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Kids, Screens & Phones

5th-8th Grades Lesson Menu

April 2025

This lesson plan menu allows teachers to select classes that resonate with challenges in their classrooms. *Kids, Screens & Phones* teaches core concepts of digital health, instilling ideas of responsibility, balance, safety, and creativity. Where possible, lessons incorporate applied neuroscience MBSR/brain-break/mindfulness activities.

Following a four month pilot period in early 2023, True Kids 1 (TK1) developed *Kids, Screens & Phones* from scratch to meet local needs and demands in digital health. It is now a supported program through the Google Kids NM Initiative. Teachers in classrooms across Taos County select the units or individual lessons that fit where their students struggle. Our lessons incorporate didactic instruction, group work, games, demonstrations, fun short videos, and more. When and where possible, TK1 staff bring teenagers from the TK1 Youth Council to help lead these lessons. There is a tremendous power in letting older teenagers reach younger kids.

Unit 1: Responsibility in the Digital Age

- **Lesson 1: What is a “true kid” in this age of digital technology?** What does it mean to be a digitally responsible person? Why do we call it “paying attention”? Because your attention is valuable; it’s a resource. We teach them the 20-20-20 practice (after 20 minutes of scrolling, look a minimum of 20 feet for a minimum of 20 seconds) and the KIKI Code, a code of digital conduct:
 - Keep it Balanced
 - IRL is Better
 - Keep it Respectful
 - Intellect: use it!
- **Lesson 2: Notifications.** How does your screen scream for your attention? Effects on the brain every time you receive a notification. It takes TWENTY MINUTES to regain focus after receiving a notification. Tips and tricks to mitigate the harms of notifications.
- **Lesson 3: What does “appropriate use” mean?** “Phubbing” (snubbing people with your phone) and phone etiquette. Do you pick up your phone if you get a notification while in the middle of a conversation? When is it appropriate or inappropriate to “phub” a person? This lesson focuses on Rule 3 (Keep it Respectful) of the KIKI Code.
- **Lesson 4: Digital footprint, digital reputation.** Your online activity lasts FOREVER! Once it is on the internet you have limited control of what happens to it. For example,

someone can screenshot a post before it gets deleted. Be mindful of what you post/comment/like online. Future schools/employers WILL do an internet search of you and judge you depending on what they find. This lesson incorporates both Rule 3 (Keep it Respectful) and Rule 4 (Intellect: use it!) of the KIKI Code.

- **Lesson 5: What to do about stranger contact.** Stranger contact online is incredibly dangerous. You never know if the person really is who they say they are or what they are after. What to do if contacted by a stranger online.
- **Lesson 6: Scams (Social media scams, Gaming scams...)** Different types of scams and how to avoid them..

Unit 2: Social Media

- **Lesson 1: What is Social media?** Social media are forms of digital communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. How did it start? What is really going on? How do they make money? Social media companies need to push people into environments where they interact with only like-minded users, and, in some cases, engage with extreme political views. In sum, social media algorithms create echo chambers. A social media echo chamber is when social media uses its algorithm to figure out what kinds of videos and content you are interested in and then subjects you to only that content.
- **Lesson 2: The Digital Economy.** How do tech companies make money? How do they magically turn your attention into dollars? How does IG/Snapchat, Tik Tok, etc. make money? If the app is free, YOU are the product; selling your valuable attention to advertisers. Social media platforms have terms of service, which are the legal agreement between the platform and the user. In a rush to sign up, students may not read the agreements. Teaching students about the terms of service of platforms helps them to make informed online choices. e.g. Instagram and your agency.
- **Lesson 3: Social media and personal well-being.** Red-flag feelings. Social media has increasingly become an everyday component of people's lives. Students use social media to connect with their friends. It's important that students recognise what online behaviors might highly influence their personal well-being. e.g. Instagram and Comparison Culture. Counting likes and toxic comments, body image, etc.
- **Lesson 4: Trolling and cyberbullying.** Trolling, an anti-social online behavior, occurs when someone makes unsolicited comments online that are often controversial and for the purpose of getting a reaction. Unlike cyberbullying, the 'troll' often doesn't care who is offended, annoyed or upset. It is important that students can recognise trolling and other forms of antisocial behavior, including cyberbullying, so that they feel safe online. Cyberbullying has emerged as a major factor shaping the online lives of pre-teens and teens in Taos.
- **Lesson 5: Positive uses of social media.** Increasingly, social media has been used to create positive social change. From hashtags to sharing positive posts and fundraising efforts, these movements build momentum through social media. Researching current trends and creating a strategy to promote a cause they believe in encourages students to be active citizens and to recognise the potential of using social media for positive outcomes.

Unit 3: Hot Topics!

- **Lesson 1: Gaming.** Prosocial games vs. Violent video games' effects on your brain, social life, and mental health. Finding balance with video games and IRL games/play.
- **Lesson 2: Group chats, texting, Snapchat.** When can group chats and social media get out of hand and what to do about it.

Unit 4: Artificial Intelligence

- **Lesson 1: What is AI?** Understanding of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning and how algorithms work. Understand how prevalent AI is in our lives.
- **Lesson 2: Recommendation Algorithms, ChatBots, and Facial Recognition.** How do recommendation algorithms work? Why does it matter? ChatBots... Are they your friends? Facial Recognition: friend or foe?
- **Lesson 3: Investigating Bias in AI.** Understand that AI bias can impact people in different ways. Reflect on the negative impacts of AI bias. Understand how AI bias happens. Reflect on ways to reduce AI bias.
- **Lesson 4: Generative AI, Deep Fakes, Ethics, and Civic Discourse.** How does generative AI affect our lives and society?

Unit 1-4 Summary (Greatest Hits)

- **Lesson 1:** Responsibility in the Digital Age: Code of digital conduct. Notifications. Digital footprint and SCAMS.
- **Lesson 2:** Social Media: What is Social media and how do social-media companies make money? Social media and personal wellbeing. Trolling and cyberbullying.
- **Lesson 3:** Gaming: prosocial games vs. Violent video games' effects on your brain, social life, and mental health. Group chats.
- **Lesson 4:** Artificial Intelligence: What is AI and how does it affect our lives and our agency?