

Critical Media Literacy in the K to 7 Classroom

A Tool Kit Created for Educators



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Research and Background

The [Digital Literacy Framework](#) by the BC Ministry of Education (2020) outlines six characteristics of knowledge and skills that students using technology should develop:

1. **Research and Information Literacy:** Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information
2. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making:** Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.
3. **Creativity and Innovation:** Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.
4. **Digital Citizenship:** Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior.
5. **Communication and Collaboration:** Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
6. **Technology Operations and Concepts:** Students demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems, and operations, and develop computational thinking skills.

Will Richardson outlines the 21st Century Literacies from the **National Council of Teaching of English (NCTE)** in his book *“Why School?”* (2012). Although I believe all of these literacies are important, number 1, 4, and 5 stand out to me when I think about the gaps I have witnessed with my students’ digital literacy, and will be the focus of this Tool Kit.

1. Develop proficiency with the tools of technology
2. Build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally
3. Design and share information for communities to meet a variety of purposes
4. Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information
5. Create, critique, analyze and evaluate multimedia texts
6. Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environment

Rationale

The purpose of this Tool Kit is to help educators in integrating technology into their teaching practice, and helping them to develop their students' digital and media literacy skills. The students we teach are "digital natives" (Neumann, 2016), which means they are growing up in a technological world and have access to vast amounts of multimedia at home and at school. Although students may be familiar and confident in using technology, they may not be literate in using technology as a learning tool. As 21st century learners, students can use technology to enhance their learning, provided they learn the necessary skills in critical thinking, analyzing, and processing. It is also important for students to learn how to navigate technology safely, respectfully, and ethically.

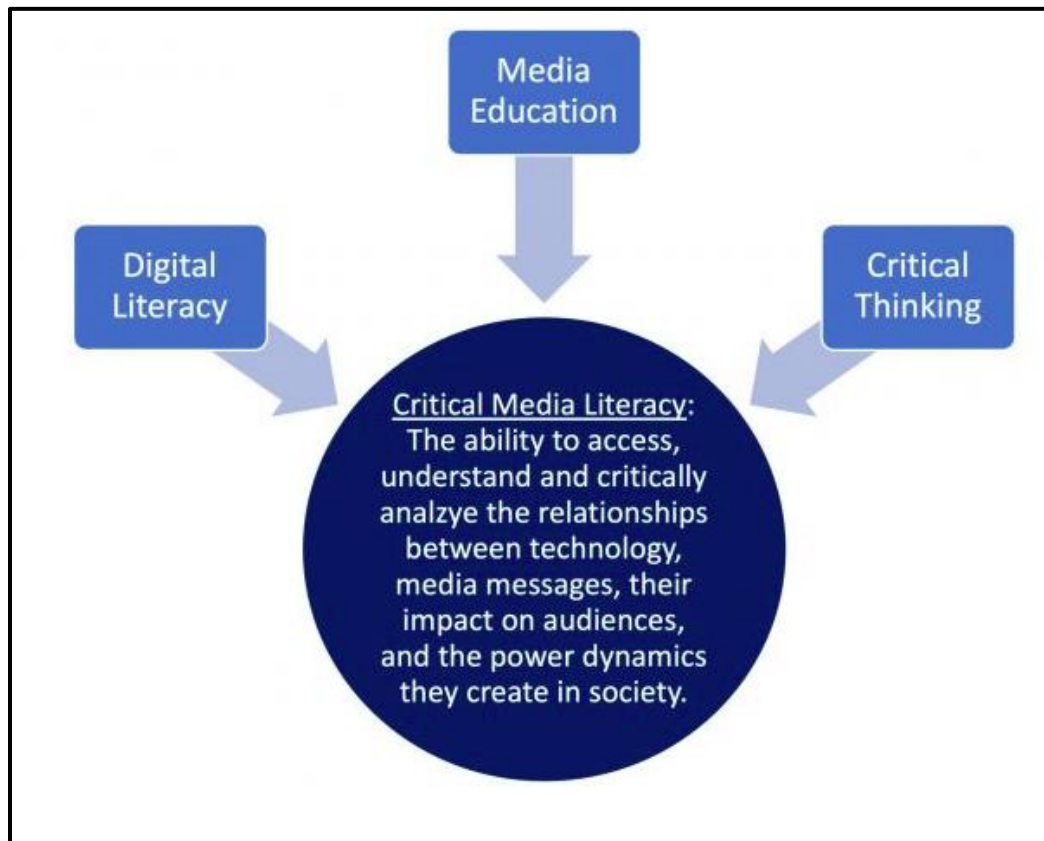
The Critical Media Literacy Toolkit will:

