



CREATING BETTER DIGITAL CITIZENS

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The Digital Education Revolution (DER) has seen a boom in the use of computers and technology in schools across Australia. With this initiative comes a significant change in thinking about educating for technology use. The concept of digital citizenship was barely relevant a decade ago. Now with K-12 students spending significant time in both the real and virtual worlds, educators are starting to identify a new collective responsibility - to teach our young people what it means to be a good digital citizen so as to help shape students' behaviour in the virtual world.

NSW DER program office of the NSW Department of Education and Training has adopted digital citizenship as a major theme for 2010. As stated by program director Dianne Marshall, *"Basic skills and using technology to learn are still high priorities but we need to move to the next stage of digital citizenship. This includes media literacy and empowerment of young people to better manage online risks such as cyber bullying and self destructive online behaviour. It recognises young people as stakeholders in positive internet use. The rules are the same for being a good real world citizen: Obey the law, have respect for others, act civilly and sensibly."*

Many users do not know what constitutes appropriate technology use and both students as well as adults misuse and abuse technology. While acceptable usage policies and user charters are important, they are not enough. Students need to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate and this will require education about the appropriate use of technology. Consider the following:

- A mobile phone rings in your class – it is a parent checking up on her child.
- Your friend shares music files with you on a regular basis.
- A student follows an online guide to bypass the laptop filtering.
- A student sends a harassing email to another student. Another writes a hurtful comment on Facebook.
- A student copies and pastes internet materials into an assignment without giving credit to the authors.
- A fellow teacher uses a software package to copy movies from DVDs for her friends.
- A student takes a silent photo of another student, edits it with a funny comment and sends it to other students using Bluetooth.
- Students try to hack the teacher's password so they can get a copy of a class test from her files.
- A student gives her friend her password and asks her to check her emails.
- Another student cracks into a teacher's email account by guessing her password based on her secret question. The student sends the teacher's login details around by MSN. Another student uses this to explore the teacher's emails, finds her bank account details and publishes her account number on his blog ... When the Principal tries to explain to the student's mother what her child had done, the mother has no idea what cracking or hacking means and no idea that her son had perpetrated part of the crime on his computer in his bedroom at home.

Digital Citizenship is a way to teach students what it means to be a good digital citizen and how to go about being one. Being a good citizen includes anything from following certain email protocols to paying for proprietary content online and engaging in constructive online dialogue.

In NSW in 2009 the first laptops were issued to government school students in Year 9 under the NSW Digital Education Revolution program. The program focused on use of the laptops, the software and on development of technology and digital learning skills. With

the second round of laptops being issued to Year 9 in 2010, teachers are realising the need for a set of common understandings about what is expected of students and others in using technology.

National resources have been developed in Australia and elsewhere to address cyber bullying and assist with digital safety and intellectual property. These include *Budd:e* from the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy (2010); *CYBER(SMART:)* from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (2009) and *Think You Know* from the Australian Federal Police and Microsoft Australia (2009). Educators also have access to teaching resources developed elsewhere such as *Safer internet* - European Union (2009); *Cry of the Dolphins* - You tube cyber bullying video (2010); *Let's fight it together Cyber Bullying* film by Digizen (2009); *NETSAFE New Zealand cyber safety resource kit and cybercitizenship grid* (2008) and *MyBytes* by Microsoft (2010).

There is an emerging worldwide movement to address and characterise digital citizenship which makes it imperative that this is addressed in Australian schools. In 2006 Global Kids' Digital Media Initiative at the University of California initiated a series of programs designed to encourage teenagers to think critically about the role of digital media in their lives. The subsequent report *Meeting of Minds: Cross-Generational Dialogue on the Ethics of Digital Lives* (2009) addresses issues from adult and student perspectives relating to ethics in the digital age and could form the basis of an interesting parent or teacher discussion.

Digizen.org (2010) in the UK states on its website under the heading: What makes you such a good digizen? *"Digital citizenship isn't just about recognising and dealing with online hazards. It's about building safe spaces and communities, understanding how to manage personal information, and about being internet savvy - using your online presence to grow and shape your world in a safe, creative way, and inspiring others to do the same."* The direction taken in the UK has been towards encouraging young people to see online environments as communities they are helping to shape so that they will act more responsibly.

