



# Digital Literacy and Online Safety

**THREE WEEKS OF EASY ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TO PRATICE MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOMS.**

Week 1: Screen time and gaming

Week 2: Social media and media representation

Week 3: Privacy and cybersecurity

## INTRODUCTION

This mental health topic focuses on the overarching concepts of digital literacy and online safety. Digital literacy refers not only to an individual's ability and know-how associated with using technology, but it involves a wide variety of ethical, social, and reflective considerations embedded in learning and the use of technology, such as creativity, critical thinking, and digital citizenship (Media Smarts, n.d.).

Excessive screen time among youth and adolescents has been associated with low psychological wellbeing and mental health outcomes, such as poor emotional regulation, inability to finish tasks, as well as a higher prevalence of depression or anxiety diagnoses compared to those with low screen time (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). These associations are greater among adolescents (11 – 17-year-olds) compared to younger children (2 – 10-year-olds). This phenomenon could be attributed to adolescents' greater use of social media and gaming compared to young children (Twenge & Campbell, 2018); screen time spent on social media and gaming is more strongly correlated with low wellbeing than screen time spent watching television or videos, which is more common screen activity in younger children (Rosen et al., 2014). Greater social media use among adolescents has been associated with depressive symptoms and experiences of online harassment, poor sleep quantity and quality, poor self-esteem, and poor body image (Kelly et al., 2018). In addition to the physical, mental, and social effects associated with gaming and social media use, these platforms also pose inherent risks to youth and adolescents in way of cybersecurity threats like identity theft, online fraud, phishing scams, and other criminal activity related to the exploitation of children online (De La Hoz, 2021).

Thames Valley District School Board has adopted the Government of Ontario's Policy/Program Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols, where strategies to prevent, recognize, and intervene in instances of suspected sex trafficking are prioritized. Enhancing students' digital literacy skills is vital in a society consumed by online technologies and will build upon competences like critical thinking and empathy that are necessary in addressing excessive screen time, cyberbullying, and online child exploitation.



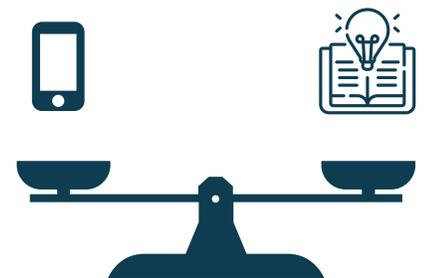
## Weekly Announcements (Mental Health Monday)

### Week One Announcement:

\*INSERT SCHOOL NAME\* welcomes everyone back from summer holiday! As we transition into the new school year it's important to think about ways to maximize our learning and make the school year the best possible. Over the summer you may have spent some time on your phone or tablet using social media, or might have done some online gaming, and that's ok because it can be fun! Sometimes we might spend too much time on those devices though, and that can impact our learning and even our health. For the month of September, in partnership with the Healthy Schools Team at Southwestern Public Health and the Middlesex London Health Unit, our school will be focusing on all things digital! Screen time, the different ways we use devices, and how to make sure we're using them safely are just some of the things we'll learn about this month. Stay tuned for in class activities!

### Five Activities to Promote Healthy Screen Time and Gaming:

- Finding Balance in Our Digital Lives [Grades K to 3; 30 – 60 min]  
-Consider condensing and using "active time, learning time, screen time" handout with older grades; brainstorming activities/hobbies as a group that could fit into active/learning time categories
- Rules of the Game [Grades K-3; 30-45 minutes]
- Pay for Play [Grades 4-6; 1-1.5 hours]
- Playing With Privacy [Grades 7-8; 1 hour]
- Screen Time and Visual Health Word Search [All grades]



### Book Recommendation

The Couch Potato (YouTube version)

## Week Two Announcement:

Last week we looked at screen time with a focus on gaming! As we know, it's important to find balance in our lives between time spent using and not using devices. Social media is one way we might use our devices, and the more time we spend on social media could influence the way we view things, such as what we think is cool, our relationships with other people, and even how we view ourselves. Use this week to consider your own use of social media! What platforms, if any, do you use? Who do you interact with on those platforms? Do you find yourself acting differently on those platforms than in real life? Have you ever found that you compare yourself to others when using social media? Consider sharing your reflections with a friend!

