

Digital Literacy Training Program for Canadian Educators

Background

For over twenty years, MediaSmarts has been a leader in defining and supporting media and digital literacy education in Canada. Our ground breaking framework for integrating digital literacy into K-12 classrooms -- [*Use, Understand & Create: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*](#) -- is built on findings from MediaSmarts' research studies [*Young Canadians in a Wired World*](#) and [*Connected to Learn: Teachers' Experiences with Networked Technologies in the Classroom*](#), and on outcomes from the discussion paper [*Mapping Digital Literacy Policy and Practice in the Canadian Education Landscape*](#). The framework provides a holistic approach which recognizes that the different skills that make up digital literacy cannot be fully separated and identifies seven overlapping aspects of digital literacy – ethics and empathy, privacy and security, finding and verifying, digital health, consumer awareness, community engagement, and making and remixing. Intended as an 'evergreen' platform, the framework will be continually updated to respond to the needs of Canadian students and their teachers. Resources in the framework are linked to curriculum outcomes for every province and territory and include supplementary materials for parents to promote continued learning at home.

About the Digital Literacy Training Program

While our research shows that teachers place considerable importance on teaching their students digital skills such as authenticating information, managing privacy, addressing cyberbullying and being safe online, evidence suggests this is not reflected in Canadian classrooms. To support educators in doing this, MediaSmarts has received funding to conduct a series of free digital literacy workshops in faculties of education across the country. The intent of these workshops is to provide pre-service teachers with information and skills to support the implementation of digital literacy into their teaching practice and to prepare them to develop digital literacy lessons and activities that suit their students' needs.

The workshops will provide an overview of essential digital literacy skills and competencies, familiarize participants with the digital experiences of Canadian youth, and introduce them to the resources and tools that are available through the *USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE* digital literacy framework.

The ideal workshop length is three hours, but there is flexibility in this. In the three hour workshop participants will explore MediaSmarts' lessons and resources and then develop their own. We are hoping to include as many participants as possible to have maximum impact. Workshops will be customized to align with each region's curriculum and learning approach, as well as offering different content depending on the grade level(s) that participants are preparing to teach.

Workshop Outline

For the digital literacy training program, faculties of education may choose from two workshop options, depending on the amount of time available.

- A three hour workshop where groups of participants engage in five interactive digital literacy activities followed by a reflection/lesson design activity;
- A two hour workshop where groups of participants engage in five interactive digital literacy activities;

Each workshop starts with a preliminary self-assessment: What do I know about teaching digital literacy? How confident am I?

Discussions and activities will include:

1. A brief overview of the key concepts of media literacy.
2. An introduction to the five key concepts of digital literacy (as defined by MediaSmarts), accompanied by an interactive activity to explore or illustrate each one. (Activities will vary based on the grade levels that participants are studying for. Sample activities below would be for mixed-grade workshops.)
 - a. **Digital media are networked:** Viral video activity to demonstrate authentication skills;
 - b. **Digital media are persistent and shareable:** Media production activity to illustrate search ability of online content;
 - c. **Digital media have unexpected audiences:** Internet time capsule activity to consider unanticipated audiences;
 - d. **What happens via digital media is real, but doesn't always feel real:** Perspective-taking activity to examine "empathy traps" of online communication;
 - e. **Digital media experiences are influenced by the architecture of the platforms:** Avatar design activity to explore the impact of game platforms on body image.
3. An overview of MediaSmarts' K-12 digital literacy resources.
4. A discussion on opportunities provided by digital technology.
5. A reflection/lesson design activity (three hour workshop only) where participants work in groups to develop a digital literacy activity for the grade level and subject of their choice, then share their work and receive feedback from the group and the facilitator.

Each workshop concludes with a post self-assessment: How confident do I feel now? What more do I want to learn?