**The Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship and its Implications in Education**

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For the past several years, technology usage in school has grown exponentially, and with this also the concern about the proper use of said technology. The risk of students using technology for inappropriate purposes is exceptionally high. Legally, schools are responsible for developing in students the digital citizenship skills that they will use in the future, as well as ensuring their safety and that has been a challenge and a frequent conversation in schools. Educators are incorporating digital citizenship skills in their classes to educate students on the known and unknown effects of the technology on an ever-growing digital world.

**What is digital citizenship and why should we be concerned?**

After reflecting on the meaning and reach of digital citizenship, I elaborated the definition below:

"Digital citizenship is a set of ethical code guidelines that help people interact and communicate with others via digital tools. It establishes the appropriate use of digital resources and strategies to keep digital citizens safe."

As remarkable as technology advancements are, it is essential to emphasize the increasing trend of misuse and abuse of technology in all areas of our life. Families where all members have a smartphone at the dinner table, conversations about how the day went are a thing of the past.  We hear about piracy and illegal sharing of music and movies among people of all age groups. Often, in social media, people have heated arguments to demonstrate their point of view, and only theirs is correct, currently challenging opinions are considered aggression. Users of digital communication have become desensitized of the human being on the other side of the screen and more often use violent language to interact with others.  Without going any farther, as educators, we see students', and even other adults lack control over their technology,

playing games and texting during class time, meetings and even when talking face to face to others.

**The Nine Elements of Citizenship**

The nine elements of digital citizenship are considered the foundation of a responsible Digital Society. These nine elements are grouped in sets of three according to their purpose, and it would be ideal for every citizen of the digital world to master the skills embedded in each one of them.

**Respect yourself and others.**

1. Digital access. Citizens have access to the digital world and the ability to actively participate in it.

2. Digital etiquette. Citizens recognize and use acceptable behavior in online interactions.

3. Digital law. Citizens know their legal limitations and responsible for their acts.

**Educate yourself and others.**

4. Digital literacy. Citizens have the opportunity to learn and use technology.

5. Digital communication. Citizens use digital communication tools in appropriate ways.

6. Digital Commerce. Citizens know how to safely buy and sell goods online.

**Protect yourself and others.**

7. Digital rights and responsibilities. Citizens know their and others' rights and how to protect them.

8. Digital health and wellness. Citizens acknowledge the health risks of using technology.

9. Digital security. Citizens know how to protect sensitive information when online.

**The Nine Elements of Citizenship and Their Effect on Education**

To understand the reach and significance of digital citizenship, I reach to various sources of information, analyzed their metrics and made connections to my daily work at school. Below, I am only reflecting on the elements that have seen most evident in my day to day activities as a high school teacher and that are my greatest concern.

**Digital Access.**

The United States is one of the largest worldwide online markets with 76.2% of the population able to access the internet in 2016; our country also ranks four in the Freedom House Index of 2017 which is a scale that reflects internet freedom (Statista, 2017). This resource notices that online usage increases with higher levels of education and income which means that many of our student population are on the bottom half of the spectrum. The inequality and access gap is evident, in my campus, 88% of students in advanced placement classes paid the annual fee for the usage of a district iPad, however, in on-level classes only 10% of the students did the same. The difference in the lessons designed for each course is substantial.

**Digital Etiquette.**

According to the Pew Research Center 2018 survey, 95% of teenagers 13-17 years old, own a smartphone or had access to one. The ability to connect has fueled a more persistent online activity; 45 % of teens reported going online "almost constantly," affecting their behavior during school time. Due to a lack of digital etiquette, students believe it is acceptable to update their social media status, post pictures or carry a text conversation with a friend meanwhile in class time. Psychologists describe the digital distraction as FOMO, fear of missing out. By becoming increasingly reactive to the various notifications on their phones, students respond or

post with a lack of deliberation or the consequences that these activities could bring (Shapiro, 2014).

My question is, how did we become so different? Why adults of my generation are so different than the youth of these days. To me, it is common sense to carefully review a parent email, text or social media post before sending or posting them, making sure that it does not sound rude and that within the limitations of the emotional flatness of these communication tools, no one misinterprets my words. I have made my goal of talking to my students about the proper time and etiquette for using cellphones in addition to making sure to think before they post, email or text.

**Digital law.**

Technology has made it easy to publish, access and download information; this is a significant advantage for communication when used correctly, but students and users, in general, have found ways to take advantage of it. Users of the internet fail to take into consideration other users' rights when illegally downloading, sharing, copying or modifying copyrighted materials. The most significant issue is students not considering it a problem and ignore the legal implications that could be brought to them. I believe this is an element that should be taught within every class every time research or images are necessary.

**Digital communication.**

In regards to the digital communication element and after reviewing the results of the Pew Research Center survey of social media usage in 2018, I noticed that teens have mixed views on the impact that social media has on their lives, 31% of them consider it useful in connecting with friends and family. On the other side, 27% think the effect is mostly adverse since the proliferation of smartphones has changed how bullying takes place. In another survey

from Pew Research Center (2018), 59 % of American teenagers have experienced at least one abusive online behavior with name calling and rumor spreading as the most significant concern.

My awareness about bullying in school has increased, and I am curious to know about the real situation of my campus because although statistics say that a high percentage of students have experienced bullying at some point of their lives, I do not hear conversations about it. What I have heard is the word "drama" and did not realize until now after watching a video called Digital Drama from Generation Safe, that students refer to aggressive behaviors and even cyberbullying from other students as drama. The reason why I have not heard anything about cyberbullying is that the vocabulary that my students are using does not match mine.

**Digital health and wellness.**

Related to the digital health and wellness element, a study from Kent State University (2013) suggests that excessive cellphone use in students relates to higher levels of anxiety and lower academic performance. The existence of a new phenomenon known as text addiction is also on the rise, making the technology misuse and overuse a genuine health concern.

It is notorious the student technology abuse, often when a student falls asleep in class, I ask them, did you sleep? And usually, they reply not very well. When I ask them for the reason, they commonly say that they stayed late playing videogames or playing on their phone. I have also seen students that frequently try to play on their phone in class, which is a problem of etiquette itself, with their nose almost on their navel and their back extremely curved, such position is not natural or healthy for their spine.

**What we can do about it**

During this class, I developed my mantra: **"Safe, respectful and constructive digital world for everyone,"** because I do believe with some work from all stakeholders, it is possible.

I think that permanent student, parent, and teacher education is the solution to the lack of digital citizenship skills in our students, as well as leaders that keep themselves informed of the latest technology innovations and possible uses and misuses of those new technologies. My idea is starting with digital citizenship workshops for parents, because I consider that nothing is better than including the support and supervision that parents can provide at home to successfully develop the skills to master the nine elements of digital citizenship. Later on, establish 15 minutes period at the beginning of the day exclusively dedicated to teaching about the elements of digital citizenship, including hands-on activities and role-playing.

**About the presentation project**

For the presentation project, I chose Prezi; I selected it for several reasons

1. I had never used Prezi before, and I wanted to learn it.

2. Every time we needed a presentation, I have made a video and wanted to change.

3. I perform better under pressure; I knew this was the perfect opportunity to force me to master a new tool.

4. I consider Prezi to be a very engaging tool for presenting concepts in a non-linear way.

I enjoyed much the making of the presentation project, although it took me a couple of hours to learn Prezi and several hours to finish the project (about 12 h), at the end of the day I am happy and proud with the result of my work and would not change the learning experience for anything else.

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