

## **Standard #4: Analyzing Influences**

Health is affected by a variety of positive and negative influences within society. Health teachers play a powerful role in helping their students look at the factors inside themselves (internal influences) such as feelings, likes, dislikes, curiosity, moods, needs, values, fears and desires that influence their actions. Students also enjoy examining the outside factors (external influences) – friends, family, culture, technology, advertising, and media of all kinds. Health Education provides great opportunities to examine advertising and media messages in particular. It's fascinating for students to explore who is working behind the scenes and what they want to convince us to do.

### Media Literacy

Teachers can help students develop "literacy" when evaluating media messages by asking them to:

- identify the purpose of the carefully constructed messages and images
- discuss how music is used to generate specific emotions
- explain values and points of view that differ from their own
- identify programs with associated products such as toys (these are referred to by the industry as "program-length commercials")
- what would happen next in real life
- name violent images or stereotypes
- join you in a blind taste test between heavily advertised and nonadvertised foods

For more ideas: [www.aap.org/parents](http://www.aap.org/parents)

### **Tips for Parents:**

The following are suggestions for parents so they can partner with teachers in helping their children develop positive viewing habits:

1. **Set limits.** Limit your children's use of TV, movies, and video and computer games to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day. Do not let your children watch TV while doing homework. Do not put a TV in your children's bedrooms.
2. **Plan what to watch.** Instead of flipping through channels, use a program guide and the TV ratings to help you and your children choose which shows to watch. Turn the TV on to watch the program and turn it off when it is over.
3. **Watch TV with your children.** Whenever possible, watch TV with your children and talk about what they see. If your children are very young, they may not be able to tell the difference between a show, a commercial, a cartoon, or real life. Be especially careful of "reality-based" programs. Most of these shows are not appropriate for children.
4. **Find the right message.** Some TV programs show people as stereotypes. If you see this, talk with your children about the real-life roles of women, the elderly, and people of other races.
5. **Help your children resist commercials.** When your children ask for things they see on TV, explain that the purpose of commercials is to make people want things they may not need.
6. **Look for quality children's videos and DVDs.** There are many quality videos and DVDs available for children. Check reviews before buying or renting programs or movies.

7. **Give other options.** Watching TV can become a habit for your children. Help them find other things to do like playing; reading; learning a hobby, a sport, an instrument, or an art; or spending time with family, friends, or neighbors.
8. **Set a good example.** As a role model, limiting your own TV viewing and choosing programs carefully will help your children do the same.
9. **Express your views.** When you like or do not like something you see on TV, make yourself heard. Stations, networks, and sponsors pay attention to letters from the public. If you think a commercial is misleading or inappropriately targeting children, write down the product name, channel, and time you saw the commercial and describe your concerns.
10. **Get more information.** The following resources can provide you with more information about the proper role of TV in your children's lives:
  - Public service groups publish newsletters that review programs and give tips on how to make TV safe for you and your child.
  - You can ask the parent organization at your child's school.
  - Parents of your child's friends and classmates can also be helpful. Talk with other parents and agree to enforce similar rules about TV viewing.

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