

Digital Citizenship: Creating Community, Being Conscious, and Cultivating Creativity

Kimberly Joiner

Lamar University

Digital Citizenship: Creating Community, Being Conscious, Cultivating Creativity

Introduction

Digital citizenship defined is the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior with regard to technology use (Ribble, 2015). Additionally, digital citizenship is self-monitored participation that reflects conscious interdependence with all community members. Lastly, digital citizenship is the quality of habits, actions and consumption patterns that impact the digital ecology of digital content and communities. Digital citizenship is comprised of nine elements identified as a way of understanding the complexity of digital citizenship and the issues of technology use, abuse and misuse (Ribble, 2015). The nine elements are digital access, digital commerce, digital literacy, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness, and digital security. These nine elements are organized into the three principles of respect, educate, and protect. These principles will help students and teachers understand how to become more responsible users of technology.

The Nine Elements

In order to become a digital citizen it is important that we spend time discussing the nine essential elements. Digital Access makes us look at the issue of all students having the opportunity to be involved in a digital society. Digital Commerce focuses on the buying and selling of products online. Digital Communication provides users with instant access to others at an unprecedented level, but is the communication always appropriate? Digital Literacy is defined as the process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology. One must understand how the technology works in order to use it in the most appropriate manner.

Digital Citizenship

Digital Etiquette backdoors literacy and is defined as the electronic standards of conduct or procedure. Many times students use different technology platforms without knowing the rules or responsibilities. Digital Law is the electronic responsibility for actions and deeds. Are students aware of the legal ramifications for illegal online activities? Digital Rights are Responsibilities are those requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world. Students must be responsible using technology in and out of school. Digital Health and Wellness those requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world. This is something that I worry about for my students. I think we have gotten to a point where students are addicted to their devices. I honestly believe there should be limits placed on the amount of screen time for children. Lastly, Digital Security is the electronic precautions to guarantee safety. Most of my students play games online and these games allow for in app purchases. Students must be aware of the precautions that need to be taken to ensure that their parents debit/credit cards and identities are not compromised.

Digital Literacy, Digital Etiquette, Digital Rights and Responsibilities

_____Digital Literacy, Digital Etiquette, Digital Rights and Responsibilities relate to student learning as well as school environment and student behavior that is focused on in school. Not all learning happens in the classroom. Students must take ownership and learn how to use technology correctly. We use technology so much that we forget the way in which we use it can affect others. Technology also affords many opportunities to have fun, but with this fun comes the responsibility of being conscious and aware of others.

Digital Literacy is the process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology (Ribble, 2015). It is important that students understand how technology works so

Digital Citizenship

that they can use it in the most appropriate manner. Technology based learning is taking over the classroom but the education on how to appropriately use this technology is not be taught at the same pace. Often times we place emphasis on learning the technology with little time focused on what is and is not appropriate. This element questions whether there is enough time devoted to learning how to use technology tools in the classroom (Ribble, 2015, p.36). It also questions how students can use digital technologies to “best take advantage” of the educational opportunities available to them (Ribble, 2015).

Digital Etiquette is the electronic standards of conduct or procedure. Students watch how others use a technology and assume if others can use it in that manner, so can they. It is hard to teach digital technology because few rules have been established for the proper use of these devices. This element of digital citizenship poses the questions; are students aware of others when they use technology and do students realize how their use of technology affects others. Before, it was left up to parents to teach basic etiquette before students reached school. Now that we live in this technological age it is imperative that students are aware of appropriate behavior. Unfortunately, many parents have not been informed on the dos and don'ts of technology. Parents and students often learn together by watching others use the technology. There is a slippery slope when it comes to digital etiquette. Behavior that is deemed inappropriate to adults may be acceptable to students. A good digital citizen seeks out feedback from others to evaluate their use of technology, and then makes personal adjustments based on this feedback (Ribble, 2015, p.39). The issues associated with digital etiquette are using technology in ways that minimize negative effects on others, using technology when contextually appropriate and respecting others online (Ribble, 2015).

Digital Citizenship

Digital Rights and Responsibilities are those requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world. Two essential questions are posed under this element. What rights and responsibilities do students have in a digital society and how do we make students aware of their rights and responsibilities when using digital technologies. Being part of the digital world means you are afforded certain rights, equal to all members. With these rights come responsibilities to this digital society would work together to come up with appropriate use that is acceptable to all. Students need to be given a clear understanding of the behavior that is required of them to be members of the digital society (Ribble, 2015). The issues associated with digital rights and responsibilities are following acceptable use policies and using technology appropriately in and out of school, using online material ethically, and reporting cyberbullies and other inappropriate behavior.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2015). In order to be classified as bullying the behavior not only has to be repetitive but the victim must perceive that harm was inflicted. What differentiates bullying from cyberbullying is the use of electronic devices. No one is exempt from this cyberbullying epidemic. If you have an online presence there is a possibility that you could fall victim to cyberbullying or even become a bully yourself. The consequences of cyberbullying can be very detrimental to the well being of adolescents and teens.

In addition to teaching about cyberbullying we also need to instruct our students on the appropriate ways to conduct themselves when using technology. Teaching students, the appropriate

Digital Citizenship

use of technology may not end the epidemic of cyberbullying, but it will produce responsible digital citizens. We as parents and educators often assume that our children/students know the proper ways to use technology just because they've had a device attached to them since birth. I think before you talk to your students about cyberbullying you have to teach them how to properly use their devices. There are times that cyberbullying is a result of something being shared that was meant to be private. I believe students feel that they should be able to share certain things without it being used to hurt them. Unfortunately this is not always the case and our students need to understand the ramifications of their actions when using technology.

Conclusion

_____As a synthesis of learning, I have included in this culminating reflection the definition of digital citizenship along with a brief discussion of the nine elements of digital citizenship followed by an in depth analysis of the three elements (digital literacy, digital etiquette, and digital rights and responsibilities) I focused on for my presentation. Lastly, I included a section on cyberbullying and how it relates to the responsibility we have as digital citizens.

I decided to focus on digital literacy, digital etiquette and digital rights and responsibilities based on the current needs of my school. For my culminating technology based presentation I created a powerpoint presentation that I would be able to share with my colleagues as well as my students on what it means to be a digital citizen. As I started to prepare the information for my PowerPoint I realized that all of the nine elements should be explained in detail. I started with these three because I believe our students need this education as soon as possible. I will eventually create a flyer or brochure that explains all nine elements in detail. As we progress with digital citizenship education I think videos may be a better way to go. The

Digital Citizenship

widespread majority of students have access to technology but the question remains is do they know the proper way to use this technology and are they aware of the ramifications if said technology is misused.

This reflection essay has been added to my ePortfolio, to view it on my eportfolio click [here](#).

References

- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2015). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.
- Ohler, J. (2010). Digital community: Digital Citizen. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Ohler, J. (2011). Character education for the digital age. *Educational Leadership*, 68(5), 187-205.
Retrieved from
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb11/vol68/num05/Character-Education-for-the-Digital-Age.aspx>
- Ribble, M. (2015). *Digital citizenship in schools - nine elements all students should know*. International Society For Tech.