murderer carried out this horrific act based on a video collection of violent movies that he owned, many of them recorded from television. I want to ensure the FCC that the V-chip has the ability to deal with concerns parents have or may have in the future with television programming on a number of levels. The flexibility now mandated by the FCC ensures that the V-chip has the ability to deal with additional mechanisms that might be required to control exposure to violence or other content that might be harmful.

The V-chip system I worked on allows labeling of not only violence but also illegal acts, sexual content (including that which may have violent overtones), and verbal content that may indicate violence.

By providing for flexibility in rating systems, the V-chip also has the capability to deal with a number of potential concerns that parents may have. The data capabilities of digital television gives it the ability to provide customers with video games and other interactive content they viewers can download from broadcast signals and play on digital receivers, even interactively with other participants in other locations. The V-chip has been designed to provide parents with the same protection for video games and other interactive applications which are downloaded from over-the-air television stations, satellite or cable, should there be consumer demand for this in the future.

Much has been said about interactivity in children's programming. V-chip could be used to allow parents to choose the level of interactivity with digital television that they feel is appropriate. Parents may choose to allow interactive questioning to help a child learn information about a program he or she has watched, and test understanding about the information learned but may not want that information shared, but the parent may not want similar interactivity for commercials aired within the program.

The control of broadcast and interactive television content can easily be accomplished as long as: (i) the content is encoded and ratings are applied on a consistent basis, and (ii) the V-chip is available in all electronics used by the child to interact with that content.

2. The NOI also seeks comment on *"…whether the lack of a content rating for violence renders ineffective any technology-based blocking mechanism, built into television sets, designed to limit violent programming."*

First of all, there is a content rating for violence – a "V" content descriptor can be added to programs that are rated TV-PG, TV-14 and TV MA (as well as fantasy violence - FV – for TV-Y7 programs). The difficulty with this form of content descriptor, as well as those used for language (L) dialog (D) and sexual situations (S), is that they do not give parents sufficient information regarding the criteria that is used to arrive at the rating. Granted there are divergent opinions on what constitutes violence in programming - the depiction, intent and situation all come into play.

The good news is that we don't all have to agree on what is and isn't "violence" - it is much easier to outline a descriptive rubric for violence (showing examples) and allow parents to choose their own comfort level on the scale. The V-chip is ideally suited for this task because it can be modified to take individual factors into account. The control of violent content can be accomplished if ratings are applied on a consistent basis, and the V-chip is available in all electronics used by the child to interact with that content.

3. The NOI further asks: *"Do the TV Parental Guidelines give parents sufficient information to make educated programming decisions for their children and to what extent is the system being used? Are there ways to improve the ratings system?"*

The effectiveness of V-chip is entirely a function of the accuracy of ratings and the accessibility to the technology by consumers.

The problem that many parents have with the TV Parental Guidelines is that they do not provide sufficient information regarding the criteria that is used to arrive at the rating, thereby leaving the matter to the discretion of the industry programmer. Who in the industry has the arrogance to create a category such as "*TV-G: Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages*"? The criteria for determining a rating varies from network to network, but it does not have to. Each network's standards and practices department could easily consult common broadcast and reference works online – that way, the ratings process could be better coordinated and become much more consistent and accurate amongst broadcasters and, therefore, help parents tremendously.

A disconnect also exists between industry ratings and parent ratings. For example, parents indicated that 38% of TV-PG rated shows were deemed inappropriate for children according to an article in Pediatrics in June of 2001 (Vol. 7 No. 6) entitled, "*Validity Test of Television Ratings*". We need objective criteria applicable to all programmers so that the ratings are consistent and parents know what to expect prior to viewing.

V-chip usage will and should remain at the discretion of consumers. Industry and government information in support of V-chip has been helpful. However, without availability of the V-chip itself, the technology cannot be effective. The transition to digital television provides a unique opportunity to ensure virtually total availability. The FCC has gone a long way toward insuring universality by mandating flexible V-chip in digital receivers with screens 13 inches and larger and in the 16:9 format 7.8 inches high and larger and in digital receivers that do not have associated display capability.

Beyond these products, a torrent of digital products is expected to enter the market. Small wireless electronics such as cell phones, video notebooks, video players, and monitors in motor vehicles are likely to form the informational, educational, and entertainment environment of the future for children. Ensuring these new technologies meet the intent of the Commission's ruling, which mandates V-chip in all digital television receivers, is essential. Without universality, any improvements in the V-chip could be unavailable in those devices most likely to be in the hands of children.

