



Digital Citizenship

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In the newly released draft of the refreshed ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS•S), Digital Citizenship is the new name of the Social, Ethical, and Human Issues standard. The draft standard reads, “Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior.” (See ISTE News on page 6 for more on the new standards.)

I believe this standard is so important that all educators at every level from classroom to administration need to be focused on their role in achieving it. One of the reasons for this standard’s importance is that not all aspects of legal, ethical, and appropriate behavior are clear to adults, much less to students. So the first step is to educate ourselves and have the conversation with all stakeholders. Gerald Bailey and Mike Ribble have an excellent Web site devoted to digital citizenship (<http://www.educ.ksu.edu/digitalcitizenship/>) that outlines their nine themes and provides curriculum ideas and related Web sites. Another excellent Web site to find resources for Internet ethics, safety, and security is the Cyberethics, Cybersafety and Cybersecurity Institute (<http://www.edtechoutreach.umd.edu/C3Institute/>), an outreach program of the University of Maryland.

Another reason for education in digital citizenship is that it empowers students to protect themselves online. Younger students need to be protected with safe and effective policies and procedures by adults, but as students grow older we must educate them about the risks, dangers, legal, appropriate, and healthy versus not healthy practices. The state of Virginia felt strongly enough about this to pass a law in March 2006 that all

school districts integrate the teaching of Internet safety into their curricula. Note that the law does not instruct them to teach cybersafety as a separate course. All teachers and educators working on curriculum should be teaching Internet safety.

These are just a few of the lessons—including electronic simulations—available online:

- NetAlert (<http://www.netalert.net.au>), Australia’s Internet safety advisory body, provides resources for teachers and librarians and advice by grade levels and by risks.
- i-Safe (<http://www.isafe.org>) for middle school students incorporates classroom curriculum with community outreach to students, teachers, parents, law enforcement, and concerned adults.
- ID the Creep (<http://www.idthecreep.com>) is another online simulation for students sponsored by the Ad Council and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
- NetSmartz (<http://www.netsmartz.org>) uses age-appropriate, 3D activities to teach children and teens how to be safer when using the Internet.

Educators can locate and use safe social networking sites. At the BlogSafety Forum (BlogSafety.com) parents, teens, educators, and experts discuss and learn about safe blogging and social networking. Educators in charge of the technology infrastructure can include safe local forms of social networking tools and spaces.

Learning how to be productive and safe digital citizens is a vital part of today’s education. Please share your resources and implementation stories and ideas with other *L&L* readers at letters@iste.org. ■

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