- Provide a scope, sequence, and sample lesson plans for intentionally teaching digital and critical media literacy in the classroom.
- Allow students (digital natives) to use their existing knowledge of technology to further develop their digital literacy skills.
- Teach students the skills to be able to use technology as an effective learning tool.
- Teach students to use technology and media safely, respectfully, and intentionally.
- Integrate the NCTE 21st Century Literacies, with a focus on:
 - Develop proficiency with the tools of technology
 - Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information
 - Create, critique, analyze and evaluate multimedia texts
- Provide a common language for students to develop their digital literacy from Kindergarten to Grade 7.
- Be used as a tool for teachers in the school who would like to integrate technology and digital/media literacy in their classroom.

How To Use The Critical Media Literacy Tool Kit

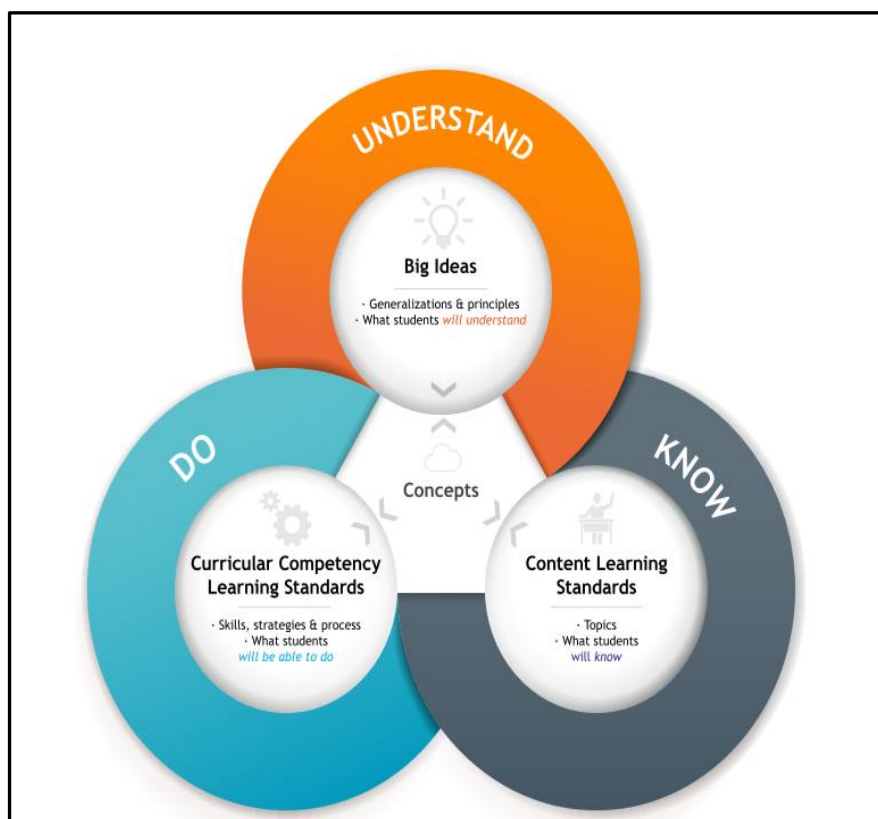
The Ministry of Education defines digital literacy as “the interest, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital technology and communication tools to access, manage, integrate, analyze and evaluate information, construct new knowledge, create and communicate with others” (Ministry of BC, 2020).

