

United Russia Wants More TV Time for Kids During Games

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian parents and teachers have been given an unusual task by their government: get their kids to watch more television.

As the Winter Olympics in Sochi stretch into their first full week, members of parliament said Wednesday they will support an initiative to cut the school day short and encouraged teachers to give their students less homework. The hope: that kids will spend more time watching the Games.

State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin supported the initiative, which was put forth by a member of the dominant Kremlin-backed party, United Russia. The announcement in parliament followed a statement on Friday from the Defense Ministry, which said it was revising troops' schedules so that they would have free time to watch live Olympic broadcasts.

School is already out for winter in Sochi, where children will have three weeks of holiday

for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The top city education official told journalists that more than 20,000 of Sochi's 54,000 schoolchildren would be participating in events related to the Games.

While the country is straggling in the overall medal count, the games have been touted as a way of kick-starting Russia's return to athletic glory by getting more young people interested in sports. When the Russian figure skating team took home the country's only gold medal so far on Sunday, President Vladimir Putin shook hands with all of the athletes but reserved an awkward bear hug for 15-year-old prodigy Julia Lipnitskaya.

Three leading state-owned channels have been broadcasting the Games live, making everything from curling to figure skating required watching for viewers.

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