

What Parents and Teachers Need to Know about Media Literacy and Gambling, Gaming, and Digital Media Use

Information, Facts, Resources, and Conversation Starters

What is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is the ability for individuals to understand how the media works. Being media literate means understanding how to access, analyze, and produce media.

Why Focus on Media Literacy?

Continued advances in technology have given companies platforms to market and advertise products and services. These advances also include persuasive design concepts that utilize psychological and social theories to keep people engaged and spending money on products and services. The goal of media is monetary. In addition, technology has connected the world and provided a platform for people to create and share messages. It is vital to understand how to be a responsible digital media citizen of the world. What we share online not only reflects ourselves, but it impacts those around us. Media literacy can empower adolescents and young adults to make smart choices.

What Are Examples of Advances in Technology?

Technology has made analysis of behaviors possible with big data and natural language processing. This information is sold to advertisers, and algorithms on internet behaviors are created to target individuals by showing them information that is likely to appeal to them. Technology has given companies tools to know us better than sometimes we know ourselves and this gives them power over us and our decisions. Media literacy empowers us to make decisions independently.

“Media literacy is a risk management strategy. By creating habits of mind that allow you to better identify and evaluate risk, you create lifelong strategies for making decisions that benefit you. This strengthens your ability to stand up against the incentive that encourages you to lose control.”

– Tessa Jolls, President, Center for Media Literacy

8.01 billion people in the world



5.16 billion people use the internet

4.76 billion people are active social media users



3.32 billion people play video games

Big data are large data sets that may be analyzed to reveal patterns and trends in human behavior



Natural language processing or artificial intelligence give computers the ability to understand texts and spoken words

Algorithms record what we do online and create a more personalized experience for each user



What Are the Center for Media Literacy (CML) Core Concepts and Key Questions?

Media messages are built just like an architect would build a home. The creative process allows for choices to be made based on what appeals to the target audience. Media messages must be analyzed by taking into consideration colors, shapes, lighting, symbols, the people, the emotional appeal, and persuasive appeal. Our differences influence our various interpretations, and our similarities create a common understanding. All media carry subtle messages about who and what is important. The internet provides multiple reasons for all users to be able to recognize legitimate information versus propaganda or trickery used with false information or websites.



All media messages are constructed.

Who created this message?

Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Different people experience the same media message differently. How might different people understand this message differently?

Media have embedded values and points of view. What lifestyles, values & points of view are represented, or omitted from this message?

Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. Why is this message being sent?

What Is CML's Empowerment Spiral?

The Empowerment Spiral gives students a framework for thinking about the core concepts and questions, and will help them make smarter choices.

Awareness allows for students to participate in an activity that leads to observations and personal connections for potential insight

Analysis provides students with time to figure out how an issue came to be. Applying the five key questions and conducting an analysis is an example of ways to better understand the complexities of the issue

Reflection allows for students to go deeper and ask questions and consider different beliefs or ethical decisions

Action gives students an opportunity to formulate action ideas. Deciding not to act is an action. Raising awareness of something learned with the school would be an example of an action step

For more information on training, please reach out to the Center for Media Literacy.

What Do “Gamification” and “Gamblification” Mean?

Gamification is the application of gaming elements to everyday non-gaming activities. This includes adding game style incentives, challenges, and rewards to increase user engagement. An easy example is applications which allow users to unlock rewards while setting goals or tracking progress. Gambling websites have added in gaming elements to increase player engagement and create a shared experience.

Gamblification is a term used to the incorporation of gambling elements into nongambling activities. This includes visual elements, language, and activities. Researchers indicate this term emerged in the late 2000s and describes the combining of the sports culture and the gambling industry. Free-to-play online games utilize gambling mechanics within the microtransactions presented throughout game play. Gaming statistics from 2023 indicate around 85% of all revenue in the digital game industry comes from free-to-play games.



What Do I Need to Know About Gambling?

