

What it takes to be a responsible Digital Citizen

Description



What would it take to raise a child to be a responsible digital citizen? We get wisdom from African proverbs, saying, “it takes a village to raise a child.”™ It’s true. The responsibilities are for us all. Whether you are government authorities, educators, parents, or companies benefiting from students, we all share the responsibilities, and our choices impact a child’s well-being. The same rules apply in the digital world. Just as children learn their rights and responsibilities in the real world, they must also learn how to behave online.

The author M. Riddle in his book *Digital Citizenship in Schools*, wrote about the crucial digital elements: accessibility, commerce, communication, literacy, and etiquette. He emphasized the need to bridge the gap between educators and students and how educators must be digitally literate to help students with digital citizenship. According to research by Common Sense Media, approximately six out of ten K-12 teachers used a digital citizenship curriculum, and seven out of ten taught digital competency skills utilizing digital citizenship. Even with a higher utilization percentage, over 35% of students were determined that they did not have the proper skills to evaluate information online critically. The statistics showed a parallel increase as grades went up. Another result from the same study showed that approximately 60% of the K-12 teachers used online videos found on YouTube and Netflix in classrooms, and around half of the teachers used educational tools like Microsoft Office and Google G Suite in the classroom (Educator Innovator, 2021). These big-name companies profit from schools and students and should be taken more accountable for their actions. They need to be in compliance and be more transparent in their disclosures of how they are using students'™ data, making efforts to protect students'™ privacy.

International OECD guidelines state that "personal data should be relevant to the purposes for which they are to be used, and to the extent necessary for those purposes should be accurate, complete, and kept up to date." Under Article 8, personal information revealing race, ethnicity, religion, political stance, health, and gender cannot be published online, enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). For example, the FTC once sued Microsoft for failing to protect customers'™ personal information properly. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) also prohibits the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information in education records. As responsible Digital Citizens, students should know their rights and "make informed decisions to protect their personal data" (ISTE Standards 7d).

After going through many resources on digital citizenship, I found The National Education Technology Standards (NETS) to be precisely applicable and reliable. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) updated NETS in 2009 for educational leaders, teachers, and students, and it integrated educational technology standards across all academic curriculum. The following nine crucial components, grouped into three broad categories, guide us to be responsible digital citizens (Ribble & Miller, 2013, p139).

Respect Yourself/Respect Others

- Digital Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure.
- Digital Access: full electronic participation in society.
- Digital Law: electronic responsibility for actions and deeds

Educate Yourself/Educate Others

- Digital Communication: electronic exchange of information.
- Digital Literacy: the process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.
- Digital Commerce: electronic buying and selling of goods.

Protect Yourself/Protect Others

- Digital Rights and Responsibility: those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.
- Digital Security: electronic precautions to guarantee safety.
- Digital Health and Welfare: physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.

Our goal as educators is to help students understand the impact of their words and actions and learn to be respectful and have empathy towards others to improve their communities and foster a culture of respectful online interactions (ISTE Standards 7a,7b). It takes more than just individuals being responsible but collaborative efforts from all parts of our communities. We want to see technology improve the lives and well-being of students. Furthermore, we want to see digital leadership in educators, students, and our communities to promote digital citizenship actively, be proactive in prevention, and make positive changes in the digital world.

References

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1. Blog

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