

## LESSON: Searching for Answers

### Overview

The web has become quite the common destination these days when students are seeking information. There are many places on the web they might choose to visit to ask what's happening to their bodies and what changes to expect. The web also allows them to maintain anonymity as they seek answers to some of their questions.

This lesson encourages students to think more critically about the places they visit, contrasting and comparing information that sources offer. The lesson requires that they carefully examine the information on an existing website while at the same time trying to determine how this site could be enhanced to have even greater appeal to students their age. They will be evaluating whether the content on the website is presented in a way that would be most helpful and informative for students. While offering their own ideas, they will be asked to demonstrate that the information that they would want to add to the site has been gathered from medically and scientifically accurate sources.

### Objectives:

Analyze information provided on one section of a website focused on the subject "Body"

- Compare and contrast this information with that provided by at least one other source.
- Evaluate the "Body" section of the website for its content as well as its appeal to students their age

**Level:** Upper elementary / Middle school

**Time:** 1-2 class periods

### Preparation and Materials:

- PBS website, It's My Life
- Video featuring British Teens and Professionals from Britain's NHS
- Resource from National Library of Medicine, NIH
- What the Heck is Going on Here? By Planned Parenthood
- Puberty for Guys, Planned Parenthood
- Puberty for Girls, Planned Parenthood
- What's Up Information Sheets, Washington State Department of Health

### Procedures

This lesson assumes that you have introduced the topic of puberty to your class in previous sessions. By way of introduction to this lesson, you will want to review some of the key information that you have presented.

Point out that the subject of puberty is one that people their age usually have lots of questions about. There are many places on the web where you can go to learn more about puberty but it's important to make very sure that the information you're getting is medically and scientifically accurate.

We're going to spend some time today exploring one of the places you might visit on the web. This website called It's My Life has been produced by PBS. You will see when visiting this site that a number of professionals have helped with its development.

For this lesson, we're going to only focus on one section of the site called Body.

## Activity

Go to the website. Examine and discuss the various topics you see presented here. Discuss with the students some of the things that might be added that could make this site even more appealing.

Show them a few sample materials that other sites have included such as the puberty quiz.

Also consider whether the site would benefit from addressing even more issues. Students might get some ideas from watching the video featuring British Teens and Professionals from Britain's NHS.

Also consider the way other sites handle the subject of puberty: for example, show the NIH site; the Planned Parenthood site for girls or Planned Parenthood site for Boys. Then ask students to break up into website review teams of 3-4 students. Each team will be asked to critique the Body section of the It's My Life website asking such questions as:

- Is the information presented medically and scientifically accurate? How do they know this? How can they go about finding this out? Who produced it? What do they know about this producer?
- How does another site that is known for its medical/scientific accuracy present some of this same information? Compare the ways in which these two different sites choose to present this information.
- Who is the target audience for the It's My Life site (e.g. their age, gender)? How do we know this by looking at the site? What would make the Body section of the site appealing to its intended target audience?
- Is there anything about it that would make it not appealing? What might you suggest to make the Body section especially appealing to students your age? What content would you add that you feel should be addressed? Is there anything you would change or remove?
- What other ideas do you have to make this site one a student your age would want to visit to get information?

After the teams have met, ask students to return to their seats and write their own independent evaluations of the Body section of It's Your Life site. Include in their evaluations recommendations for other students: Consider, for example, whether they would suggest that other students their age visit this site? What if students used this site as their only source of information? How does it compare to at least one other site offering puberty information? What else might he/she need to know (what was missing) and where else might they be encouraged to go to find out more answers to questions they might have?

Have students share some of their conclusions with the class.

## Assessment

Written evaluations submitted by each of the students can serve as a basis for assessment.