4. Further, the NOI seeks comment *"…on recent initiatives to educate parents about the V-Chip's availability. What can be done to enhance the usefulness of the V-chip?"*

Information on ratings and V-chip have been slow getting to parents, but the FCC, the major networks, the NAB, and the NCTA have all done an admirable job this past year with the educational drive necessary to educate parents about the availability of parental monitoring tools. An annual check on the availability of V-chip technology, and appropriate rating of audio/video content as proposed in the Hollings Amendment (S2056 108th Congress 2nd Session) could go a long way to allow each and every person in America to create their own "safe harbor". Specific applause goes to the FCC for acting decisively to provide flexibility in rating systems that could react to the findings of annual V-chip effectiveness surveys.

Standardization of the user interface in all electronic products using V-chip could help enhance usefulness. A V-chip button on the remote control, an easy-to-use set-up menu, and uncomplicated instructions in owner's manuals all contribute to user acceptance. Having all new televisions present a similar V-chip menu to the user when the TV set is first powered on, or whenever new ratings are introduced, will greatly enhance the usefulness of the V-chip. The V-chip settings in many televisions are sometimes lost in a maze of menus - some owner's manuals run as long as 8 pages! It is totally unnecessary and counterproductive to make use of V-chip seem so daunting. If, after plugging in your new 42-inch plasma TV, you are faced with ***"Please enter your V-chip password and select appropriate settings for your family"***, a high proportion of V-chips will be used.

Positive Impact of TV Programming

The FCC recognizes "*that television programming may have a positive influence on individual behavior, especially educational and informational material directed at children. The literature suggests that consumption of educational television programming correlates positively to children's school preparedness and may also encourage beneficial social skills and behavioral development.*"

5. The NOI seeks comment on *"…what actions Congress or the FCC may take to encourage more programming choices that have a positive effect on children's development. How can parents be made aware that such programming is available?"*

An overlooked capability of the V-chip is that, while it can filter out inappropriate content for children, the V-chip can also act as a "beacon" for beneficial programs. Former PBS president Ervin Duggan once stated that, "*We in the television industry have an obligation to do more that simply say our programs will do no harm. I want to suggest an addition to the ratings system that has the potential to create 'welcome mats' for programs worth watching, not just warnings about what not to watch.*" We can and should be using technology to help viewers find these programs.

The TV Parental Guidelines may indicate that a program contains "violence", "coarse language" or "sexual situations", but ratings can now be applied to programs to indicate that presence of educational material, for example.

The ability to use multiple rating systems will soon exist in all digital television since the August 4, 2004 FCC mandate that requires the ratings system to be modified or extended. The V-chip can now be used to select programs by programming the digital television set to catch, rather than kill, the broadcast.

The ability to respond to the TV Parental Guidelines, as well as additional rating systems in a simultaneous manner (multiple rating systems support) is a requirement for newer digital receivers.

The recommended practice for supporting multiple rating systems is outlined in the CEA CEB-12-A "PSIP Recommended Practice", ***Section 8.3.6 - Content Advisory /Action***:

"If, at some time in the future, the U.S. were to extend or replace its parental advisory system, then the US would need to assign a second value of rating_region, and an RRT definition would need to be established. To allow backward compatibility, the new RRT would need to be designed without interdependent dimensions. A purely table-driven user interface based on the transmitted RRT would then produce predictable receiver behavior for the new system. It is possible that a program may have several ratings linked to it, especially in situations where signals may be received across national boundaries. ***Products should, therefore, be designed to support and respond to programs rated for more than one rating region."***

It is possible that a program may have several ratings linked to it, especially in situations where signals may be received across national boundaries. Products should, therefore, be designed to support and respond to programs rated for more than one rating region. ***The CAD may contain ratings for any or all of the defined rating_region values, up to a maximum of 8 regions for each program****.*

*An example implementation of multi-region support involves offering users a choice to select one or more rating systems by "**activating**" the RRT associated with a given rating_region. With this scheme, users can make viewing selections for each active rating_region using a table-driven user interface displaying the rating_region_name_text for each active rating_region. Users can then select appropriate rating settings for each active RRT from subsequent menus that display the available rating values within each dimension."* A sample multiple rating system user interface is found in Appendix A3.

