



Introduction

When talking to people who understand technology, does it sometimes seem that they are speaking a different language? Do they talk about podcasting, blogs, and wikis? Do their discussions of viruses, worms, and phishing confound and confuse? In 2001, an influential article by Mark Prensky identified two distinctive groups of technology users, “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.” Digital natives are young people who have grown up around digital technologies and seem to instinctively understand the technology. Digital immigrants (the rest of us), on the other hand, may be fascinated by and may have adopted many aspects of the new technologies, but because they have not grown up with these digital tools, they don’t use them as instinctively as the natives.

Because students have grown up in a society surrounded by digital technology, many teachers see their students as digital natives who already know everything there is to know about technology. Worse, some teachers do not feel competent as digital immigrants. But the truth is, not all students are as technologically savvy as teachers might assume, and not all teachers are as incompetent as they fear.

Even when students are comfortable using technology, they may not be using it appropriately. Likewise, educators of all skill levels may not understand how to use digital technology effectively. Both students and teachers need to find a common ground. They need to become members of a digital citizenry.

Over the years, users of technology have come together to interact with one another, creating, in effect, a digital society.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Has your school or district experienced situations in which digital technology has been an issue? Are you happy with the way these situations are being handled?

Are you aware of issues that other schools are having related to digital technology?

We created the nine elements of digital citizenship to help bring some clarity to this situation, not only in our schools but in our society as well. Digital citizenship does not stop at the classroom door. Everyone knows that digital technology has permeated our society, and it should be our hope that individuals will use technology appropriately in all settings, not just at school. Digital citizenship aims to teach everyone (not just children) what technology users must understand in order to use digital technologies effectively and appropriately. If using technology appropriately is a priority for society as a whole, then teaching students how to use it in this manner should be a priority. By learning about these nine elements of digital citizenship, students can learn to recognize inappropriate technological behavior wherever it occurs.

Definition of the Nine Elements

Digital citizenship can be described as the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use. As a way of understanding the complexity of digital citizenship and the issues of technology use, abuse, and misuse, we have identified nine elements that together make up digital citizenship. Those nine elements are as follows:

Digital Access: full electronic participation in society

Digital Commerce: the buying and selling of goods online

Digital Communication: the electronic exchange of information

Digital Literacy: the capability to use digital technology and knowing when and how to use it

Digital Etiquette: the standards of conduct expected by other digital technology users

Digital Law: the legal rights and restrictions governing technology use

Digital Rights and Responsibilities: the privileges and freedoms extended to all digital technology users, and the behavioral expectations that come with them

Digital Health and Wellness: the elements of physical and psychological well-being related to digital technology use

Digital Security: the precautions that all technology users must take to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their network

Digital Rights and Responsibilities

DEFINITION: *The privileges and freedoms extended to all digital technology users, and the behavioral expectations that come with them*

When discussing the rights of any individual within a group, educators often note that rights or privileges come with membership in that group. Likewise, when someone is given membership rights, there is an assumption that the person will act in accordance with the rules that govern that group. This is true for digital society as well, in which membership allows users to use digital content while enjoying certain protections. In the digital world, users should expect that if they post information to a site (whether it is a poem, a picture, a song, or some other form of original research or creative expression), others will enjoy it without vandalizing it, passing it off as their own, or using it as a pretext to threaten or harass.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What rights and responsibilities do students have in a digital society?

How do we make students more aware of their rights and responsibilities when using digital technologies?

Being a full member in a digital society means that each user is afforded certain rights, and these rights should be provided equally to all members. Digital citizens also have certain responsibilities to this society; they must agree to live according to the parameters

that are mutually agreed upon by members. These boundaries may come in the form of legal rules or regulations, or as acceptable use policies. In a perfect world, those who partake in the digital society would work together to determine an appropriate-use framework acceptable to all. The alternative is to have laws and rules thrust on them.

Through the guiding principles of digital citizenship, we offer a means to achieve appropriate behavior in a digital society. This is not just pie-in-the-sky idealism. Some technology companies including Google already adhere to basic good-citizenship tenets, such as “do no harm.” If we are to have a strong digital citizenry, we need to teach these same values to

students, as they will be the next generation of digital technology users. Now is the time to provide a structure for technology use in our digital society. Digital citizenship can help create the framework, but school technology teams will have to come together to determine how their organization will handle unsociable digital behavior. Students need to be given a clear understanding of the behavior that is required of them to be members of the digital society.

Helpful Tip

Use scenarios to help draw attention to what is happening in the school and classroom. Encourage students to provide examples of technology use and discuss what might be considered appropriate or inappropriate.

Developing a Plan for Digital Citizenship

Once a technology leadership team is in place, it is important that all members acquire a baseline awareness of digital citizenship issues. The following discussion suggests five steps to begin this process. These steps are depicted graphically in Figure 3.1.

Step 1. Have members of the technology leadership team complete the Digital Citizenship Audit (see section following these steps). The audit takes only a few minutes and will help determine which elements of digital citizenship are significant issues in your school or district. The Digital Citizenship Audit is a quick way for technology leaders to determine whether technology resources are being properly used or being misused or abused.

Step 2. Analyze the results of the audit, using the scoring guide.

Step 3. From the results gathered in Step 2, the technology leadership team should ask themselves: Are there significant problems? If so, are the inappropriate technology activities in violation of laws, rules, or policies? Are these activities causing physical or emotional harm to students? Are these activities disrupting the educational process? How aware of these problems are teachers, students, board members, and community members?