With advances in technology, gambling has become an extremely profitable and popular activity for adults and has become increasingly present in everyday life. With the increased expansion of online gambling, young people have also increased their gambling activities. Despite adolescent gambling being illegal, youth engage in gambling with a prevalence rate higher than adults. Young people are more at-risk for developing a problem related to gambling because they have developing brains, are more impulsive, and believe in the myths around their ability to control the outcome. Influences for youth gambling are also family and peers gambling behaviors and misleading marketing and advertising that tout the social and financial rewards of gambling.

What Are Important Concepts to Remember About Gambling?



Gambling is putting something down of value on an uncertain outcome in hopes of gaining something of greater value



Gambling is normalized, glamorized in the media, and parents gamble with children with little to no awareness that gambling can become an addiction



False beliefs or myths around gambling give people the illusion of control



Gambling has become a commercial enterprise and there is no type of gambling where you can make money in the long run



Youth and young adults have higher prevalence rates of problem gambling than adults

How Is Gambling Being Marketing, Advertised, and Directed at Youth?

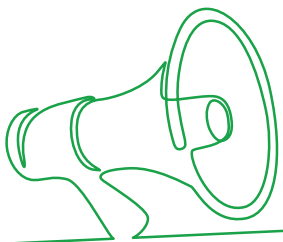
Gambling marketing and advertising are being directed at children and adolescents utilizing social media, in-game advertising, online ads and promotions, gambling websites and apps, billboards and public advertising, promotional products, sports-betting sponsorships, and celebrity endorsements. A recent study of gambling marketing on Twitter demonstrated how adolescents are being exposed to gambling advertising and are sharing and retweeting messages from gambling companies. Online influencers also encourage children and adolescents to purchase skins which are cosmetic items for avatars, within games and buy, sell, trade, or gamble them on esports tournaments on third-party websites. Online influencers are paid by companies because they have followers. There are also in-game advertising techniques that are reaching children while they play their favorite online games. Gaming stats for 2023 indicate that 74% of American mobile gamers prefer to watch in-game ads if they get perks within the game. Another example is sports betting, which is heavily advertised, and young men are the target.

How Is the Gamification of Gambling Important in Media Literacy?

Taking the conversation into the realm of gamification of gambling, simulated gambling activities such as social casino games (with no payout of real-world money) and gambling persuasive design principles are incorporated into social media and the games children and adolescents play. These techniques are found in the microtransactions that are presented throughout games, but also the reward schedule of virtual items provided within the game. These persuasive design principles keep people engaged and spending money.

What Is Persuasive Design?

Persuasive design is a combination of psychological and social theories utilized to drive human behaviors. Technology has given companies information to know us better than sometimes we know ourselves and this gives them power over us and our decisions. These tactics give companies an understanding of how to frame and use the information they have gathered on each of us to influence our behavior. An example is the scarcity principle. When there is less of something, it becomes valuable.



“ Gaining media literacy skills takes practice over time. The strategies teach you to engage students or your children in questioning media messages that will give them skills for life.”

– Tessa Jolls, President, Center for Media Literacy

What Are Examples of Persuasive Design Techniques in Gambling and Gaming?

The illusion of control is a vital element in gambling. Skill-based games give people even more of an illusion of control. For example, Candy Crush Saga provides boosters giving players the illusion they are affecting the outcome. Mixing and matching of candy can create a feeling of excitement around not just winning, but also near misses, just like slot machines. Candy Crush also provides rewards throughout the game that releases dopamine in the brain, which impacts human behaviors by forming habits. Too much dopamine and too little dopamine have been related to mental health and neurological disorders.

A social scientist would describe a variable-ratio schedule as a response that is rewarded after an unpredictable amount of time has passed. In a lab setting, a rat would be delivered food pellets after one lever press, again after four lever presses, and again after two lever presses. This random schedule of being provided rewards reinforces behaviors in humans too.

