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ISTE Action Plan: Digital Citizenship Plan

Defining Digital Citizenship:

Digital Citizenship asks what it means to be a citizen of our world's emerging digital community, such as what rights, privileges, and responsibilities come with our access to technology (Hummel 2024). This specifically includes how we can use computers, phones, and the internet as tools to connect empathetically with one another and maintain our privacy and sense of humanity. Both elements of this definition are important in thinking about our relationship with technology. On the one hand, there are a lot of privileges that come with technology that help us to advance our understanding of one another and connect in new and powerful ways. In my own instance, through online communities I have become friends with people who live on the other side of the world. The flip side of this, however, is that technology can often alienate us from the real world and our sense of self. Our information is not as closely guarded as it feels and we can easily fall into the world of cyberspace. As such, digital citizenship also includes knowing where to draw the line of using technology and how to bring ourselves back to the world around us. As technology becomes more powerful and more integrated into everyday life, our students are going to face new challenges and questions about how to use technology responsibly. As such, it is an important conversation to have and model in our classrooms as part of preparing our students for life outside of the classroom.

Modeling Digital Citizenship in the ELA Classroom:

When it comes to modeling digital citizenship, I was most struck by Hummel's (2024) sense that digital citizenship includes digital wellness and knowing when and how to take breaks

from technology. Based on that principle, I want to be intentional in my use of technology in the classroom, being open with students about why we are using the technology we are using and taking intentional breaks from it as well. By talking with students about the “why” behind my use of technology and encouraging them to think about it as well, I aim to help them learn not only how to use technology but also to think critically about when a certain resource or tool is most appropriate or if technology is even the appropriate tool in that instance (Adams 2021). Part of this would be modeling digital wellbeing by choosing to have a physical copy of our classroom text and showing them the ways I annotate that text. Additionally, English Language Arts is a great content area to be critical about our use of technology and to be intentional about taking breaks from it because there is evidence to show using technology in the way we read or write changes how we process information because it alters psychomotor processes (Smoker et al., 2009).

Another way I want to model digital citizenship in my classroom is by being open with my students about where I find my information and the resources that I am using in class. One thing I have taken from this program so far is a reflection on how important it is to model citing resources for students. This helps them to see the process we take to produce our lessons and allows them to go deeper into a subject if they are interested in that. In terms of digital citizenship, however, it also becomes a chance to model for our students what respecting intellectual property looks like and what it means to be critical of the sources we are using, especially when it comes to the digital landscape. Research is a major part of the ELA curriculum and one of my challenges has been pushing students to use peer-reviewed research and credible sources as opposed to the first link that appears in a Google Search. I can start modeling that from the first day if I am citing my sources as well.

Potential Lesson Plans for ELA:

English Language Arts is uniquely suited for developing lesson plans on digital citizenship because it is geared towards how we process or use information, how we engage with others, and how we present ourselves. In short, it asks questions related to citizenship and can therefore ask the same questions about being digital citizens.

An essential lesson at this point in time would be one that addresses generative AI, how it works, and its place in the classroom. Part of Hummel's (2024) understanding of digital citizenship is that we ought to help students understand how the internet works. We can extend that idea to helping students understand how AI works so that they can use it more effectively. At the moment, most students seem to understand what AI can output, but because they do not understand the data processing behind it, they do not necessarily understand its limits. I have first hand experience with this looking at AI-generated assignments where there is a disconnect because the AI cannot properly meet our expectations and students do not realize that shortcoming. The AI Education Project has several useful resources that would be helpful for this, including the AI Snapshot questions listed under "Potential Resources" below.

Another possible lesson plan would be around understanding copyright, fair use, and open access resources. I see this as especially important in terms of the images students use during presentations or sources they use for reading projects. Moreover, understanding copyright is important real-world knowledge for students as they create a digital footprint through social media or work towards being content creators (a commonly listed career goal). This is especially relevant for the ELA classroom because it fits our digital literacy and research curriculum standards, while also helping them reflect on the ethics and responsibilities of using technology.

See the resources from the Creative Commons listed below under “Potential Resources” for useful tools.

A final lesson plan idea involves creating space for students to practice clear, empathetic communication in a digital environment, perhaps with a project-based or problem-based learning framework. One of the challenges to digital citizenship is that we often forget we are communicating with real people through our screens. The benefit of practicing digital communication with students is they face those real people on a day-to-day basis, so we can practice and develop empathetic digital communication knowing we are in both a digital and in-person relationship with each other. One good way to develop these skills would be to create a digital environment for students and have them develop their own rules for how they should interact with one another. By presenting them with the problem that we need rules to guide our digital interactions, they have a chance to think about what empathetic communication looks like, using critical thinking skills to consider what challenge technology presents to communication (Kilbane and Milman 2013). At the same time, if we do this at the start of the semester/school year, students have a chance to outline the rules they will use throughout the class, which creates a sense of ownership over their learning environment.

Potential Resources:

[AI Education Project - AI Snapshot Questions](#): These are a series of 180 warm-up questions that challenge students to think about where AI might be useful and the ethics of using AI. This would be an important resource for helping students be intentional about the ways they use technology, while also fostering a technology-positive environment. By using these

questions, we do not condemn AI as inherently bad (which I think can be the perception at times), but we still encourage students to engage with it critically.

[Creative Commons](#): Creative Commons is a non-profit organization focused on building a shared commons where culture and literacy resources become open access for everyone to use. As such, they offer a lot of background information about copyright and open access resources, as well as functioning as a hub for finding many open access resources. Because it has an education branch and is geared towards making cultural resources accessible to the public, it offers a good starting point for helping students understand the complexities of open access and copyright.

[Common Sense Education - The Change You Want to See](#): Common Sense Education has many potential lesson plans and resources about digital citizenship, but I am especially drawn to this one about digital footprints and identity. A major part of the 12th Grade ELA curriculum is thinking about literature and identity and how literature can be a tool for students to think about their own identity. As such, this lesson could be a great tool to integrate how students use technology to articulate their purpose as a reflection of how authors have used literature to articulate their purpose as well. In that sense, it can demonstrate the ways our students are already taking part in the meaning-making process that we see in literature, helping them build a text-to-self connection.

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