

Screen Smart Rationale

Screen Smart is a health education program that aims to teach elementary school children to manage screen time. With time “saved”, from recreational screen time, for example, children can engage in many activities such as creative projects, physical activities and inter-personal communications.

Screens include those used for work and school assignments, and those for recreational use. Children often have the ability to make decisions about their activities when not in school. Screen Smart activities therefore provide information and personal experience in reducing screen time, and an opportunity to reflect upon the experiences.

Screen Smart strives to:

- raise awareness of screen time (with students, but also with parents and teachers), and
- reduce screen time to less than 2 hours a day (or maintain that level if already achieved).

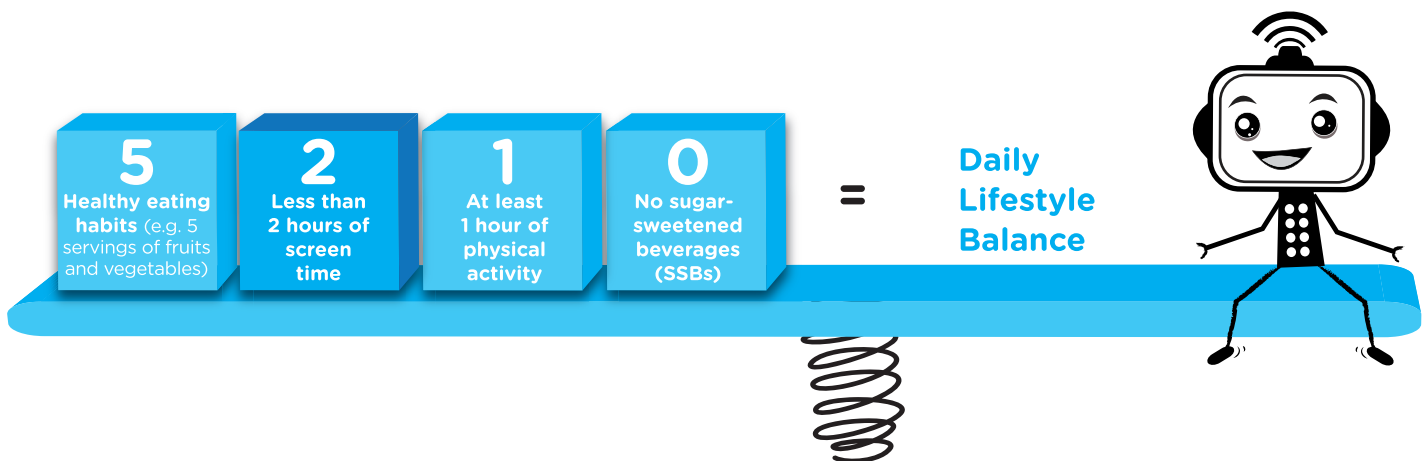
There are 6 messages supporting the achievement of these objectives. Messages 4 and 5 are targeted to teachers and parents.

1. Our bodies are designed to move. People who are active each day live healthier, happier, and longer lives.
2. Screen time can displace physical activity, reading, and face-to-face socializing. By turning off screens, children have more time for active play and other beneficial pursuits.

3. Children often eat while they watch TV and eat what they watch. Commercials expose children to unhealthy food. Children who watch more TV often snack more and drink more sugary drinks.
4. Children with less screen time are more likely to have better school success with improved grades, improved reading skills, better attention in class, and better communication skills.
5. Children develop lifestyle habits that persist into adulthood. Parents, caregivers, and other family members can influence children in the development of healthy lifestyles that include regular physical activity and active play and controlled amounts of screen time.
6. It is easy to make a difference – we can **TRADE** 30 minutes of screen time each day for other fun activities.

See Appendices D and E for information and research underlying the program rationale.

Screens will continue to be an important part of our lives in the future. How we manage and use our screens each day will, along with other healthy lifestyle habits, contribute to a healthy, balanced lifestyle.³



3. Links to school programs addressing healthy lifestyle practices can be accessed from the Childhood Obesity Foundation website www.childhoodobesityfoundation.ca.