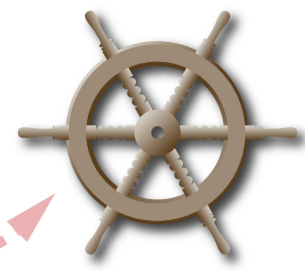


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Digital Literacy 101 For Teachers

By Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts

How can teachers equip their students to successfully and ethically navigate the digital world?

For more than 30 years, Canada has been a world leader in media literacy education. While MediaSmarts offers the world's largest free library of media and digital literacy lessons and resources, including our comprehensive K-12 digital literacy framework *USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE*, the key to media literacy education has always been empowering teachers to develop their own activities. The heart of this approach has been the key concepts of media literacy, five fundamental ideas that underpin media literacy at the K-12 level. With an understanding of these concepts – that media are constructions, that media have social and political implications, that media have commercial implications, that audiences negotiate meaning, and that each medium is a unique aesthetic form – teachers can bring media literacy into classrooms at all grades without having to be “media experts.”

While these key concepts remain essential, there are elements to digital media that they don't address, and issues – from cyberbullying, to privacy, to “fake news” – that didn't exist in the age of traditional media. Now, teachers are getting the tools to develop their own digital literacy lessons and activities thanks to MediaSmarts' professional development suite of resources, *Digital Literacy 101*, which includes free workshops, guides, posters and videos to help teachers across the curriculum integrate digital literacy into their teaching practice.

The workshop, which is offered in three versions for K-6, 7-12, or all of K-12, makes digital literacy accessible by explaining five *key concepts* that can be communicated to students at all grade levels:

- **Digital media are networked:** In traditional media like TV or magazines, content only flows one way. But online, you're part of an infinite network – you can connect to others as easily as they can connect to you. You can be part of a community and find or share things with anyone around the world. But everyone else can do that too – and it is just as easy to share fake information as real.
- **Digital media are persistent and shareable:** When you're online, you leave “digital footprints.” Everything you share is stored somewhere – even things that you think are temporary. Other people can also copy, share and spread things you have shared.
- **Digital media have unexpected audiences:** It's hard to control who sees the things you share online. Once something is online, it's almost impossible to erase it. Because digital media are networked, nearly all interactions are two-way: even if you're doing something that feels like a traditional media experience, like watching a video online, data about what you're doing is being sent to the owners of the website.
- **Interactions through digital media can have a real impact:** What we do online can help people or hurt them, and through our actions online, we can choose to help make the world better or we can contribute to making things worse. But because we can't see people's faces or hear their voices, we can't always tell if something we've done has made them happy, angry or been hurtful. Most importantly, all of us – even kids – are full citizens online, and have the right *and* the responsibility to be part of shaping the values of our online communities.
- **Digital media experiences are shaped by the tools we use:** How digital tools like social networks and search engines are designed affect how we use them. Sometimes it's because of questions the designers didn't think to ask (like whether a tool might be used to harass people or whether news stories should be treated differently from ads) and sometimes it's so they can make more money (for instance, social networks are designed to make you use them more often).

This workshop, which can either be used as a self-directed tutorial or downloaded to present to a group, includes sample activities for exploring these concepts at different grade levels, but that's just the start! The *Classroom Guide* gives you all the information you need to build your own digital literacy program, from tips on dealing with technology limitations to suggested resources for making media in the classroom. There are also short videos you can use to explain these concepts to your students – or colleagues – in a fun, engaging way.

To access these resources, visit <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-101>.

For a more thorough background on media literacy, see <https://mediasmarts.ca/media-literacy-101>

Digital Literacy 101 was made possible with financial support from CIRA's Community Investment Program and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's CanCode Program.

For more information on the many media library resources and timely research about youth and media literacy visit mediasmarts.ca.

Media Smarts

Key Concepts of Digital Literacy

- Digital Media Are Networked**
Everything and everyone online is connected to everyone else
- Digital Media Are Shareable and Persistent**
Everything on digital networks is stored somewhere and can be copied and shared
- Digital Media Have Unexpected Audiences**
What you share online can be seen by people you didn't think would see it
- Interactions Through Digital Media Can Have Real Impact**
What we do online can have a real impact, but we can't always tell how other people are feeling
- Digital Media Experiences Are Shaped by the Tools We Use**
How we use digital tools like social networks and search engines is affected by how they're designed

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