



Overview of the Healthy Choices: Substance Use and Digital Safety Modules for Grade 6 Students and Implementation Tips for Administrators

What are the Ministry of Education's Healthy Choices: Substance Use and Digital Safety Modules for Grade 6 students?

The Ministry of Education is providing two modules to deliver Health and Physical Education and Language curriculum expectations. The modules provide a consistent, ready-to-implement approach to substance use health and digital media safety.

The modules are:

- Flexible, easy to use, and available in both English and French. They include resources to support delivery (e.g., slide decks, videos, parent/guardian communication templates, and educator guides).
- Available through the Ministry of Education's virtual learning environment (VLE).

MODULE TITLE	KEY THEMES AND TOPICS
Digital Media: Safe and Healthy Personal Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• practical strategies for navigating online environments safely and protecting privacy• the importance of seeking advice or help, should students need it
Substance Use: Addiction and Related Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• substance use and its range of effects• factors that influence substance use safe and healthy choices• refusal skills and strategies• the importance of seeking advice or help, should students need it



Why is this learning important?

- Grade 6 students face increasing opportunities to engage with digital media and substances. Peer influences also play an ever-increasing role in decision making. This learning is evidence-informed and designed to provide students with reliable information with the goal of reducing stigma. Thus, **this learning is proactive**.
- While educators already teach these specific expectations, the modules provide a consistent, evidence-informed approach which is designed to be supportive to educators.
- Making informed choices that align with our identities, values, and goals can help **support student mental health and well-being**, which in turn supports student learning and achievement.

How can administrators support implementation?

Check out School Mental Health Ontario's [Healthy Choices: Substance Use and Digital Safety Modules for Grade 6 Students webpage](#) for additional resources created by SMH-ON to support implementation such as a promotional video and an introduction slide deck.

Set the direction and tone

- Reinforce the learning by finding opportunities to share key concepts with the entire school staff and integrating the modules with other supportive school, board or community-based initiatives focused on substance use and digital literacy.
- Model the use of an open, non-judgmental tone and learning stance by approaching stigmatized topics like digital media and substance use with curiosity and empathy and recognizing the complexities and individual experiences involved.

Build awareness

- Help school staff become aware of and familiar with the modules through your established communication channels, such as email updates, newsletters or presentations at staff meetings or professional development days.
- Invite early adopters or educators with experience teaching the Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grade 7 and 8 to share their experiences with other staff.



Prepare to support educators

- Highlight the educator guides provided with the modules. The tips and suggestions for delivery included are designed to help prepare, and support educators in providing a positive and meaningful learning experience with students.
- Know how to access the modules and resources in the [Ontario Virtual Learning Environment](#) (additional guidance can also be found in the educator guides).
- Remind or connect staff with any additional school or board staff/resources available to support delivery of the modules (e.g., curriculum leads and/or school mental health staff, TELTs).
- Ensure all educators and school staff know the available school and community support related to mental health and substance use and keep phone numbers/resource lists accessible and up to date.
- Plan for intentional collaboration between all staff who support Grade 6 students (e.g., special education resources teachers, classroom teachers, specialist teachers, educational assistants). This might include strategies such as brief grade level planning or learning within a staff meeting or peer mentoring.

Consider alignment and coherence

- How do the modules connect to the School Learning/Improvement Plan or Student Achievement Plan?
- How could the modules connect to other school and/or board initiatives, events, or opportunities throughout the school year?
- How could the modules serve as a spark for further student engagement?