The Critical Media Literacy Tool Kit is not meant as an exhaustive list of lessons/activities, but rather a guide of activities that can be integrated into the classroom. With our limited instruction time, it is suggested that teachers first explicitly teach the outlined skills, and then provide opportunities to practice the skills by embedding them into other subject tasks. Each skill can be transferred cross-curricularly and will be more meaningful to students when they are able to practice and develop their skills in various areas of their learning. As *digital natives*, students can use their existing knowledge of technology, and further develop their skills to enhance their learning. The lessons, activities, games, and resources outlined in this Tool Kit will provide students with various opportunities to develop the above-mentioned skills and knowledge in relation to digital and media literacy. Before beginning, it is important to define “critical media literacy”. Keep this definition in mind during each lesson, skill development, and discussion. Read more about how I consolidated this definition on this [Blog Post](#).



1. Critical Media Literacy Scope and Sequence

The Critical Media Literacy Scope and Sequence is designed to parallel the BC Curriculum model of Know-Do-Understand. It is divided into six sections (what students should understand), as outlined in the Digital Literacy Framework document. Each section is then divided into sub-sections (what students should know), and further divided into specific skills (what students should be able to do).



BC Ministry of Education

There are 3 grade groups in focus for this Tool Kit:

Kindergarten to Grade 2, Grade 3 to Grade 5, and Grade 6 to Grade 7. The purpose of including all elementary grade levels in the Scope and Sequence allows for educators to collaborate and communicate between grade levels and create a common language for students to use throughout their years. Also, students can be introduced to a skill, and then reinforce and master the skill in later years. For each skill, there is an I, R, M, or Blank under the grade group.

- I = The skill introduced to the students. The teacher models the skill, provides guided instruction, then students practice.
- R = The skill should be reinforced. It has already been introduced in a previous year, and students should have various opportunities to practice.
- M = The skills should be mastered. The skill has been introduced and reinforced in previous grades, and students should be proficient enough to teach the skill to others.

Again, the Critical Media Literacy Scope and Sequence is merely a guide. It is important that teachers first assess the unique needs of their students and adapt their instruction accordingly. This may include direct instruction, teacher modelling, guided instruction, collaborative practice, and independent practice.

2. Sample Lessons and Activities

There are 18 sample lessons, activities, and games for each of the six sections. There is one lesson for each grade group in each section. Teachers may adapt the lessons to fit the needs of the students. Ongoing, formative assessment should be done throughout the lessons to monitor student skill development. The links redirect you a specific lesson, but you can also browse other resources on those sites.

3. Additional Resources

Included is a list of linked resources for additional apps, games, activities, and learning opportunities.

Digital Literacy Scope and Sequence					
I=Introduce, R=Reinforce, M=Master, Blank=Optional					
Digital Literacy Characteristic		Skills	Gr. K-2	Gr. 3-5	Gr. 6-7
1. Research and Information Literacy	a. Information Literacy	understands that anyone can publish on the Web, so not all sites are equally trustworthy	I	R	M
		understands that keyword searching is an effective way to locate information on the Internet and knows how to select keywords to produce the best search results.	I	R	M
		determines criteria for rating informational websites and apply them to an assigned site and understands that all websites are not equally good sources of information		I	R
		knows strategies to increase the accuracy of his/her keyword searches and is able to make inferences about the effectiveness of the strategies		I	R
		understands the importance of citing all sources when they do research and is able to write bibliographical citations for online sources.		I	R
		evaluates and selects information sources and digital tools based on the appropriateness to specific tasks			I
		understands that to conduct effective and efficient online searches, he/she must use a variety of searching strategies			I
	b. Information Processing and Management	understands and interprets data, and reports results.		I	R
		judges the validity of content found on the Internet, how to find appropriate material, and what sources can be trusted		I	R
		compares, contrasts, and synthesizes information from diverse sources (triangulates information) before it is used in a knowledge-making process.			I
2. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making	a. Specialized and Advanced Skills for Learning	gathers relevant digital information, e.g. other users' experiences, and assesses the quality of goods based on that information			I
		collects and analyzes data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.		I	R
		is able to build meaningful knowledge through interaction with digitally available resources		I	R
		uses digital technology to identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation			I
		uses digital technology to plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project			I
3. Creativity and Innovation	a. Specialized and Advanced Skills for Creative Expression	creates knowledge representations (e.g. mind maps, diagrams) using digital media			I
		uses a variety of digital media (text, images, audio, and movie) to express him/herself creatively	I	R	M
		applies existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes using digital technology		I	R
		creates original digital works as a means of personal or group expression		I	R
		uses digital models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues			I