The slot machine is a good example of this type of schedule. The slot machine gives the illusion of control by giving unpredictable small rewards every so often. Slot machines are gambling's biggest money maker and have been labeled "the crack cocaine" of gambling. Online casinos utilize these concepts and combine gaming tactics to keep players online and engaged with a shared identity among its members. Social casino games further blur the lines of gaming and gambling with no actual payouts of real money. This gives players an illusion of control because social casino games are not regulated and have big payouts and large bonuses of virtual coins.

Loot boxes or loot crates are mystery boxes purchased throughout video game play. These crates contain virtual items. Gaming companies do not reveal loot box content in advance, and they can be purchased with real-world money or in-game currency. The loot box is presented to players utilizing a variable-ratio schedule. The combination of paying to open a loot box and a chance-based reward has led to investigations.

The combination of paying to open a loot box and a chance-based reward has led to investigations and allegations that loot boxes are gambling. Skins are items found within loot boxes. Skins are cosmetic items for the avatar within the game. Skins can be bought, sold, traded, and gambled on esports competitions websites.

Esports, video game competitions, can be viewed in-person in big venues and or in the comfort of home in a virtual environment. Many esports fans will watch their favorite player on a streaming service. The esports players are considered superstars and can utilize their influence to encourage fans to purchase skins or bet on esports tournaments. Skins are virtual cosmetic items purchased in games for a gamer's avatar. The scarcity principle is a technique utilized in skin development. Unique skins are in high demand and can also carry a large price tag.



The profile of the indulgent sports bettor

Young, male,
and single



High perception of
knowledge and skills

Impulsive and may
use substances



Influenced by peers

Multiple betting accounts
and frequently uses promotions



What Is an Example of Advertising and Marketing of Gambling Products and Services with Advances in Technology?

Sports betting marketing and advertising strategies are very important topics of conversation as states and jurisdictions continue to legalize in-person and online sports betting. Sports gambling advertising utilizes certain narratives and persuasive design concepts to engage people in sports betting.

College and University students are being bombarded with advertising and marketing. Partnerships and naming rights are also emerging as important topics of conversations as college and university administrations consider marketing to their students on behalf of the gambling companies without taking into consideration that gambling is as addictive as drugs or alcohol.

The techniques utilized by sports betting companies build on skill-enhancing narratives giving those who gamble a feeling that they have an advantage and the illusion of control. Betting operators use a persuasive design concept using a theory that suggests that humans must process large amounts of information and need to make immediate decisions. This allows gambling operators to utilize a skill-enhancing narrative to their benefit. By creating bets throughout the game that seem the most plausible or represent that person's bias or beliefs, decisions can be made quickly.

Another impactful tactic is the control and masculinity narrative, which depicts the idea that "real men" gamble on their favorite sports teams because they need to be loyal and placing a wager makes them appear manly. There is also a risk-lowering advertising narrative to make people believe they have little to no risk. This narrative or message includes banners or displays that say, "everyone is a winner." A part of this narrative is what sports betting companies call risk-free bets and promotions that provide people with credits upfront to gamble.

Sports betting is becoming a normalized part of being a sports fan and a social form of entertainment. Normalizing the activity is an important aspect within persuasive design. Watching a gambling advertisement with your favorite sports player or hearing that your favorite online influencer is betting skins on the next upcoming esports tournament is a persuasive design technique using social and psychological theories of human behavior. Media literacy can assist students and our children understand how to critically read information, identify narratives, and learn to make smart decisions.



Place Your Bet with Us and Win Free Money! Act Now!

*Want to brag with the boys about your favorite soccer team with an extra kick? Get a **Risk-Free Bet** up to \$200. Invite a friend and get another Risk-Free bet worth \$500.*

You know the stats and your team better than anyone else!

Use the promo code below to enter to win!

Promo code: Winner

(This advertisement was produced as an example of a sports betting advertisement.)



“Once you establish good habits in managing risk through media literacy, you will have a lifelong strategy for making smart choices comfortably.”

– Tessa Jolls, President,
Center for Media Literacy

Stop for a moment and return to the description of CML’s Core Concepts, Key Questions, and the Empowerment Spiral.

