

## In the Classroom

Here are a few notes and suggestions for using *Media Literacy for Health* in your classroom.

1. In more than a decade of experience with media literacy education, we've found that most kids – from the youngest kindergartner to the most cynical high school senior – are fascinated by media. It shouldn't be too difficult to get your students to watch and discuss the media examples assembled on this CD-ROM. Your challenge is to use this setting to convey important, accurate information about critical health issues.
2. You don't have to be a health teacher to use *Media Literacy for Health*. Each lesson plan suggests other subjects – Language Arts, Physical Education, etc. -- in which the lesson could be included. Each lesson plan also specifies the relevant New Mexico Content Standards established by the NM State Board of Education.
3. While each of the lesson plans in *Media Literacy for Health* is designed for use in a specific grade strand (K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12), all of them can be adapted for use in other grades. Be sure to explore lesson plans above and below your grade strand, and use the "Extensions and Activism" suggestions in each lesson plan to customize the lessons for your class.
4. One of the basic principles of media literacy holds that individuals construct their own meanings from media. Although media makers attempt to convey specific messages, people receive and interpret them differently. Different interpretations should be respected. The lesson plans in this curriculum include discussion questions for each media example, and many of them also include responses based on our own interpretation of the media. These responses should be viewed as suggestions, not definitive answers. You or your students will likely have different interpretations and responses. That's great! Good media education emphasizes questioning, not preaching.
5. Many of your students (or their family members) undoubtedly engage in some unhealthy behaviors – eating lots of fast food or smoking cigarettes, for example. For this reason, it's important to make a distinction between people and their behavior. It's not helpful to blame or guilt-trip individuals for making unhealthy choices. We've found it's more useful to point out how our media culture encourages us all to engage in unhealthy or harmful behaviors, and to provide accurate information about healthy lifestyles so that students understand the alternatives.
6. Because much of the media relies on provocative, titillating or sensational images to grab viewers' eyeballs, some of the media examples included in

this CD-ROM may not be appropriate for your students. We urge you to preview all media examples before class.

7. Many of the lesson plans bring up issues – like violence or addiction -- that may be quite distressing for some students. We encourage you to consult with your school psychologist or counselor when appropriate, and even to request his/her presence in the classroom.
8. To encourage students to talk openly and honestly about some of these subjects, you may want to print and distribute the enclosed list of “**Class Rights**”. Discuss these ideas with the class; they can help to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. These “rights” will also protect you from having to answer personal questions about your own behavior. Important: Make sure your students understand that you will keep confidential everything said in class, except for evidence of physical or sexual abuse, which you are required by law to report.
9. Some parents may not understand the concept of media literacy, and may wonder why you’re showing TV commercials to their kids. Others may have concerns about the content of lessons on sexuality, violence or other topics. Before you begin using these lesson plans, you may want to send home a letter to parents, explaining the objectives and procedures.
10. Finally, thanks for being among the first teachers to use *Media Literacy for Health* in the classroom. You’re using version 1.0 of the curriculum; we plan to revise and improve the curriculum based on feedback from teachers and students. Please tell us how you’re using it in the classroom, and how we can make it even better. Thanks!