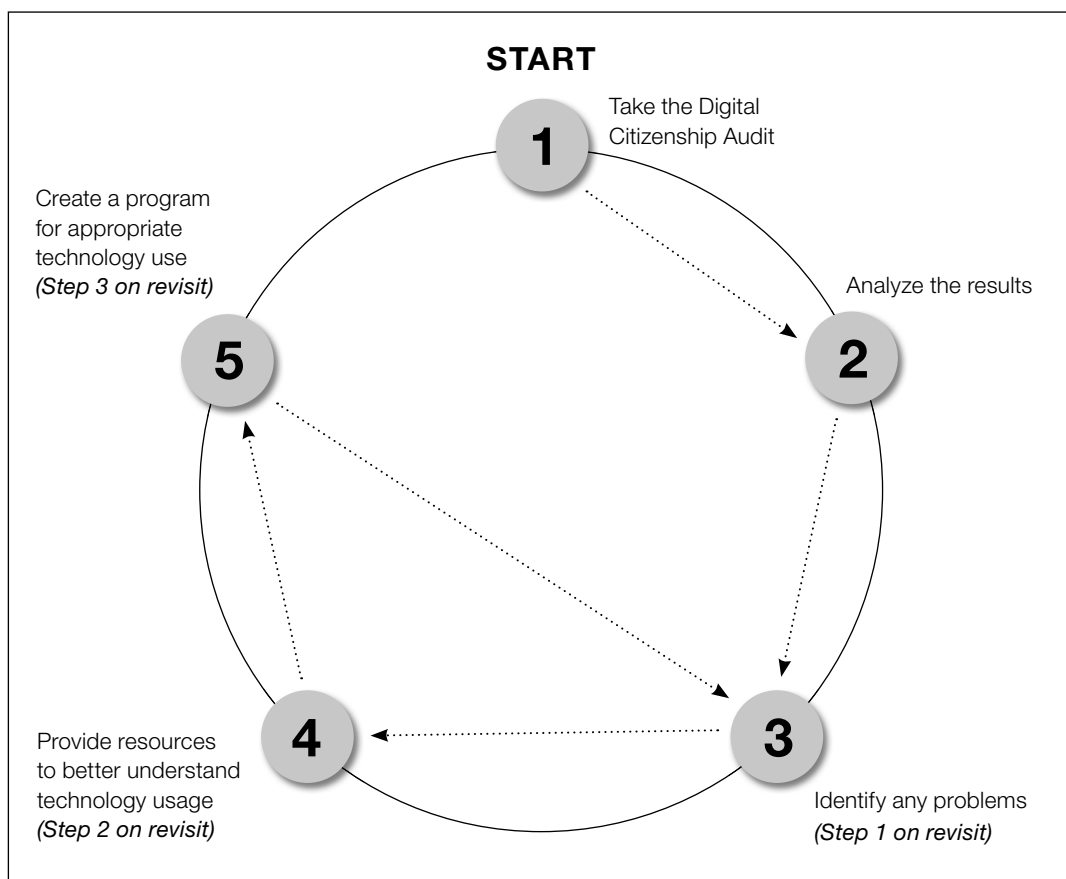


Figure 3.1 Process for developing a plan for digital citizenship.

Technology Use Scenarios

1. Sean decides to create a Web site that is a parody of his school's Web site. Sean uses the same Web site style as the school, but makes up stories and misinformation about the school, such as features about weekend drinking parties. Because he is in the class that makes changes to the real Web site, he is able to direct people to his Web site instead of the real one. The principal, Ms. Martinez, finds out about the change when an angry parent calls to complain about a story on the Web site mentioning her daughter. Ms. Martinez contacts the school technology support person, Mr. Jones, and requests that he remove the parody site. She also asks Mr. Jones to find out who is responsible.
2. Michelle likes to use instant messaging (IM). Often she spends two to three hours each day on IM. She has an account that she uses both at school and at home. She has a large list of contacts—friends as well as friends of friends. She communicates with almost everyone on her list on a weekly basis. Michelle's mom assumes that she has 10 to 20 contacts, but in reality she has more than 80, and only 30 are personal friends.
3. Sarah received a new cell phone for her birthday. Her phone has a camera, so she spends most of the day taking pictures of her friends. During algebra class, she decides to take a picture of Ms. Everett, the substitute, while her back is turned to the whiteboard. When she gets home she downloads the picture and uploads it to her blog site as she writes about her day.
4. During word processing class, Mr. McIntosh notices Mary typing in an IM window. As her teacher comes near her station, she hides the window, knowing that Mr. McIntosh does not allow the use of IM during class. Mr. McIntosh asks Mary to close the IM window and see him after class. After class, Mr. McIntosh asks Mary why she was sending instant messages during class. Mary responds that she was already done with her assignment and was bored.
5. Tim and his friends spend a lot of time working on computers and they understand how to get around security features. Tim decides to see how far he can get into the school's computer system. Tim manages to get onto the school's server and decides to change a few grades for his friends, "just for the fun of it." The next day a rumor is circulating that someone has hacked the school's server. That afternoon, Tim is called to the office to talk to the principal.
6. John and his friend Mike both have camera phones. Mike sits in the back of the class and uses his phone to photograph the test for John, who is taking the test that afternoon. Mike then e-mails the photograph of the test to John's phone.
7. Mrs. Baker is in charge of the student bookstore. She has ordered supplemental texts for many of the courses that the students need for their classes. After the new school year starts, she finds that very few of these texts have been sold. When she asks students why they have not purchased the text, the students tell her that other teachers have told them that they can buy the same books online at a significant