		uses digital technology to identify trends and forecast possibilities			I
4. Digital Citizenship	a. Internet Safety	understands that he/she can go to exciting places online, but needs to follow certain rules to remain safe	I	R	M
		understands that he/she should stay safe online by choosing websites that are good for him/her to visit, and avoids sites that are not appropriate for him/her		I	R
		acknowledges the benefits of online talk and messaging, but knows how to handle situations or online behavior which may make them feel uncomfortable			I
	b. Privacy and Security	is aware that many websites ask for information that is private and knows how to responsibly handle such requests	I	R	M
		understands the reasons why people use passwords, the benefits of using passwords, and knows strategies for creating and keeping strong, secure passwords	I	R	M
		understands that the purpose of product websites is to encourage buying the product and is aware of methods used to promote products on these sites	I	R	M
		understands not to reveal private information to a person they know only online		I	R
		knows how to create secure passwords in order to protect their private information and accounts online		I	R
		knows what spam is, the forms it takes, and can identify strategies for dealing with it		I	R
		understands that children's websites must protect their private information and how to identify these secure sites by looking for their privacy policies and privacy seals of approval		I	R
		knows strategies for guarding against identity theft and scams that try to access his/her private information online			I
	c. Relationships and Communication	uses email to communicate with real people within his/her school, family, and community	I	R	M
		understands how the ability for people to communicate online can unite a community	I	R	M
		understands what it means to be responsible to and respectful of his/her offline and online communities as a way to learn how to be a good digital citizen		I	R
		demonstrates responsibility and respectfulness in his/her online communications and communities		I	R
		is aware of the benefits of online communication and able to handle situations of online behaviour that may make him or her uncomfortable			I
	d. Cyberbullying	understands what cyberbullying means and what he/she can do when he/she encounters it	I	R	M
		understands how it feels to be cyberbullied, how cyberbullying is similar to or different than in-person bullying, and strategies for handling cyberbullying when it arises		I	R
		understands that he/she may get online messages from other kids that can make him/her feel angry, hurt, sad, or fearful		I	R
		distinguishes good-natured teasing from cyberbullying			I
		understands the difference between being a passive bystander and an active intervener in cyberbullying situations			I
	e. Digital Footprint and Reputation	understands that the information they put online leaves a digital footprint or "trail." This trail can be big or small, helpful or hurtful, depending on how he/she manages it	I	R	M
		is aware that he/she has a digital footprint and that this information can be searched, copied, and passed on, and that he/she can take some control based on what he/she posts online			I

	f. Self-image and Identity	is aware that photographic images can be digitally manipulated for positive purposes or to mislead us, and can distort of our perceptions of beauty and health		I	R
		understands how the media can play a powerful role in shaping our ideas about girls and boys		I	R
		understands the social nature of digital media and technologies, and has basic vocabulary and knowledge for discussing the media landscape			I
		is aware of his/her media habits and the array of media he/she uses on a weekly basis, and the role of digital media in his/her life			I
		understands that presenting themselves in different ways online carries both benefits and risks			I
		is aware of the gender stereotypes that exist in video games, virtual worlds and elsewhere on the Internet			I
	g. Creative credit and Copyright	understands the concept of having ownership over creative work	I	R	M
		understands the concept of plagiarism, and when and how it is okay to use the work of others		I	R
		understands copyright and licence rules, fair use, and the rights he/she has as a creator			I
	h. Legal and Ethical Aspects	communicates and collaborates with others in accordance with codes of conduct appropriate to the context		I	R
		considers legal and ethical principles of use and publication of information			I
	i. Balanced Attitude towards Technology	understands that the digital environment can make things better or worse depending on how we use it		I	R
		exhibits a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity			I
		has a positive, but realistic attitude towards the benefits and risks associated with information technologies			I
		assesses and reduces/avoids technology related threats to his/her health			I
		has a general level of confidence to experiment with new technologies, but also to reject inappropriate technologies			I
		manages the potentially distracting aspects of working digitally			I
		exhibits a positive attitude towards learning about emerging digital technologies			I
	j. Understanding and Awareness of the Role of ICT in Society	understands the role of ICT in everyday life, in social life and at work.			I
		is aware of environmental issues related to the use of digital technologies			I
5. Communication	a. Technology Mediated	communicates effectively by email, takes into account the purpose and audience of his/her message, and the tone he/she wants to convey	I	R	M

