

# Tune in and filter out: Watching the news with kids

By JENNIFER COLTON

In today's news industry, tips come from traditional press releases along with Facebook postings. Rumors pass from cell phone to cell phone through the airwaves with alarming speed, and keeping children away from this is next to impossible. But helping children and teens make sense of the news and how they should react is easier than you think.

To begin, decide how much current news you want your children to engage in. For some, watching standard television news coverage can be upsetting. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends acting as a filter for young children to allow them to understand what is going on while avoiding graphic information and images.

Once children reach age eight or nine, many can separate fact and fiction well enough to begin watching news programs or reading news articles. When a child asks for more information about something he or she heard about on the news, at school or from friends, it can be a good sign the child is ready to begin dipping a toe into journalism. For those early conversations — and especially about potentially scary topics — the AAP also recommends you start by asking the child what he or she has heard as a way to begin the conversation.

Also consider engaging children in age-appropriate news. Channel



that may accompany video news coverage.

In the current age of technology, however, parents cannot assume they will be able to filter all information. Young children may not watch news coverage at home, but the television at a restaurant or the doctor's office can pull their attention. Teens will find news shared on social media and between their friends and class-

mates at lightning speed.

Last month in the newsroom where I work two news tips came from teenagers before we were aware of them. One involved a vehicle driven into the Big Lots! store in Hermiston and the other involved a suicide. While the teens didn't have all the facts right — the original text suggested the vehicle-ravaged store was a different location nearby — they heard the rumors less than an hour after the event occurred.

In a world where news comes at us from many sources all the time, it's smart to train your kids early on what to expect and what to believe. More information can be found online in greater detail, including:

- [www.pbs.org/parents/talking-withkids/news](http://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-withkids/news)
- [www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids](http://www.commonsemmedia.org/blog/explaining-the-news-to-our-kids)
- AAP's website at [www.healthy-children.org](http://www.healthy-children.org)

One! News has delivered televised news to elementary and middle school students for decades, news websites focus on current events for children, including Here There Everywhere — HTEKidsNews — and DOGOnews, and some newspapers offer articles appropriate for young readers, such as The Washington Post's "KidsPost" and "Time for Kids" from Time Magazine. Children can also gain an interest in the world around them through news, and this interest can be fostered by sharing articles that align with the child's interest, whether it's dinosaurs, world cultures or cuddly baby animals.

If parents want to expose children to the adult-focused news industry but doubt whether a child is ready for unfiltered news, one option can be selecting a few articles to allow the child to read and then discussing them. Or recording a news program and pre-watching it to make sure parents are comfortable with the child watching them. Listening to the news — through radio broadcasts or podcasts — can also help ease children into digesting the news as they hear facts without seeing the graphic images

**E O U**  
EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

**Blue Mountain**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
EDUCATION • CONNECTED

**CO-ENROLLMENT NOW OPEN**  
ONLINE | ON CAMPUS

- > **One application - 2 great schools!**
- > **Transfer seamlessly**
- > **More courses to choose from**
- > **One-on-one advising**

**Apply NOW!**

[eou.edu/bmcc](http://eou.edu/bmcc)

Para ayuda en Español, llame al 541.962.3491  
800-452-8639 | [admissions@eou.edu](mailto:admissions@eou.edu)

*Jennifer Colton is news director of KOHU and KQFM, and mother of three, based in Pendleton.*