On September 9, 2004 the FCC adopted a Report & Order addressing the obligation of television broadcast licensees to provide educational and informational programming for children. The Report & Order amends the Commission's rules regarding on-air identification of core programming to require both analog and digital broadcasters to identify this programming by displaying the symbol "E/I" throughout the program to help parents and other interested parties locate programming for the child audience.

On-screen display of E/I programming is an important first step but, given the complex nature of digital multicasts feeds and the right to shift E/I programming within the stream, electronic encoding of E/I ratings becomes an essential next step to allow parents to find any and all E/I programming for their children. The V-chip is the only tool available which is entirely capable of performing this function. Broadcasters would undoubtedly endorse and promote tools to help viewers locate their E/I programming.

DTV receivers with flexible V-chip will soon be able to select programs based on a variety of rating systems. The V-chip user interface will allow viewers to activate one or more rating systems and select preferred ratings from subsequent menus that display the available ratings within each rating system.

The following is a sample rating system that could be used to identify E/I programming which is specifically designed to serve the educational and informational needs of children ages 16 and under:

E/I Ratings

1) E/I "*E/I for all ages*"
2) E/I-3 "*E/I for ages 3+*"
3) E/I-7 "*E/I for ages 7+*"
4) E/I-10 "*E/I for ages 10+*"
5) E/I-13 "*E/I for ages 13+*"

These ratings have been proposed based on broadcaster E/I filing information. The beauty of the flexible V-chip is that ratings can be modified or added as required.

Additional dimensions could be defined in order to use other 3rd-party rating systems. There are many organizations that promote and publicize outstanding television programming. For over a decade, the Los Angeles Times published a weekly column called "*TV Smarts*", which cites broadcast and cable programs that contain materials taught in public schools and material which appears in standardized competitive exams. Each week, "*TV Smarts*" identifies 10-15 hours of broadcast and cable programs that contain material included in the public school curriculum and on standardized tests. The proposed "*TV Smarts*" ratings are shown below:

	TV Smarts	
1)	"Smart-P"	"Pre-School"
2)	"Smart-E"	"Elementary"
3)	"Smart-M"	"Middle School"
4)	"Smart-H"	"High School"

A current example of TV Smarts listings, now online at www.whyville.net/mediamenu, is shown in Appendix B. Broadcasters and programmers can access these listings as a weekly reference for coding their shows.

Both *E/I Ratings* and *TV Smarts* (as well as other systems) can be defined in an additional RRT (**rating_region** 3 for example) so that ratings from these systems can be attached to programs just as *TV Parental Guidelines* are assigned to programs now. Program selections based on these types of ratings can be used to over-ride blocking settings if, for example, a parent wants a child to see historical documentaries like *The War of 1812* and dramas like *Henry V*. The sample user interface in Appendix A3 shows how multiple rating systems can be responded to.

The accompanying Appendix A1 outlines the technical details involved in creating the RRT structure as well as the protocol for assigning ratings to programs. Appendix A2 also outlines the content advisory descriptor structure as well as several examples of rating.

Appendix A: Program Ratings

Program ratings – also known as Content Advisory Descriptors (CADs) - are used: (i) by broadcasters to describe program content, and (ii) by viewers to select programs based on their personal rating preferences. The process of program selection requires three steps: (a) first, ratings systems are defined and transmitted in one or more Rating Region Tables (RRTs); (b) second, the CAD is created and transmitted by selecting ratings from one or more RRTs; and (c) finally, program ratings are extracted from the received CAD and compared to the preferences set by the viewer to determine if a program can be selected.

The RRT structure consists of one or more dimensions (each dimension is analogous to a rating system), with each dimension consisting of a number of possible rating values. The CAD may contain ratings from a maximum of 8 RRTs per program.

DTV receivers are designed to select programs based on a variety of rating systems. The program selection user interface allows viewers to select preferred ratings from one or more rating systems. Viewers select preferred ratings from sub-menus that display the available ratings within each rating system.

