



Digital Citizenship Resources for Educators

2025-26

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Curriculum Connections

A2 Digital Media Literacy Curriculum Grades 4-6

A2.1 Digital Citizenship

Explain their rights and responsibilities when interacting online with appropriate permission, and make decisions that contribute positively to the development of their digital identity and those of their communities.

A2.2 Online Safety, Well-Being, and Etiquette

Demonstrate an understanding of how to navigate online environments safely, manage their privacy and personal data, and interact in a way that supports their well-being and that of others, including seeking appropriate permission.

A2.3 Research and Information Literacy

Gather, evaluate, and use information, considering validity, credibility, accuracy, and perspectives, to construct knowledge, create texts, and demonstrate learning.

A2.4 Forms, Conventions, and Techniques

Demonstrate an understanding of the forms, conventions, and techniques of digital and media texts, consider the impact on the audience, and apply this understanding when analyzing and creating texts.

A2.5 Media, Audience, and Production

Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between the form, message, and context of texts, the intended audience, and the purpose for production.

A2.6 Innovation and Design

Select and use appropriate digital and media tools to support the design process and address authentic, relevant, real-world problems by developing innovative solutions.

A2.7 Community and Cultural Awareness

Communicate and collaborate with various communities in a safe, respectful, responsible, and inclusive manner when using online platforms and environments, including digital and media tools, and demonstrate cultural awareness with members of the community.

Overview

Why Do We Need to Teach Students about Digital Citizenship and Digital Literacy?

Thanks to handheld devices and portable computers, children and youth are spending more unsupervised time online. Beyond lost opportunities to learn, play, and interact with others, solitary screen use greatly increases risk for exposure to negative or harmful content (CPS, 2025). Students need guidance about internet safety and protection of privacy and to be taught about good citizenship and responsible internet use. They also need to be taught how to conduct effective research online and how to question and recognize marketing messages, bias and stereotyping (Media Smarts, 2025).

Health Behaviours

The 2023 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey reported that one quarter (26 per cent) of the grade 7-12 students across Ontario who completed the survey met the recommended daily physical activity guideline (defined as a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day) during the past seven days. In contrast, about seven per cent of students were physically inactive on each of the past seven days. Over three quarters (78 per cent) of students spend three hours or more per day in front of an electronic screen in their free time ("screen time" sedentary behaviour). This amount of screen time exceeds the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth](#). Over one third (39 per cent) of students report that they

usually get eight hours or more of sleep on an average school night. Therefore, most students (61 per cent) get fewer than eight hours of sleep (OSDUHS, p 3). These statistics show us the important impact prevention work with younger students could have when taught safe and healthy screen and digital technology use. Students need to be taught to be aware of how screen time is affecting their time being active and getting enough sleep.

Cyberbullying

The 2023 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey also found one quarter (26 per cent) of students report being bullied over the internet in the past year. One in six (16 per cent) students report bullying others over the internet in the past year. Body size and

appearance are frequently cited as the most common type of bullying (both in person and online) with over half (53 per cent) of students reporting having been bullied about weight or body shape in the past year (OSDUHS, p 32).

Gambling

About eight per cent of students report betting money on any online game (such as online casino games, online sports betting) at least once in the past year. About one quarter (24 per cent) of students report gambling while playing a video game in the past year (that is, spending real money to buy loot boxes, keys or in-game currency, or engaging in skins betting). About 16 per cent of students report gambling in another activity, such as card games, dice, lotteries, scratch cards, in the past year (OSDUHS, p 9).

Video Gaming

Over one quarter (28 per cent) of students play video games daily or almost daily. About one in eight students (12 per cent) play video games for five hours or more per day. One in six students (18 per cent) report symptoms of a video gaming problem (such as preoccupation, tolerance, loss of control, withdrawal, escape, disregard for consequences, disruption to family or school). The percentage of students reporting symptoms of a video gaming problem has significantly increased since 2007, the first year of monitoring, from nine to 18 per cent (OSDUHS, p 9).

Social Media

The vast majority (94 per cent) of students use social media daily. About one quarter (23 per cent) of students spend five hours or more on social media daily. The percentage of students who report spending five hours or more on social media daily significantly decreased between 2021 (31 per cent) and 2023 (23 per cent). However, despite this recent decrease, the current estimate remains higher than 2013 (11 per cent), when monitoring began. About one in eleven students (9 per cent) report symptoms of problematic social media

use (such as preoccupation, tolerance, loss of control, withdrawal, escape, conflict with family). Intensive and misuse of social media have been associated with body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, risky behaviours, and eating disorders due to information manipulation, lack of media literacy, and internalization of ideal body standards (Vincente-Benito & Ramírez-Durán, 2023).

Mental Health

"In adolescents, zero screen use or excessive use are associated with negative effects, while moderate use (typically reported as between 2 to 4 hours per day) is associated with some cognitive and psychosocial benefits ^{[11][17][39][40][41]}. The type (video game, TV, smartphone, computer) and timing (weekday or weekend) of screen use determined different effects on mental well-being in a non-linear fashion ^{[39][42]}. Content, context, and individual traits are other defining factors when assessing screen use effects. Evidence is not clear whether increased technology use may cause lower well-being or whether lower well-being results in increased technology use. There are likely unaccounted factors affecting both technology use and adolescent well-being" (CPS, 2025).

Prevention is Key

Digital Citizenship lessons need to start early in order to help prevent problematic screen and digital media use.