This media message was constructed to attract young males to place a sports wager on their favorite team. The young men depicted in the picture appear to have either just won a bet or watched their favorite team/player win or score. They are all wearing the same scarves to indicate they are friends who are loyal to one team. They are also in a social setting, which could be a bar or another setting. What would someone of a different age, race, sex, ethnicity see in this advertisement? Would an adolescent with no media literacy training find this ad appealing? The values embedded in this ad are that being

a man, betting, and sport are combined. This media message was constructed to get people to place a bet. The end goal is for the bystander to become a loyal customer, who is engaged on the platform, and invites others to join as well.

By looking at the empowerment spiral, we have raised awareness of sports betting narratives that encourage a target audience to place a sports bet. Analyzing the ad has given us information from our own perspective, but what would someone else say about this advertisement? It is important to reflect on how we feel about sports betting advertisement and how we plan to engage with them in the future. Now that we know that these narratives are persuasive design tactics to get people to place a wager and that commercial gambling will not allow you to make money in the long-term, what are next steps? Empowering students or your children to take action and find a way to raise awareness of what they are learning will give them skills in critical thinking and communicating with others about what they are learning.

What Are Important Concepts to Remember about Esports Betting?



Esports is competitive video game play that is played in an official or structured setting

Research indicates 17 percent of the esports audience is under the age of 16, while as many as 69 percent are ages 16-23



Esports betting is the process of putting real-world money on the outcome of exports leagues and tournaments

Thirty-two percent of 13-39-year-olds would rather watch esports than traditional sports



The three most common types of esports betting are real-world money, social betting between friends, and skins gambling

What Does this Increase in Access with Advertising and Marketing and Persuasive Design Concepts Mean for Gambling and Gaming Industries?



By 2025, the casino gambling, internet gambling, sports betting and daily fantasy sports are projected to reach \$15 billion in the U.S.

By 2030, those markets are forecast to reach \$30 billion in the U.S.



What Is Research Showing About Marketing and Advertising Directed to Youth?



Eight of 10 young people are able to identify a list of gambling firms

Almost a third of all replies and retweets of esports gambling Twitter posts were from children under the age of 16



More than 95 percent of children see gambling advertisements on television, in sport and on social media

Esports ads are more appealing to children and young people than to older adults



Research found 41,000 children under 16 follow bookmakers' accounts

Esports media companies have been using Snapchat's gaming content to reach more adolescents



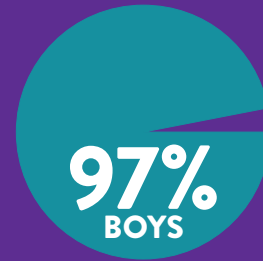
Are Adolescent Screen Time Behaviors Impacted with Advances in Technology?



The average screen time for adolescents is 8 hours and 56 minutes per day



Around 97 percent of adolescents are on social media



Around 97 percent of boys and 83 percent of girls play online games



“An important component in effectively treating digital media overuse is supporting in-person connection.”

— Tracy Markle, Digital Media Treatment & Education Center

What Are Youth Gambling Activities?

Playing cards and dice for money		Internet gambling	
Buying lottery or scratch off tickets		Bingo	
Sports and Esports betting		Purchasing loot boxes	
Games of skill		Skin betting	
Horse or dog racing		Playing social casino games	

“It is very important to understand that gambling is illegal for children and adolescents and research shows that those who engage in an addictive behavior early in life increase their chances of becoming addicted later in life. Family gambling patterns and genetics also play a large role in a young person developing a problem with gambling.”

– Amanda Winters, Problem Gambling Administrator, NC Problem Gambling Program

“Humans shape technology and technology shapes human behaviors. Online harms do exist. There need to be safe design concepts created and enforced to protect children, adolescents, and young adults.”

– Center for Humane Technology

What Are the Harms Associated with Problematic Gambling, Gaming, and Digital Media Use?