A1.0: The Rating Region Table (RRT)

The Rating Region Table defines the rating systems that are available in each region. Several RRTs can be defined and carried in the Transport Stream simultaneously. Each RRT is identified by a different **rating_region**. Each RRT has a version number. This feature allows updating each RRT separately. The basic bit stream syntax from ATSC A/65-B (PSIP) for the RRT is shown below:

```
rating_region_table_section () {
        section_length 12 uimsbf
        rating_region 8 uimsbf
        version_number 5 uimsbf
        rating_region_name_length 8 uimsbf
        rating_region_name_text() var
        dimensions_defined 8 uimsbf
        for(i=0; i<dimensions_defined;i++) {
                dimension_name_length 8 uimsbf
                dimension_name_text() var
                reserved 3 '111'
                graduated_scale 1 bslbf
                values_defined 4 uimsbf
                for (j=0;j<values_defined;j ++) {
                        abbrev_rating_value_length 8 uimsbf
                        abbrev_rating_value_ text() var
                        rating_value_length 8 uimsbf
                        rating_value_ text() var
                }
        }
}
```

Definitions:

section_length — 12-bit field specifying the number of remaining bytes in this section immediately following the section_length field up to the end of the section. The value of the section_length shall be no larger than 1021.
rating_region — An 8-bit unsigned integer number that defines the rating region to be associated with the text in this rating_region_table_section(). The value of this field is the identifier of this rating region, and thus this field may be used by the other tables (e.g., MGT) for referring to a specific rating region table. Assignment of values for rating_region is the responsibility of the ATSC, which shall be the registration authority.

version_number — This 5-bit field is the version number of the Rating Region table. The version number shall be incremented by 1 modulo 32 when any field in this instance of the Rating Region Table changes. The value of this field shall be the same as that of the corresponding entry in MGT.
rating_region_name_length — An 8-bit unsigned integer number that defines the total length (in bytes) of the rating_region_name_text() field to follow.
rating_region_name_text() — A data structure containing a multiple string structure which represents the rating region name associated with the value given by rating_region. The display string for the rating region name shall be limited to 32 characters or less.
dimensions_defined — This 8-bit field (1-255) specifies the number of dimensions defined in this rating_region_table_section().
dimension_name_length — An 8-bit unsigned integer number that defines the total length in bytes of the dimension_name_text() field to follow.
dimension_name_text() — A data structure containing a multiple string structure which represents the dimension name being described in the loop. The dimension name display string shall be limited to 20 characters or less.
graduated_scale — This 1-bit flag indicates whether or not the rating values in this dimension represent a graduated scale; i.e., higher rating values represent increasing levels of rated content within the dimension. Value 1 means yes, while value 0 means no.
values_defined — This 4-bit field (1–15) specifies the number of values defined for this particular dimension.
abbrev_rating_value_length — An 8-bit unsigned integer number that defines the total length (in bytes) of the abbrev_rating_value_text() field to follow.
abbrev_rating_value_text() — A data structure containing a multiple string structure which represents the abbreviated name for one particular rating value. The abbreviated name for rating value 0 shall be set to a null string; i.e., “”. Text strings are formatted according to the rules outlined in Section 6.10. The abbreviated value display string shall be limited to 8 characters or less.
rating_value_length — An 8-bit unsigned integer number that defines the total length (in bytes) of the rating_value_text() field to follow.
rating_value_text() — A data structure containing a multiple string structure which represents the full name for one particular rating value. The rating value display string shall be limited to 150 characters or less.

A1.1 A New RRT Example

The EIA/CEA-766-A Standard *(U.S. and Canadian RRTs and CADs for Transport of Content Advisory Information Using ATSC A/65-B Program and System Information Protocol – PSIP*) defines the rating systems currently used in the U.S. (**rating_region** 1) and Canada (**rating_region** 2). The U.S. RRT contains 2 rating systems: (i) the TV Parental Guidelines; and (ii) the MPAA movie rating system. The Canadian RRT also contains 2 rating systems: (i) English Ratings; and (ii) French Ratings.

