**common sense** education®

# Engaging Families in Digital Citizenship

A guide to Common Sense Family Engagement Resources for schools, districts, and parent organizers.

## We're all in this together!

Whether your digital citizenship efforts are focused on a single classroom or across an entire school or district, partnering with families is essential. Not only can families support students as they try out skills learned in the classroom, but educators and families can help each other better understand kids' digital lives.

Use this guide to support families and your entire community in building a healthier relationship with media and technology.

*Digital citizenship is the responsible use of technology to learn, create, and participate.*

## Three steps to a successful family engagement program

Common Sense Education's **three-phased approach to digital citizenship implementation** includes family engagement as a core component. By following the three steps of "plan," "implement," and "evaluate," you can be sure the activities and resources you provide will be relevant to the whole community.

### 1. Plan family engagement.

Understanding your community is the first step to planning relevant and helpful family engagement activities. Consider the following tips and strategies for making sure your program reflects your community's needs:

- Survey parents and caregivers to learn more about their biggest concerns, their attitudes toward technology, and media use at home. Customize the Digital Life Survey (in **English** and **Spanish**) to get valuable feedback.

- Talk with teachers to find out whether and how they teach digital citizenship lessons. Do they feel parents and caregivers could support in-class instruction? How do they currently engage families in these topics?

- Check in with administrators to understand their needs and goals for engaging families in digital citizenship. Are there ways they'd like to align the family engagement component with teacher professional development and/or classroom instruction?

- Align your plans with **Common Sense Recognition** if your school or district is working toward that goal. Consult the teacher or administrator leading digital citizenship to make sure you're on the same page.

In **Common Sense's national survey**:
56% of parents are worried their kids may become addicted to technology.
43% worry their kids are spending too much time online.
38% worry their kids are oversharing personal details.
94% have positive attitudes about the role of technology in their children's education.

## 2. Implement family engagement.

Once you've gathered feedback from all stakeholders, it's time to map out the activities. These tips will help you provide the most relevant resources and inspiring activities for your community:

- Browse Common Sense Education's **Family Engagement Toolkit for Schools and Educators** to find the best resources for your school community based on your needs assessment. Use the resources for in-person events, to share on websites and on social media, to print and send home, and more.

- Whether or not your school or district is seeking **Common Sense Recognition**, the program requirements can be a helpful guide. For recognition, schools choose three activities from the options below:

  - Share Common Sense Media's Family Tech Planners (in **English** and **Spanish**).
  - Share a **Family Activity and/or Tip Sheet** that aligns with lessons taught in the classroom.
  - Share articles and parenting advice from Common Sense Media (in **English** and **Spanish**).
  - Host an in-person workshop for families with students in **grades PreK–2** or **grades 6–12**.

- Commit to a yearlong approach to digital citizenship family engagement. Consider touch points throughout the year that can guide your family engagement activities. For example, you might focus on family media recommendations and media balance before winter break.

### *How to reach all families in your community:*

- Welcome families as partners in their kids' education.

- Reflect the needs and concerns of the community.

- Be supportive, culturally relevant, and honest.

- Translate resources into families' primary languages.

- Have translators available at in-person events.

- Provide child care and food at in-person events.

- Email or send home event resources for those who can't attend.

- Livestream or record in-person events for families at home.

- Don't rely on in-person events: Use social media, texting, emails, and more.

## 3. Evaluate family engagement.

You did it! Celebrate your hard work and recognize the valuable contributions you made to the school community. Then, use these tips to reflect on your efforts and identify areas for improvement:

- Define what success looks like from the outset so you have something to measure afterward. Is it the number of attendees at events? Engagement at those events? Satisfaction in the resources you send home?

- Celebrate your accomplishments! Give shout-outs to those involved, and highlight the program in school-wide communications or the press.

- Survey families to find out what worked for them, what didn't, and what they'd change for next time. You can customize this Family Engagement Feedback Survey (in **English** and **Spanish**) to collect responses.