ENGAGING, SAFE, AND EVIDENCE-BASED:

What Science Tells Us About How to Promote Positive Development and Decrease Risk in Online Spaces for Early Adolescents

Early adolescence— roughly ages 10 to 13—is a key time of exploration, discovery, rapid learning, and social and emotional change.

During these years, youth are:

- Transitioning into adolescence
- Spending more time exploring and socializing online

With increasing numbers of early adolescents using digital technology to learn and connect, we need to design digital technology in ways that promote healthy development and learning for these young users.

A new council report from the National Scientific Council on Adolescence outlines not only the impacts of digital technology on middle-school-aged youth, but also what policymakers can do to ensure positive experiences and limit risks for these youth.

To ensure that the online world helps all young adolescents learn and thrive, digital technology companies, policymakers, and scientists should ensure that digital technology used by early adolescents:

1 Supports healthy development

Digital technology should be designed with the input of youth, parents, and experts in development to enhance positive development, maximize wellness, and ensure that the benefits of digital platforms outweigh the risks for early adolescents.

2 Keeps young users safe

Social media and other digital platforms that are used by large numbers of young adolescents should adopt more explicit measures to acknowledge and support these users. We need to ensure that there is adequate regulation and oversight of these platforms to minimize harm.

3 Incorporates and advances best-available research

Independent evaluation by experts in development and mental health should be required for digital platforms that carry health concerns for young adolescents. Additional funding for research, best practices for supporting youth in online spaces, and collaboration with parents, youth, and youth-serving professionals can harness the power of digital techn for young people while also ensuring they remain safe.

4 Makes its benefits accessible to all youth

All youth should be able to access safe and healthy tech that reflects their diverse interests and experiences and offers opportunities to safely explore, learn, and connect with peers.

Read the Full Report: developingadolescent.semel.ucla.edu/topics/item/youth-and-digital-tech