A new RRT is shown below for “*Extended US Ratings*” (hypothetically assigned to **rating_region** 3 by the ATSC). It proposes 2 new dimensions (or rating systems): (i) “*E/I Ratings*”; and (ii) “*TV Smarts*”:

rating_region_table_section()
rating_region = 3
version_number = 0
rating_region_name = “Extended US Ratings”
dimensions_defined = 2
    dimension_name = “E/I Ratings”
    graduated_scale = 1
    values_defined = 5

value	abbrev	rating_value_text
0	“ ”	“ ”
1	“E/I”	“E/I all ages”
2	“E/I-3”	“E/I ages 3+”
3	“E/I-7”	“E/I ages 7+”
4	“E/I-10”	“E/I ages 10+”
5	“E/I-13”	“E/I ages 13+”

dimension_name = “TV Smarts”
graduated_scale = 1
values_defined = 4

value	abbrev	rating_value_text
0	“ ”	“ ”
1	“Smart-P”	“Pre-School”
2	“Smart-E”	“Elementary”
3	“Smart-M”	“Middle School”
4	“Smart-H”	“High School”

A2.0 The Content Advisory Descriptor (CAD)

The CAD is used to select ratings from any or all of the rating dimensions defined in each RRT. The CAD may contain ratings from a maximum of 8 regions per program. A program without a CAD indicates that the rating for any dimension defined in any rating region is zero.

The bit stream syntax from ATSC A/65-B (PSIP) for the Content Advisory Descriptor is shown below.

```
content_advisory_descriptor () {
        descriptor_length 8 uimsbf
        rating_region_count 6
        for (i=0; i<rating_region_count; i++) {
                rating_region 8 uimsbf
                rated_dimensions 8 uimsbf
                for (j=0;j<rated_dimensions;j++) {
                        rating_dimension_j 8 uimsbf
                        rating_value 4 uimsbf
                }
        rating_description_length 8 uimsbf
        rating_description_text() var
        }
}
```

Definitions:

descriptor_length — This 8-bit unsigned integer specifies the length (in bytes) immediately following this field up to the end of this descriptor.
rating_region_count — A 6-bit unsigned integer value in the range 1 to 8 that indicates the number of rating region specifications to follow.
rating_region — An unsigned 8-bit integer that specifies the rating region for which the data in the bytes to follow is defined. The rating_region associates ratings data given here with data defined in a Ratings Region Table tagged with the corresponding rating region.
rated_dimensions — An 8-bit unsigned integer field that specifies the number of rating dimensions for which content advisories are specified for this event.
rating_dimension_j — An 8-bit unsigned integer field specifies the dimension index into the RRT instance for the region specified by the field rating_region.
rating_value — A 4-bit field represents the rating value of the dimension specified by the field rating_dimension_j for the region given by rating_region.
rating_description_length — An 8-bit unsigned integer value in the range zero to 80 that represents the length of the rating_description_text() field to follow.
rating_description_text() — The rating description in the format of a multiple string structure. The rating_description display string shall be limited to 16 characters or less. The rating description text shall represent the program’s rating in an abbreviated form suitable for on-screen display.

A2.1 CAD Example

The CAD below is transmitted with the program "*Crashbox*" and contains 3 ratings ("*TV-Y7*", "*E/I-7*", and "*Smart-E*") from 3 systems ("*TV Parental Guidelines*", "*E/I Ratings*" and "*TV Smarts*") each found in 2 different RRTs ("*US*" RRT 01 and "*Extended US Ratings*" RRT 03):

```
content_advisory_descriptor ()
rating_region_count = 2

        rating_region = 1                       ; (US)
        rated_dimensions = 1
                rating_dimension_j = 5          ; (Children)
                rating_value = 2                ; ("TV-Y7")
        rating_region = 3                       ; (Extended US Ratings)
        rated_dimensions = 2
                rating_dimension_j = 1          ; ("E/I Ratings")
                rating_value = 2                ; ("E/I-7")
                rating_dimension_j = 2          ; ("TV Smarts")
                rating_value = 3                ; ("Smart-E")
```

Program ratings (and other PSIP information) can be displayed on-screen in most newer models of DTV receivers by pressing the "**`Info`**" button on the remote control:

Crashbox (HBO) 7:00 – 7:30 PM **7:08 PM**

TV-Y7 E/I-7 Smart_E

Features fast-paced games incorporating history, math, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, culture, and nature.

