

Green Genes: a DNA Curriculum

Massachusetts 4-H Program

Activity #8: Media and Making Decision

Time: 45 minutes

Introduction: Discuss with the youth what type of media they are exposed to? Where do they get most of their information? Make a list. How would you rank them on reliability and accuracy of such things as: National news, entertainment, and medicine?

Background Information

Why Use Articles/Media:

- Keeping content current
- Connecting science to the world the youth live in
- Encouraging youth to be knowledgeable citizens and savvy consumers
- Encouraging life long skill of reading, writing, communicating and critical thinking.
- Developing varied pedagogical strategies.

Articles can be used in several ways in the classroom:

- Set the context
- Apply conceptual understanding to solve a problem
- Analyze for science content
- Examine social, political and economic implications
- Provide resources for debate
- Analyze critically for accuracy and veracity
- Assess by applying understanding

Flow & Impact of Information

Scientific Research -> Media Report -> Public Response -> Personal Decisions and/or Public Policy

Goal: The ability to judge what we see and read in the media for accuracy is a very important life skill and allows us to make more informed decision. We need to know about many things that may or can affect our lives. Some of these may be new technologies, new advances in medicine or about potential spending. We are exposed to a multitude of information from the TV and radio, to newspapers, the internet and even family and friends. Some information is reliable, but other might be more myth than fact so we need to judge the accuracy of what information we receive. In this activity you will examine several science articles.

Group Size: Small groups of 2-3 youth per group

Supplies/Preparation: Gather several articles on current issues topics to share with the group. Try to get them from a variety of sources. (High-end newspaper, local paper, tabloids....)



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Directions:

1. Divide the group into teams of 2-3 for discussion purposes and give each group an article making sure each person has their own copy.
2. Have them discuss the accuracy of the article?
3. Can they identify the source?
4. What are the facts/claims being mentioned?
5. Is there enough information or would they need more information?
6. How can you judge the value of the information?
7. Have the groups share the information with the group?

Debrief/Reflect:

- How do you get your information?
- What shows, stations, books... do you read?
- Did they know anything about the topic prior to reading?
- Are they familiar with the newspaper/magazine?
- Are they familiar with the source? Do you think this is a trusted source? Why?
- Why is it important to judge the accuracy of the information?
- How do they feel reading the article? Is the author for or against the topic or do they take a neutral stance in presenting the facts.

Apply:

- How do you use this in your daily lives?
- How does it play into public policy/voting?
- How can you share what you know about judging materials with others?

Go Further/Challenge:

Have the groups decide on an issue? Do research then debate for and against? (Divide the group evenly – often best if they do not choose sides to be on.)

A few On-Line News Resources (some of these may require signing up or a cost to print/access articles.)

Boston Globe – <http://www.boston.com/globe>

New York Times – <http://www.nytimes.com>

USA Today – <http://www.usatoday.com/usagrnt.htm>

Yahoo Full Coverage Science – <http://news.yahoo.com/fc?templ-fc&cid=34&in=science>



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