
How to use Common Sense Media's Parent Media Education Program materials

The materials in this kit are intended to be used over the course of the school year. Choose the activities and materials that will best help your school provide a quality media education program for parents and faculty.

Introduction

» **How to be a Common Sense School: An Implementation Plan for Parent Media Education.** This simple 6-step plan will give you ideas on how to implement the media program. The plan is meant to guide your efforts; you do not need to follow every step. Select the activities that work best for your school. We encourage you to come up with new activities, too!

Communicating with parents

- » **Letter from Principal Template:** If you intend to offer parent media education throughout the year, we suggest kicking off your program with a letter to parents from your principal or head of school that lets them know the intent of the program and why media education is important. This template gives you a place to start. Use this template as is or tailor it to reflect your school's particular concerns and goals.
- » **School Newsletter Template:** Like the Letter from Principal Template, use the School Newsletter Template to spark interest and excitement about the program. Use this template as is or change it to meet your needs.
- » **"Raise Media Smart Kids" Flyer:** Place the flyer on a bulletin board or in the main office where parents are likely to see it. The flyer announces your school's commitment to family media education and provides parents with the Top Five Tips to raising children who are smart about media.

Workshop presentations

Early on in the implementation of the program, we recommend holding a parent education night or morning coffee to provide an overview presentation on raising media-smart kids. This workshop presentation can help frame your event. You can make a similar presentation to faculty during in-service training days or faculty meetings.

- » **Digital Kids: Safe, Smart, and Responsible** (elementary and middle / high school versions) and the accompanying workshop script present some background information about the media lives of kids today. It's designed to help get parents and educators up to speed about the issues kids face in the digital landscape and to provide practical tips that parents can implement with their families.

We recommend tailoring the workshop to your audience and finding ways to incorporate examples of digital media use from your community. We also recommend leading off the parent event by showing a video from our collection and distributing the tip sheets you think are most relevant to your community.

Grade-by-grade guide

The Grade-by-Grade Guide serves as a reference point for the media most children are exposed to at each grade level. All children and families are different; therefore, this information may not be accurate for some children.

Use the guide to select media education topics that are most relevant to the parents you work with based on their child's grade level.

The guide highlights by grade level:

- » Key elements of children's media lives
- » Major media challenges for parents
- » A snapshot of where kids are developmentally
- » The materials included in the kit (tip sheets, videos, and discussion guides) that can be used to educate parents about these challenges.

You can also choose to educate parents about specific media issues school-wide rather than grade by grade.

Parent education video tips

The flash drive included with this kit contains more than 30 parent tip videos. The videos can be shown at parent education events or shared on your school's website.

Each video has an accompanying tip sheet on that particular topic. Many of the videos also have accompanying discussion guides. The short videos are great ways to jumpstart grade-level parent conversations on topics that have surfaced in your school community.

For example, if your school has experienced a situation with a group of 6th grade children sending cruel IM or cell phone text messages, you could hold a 6th grade parent meeting on the topic of cyberbullying, show the Cyberbullying Video to start, use the Cyberbullying Discussion Guide to foster discussion, and hand out the Cyberbullying Tip Sheet for parents to take home.

Discussion guides by topic

Our Discussion Guides are designed to help you facilitate conversations with parents related to specific topics. Use the discussion guides together with a video to get parents thinking and talking, or on their own to help you direct a conversation with a group of parents or one on one.

Each discussion guide includes open-ended questions that ask parents react generally to the issue and to share experiences, concerns, and solutions. In addition, the guides include short vignettes featuring parents and children dealing with the media topic at hand.

Use the vignettes in small group role play or read them aloud to spark group conversations. The purpose of the vignettes is to encourage parents to consider what they would do if faced with a variety of situations, and to reflect on their parenting style, values, and the developmental needs of their child. Different scenarios are provided for elementary, middle, and high school students. We also encourage you to develop scenarios that are appropriate to your school community.

Tip sheets by topic

More than 40 tip sheets are included in this kit. Each tip sheet is designed to offer straightforward information about a particular media topic or platform. The tip sheets explain what the issue is, why the issue is important, some facts, and tips by kids' ages. Use the tip sheets in a variety of ways. You can distribute them in the school newsletter, as take-home flyers in kids' backpacks, or at school events. You can also distribute them at parent media education events, parent-teacher conferences, or grade-level meetings.

Family media agreements

The Family Media Agreement is a checklist that parents can use to have conversations with their children about media use and to establish guidelines that are right for their family. The kit includes versions of agreements for elementary, middle, and high school students. Schools can distribute the agreement to students to take home to their parents or use it as a handout at a parent education event.

Some families are comfortable using the document as a signed agreement between parents and children. Others prefer to use it to guide a conversation. Families may also use the agreement to facilitate conversations with other parents about the media rules that will guide kids during play dates.

Some schools use these agreements as supplements to Acceptable Use Policies. The agreements can help communicate the rules for responsible media use through activities that adhere to those rules.

Surveys

We offer two surveys designed to help you understand the media issues that are most important to students and families.

- » **Parent Survey:** Distribute this survey to parents to determine their knowledge, attitudes, and concerns about their children's media lives. Parent responses can help inform which topics you decide to cover over the course of the year. You can also use this survey as a pre- and post-test to assess the success of the Common Sense Schools program at your school.

Ideally, you should conduct the survey at the start of the program so that your team can share the results at a parent education event or incorporate them into early communications to parents. Depending on your goals, you can administer the survey to the entire school or to just a few grades. It will take parents approximately 10 minutes to fill out the survey. Keep the parent responses anonymous and confidential. The program leader can compile the data from the parent surveys (using Excel or similar software) or use our printed survey as a template for a Survey Monkey online effort. (For more information on Survey Monkey, visit www.surveymonkey.com.)

- » **Student Survey:** Administer this survey to students to gain a snapshot of their media use, behaviors, attitudes, and interests. This survey is designed for middle and high school students and takes 10-20 minutes to complete. The survey helps students reflect on their own media behaviors, but educational leaders use the results primarily to create awareness with parents.

Many questions on the student survey can be compared to questions on the parent survey to assess whether students "and parents have similar perceptions of student media use. Educators can also compare answers from students across grade levels to understand media-use trends as children age. Share the results of this survey at parent education events and use the results to inform the focus of your parent media education program. You can also use this survey for program assessment to measure student differences in the following areas: time spent with media, media behaviors and interests, media in the bedroom, and parent involvement.

Common Sense Media

The Common Sense Media Web site, www.common sense media.org, has great resources for both educators and parents.

We provide:

- » Up-to-date reviews, ratings, and recommended lists for movies, TV shows, video games, music, Web sites and books;
- » Parenting advice on media organized by age and stage; and
- » A weekly newsletter; and the latest research on kids' digital lives.

At www.common sense media.org/educators, educators can:

- » Build a customized checklist of our materials to get the resources that are most appropriate for the grades they serve and the topics they're most interested in;
- » Participate in community discussions to learn best practices from other schools that have implemented a parent media education program;
- » Find new materials for their program; and
- » Access Common Sense Media's free classroom curriculum: Digital Literacy and Citizenship in a Connected Culture.

Educators at your school should also register at Common Sense Media and be sure to opt in to our monthly educator newsletter for updates on our educational programming.

Please note that the materials within this kit are designed for a parent audience. For resources to use with students, please refer to our classroom curriculum, Digital Literacy and Citizenship in a Connected Culture.