A3.0 Program Selection User Interface

Viewers can choose one or more rating systems as the basis for selecting programs for viewing by "activating" each desired rating system. Below is a sample ratings selection menu:

Choose Rating Systems

```
[1] TV Parental Guidelines    ACTIVATE
[2] MPAA Movie Ratings
[3] E/I Ratings               ACTIVATE
[4] TV Smarts                 ACTIVATE
[5] EXIT

    Press [1] to [5] to Select
```

Viewers can then select their preferred ratings from the available ratings within each rating system by configuring the respective sub-menu:

TV Parental Guidelines

[1]	TV-Y	: Young Children	
[2]	TV-Y7	: Ages 7 & older	**YES**
[3]	TV-G	: General Audiences	**YES**
[4]	TV-PG	: Parental Guidance	
[5]	TV-14	: Ages 14 & older	
[6]	TV-MA	: Mature Audiences	
[7]	**EXIT**		

Press [1] to [7] to Select

Press the corresponding button on the remote control toggles the selection between YES/NO :

TV-Y7 Content Descriptor

[1]	FV	: Fantasy Violence	**NO**
[2]	**EXIT**		

Press [1] to [2] to Select

E/I ratings can be configured as soon as they are activated:

```
          E/I Ratings

[1] E/I    : E/I all ages
[2] E/I-3  : E/I ages 3+
[3] E/I-7  : E/I ages 7+          YES
[4] E/I-10 : E/I ages 10+
[5] E/I-13 : E/I ages 13+
[6] EXIT

    Press [1] to [6] to Select
```

Similarly, TV Smarts can be used to find those programs that contain materials taught in public schools and material which appears in standardized competitive exams. Selections are made based on the appropriate grade level of the children viewing:

```
          TV Smarts

[1] Smart-P :  Pre-School
[2] Smart-E :  Elementary        YES
[3] Smart-M :  Middle School     YES
[4] Smart-H :  High School
[5] EXIT

    Press [1] to [5] to Select
```

A program rated “Smart-E” or “E/I-7” would be viewed even if the assigned TV Parental Guideline was not TV-Y7 since the program meets the viewing criteria set by the parent in the E/I Rating and TV Smarts systems.

Appendix B: *TV Smarts* Listings

Some broadcast and cable programs contain material included in the public school curriculum and on competitive exams. The following text will be online at www.whyville.net/mediamenu during the period October 11-17, 2004. If anyone logs onto that web address thereafter they will get an up-to-date column. Here are viewing suggestions from September 11-17, 2004:

Monday, October 11

"Maya & Miguel" (Language Arts, Elementary and Middle School, PBS, 3-3:30 pm E/P –check for local times which may be earlier or later) This new animated daily series presents culture and language-learning as fun, relevant and rewarding for all children, with a special emphasis on the Latino population. It chronicles the adventures of 10-year-old twins Maya and Miguel Santos and features their family, friends and a richly diverse neighborhood. An accompanying website in English and Spanish http://pbskids.org/mayaandmiguel/flash.html provides lessons based on word play through conversational language activities to build confidence and increase proficient language skills for Early English Language Development.

Tuesday, October 12

"Decisions That Shook The World" (American History. Middle and High School, Discovery Channel 8-9 pm E/P) This is the initial episode of a documentary miniseries about Presidential decisions. This one is set in the 1960s when the end of racial segregation was on the horizon. It explains how and why the son of the South, President Lyndon Johnson, championed the controversial Civil Rights Movement, and the far-ranging impact his actions had on domestic and foreign affairs. The next episode, about Ronald Reagan's role in ending the Cold War, airs October 19. Franklin Roosevelt's preparations for America's entry into WWII, begun years prior Pearl Harbor, are described in the program airing October26.

"Frontline: The Choice 2004" (Current History, Middle and High School, PBS, 9-11 pm E/P – check local listings) This program, a dual biography of George W. Bush and John Kerry, goes beyond political rhetoric and campaign packaging to explore how the candidates and their values have been shaped by family background, history, victory, and defeat.. (The program repeats on PBS October 16 and November 1.) There's a website with more details at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/choice2004.

Wednesday, October 13

"Presidential Debate" (Current History, Middle and High School, ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, PBS and cable news channels, 9-11 pm ET, 6-8 pm PT) George W. Bush and John Kerry meet in their final campaign debate. The site is Arizona State University, and the focus is domestic issues.

Thursday, October 14

"Alexandra Pelosi's Diary Of A Political Tourist" (Current History, High School, HBO, 6:20-8 pm E/P) This is documentary film maker Alexandra Pelolsi's (daughter of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi) chronicle of her two-year road trip on the Democratic campaign trail following presidential hopefuls. Everybody knows what candidates have to do in their public quest to earn the nomination for President of the United States. But who were the people behind Gen. Wesley Clark, Howard Dean, John Edwards, Dick Gephardt, Bob Graham, Dennis Kucinich, Joe Lieberman, Rev. Al Sharpton and John Kerry?