- Gambling Disorder and Gaming Disorder are recognized in professional diagnostic manuals
- Problems related to gaming, gambling, and digital media overuse can impact mental health, relationships, school, work, and overall wellbeing
- Social media may impact sleep cycles and body images of youth
- Social media can expose youth to cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, sexual content, alcohol, gambling, and other unhealthy products
- Social media, especially for girls, is associated with mental health issues
- Youth may be exposed to pornography by typing in the wrong website or they may be interested and actively seek out pornography
- Information seeking on the internet can lead to bogus or unhealthy content or an uncontrollable urge to gather information
- Excessive technology use in adolescents can impair executive functioning in the brain in the areas of attention and working memory skills
- Dopamine released during excessive gambling impacts the brain similar to how substance overuse impacts the brain and can contribute to living with an addiction
- Research indicates a consistent relationship between violent video game use and increase in aggressive behavior and decrease in prosocial behavior and empathy
- Recent research indicates a connection with loot box purchases and problem gaming and gambling and past-month skins gambling and problem gambling



What Are Risk Factors to Consider?

Understanding risk factors for developing problematic behaviors is key in understanding why some people develop addictions and others do not. Risk factors including genetics, environment, personality, and coping skills, which all play a role. For example, those living with ADHD and autism spectrum disorder are at a greater risk for digital media overuse because of lack of impulse control, social difficulties, and emotional dysregulation.

Understanding brain health and its impact on overall health and wellbeing is another key factor. Brain health can be impacted by mental health disorders, neurological disorders, traumatic brain injuries, addictions, genetics, social determinants of health, technology, intellectual developmental disabilities, learning differences, trauma, disabilities, and chronic disease.

When a young person grows up in an environment with risk factors and no protective factors, lasting changes in the brain and body can lead to mental health disorder addictions, heart disease, stroke, cancer, COPD, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and suicide.

What Are the Benefits of Video Gaming and Digital Media Use?

It is important to acknowledge that a healthy media diet can lead to positive social and cognitive development. Making sure that children, adolescents, and young adults who have developing brains live a balanced life is key. This means being connected to caring adults and having other activities and interests beyond the virtual world.



Video gaming may be beneficial for the development of some cognitive skills such as problem solving, working memory, task switching, and attention skills



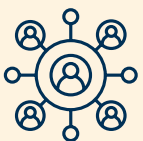
Video games can improve skills in collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and understanding behavior



Research indicates video gaming may increase gray matter in the brain and boost brain connectivity



Video games can help with hand-eye-coordination and improve social connections



Digital media can provide an opportunity to learn new information or explore new interests



Educational games, apps, and websites are being explored as excellent ways to engage students in learning

“ Shifting perspectives by thinking of media content the way we think of nutrition can help us balance our digital plates. Content that nourishes us is like whole fruits and veggies, while media that draws us into endless cycles of screen use is like fried processed foods. Making ourselves a balanced plate of media consumption helps achieve digital wellness.”

– Stephanie Diez-Morel,
Reboot & Recover

What Prevention Education, Resources, and Conversation Starters Are Available for Teachers and Parents?



“Teachable and nonjudgmental moments between parents, teachers, and children utilizing prevention education and conversation starters are tools for success.”

– Alison Drain, Youth Prevention and Treatment Specialist, NC Problem Gambling Program

What Resources Are Available?

[National Council on Problem Gambling \(NCPG\)](#) has affiliates throughout the country providing services in the areas of prevention, treatment, and recovery to communities for problem gambling. Many of the affiliates have YPE programs available. Reach out to your local resource by contacting NCPG.

[The Center for Media Literacy \(CML\)](#) has free evidence-based curriculum available online. This curriculum provides teachers with lessons and key concepts and questions to help guide students through the empowerment spiral while learning about media literacy ideas and skills. Please reach out to CML for available training.