and Collaboration	Communication and Collaboration				
		collaborates with others to outline common expectations in order to build a strong digital citizenship community		I	R
		develops cultural understanding and global awareness by engaging with learners of other cultures		I	R
		interacts, collaborates, co-constructs content, and publishes with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media.			I
		communicates information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats			I
		contributes to project teams to produce original works or solve problems			I
		communicates through ICT (e.g. email, instant messaging, video conferencing)			I
6. Technology Operations and Concepts	a. General Knowledge and Functional Skills	understands that computer programming algorithms are sets of instructions that tell computers what to do	I	R	M
		can use a digital device, which may be one of many types (e.g. Desktop PC, Laptop, Tablet, Smartphone)	I	R	M
		understands the difference between hardware and software and how they work together		I	R
		can design, write, and debug simple computer programs (e.g. Scratch or Scratch Jr.)		I	R
		understands the different parts and components of a computer and/or other digital devices and can solve problems by decomposing them into smaller parts		I	R
		knows about the existence of various operating systems and understands the differences between them			I
		possesses general computer skills (typing, using computers, launching a new program)			I
		can design, write and debug programs that accomplish specific goals, such as controlling or simulating physical systems			I
		can solve programmatic problems by decomposing them into smaller parts			I
	b. Use in Everyday Life	uses basic applications to edit and create content (text, numeric, images)		I	R
		is able to download and access different information types from the Internet			I
		searches, collects, process, evaluates, shares, and stores data and information using various devices, applications, or cloud services			I
		participates in society through online engagement in democratic actions (e.g. lobbying, petitions, parliament).			I
	c. Informed Decision Making	selects and uses applications effectively and productively (e.g. chooses the most appropriate technologies according to the task).			I
		understands the potential of digital devices and resources for her/his schoolwork			I
		knows the range of things that can be done using ICT/Internet			I

	d. Seamless Use	arranges and develop his/her personal working environment as an effective and reliable system			I
	Demonstrating Self-Efficacy	uses different ICT in a way that helps to achieve certain results more quickly, or more easily, or to achieve better results			I
	e. Learning about and with Digital Technologies	uses digital media to learn and develop		I	R
		uses a digital environment for lifelong learning (formal or informal)		I	R
		uses ICT resources to safely expand his/her own knowledge and connect to the world			I
		learns how to work with any new digital technology by trying it out, and using its internal guidance and help			I
		adapts smoothly to new technology, and learns how to use them, and integrates them into his/her environment.			I
		self-monitors personal goals and diagnoses deficiencies of digital competence required for reaching these goals			I

Sample Lessons and Activities

Research and Information Literacy

Lesson Link: Break the Fake From Mediasmarts.org	Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 20-30 mins
Learning Goal: I can show that not all online content is reliable.	Overview: In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea that what they see online may be deceptive. They explore the idea that content may be “framed” by their creators and consider what parts are left out of the frame.
Lesson Link: A Creator’s Rights and Responsibilities From CommonSense.org	Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 45 mins
Learning Goal: I can define ‘copyright’ and explain how it applies to creative work.	Overview: In this lesson, students will learn about the rights and responsibilities they have when it comes to the images they create and use.
Lesson Link: The Four Factors of Fair Use From CommonSense.org	Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 50 mins
Learning Goal: I can define the term ‘copyright’ and identify the purpose of the Four Factors of Fair Use.	Overview: In this lesson, students will learn about concepts like fair use, copyright, and public domain, and develop a framework they can use to better understand how fair use works in the real world.

