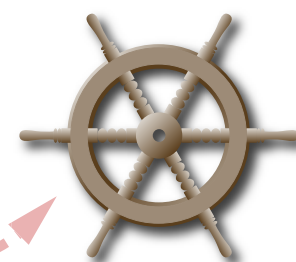


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



From Ethics and Empathy to Making and Remixing: Extending Digital Literacy to the Secondary Grades

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For more than a decade, MediaSmarts has been a leader in defining digital literacy in Canada. This is reflected in the elementary digital literacy framework we launched in 2015. The Use, Understand & Create framework is based on a holistic approach which recognizes that the different skills that make up digital literacy cannot be fully separated. The framework identifies six overlapping aspects of digital literacy – ethics and empathy, privacy and security, finding and verifying, digital health, consumer awareness, and community engagement – and includes resources to ensure that every Canadian student from Primary to Grade 8 can receive a comprehensive digital literacy education. Now we are extending that work to the secondary grades with a suite of new lessons in all six categories as well as adding a seventh aspect – Making and Remixing – to help students learn how to use digital tools to collaborate with others and to create and ethically remix content.

Though the new secondary resources draw on the same principles of digital literacy, they reflect the important differences between teens and younger children found in our Young Canadians in a Wired World data. Because teens' online experiences are more varied and more likely to encompass multiple platforms and devices, many of these resources help youth to understand how the different digital skills learned in earlier grades interrelate and reinforce one another in helping to address the new challenges they face. In dealing with sexting, for example, youth need to not just be able to manage their own privacy and make ethical decisions about others' but also to understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships (American research has found that sexts sent as a result of pressure or coercion are three times more likely to result in a negative outcome). Our new Ethics and Empathy lesson Online Relationships: Respect and Consent encourages students to consider the importance of ethical thinking and consent before sharing any content that might be harmful. It presents a series of scenarios that explore issues such as coercion, lack of consent, violation of privacy and making private content public in low-stakes situations that are relevant to students' day-to-day experience.

Our Young Canadians findings allowed us to “start where the learner is” by building on the approaches we know youth are already using. Their preference for social strategies in dealing with privacy issues, for instance, served as the jumping-off point for Online Relationships: Respect and Consent. Similarly the findings in our report Young Canadians' Experiences with Electronic Bullying – which looked at what leads witnesses to cyberbullying to intervene (or not intervene) and which intervention strategies were most likely to help without making things worse – allowed us to provide practical advice on how to help targets of bullying in our lesson First, Do No Harm: How to Be an Active Witness to Cyberbullying.

One of the most striking findings in our Young Canadians survey was the number of youth who said they sleep with their cell phones at night to avoid missing anything: more than half of Grade 11 students report doing this. The amount of time students spend on their devices is just the tip of the iceberg, as many report being stressed by constantly comparing themselves to their friends, by the pressure to seem happy and successful on social media, and what they themselves call FOMO (“fear of missing out”). Our Digital Health lesson Dealing with Digital Stress helps students identify habits in their lives that are making them anxious and teaches them evidence-based strategies for managing their time, changing harmful habits and attitudes, and making time for rest and relaxation.

Besides needing to look happy and popular to their peers, as students reach their teen years they're also under stress to present an online image that will be appropriate for potential employers, college and university admissions officers, and others who know enough to be suspicious of someone with no social media presence, or who recognize a freshly-scrubbed profile when they see one. Our Privacy and Security lesson Your Online Resume empowers students to “accentuate the positive” and take control of their online identity by considering the different audiences who might see their content and making a plan to ensure that they're sending the right message to each audience.

Our research also gave us insight into what students aren't doing: while the data showed that most students are learning and using search and verification skills in school, it also showed that they are not as likely to use them to verify content they come across outside of school. That's why our new Finding and Verifying lesson Authentication



Beyond the Classroom teaches students not just how to fact-check the latest viral photo or video but why they should verify something by helping them understand that in our networked world we are, in effect, all journalists, and we have an ethical duty to be sure

something is true before passing it on.

While Canadian youth are creating lots of content on social media, our data shows that relatively few are producing creative content such as music or videos, and our recent teacher survey conducted with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Connected to Learn: Teachers' Experiences with Networked Technologies in the Classroom, shows that few are doing these activities in class either. But media production, which has always been a central part of media literacy, has never been simpler: students can now do things with their phones that just a decade ago would have required expensive video cameras. Editing and remixing, which once required specialized hardware or software, can now be done with free online tools, and it's never been easier for youth to find an audience for the content they create – but these new tools come with ethical considerations as well. Our Making and Remixing lesson Remixing Media teaches students the rights they have to remix content under Canadian copyright law and has them look at the different kinds of remixes and the different legal and ethical considerations associated with each one, before creating a critical remix of their own.

The ethical considerations of remixing highlight the issue of digital citizenship. Even more than digital literacy, the precise definition of this term is still evolving: all too often it's simply a list of “thou shalt nots” which, while important, fail to engage youth. What may be more valuable is to approach digital citizenship not as a separate subject but as the ideal outcome of digital literacy education, and to view it in terms not just of the responsibilities but also the rights of a digital citizen. A rights-based approach to digital citizenship provides the essential link between teaching youth what they can do to manage and defend their privacy and empowering them to actually do it. Young Canadians need to know that they don't give up their rights when they go online and, in fact, they may have rights they're not aware of. Online Cultures and Values lets students investigate how online communities such as social networks and multiplayer games form their cultures and values and how every member of these communities has the right and the power to influence those values so that racism, sexism, and other forms of harassment aren't tolerated. While this lesson shows students how they can make a difference in their online communities, our three-part lesson Digital Storytelling for Civic Engagement (which teachers can deliver as a unit or as standalone lessons) combines Making and Remixing and Civic Engagement competencies to help students use digital tools to be active citizens in their offline communities. By having students research and create a Digital Story – a simple but flexible media product which can be done with even the most minimal media production tools – on an issue that's relevant to them and their community, and then find ways of getting it in front of the right audience, this lesson series prepares students for a lifetime of active citizenship.

There's no question that networked technologies pose significant risks and challenges for Canadian teens, but they offer unparalleled opportunities as well. Now that MediaSmarts' comprehensive digital literacy framework Use, Understand & Create has been extended to the secondary level, we're able to prepare them to be active and engaged digital citizens. Based on our ground breaking research on digital literacy education in Canada – Mapping Digital Literacy Policy and Practice in the Canadian Education Landscape – and linked to existing curriculum outcomes for each province and territory – provides tools for teachers, parents, administrators and policymakers to ensure that all Canadian students get the digital literacy education they need for living and working in a digital world.

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