[The North Carolina Problem Gambling Program \(NCPGP\)](#) partnered with CML to create a lesson combining CML’s curriculum, SEL, Youth Prevention Education, and project-based learning. Reach out to Alison Drain, Youth Prevention and Treatment Specialist, to learn more at alison.drain@dhhs.nc.gov. The curriculum is free, but all interested parties must attend a CML training and an introduction to adolescent problem gambling and gaming training.

[The Center for Humane Technology](#) provides resources and a youth toolkit to be utilized by both teachers and parents as conversation starters regarding healthy social media diets.

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#) provides resources, training, and technical support for school systems in Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

[Common Sense Media](#) offers free prevention curriculum for various grade levels and resources for parents and teachers.

[Children and Screens Institute of Digital Media and Child Development](#) has resources and offers free webinars that are recorded and put on their YouTube channel.

[Digital Media Treatment and Education Center](#) offers trainings for a fee and provides treatment.

[Powered Up](#) is an online resource for parents and their children. For a small fee, parents and their children can watch videos. Parents will learn how to talk to their children about their gaming and children will learn about the importance of having a balanced life and risk factors associated with gaming disorder.

[Reboot & Recover](#) provides assessments, treatment, and resources for parents in the areas of digital media overuse, gaming disorder, substance use disorders, and gambling disorders. Teachers can also reach out to Reboot & Recover to license problem gaming and internet media use YPE curriculum.

[Gamequitters.com](#) provides an online platform for both youth and parents to explore an online community, resources, and support for treatment and recovery.

[The National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) has released data from a landmark study on the effects of screen time on children. This information can provide data for parents and teachers.

[The International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours](#) has resources for parents, teachers, and researchers.

[Stacked Deck](#) is the only evidence-based problem gambling prevention curriculum for middle school and high school students. It can be purchased from Hazelden Publishing Company.

What Do Parents and Teachers Need to Know About Resilience?

Adversity can come in many different forms. Social scientists, in the fields of problem gambling, gaming, and digital media overuse, have shown through research that taking a public health perspective including the individual, family, community, and society is imperative. This theory coupled with the social determinants of health, understanding that where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age, can have an impact on the overall health and wellbeing of an individual is a key combination. Research has proven that both nature (genetics) and nurture (environment) make an impact on a young person's life. Adversity can look like unsafe neighborhoods and schools, community violence, domestic violence, natural disaster, food deserts, living with someone with mental health issues or addictions, living with someone who has been incarcerated, witnessing divorce, or experiencing neglect or verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse. Adversity can also look like living with mental health conditions such as ADHD, developmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder, or learning differences such as dyslexia. Each person is affected differently by adversity and trauma due to their genetics, age, personality, environment, and resiliency tools.

What parents and teachers need to know about resilience is that living a mindful life and learning to control emotions will help build a resilient brain and a resilient body. Being resilient means that a person is provided skills to help keep them calm during times of stress. With practice, these skills can create healthy changes in the brain and create lasting healthy habits. The way a young person deals with that adversity in an unhealthy way is what researchers call “maladaptive coping skills” and can become mental health disorders and addictions. Learning to cope with life and build healthy relationships is vital for all human beings. Learning to control emotions is the key.



“Research has shown that regardless of the number of traumatic events or the amount of adversity a young person experiences, protective factors can combat those experiences and help that individual grow to become a healthy adult with good relationships. This means those who are vulnerable, living with many risk factors, can overcome adversity in life when connected to a caring adult and supportive community.”

— Alison Wood-Drain, Youth Treatment and Prevention Specialist,
North Carolina Problem Gambling Program



What Is Social Emotional Learning and Youth Prevention Education and How Can These Methods Impact Resilience?

Adult and student social emotional learning competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making. It is the process through which children, adolescents, and adults learn skills to support healthy development and relationships. Universal Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is being promoted across the country as an excellent prevention tool for school systems. Evidence shows that when SEL is implemented with intentional efforts, students have positive attitudes toward self and others and in the long-term have better mental health and academic success.