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

<p>Lesson Link: So Many Choices! From MediaSmarts.ca</p>	<p>Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 45 mins</p>
<p>Learning Goal: I can use links and keywords to complete a safe search online.</p>	<p>Overview: This lesson introduces the students to the first steps in finding information on the Internet. Specifically, this lesson helps students understand the basic good practices of searching for something online: be accompanied by a trusted adult, start with a safe site and understand the use and power of using good links and keywords to find what they are looking for and to avoid bad results.</p>
<p>Lesson Link: Maps as Media From MediaSmarts.ca</p>	<p>Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 45 to 90 mins</p>
<p>Learning Goal: I can understand the constructed elements of a map and critically evaluate a map as a source of information.</p>	<p>Overview: In this lesson, students are introduced to Earth Day and the theme of “Green Cities”. After listening to a short presentation on the concept of a “green city” and elements that constitute a green city (e.g. renewable energy sources such as solar panels, more energy-efficient buildings, recycling programs, cleaner air and water) students participate in an activity where they count the number of parks on a map of their city or neighbourhood. Maps are then analyzed as a medium as students discuss how they are created, things they can and can’t show, and their effectiveness at communicating environmental information.</p>

Lesson Link: Scientific Detective From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 60 mins
<p>Learning Goal: I can investigate and analyze the properties of materials. I can understand the need to critically question media.</p>	<p>Overview: In this lesson, students use science and critical thinking to test the legitimacy of advertisers' claims about their products. The lesson begins with students viewing and discussing a series of ads that make claims about their products. Students read a case study about two girls who replicated experiments from advertisements as a science fair project, and discuss their findings. Then students conduct their own experiments to see if products live up to their claims.</p>

Creativity and Innovation

Lesson Link: Intro to Online Food Advertising From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 60 mins
<p>Learning Goal: I can understand overt messages in ads and apply my learning through a simulation ad.</p>	<p>Overview: In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea of online advertising and look at the ways that marketers create immersive and appealing online environments that draw and hold children's attention. After studying common advertising techniques, students play an educational online game that lets them put their learning into action by "creating" a site advertising a fictitious cereal, Co-Co Crunch.</p>

<p>Lesson Link: Avatars and Body Image From MediaSmart.ca</p>	<p>Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 60 to 90 mins</p>
<p>Learning Goal: I can collaborate to create a media product that communicates self-perception and representation.</p>	<p>Overview: In this lesson students are introduced to the concept of “avatars” and share their experiences creating and playing avatars in video games and virtual worlds. They then create avatars using a program that is intentionally limited in terms of available body types and gender markers, first creating an avatar of their own gender and then of the opposite gender, and then discuss the program and relate it to representations of gender and body image in games and virtual worlds and in other media.</p>
<p>Lesson Link: The Disconnection Challenge From MediaSmarts.ca</p>	<p>Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 120 mins</p>
<p>Learning Goal: I can reflect on my media use and prepare a detailed action plan using technology.</p>	<p>Overview: In this lesson, students consider the role of technology and media in their lives and then spend a week either tracking or limiting their media use. They then share their experiences and discuss how the ways that digital media tools are made may cause us to use them differently (or simply more often). Finally, students draw on those insights to create a mindful media use plan. In an optional extension activity, they interview other students for a video exploring their experiences and reflections over the course of the project.</p>

Digital Citizenship

Lesson Link: Representing Ourselves Online From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 60 to 90 mins
Learning Goal: I can reflect on the relationship of virtual identities to personal identities.	Overview: In this lesson, students talk about dressing up and taking on identities that are similar to or different from them. They are then introduced to the idea of avatars as a kind of “dressing up” inside video games and consider the ways in which the technical, generic and aesthetic limitations on avatar creation and customization affect their choices and their ability to represent themselves online.
Lesson Link: Is It Cyberbullying? From CommonSense.org	Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 45 mins
Learning Goal: I can recognize similarities and difference between in-person and cyberbullying.	Overview: In this lesson, students will learn about what cyberbullying is -- and what it isn't -- cyberbullying, and give develop the tools they'll need to combat the problem.
Lesson Link: Cyberbullying and Civic Participation From Commonsense.org	Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 60 mins
Learning Goal: I can understand the role of rules, values, and ethics	Overview: This lesson allows students to explore the concepts of rules, values and ethics and learn how they influence our decision-making.