"Paths Of Glory" (World History, High School, Turner Classic Movie Channel, 10pm-midnight ET, 7-9 pm PT, repeats October 16th at 4 pm ET, 1 pm PT) Available on video) Senator John McCain, R-Arizona, will discuss this 1957 drama of French soldiers on a futile mission during World War I. McCain cites the film's stark examination of the human toll during wartime, thereby emphasizing the gravity of holding public office. In this multiple-Oscar-nominated film a military lawyer comes to question the status quo when he defends three men accused of cowardice. More info at the website http://www.turnerclassicmovies.com/ThisMonth/Article

Friday, October 15

"Modern Marvels: The Wheel" (Science and Technology, Elementary, Middle and High School, History Channel, 7-8 pm E/P) The history of civilization has turned on the wheel, and we have traveled as far as we have because of it. One of the six simple machines and perhaps the most important invention in the history of mankind, the wheel has been essential in all aspects of life--from farming to fighting, traveling to trading. This documentary features interviews with scientists, historians, philosophers, millers, potters, and spinners.

Saturday, October 16

"Taking Care Of Business" (Mathematics and Economics, High School, TLC-The Learning Channel, 10-11 pm E/P) This documentary delivers a double dose of "Reality TV". It utilizes the customary hidden cameras. Plus, it probes the cold, hard world of business. You will watch a team of outside experts armed with fresh ideas swoop into a business that's in trouble. Their goal is to move things from 'in the red' to 'in the money' - turning things around financially and helping the owners achieve success. In this premiere episode of a new weekly series on this theme, the business shown is the Microchip Café. Owners Patty and Gabe are coping with having combined five businesses into one location – computer classes, computer repairs, internet access, a gaming room and a juice bar/café. The experts' challenge is to reorganize the space to give it some 'curb appeal'.

Sunday, October 17

"Mummy Detectives: Crypt Of the Medici" (World History, Medical Technology, TLC-The Learning Channel, 9-10 pm E/P) This documentary follows a team of scientists as they open the burial crypts of the famous, ancient, rich, powerful – and large - Medici family and use the latest forensic technology to investigate how they lived and died. The scientists turned up so many revelations about who actually murdered who to settle family conflicts or inherit family fortunes or who died from bad medical treatment, etc, that scenes of this film were shown on "CBS 60 Minutes" last week. Details about this news-that's –still- news after 500 years at http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/10/01/60minutes/main646857.shtml and also http://www.guardian.co.uk/italy/story/0,12576,1256459,00.html

"The Lost Prince" (World History, High School, PBS, 9-11pm E/P) This is Part 1 of a 2-part drama based on the real-life story of Prince John, the current Queen of England's uncle, who as a young boy was shut away due to epilepsy and a learning disability. (Part 2 airs October 24) For a description of his life, and the world events to which he was witness log on http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/lostprince/synopsis. The program presents John as a charming and attractive boy, with an eccentric view of the world and uninhibited in a way that is alien to his parents. But ailing grandfather, King Edward VII, loves him for his frankness. It is clear also that his nanny, Lalla, is reluctant to reveal the seriousness of his medical condition.

Then, at Edward VII's funeral, attended by all the heads of state of Europe, including the sinister Kaiser Wilhelm, Johnnie succumbs to a serious epileptic fit. Queen Mary, Johnnie's mother, summons doctors to examine him and their diagnosis confirms her and Lalla's worst fears. Lalla volunteers to look after Johnnie to prevent him being sent to an institution. The two of them are to be sent to Sandringham, where Johnnie is to be prevented from encountering anybody but the closest members of his family.. Then one day, to the acute embarrassment of King George V and Queen Mary, he speaks his mind at a tea party held for Prime Minister Asquith and his Foreign Secretary, Lloyd George. Johnnie is summoned to London to be re-examined by the doctors. During his stay he is taken by his brother George up to the minstrel's gallery looking down on the banqueting hall of Buckingham Palace, to observe a grand state occasion. The assembled dignitaries are chattering feverishly about the poise with which the Queen has dealt with the intrusion of a suffragette, who has confronted the Queen to demand her support for women's emancipation. During the banquet Asquith and Lloyd George are called back to Downing Street to receive the news that is to prove to be the catalyst for the start of the First World War.