HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION

POLICY HANDBOOK

Policy Code:	**HG**
Policy Title:	Citizenship in a Digital Age
Cross Reference:	IHF Safe and Caring Schools
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POLICY

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION RECOGNIZES THAT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES ARE INTEGRAL TO LEARNING, COMMUNICATION, CIVIC PARTICIPATION, AND DAILY LIFE. AS SUCH, DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IS UNDERSTOOD NOT ONLY AS APPROPRIATE USE OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, WELL-BEING, AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN A DIGITALLY CONNECTED SOCIETY.

DEFINITIONS

The purpose of the *Citizenship in a Digital Age* policy is to ensure that students and staff develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to participate safely, responsibly, ethically, and productively in digital environments.

This policy affirms the Division's commitment to:

- educating students to become respectful, informed, and responsible digital citizens;
- fostering digital environments that are welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe;
- supporting balanced and healthy engagement with digital technologies;
- protecting privacy, personal information, and intellectual property; and
- ensuring the ethical, lawful, and appropriate use of digital resources.

The Division believes that effective digital citizenship is best achieved through education, shared responsibility, and ongoing collaboration among students, staff, parents/guardians, and the broader community. Expectations related to digital citizenship shall be developmentally appropriate, instructional in nature, and responsive to emerging technologies and evolving digital contexts.

GUIDELINES

The Division believes that effective digital citizenship is best achieved through education, shared responsibility, and ongoing collaboration among students, staff, parents/guardians, and the broader community. Expectations related to digital citizenship shall be developmentally appropriate, instructional in nature, and responsive to emerging technologies and evolving digital contexts.

Horizon School Division believes that:

horizon school division

1. **Digital citizenship is an essential component of education**
   Preparing students to navigate digital environments responsibly is a shared responsibility of schools, families, and communities and is fundamental to student learning, well-being, and citizenship in contemporary society.

2. **All students can learn to be responsible digital citizens**
   With appropriate instruction, guidance, and support, students can develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required to engage ethically, respectfully, and safely in digital spaces.

3. **Digital citizenship is learned through education, not solely through restriction**
   Effective digital citizenship is best fostered through teaching, modelling, and reflection rather than relying only on rules, controls, or consequences.

4. **Expectations for digital citizenship must be developmentally appropriate**
   Responsibilities, supports, and instruction related to digital citizenship should reflect students' age, maturity, and learning needs and evolve as students progress through school.

5. **Respect, responsibility, and care extend to digital environments**
   The same expectations for respectful behaviour, integrity, and accountability that apply in physical learning environments also apply to online and digital spaces.

6. **Digital well-being is integral to student success**
   Balanced, healthy engagement with digital technologies supports students' mental, emotional, physical, and social well-being and contributes to positive learning environments.

7. **Privacy and personal information must be protected**
   Students and staff have the right to privacy and the responsibility to protect personal information, intellectual property, and digital identities in accordance with legal and ethical standards.

8. **Digital identity and permanence**

   Digital citizenship includes understanding that online actions contribute to a lasting digital identity and may have long-term personal, academic, and social impacts.

9. **Digital technologies should enhance learning and participation**
   When used purposefully and responsibly, digital tools expand opportunities for learning, creativity, collaboration, and civic engagement.

10. **Media literacy and critical evaluation**
    Digital citizenship education includes developing students' capacity to critically evaluate digital information, media, and sources, and to share information responsibly.

11. **Families are essential partners in digital citizenship education**
    Collaboration between schools and families strengthens students' ability to make responsible and informed decisions in digital spaces both within and beyond the school environment.

12. **Digital citizenship is an evolving responsibility**
    As technologies, platforms, and digital contexts continue to change, expectations for digital citizenship must be regularly reviewed and responsive to emerging issues.

13. **Learning-first responses to digital misconduct**
    The Division will respond to digital misconduct with educational and restorative approaches where appropriate, and with disciplinary measures where necessary to ensure safety, accountability, and compliance with legislation and Division policy.

REGULATIONS

To support the purpose and beliefs of the *Citizenship in a Digital Age* policy, the Superintendent expects that schools will implement the following administrative practices.

1. Instruction and Learning

1.1 Schools shall provide developmentally appropriate instruction in digital citizenship for all students, integrated into classroom learning and school activities.

1.2 Digital citizenship instruction shall emphasize:

- respectful and ethical online behaviour;
- protection of personal information and privacy;
- responsible creation, use, and sharing of digital content;
- critical evaluation of digital information; and
- balanced and healthy engagement with digital technology;
- include explicit instruction on digital identity/footprint and the long-term impact of online actions;
- include explicit instruction on media literacy (e.g., verifying sources, recognizing misinformation) and responsible information sharing.

1.3 Digital citizenship instruction shall be educative and preventative in nature, supporting students to learn appropriate behaviours rather than relying solely on corrective or disciplinary responses.

2. School-Based Practices and Environments

2.1 Schools shall establish and maintain clear expectations for student and staff behaviour in digital environments that are consistent with Division policy, administrative procedures, and applicable legislation.

- ensure annual, plain-language communication of digital citizenship expectations to students and families (e.g., handbook, website, classroom syllabi)

2.2 Digital environments used by the school shall reflect the same expectations for welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments as physical spaces.

2.3 Schools shall ensure that digital tools and platforms are used purposefully to support learning, collaboration, and engagement, and not in ways that undermine student well-being or instructional time.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Principals are responsible for:

- ensuring that digital citizenship expectations are communicated to students, staff, and families;
- supporting staff to deliver appropriate digital citizenship instruction;
- ensuring consistent application of expectations and responses related to digital behaviour; and
- responding to digital citizenship concerns in a manner that is educational, fair, and proportionate.

3.2 Teachers are responsible for:

- modelling responsible digital citizenship;
- explicitly teaching digital citizenship skills within learning contexts; and
- supervising student use of digital technologies during instructional activities.

3.3 Students are expected to:

- engage in digital environments respectfully and responsibly;
- protect their personal information and the privacy of others; and
- comply with school and Division expectations for digital citizenship.

4. Family and Community Engagement

4.1 Schools shall communicate digital citizenship expectations to parents/guardians and recognize families as essential partners in supporting students' digital behaviour.

4.2 When appropriate, schools shall provide families with information or resources to support digital citizenship learning beyond the school environment.

5. Protection, Privacy, and Legal Compliance

5.1 Schools shall ensure that the use of digital technologies complies with all relevant legislation, Division policies, and administrative procedures, including those related to privacy, access to information, intellectual property, and acceptable use.

5.2 Concerns related to digital safety, privacy breaches, or inappropriate use of technology shall be addressed promptly and in accordance with Division procedures.

6. Continuous Review and Responsiveness

6.1 Schools shall remain responsive to emerging technologies and digital issues, adjusting instructional practices and expectations as required.

6.2 School leaders shall support ongoing professional learning related to digital citizenship to ensure staff are equipped to address evolving digital contexts.

6.3 School leaders shall collaborate with relevant school-based supports (e.g., counsellors, wellness teams) when digital well-being concerns arise.

7. Technology Use Agreements:

7.1 Staff Technology Use Agreement (Appendix 1)

7.2 Student Technology Use Agreement (Appendix 2)