### Six Activities for Social Media and Media Representation:

- Break the Fake: What's in the Frame? (Grades K-2; 20-30 minutes)
- Wacky Media Songs: Media Representation (Grades K-3; 10-15 minutes per song)
- Songs and corresponding lessons:
  - Frame It – same message as “Break the Fake”
  - Picture Perfect – body image
  - You Do You – gendered stereotypes
  - Make Me Shine – food advertising
  - Just Another Influencer – influencer culture
- Is Seeing Believing? [Grade 3; 45 minutes]
- Prejudice and Body Image [Grades 3-7; 1 hour]
- The Anatomy of Cool [Grades 4-7; 1 hour]
- All Things Digital: Matching Activity [Grades 7-8; 15-30 minutes, consider working in pairs for this activity]

### Book Recommendation

The Fabulous Friend Machine, by  
Nick Bland



## Week Three Announcement:

The final week of digital health month focuses on privacy, cybersecurity, and how to stay safe online! Staying safe online includes knowing who you're interacting with when using the internet for things like gaming and social media, being mindful of what you share online, making sure that passwords aren't shared with others or easy to guess, and getting help from a trusted adult when you have questions or concerns. Stay tuned for classroom activities!

### Five Activities for Online Privacy and Cybersecurity:

- Wacky Media Songs: Privacy and Security [Grades K-3; 10-15 minutes per song]  
Songs and corresponding lessons:
  - Privacy Please – online privacy
  - Be Nice to Your Device – proper handling of devices
  - Check Before You Post – smart online sharing
  - Too Good to Be True – online scams
- Privacy Pirates Interactive Online Game [Grades 1-4; 20-30 minutes]
- Social Smarts: Nothing Personal Graphic Novel [Grades 3-5]
- Know the Deal: The Value of Privacy [Grades 6-8; 1-1.5 hours]
- Government of Canada Toolkit (Ages 10-12)



# General Resources:

These resources can be shared in classrooms, hallways, etc.

- [Key Concepts of Digital Literacy](#)
- [Digital Media Are Networked](#)
- [Digital Footprints](#)
- [Digital Media Have Unexpected Audiences](#)
- [Digital Interactions Can Have Real Life Impacts](#)
- [Cyber Security Consumer Tip Sheet](#)

## Book and/or Video Recommendations

Screen Time: [The Couch Potato](#) (Consider sharing with younger grades)

Online Relationships and Safety: [The Fabulous Friend Machine](#) (Consider having older students read with younger students)

## For Educators Who Use Social Media

- Share to social media photos of brainstormed screen-free activities and hobbies from activity in week one.
- Share photos of posters/resources displayed in hallways and classrooms, consider tagging Southwestern Public Health or Middlesex-London Health Unit on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.
- [Media Smarts Parents Page](#)
- [Family-Based Social Media Contracts/Agreement](#)

# References

- De La Hoz, G. T. (2021). New Trends in Online Crime Using Social Networking Sites and Apps against Children and Adolescents: Police-Based Longitudinal Research. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 15(1), 31-49.  
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- Kelly, Y., Zilanawala, A., Booker, C., & Sacker, A. (2018). Social media use and adolescent mental health: Findings from the UK Millennium Cohort Study. *EClinicalMedicine*, 6, 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2018.12.005>
- Media Smarts. (n.d.). [Digital Literacy Fundamentals](#).
- Rosen, L. D., Lim, A. F., Felt, J., Carrier, L. M., Cheever, N. A., Lara-Ruiz, J. M., Mendoza, J. S., & Rökkum, J. (2014). [Media and technology use predicts ill-being among children, preteens and teenagers](#) independent of the negative health impacts of exercise and eating habits. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 35, 364-375.
- Wordmint. (n.d.). [Screen Time and Visual Health Wordsearch](#).
- Thames Valley District School Board. (n.d.). [Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol](#).
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). [Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents](#): Evidence from a population-based study. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 12, 271-283.

**Your mental health is a priority**

[www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca)

[www.healthunit.com](http://www.healthunit.com)