in helping us prevent cyberbullying.	Students are then invited to consider how they can contribute to create positive online cultures.
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Communication and Collaboration

Lesson Link: Who is your Online Community? From CommonSense.org	Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 30 mins
Learning Goal: I can compare and contrast how I am connected to different people and places, in person and on the internet.	Overview: In this lesson, students explore how the internet connects us to people in our community and throughout the world. Help your students think critically about the different ways they connect with others, both in person and online.

Lesson Link: Editing Emotions From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 60 to 120 mins
Learning Goal: I can work together to practice film editing.	Overview: In this lesson, students learn about the history of film editing and how shot composition, juxtaposition of images and the use of rhythm and repetition in film editing can affect the emotional impact of a film. Students begin by watching a video on the basics of film editing and answering questions to aid their comprehension. They then view and analyze a slideshow demonstrating basic ways in which the “building blocks” of film editing can affect a film’s emotional impact, and discuss how this can affect a film’s rating. Finally, students create their own film

	and/or storyboard, using the editing techniques they've learned to produce different emotional effects with the same collection of shots.
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Lesson Link: The Disconnection Challenge From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 120 mins
Learning Goal: I can reflect on my media use and prepare a detailed action plan using technology.	Overview: In this lesson, students consider the role of technology and media in their lives and then spend a week either tracking or limiting their media use. They then share their experiences and discuss how the ways that digital media tools are made may cause us to use them differently (or simply more often). Finally, students draw on those insights to create a mindful media use plan. In an optional extension activity, they interview other students for a video exploring their experiences and reflections over the course of the project.

Technology Operations and Concepts

Lesson Link: Film Production – Who does What? From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade K to Grade 2 Duration: 90 mins
Learning Goal: I can begin to operate some media equipment.	Overview: This lesson is one of a five-part unit that provides teachers with ideas for teaching TV in the elementary classroom. In this lesson, students

	look at the equipment used to produce television and film, and learn about the members of the film production team and their duties.
Lesson Link: Computer Basics From CommonSense.org	Grade 3 to Grade 5 Duration: 60 mins
Learning Goal: I can define the hardware and software and identify the basic parts of a computer.	Overview: In this lesson, students will learn and practice terms to define the hardware, software, and parts of a computer.
Lesson Link: Editing Emotions From MediaSmarts.ca	Grade 6 to Grade 7 Duration: 60 to 120 mins
Learning Goal: I can use film editing techniques to create and share a media product.	Overview: In this lesson, students learn about the history of film editing and how shot composition, juxtaposition of images and the use of rhythm and repetition in film editing can affect the emotional impact of a film. Students begin by watching a video on the basics of film editing and answering questions to aid their comprehension. They then view and analyze a slideshow demonstrating basic ways in which the “building blocks” of film editing can affect a film’s emotional impact and discuss how this can affect a film’s rating. Finally, students create their own film and/or storyboard, using the editing techniques they’ve learned to produce different emotional effects with the same collection of shots.

Additional Resources

[Common Sense](https://commonsense.org).org is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in the world of media and technology. You can find tons of lesson plans, videos, games, and teacher resources.

[Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org) is a non-profit organization devoted to educational access and expanding the range of creative works available to students to legally use and share.

[Media Literacy Now](https://medialiteracynow.org) is a movement to create a public education system that ensures all students learn the 21st century literacy skills they need for health, well-being, economic participation, and citizenship. On their website, you can find current news, resources, and ways to get involved in the cause.

[Media Smarts](https://mediasmarts.ca).ca is an organization that supports students and adults in digital and media education. They promote critical thinking via educational resources and help students learn to analyze content and media.

[Center for Media Literacy](https://centerformedia literacy.org) provides resources for teachers using evidence-based studies.

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