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1. [Digital media: Promoting healthy screen use in school-aged children and adolescents](#), Canadian Paediatric Society, 2025.
 2. [Digital Media Literacy Framework - Grades 4-6](#), Media Smarts, 2025.
 3. CAMH. [2023 OSDUHS Mental Health & Well-Being Report - Summary](#).
 4. Vincente-Benito I, Ramírez-Durán MDV. Influence of Social Media Use on Body Image and Well-Being Among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Systematic Review. *J Psychosoc Nurs Ment Health Serv*. 2023 Dec;61(12):11-18. doi: 10.3928/02793695-20230524-02.
 5. Hock K, Vanderlee L, White CM, Hammond D. Body Weight Perceptions Among Youth From 6 Countries and Associations With Social Media Use: Findings From the International Food Policy Study. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2025 Jan;125(1):24-41.e7. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2024.06.223.

Lesson Plans

Media Smarts

Media Smarts is a Canadian source with lesson plans for every grade on a variety of topics related to safe and healthy screen and digital technology use, and positive digital citizenship. Lessons are linked to Canadian Curriculum standards.

[Digital Media Literacy Framework](#) (Grades 4-6)

Find lesson plans for Grades 4-6

[Media Literacy 101](#)

On this page you'll find videos and lesson plans on key concepts of Media Literacy.

[Break the Fake: What's Real Online?](#) (Grades 3-5)

In this lesson, students are introduced to the challenges of identifying what is real and what is fake online. Includes student handout.

[Once Upon a Time](#) (Grades 3-6)

In this lesson, students become aware of the idea of stereotyping and the role that stereotypes play in the stories and movies that they enjoy.

[Privacy Pursuit! Protecting Your Privacy](#) (Grades 4-5)

In this lesson, students review what the word "privacy" means in an online context and learn key privacy-related vocabulary. They explore different privacy risks and then learn practical techniques and strategies to manage and protect their privacy.

[Behaving Ethically Online: Ethics and Empathy](#) (Grades 4-6)

In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea that "hot" emotional states such as anger or excitement can make it harder for them to control how they act. They also discuss the concept of empathy and look at the ways in which digital communication can make it harder to feel empathy for other people. Students consider how to resolve online conflict and build a list of tools for emotional management and conflict resolution online.

Lesson Plans

[Video Game Verbs](#) (Grades 4-8)

In this lesson, students learn that video games are unlike other media because they are interactive, allowing players to do things and make choices. They then explore the idea of affordances and defaults by considering the “video game verbs” that different games allow you to do. Includes student handout.

[Stay on the Path Lesson One: Searching for Treasure](#) (Grades 5-6)

In this first lesson of a four-part series, students learn how to create well defined search strings and to use tools and techniques such as bookmarking, browser filters and search engine preferences to avoid unwanted material.

[Comic Book Characters](#) (Grades 5-8)

In this lesson, students learn how shapes are used in character design in comics and animation and look at how male and female characters are depicted in comic books. Includes student handout.

[Getting the Toothpaste Back into the Tube: A Lesson on Online Information](#) (Grades 6-8)

In this lesson, students watch a short video that compares getting rid of personal information online to getting toothpaste back into a tube. Includes visuals and student handout.

Common Sense Education

Common Sense Education is an American source with lesson plans for every grade on a variety of topics related to digital citizenship, digital literacy and wellness plans. Educators will need to create an account to access free materials.

[Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#)

Find lesson plans for Grades 4-6

[Navigating AI in Schools](#)

Understanding AI digital literacy skills for teachers, including lesson plans for grade 6

[30 Great Lesson Plans for Internet Safety](#)

Online safety lesson plans, divided by grade

[Digital Well-Being Lessons for Grades K-12](#)

Research-based lessons to support social emotional learning and digital well-being

Resources

Activity Worksheets

[Digital Citizenship Handouts and Workshops](#) (Grades K-12)

From [PiQ Potential](#), “The Wellness Project”

[Tech-Check Habit Challenge | Student Handout](#) (Grades 6-8)

From Common Sense Education session, [Positive Tech Habits](#), one of four lessons in the Digital Well-being Collection for Middle School. Students will consider how to build positive habits around media and tech to support their well-being.

[Tech-Check Habit Challenge | Teacher Version](#) (Grades 6-8)

[Activity Sheets for Kids](#) | Privacy Commissioner of Canada

Additional Resources

[Fact or fake — can you tell the difference online?](#) | CBC Kids

10 Question Interactive Digital Media Literacy Quiz

[Teen Voices: Who Are You on Social Media?](#) | Common Sense Education (5 min, 13 sec)

Video in which teens reflect on how they decide to represent themselves in the digital world.

[How can you spot AI fakes?](#) | CTV News (4 min, 13 sec)

Video about spotting fakes and staying vigilant.

Resources

Caregiver Handouts

[Screen use and digital media: Advice for parents of school-aged children and teens](#) | Caring for Kids

[Helping Your Child Manage Digital Technology](#) | School Mental Health Ontario

[Cyberbullying Fact Sheet for 12-13 year olds](#) | Public Safety Canada

[Cyberbullying Resources for Teachers and Parents](#) | Public Safety Canada

Digital Wellness Board Game

[School Health Digital Wellness Board Game](#) | Huron Perth Public Health

Student Resources

[Kids Help Phone](#)

provides free, 24/7 confidential support for mental health and well-being.

- Call 1-800-668-6868
- Text 686868
- Or visit: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

[Mental Health and Well-Being](#) | Huron Perth Public Health

[Creating a Healthy Digital Life](#) | Mindscape

[mindyourmind](#)



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