Youth Prevention Education (YPE) programs focus on reducing high-risk behaviors and have been proven to promote academic success, build resilience, and increase decision-making skills. The Center for Media Literacy (CML) has an evidence-based curriculum using Core Concepts and Key Questions to assist students in being able to understand how to access, analyze, and produce media and become a responsible digital media citizen of the world. By combining universal SEL with YPE programs, school systems can reduce high-risk behaviors and improve mental health and academic success.

“Both SEL and YPE can contribute to building resilience in youth and assist them in understanding how to responsibly reflect on how they think, feel, and act and how they impact others. The CML’s Media literacy curriculum can certainly provide a framework for youth to learn to the importance of awareness, analysis, reflection, and action. In North Carolina, we have partnered with CML to continue to adjust our prevention education program to incorporate media literacy and an understanding of how technological advances are making an impact on how children, adolescents, and young adults are spending their time and their money.”

— Alison Wood-Drain, Youth Treatment and Prevention Specialist, North Carolina Problem Gambling Program

What Do Parents and Teachers Need to Know about Sleep?

According to a new study that provided population level evidence that lack of sleep during early adolescents and young adulthood makes an impact on the neurodevelopment of youth. Insufficient sleep, less than 9 hours per night in kids, showed a smaller gray matter volume in some key brain regions related to many different high-order functions like memory, attention and inhibition control. Insufficient sleep also had an impact on memory, anxiety, depression, problem-solving and school performance. Less sleep is due to the screen use of youth today. Interventions on the importance of sleep are needed in homes and in school curriculum.

What is suggested sleep time for young people by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine?

- 1–2 years: 11 to 14 hours (including naps)
- 3–5 years: 10 to 13 hours (including naps)
- 6–12 years: 9 to 12 hours
- 13–18 years: 8 to 10 hours



What are some interventions to consider?

No screens in the bedroom after bedtime



Establish a relaxing bedtime schedule



Encourage physical activity during the day



Limit caffeine



Keep sleep consistent on weekends



Talk to your kids about the importance of sleep



What Are Conversation Starters and Action Steps for Parents and Teachers?

Be curious, nonjudgmental, and get to know what your students or children are doing online. It is important to have open dialogue that allows students or children to know you are not judging them. This will give you an open window into understanding the language they use in the online world, but also provide teachable moments on important media literacy topics.

Discuss screen use like a diet. Some content is nourishing while other content is more like eating cake and fried food. For example, social media use should be considered cake while exploring an interest online and learning new information from credible sources is considered a salad. Using the CML Empowerment Spiral can assist teachers and parents in helping students and children to reflect on how certain media makes them feel.

Limit screen time at home and at school. Create rooms where screens are not allowed or times when screens are to be put down. Instill family and classroom values within students and your children. Research parental controls for devices and put those controls into action. Talk about the importance of sleep and establish a bedtime routine. Boundaries are important in developing healthy screen use. Giving children choices and age appropriate decisions along with media literacy is key.

Read about risk factors and protective factors for developing and preventing problems with gaming, gambling, and digital media use. As a parent, you are encouraged to get your children early screening and interventions. As a teacher, you can put what you are learning into your SEL curriculum. What protective factors can you provide in the classroom and at home to support healthy brain development?

Find teachable moments to reinforce media literacy with students and your children. As a teacher, you can utilize CML's youth prevention education curriculum, research SEL, and utilize curriculum in the classroom. As a parent, you can find free curriculum online and use the material as talking points with your children.

Learn about what it means to have a healthy brain and what can impact a healthy brain across the lifespan. These conversation with students and your children can create a dialogue about how high-risk behaviors can impact development. It is important that teachers and parents understand that genetics and the environment make an impact on brain development. What protective factors can you create in the classroom and at home to support a healthy brain?

“Young people need guard rails in the online world, so they can safely learn, grow, and share. Intentional connection with parents and teachers will serve as important protective factors in support of creating a space for these conversations and information to be shared.”

— Alison Wood-Drain, Youth Treatment and Prevention Specialist,
North Carolina Problem Gambling Program

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