Francine's Bad Hair Day   Episode #101

Subject Areas
Health, Math

Media Literacy Objective
Examine how media affects feelings toward body image and gender stereotypes.

Episode Description
It's school-picture day, and Muffy is determined that Francine will look her best. Francine has been shamed into rising to the challenge: Her hair has been curled, and she's even wearing a dress (inspiring many pithy comments until Francine threatens to beat everyone up). But no matter how hard she tries, Francine just can't keep her "new look" together.

Active Listening
Listen and watch to find out why Muffy pushes Francine to change her look for school pictures.

Guided Discussion
Why didn't Muffy want Francine to look like a tomboy for her pictures?

What does Muffy think girls should look like?
Where do you think Muffy got her ideas about what girls should look like?

Do you agree with Muffy that Francine should have changed the way she looked for her picture? Why or why not?

Make a column labeled "Girls" and a column labeled "Boys." Write students' ideas in these columns:
How do you think girls should look and act?
How do you think boys should look and act?
What do you think each should like and dislike?
Where do you think these perceptions come from?

Activity: Model Behavior
Bring in a pile of old magazines that you feel are appropriate for the class. Ask students to cut out a fashion advertisement of their choice from one of the magazines. Their ad should include at least one person. (You may wish to have students work independently or in groups.)

On the board, create a horizontal axis that contains physical descriptions (see suggestions below). Encourage students to suggest additional descriptions. Have each student or group plot the characteristics of the model in their ad to create a final bar graph. (You may want to create separate bar graphs for men, women, boys, and girls.) Through this graphing activity, students begin to recognize what characteristics are seen most often in advertising. Ask:
Why do you think those particular features are so commonly shown?
Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

Suggestions for physical descriptions:
Build (slender, plump; tall, short; athletic, non-athletic)
Hair (blond, red, brown, black)
Ethnicity (White, African American, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic, Other)

Activity Materials

Old magazines (doctors' offices are often good sources for these)
Scissors