

Digital Citizenship: In the World, Of the World, For the World



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What does it mean to be a good digital citizen? First, we have to be digital citizens *in* the world and understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology. We need to know and practice legal and ethical behavior for a relatively new medium. Digital content, which is easy to acquire, copy, alter, and/or share, is different from print and analog.

Creative Commons, which defines the spectrum of licensing possibilities between full copyright—all rights reserved—and the public domain—no rights reserved—is an important concept that is a new idea to many people. The trick is finding a balance between the right to build on others' work and the responsibility for protecting intellectual property rights. It is important for teachers and students to understand what fair use is and what the law allows. That creates a certain challenge because this issue is rapidly evolving. Doug Johnson, the director of media and technology for the Mankato (Minnesota) Public Schools, has good information about copyright and fair use on his site.

As technology connects us to the world, we also need to be digital citizens *of* the world and develop cultural understanding and global awareness. In a flat world, it is easy to engage with learners of other cultures. Many established projects are available, as are opportunities for informally finding co-collaborators through educator wikis, blogs, and Nings. Look into iEARN, Global Schoolnet, Taking IT Global, and ePALs. If you need some inspiration for joining a global project, listen to the webcast

of Mali Bickley and Jim Carleton's keynote session at NECC 2008.

Technology also empowers us to be citizens *for* the world and to engage in social entrepreneurship and stewardship. Technology can help turn short service-learning projects into long-term, sustainable solutions. The Students Helping Students project of the Room to Read social entrepreneurship project has resources and lesson plans for teaching students about social entrepreneurship and working with different cultures. PBS has an array of resources to support its 2005 series, "The New Heroes," a four-hour program hosted by Robert Redford. The series tells the story of 12 social entrepreneurs who bring innovative, empowering solutions to social problems around the world. Resources include written information about the heroes, lesson plans, games, and links to supporting sites and information.

Clearly, there is much to explore in the world of digital citizenship. In fact, one could develop a complete K–12 curriculum around it. Any takers?

Resources

ePALs: www.epals.com
Global Schoolnet: www.globalschoolnet.org
International Education and Resource Network: www.iearn.org
Johnson's site: www.doug-johnson.com/dougwri/ beating-the-no-u-turn-syndrome-copyright.html
NECC 2008 Keynote session by Mali Bickley and Jim Carleton: www.kzowebcasting.com/necc
Students Helping Students: www.roomtoread.org/shs/ teachers/index.html
Taking IT Global: www.takingitglobal.org
The New Heroes on PBS: www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/

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