In Europe the European Commission Joint Research Centre has *Digital Living - the digitisation of the life and mainly of an individual's identity* (2009) as one of its major research themes with specific research focussing on the Promotion of Digital Citizenship in the Information Society.

In the US the focus has been on individual ethical behaviour. US educator and author, Mike Ribble (2004) has developed nine very useful themes of Digital Citizenship defining it as *"appropriate, responsible behaviour with regard to technology use"*. They are:

- **Digital Etiquette:** electronic standards of conduct or procedure.
- **Digital Communication:** electronic exchange of information.
- **Digital Literacy:** process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.
- **Digital Access:** full electronic participation in society.
- **Digital Commerce:** electronic buying and selling of goods.
- **Digital Law:** electronic responsibility for actions and deeds.
- **Digital Rights and Responsibilities:** those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.
- **Digital Health and Wellness:** physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.
- **Digital Security (self-protection):** electronic precautions to guarantee safety.

In *Digital Technology- Using Technology Appropriately*, Ribble



(2004) provides descriptions of each element with suggestions for discussion in class and his approach to digital citizenship has widespread usage in schools in the US as an e-search will demonstrate.

On *CYBER(SMART:)* ACMA has provided a range of quizzes and resources targeting young kids, kids, teens and parents and tips on unwanted contact, cyberbullying, online friends, playing games online, keeping the balance, digital footprint, P2P/filesharing, inappropriate content, financial security and online shopping and identity theft. However decisions to teach these materials rest only on the planning of the individual teacher as there is no coordinated K-12 curriculum approach. The digital world is moving faster than syllabi can keep up.

In 2010 DER – NSW will encourage schools to approach DER based on the following four themes:

- i. encompasses the skills needed to use the laptops technology and software.
- ii. aims to provide students with the skills they need to use technology to learn e.g. e-research.
- iii. includes keeping safe online, understanding and dealing with cyber bullying, privacy and password security.
- iv. will address the issues raised in this paper about ethical and responsible use of technology. Actions that constitute cyber bullying are addressed in this component.

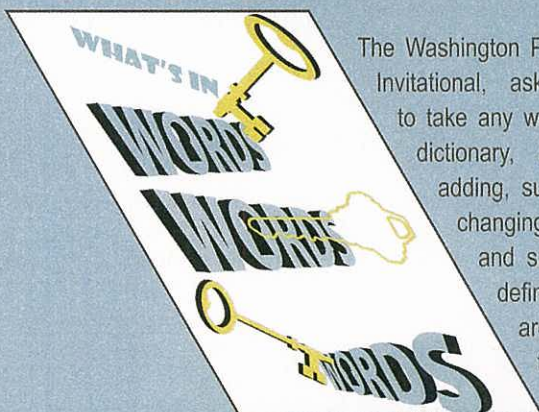
Schools are encouraged to develop a plan to make digital citizenship a priority in their schools and to encourage staff to see its importance; to create forums for dialogue about ethical and unethical technology behaviour; and to focus on the positive aspects of technology without over-emphasising rules and regulations. Places for inclusion in the curriculum K-6 and 7-12 will need to be identified along with staff professional learning opportunities.

The advent of the Australian Curriculum is an opportunity to ensure that Australia's first national syllabi are forward thinking and meeting the needs of the digital future of our young people. Presently ICT and ethical behaviour are addressed by ACARA (2010) only as general capabilities. An opportunity exists for Australia to lead the world in this area should ACARA, in the light of the national nature of the Digital Education Revolution, determine that digital citizenship and digital safety should be developed as mandatory syllabus content K-10 as part of the national Australian curriculum rather than being left to schools to include in various student welfare programs that differ across schools, systems and states.

If digital citizenship is to become part of our school culture as well as part of our daily lives, and educators are to take on the responsibility to help our young people to know right from wrong and appropriate from inappropriate in the 21st century digital world, it seems essential that a concerted national K-12 approach is needed. As Ribble and Bailey (2004) ask: "If not here (schools), where? If not now, when? If not you, who?"

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The Washington Post's Mensa Invitational, asked readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and supply a new definition. Here are some of the winners:

- CASHTRATION:** The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.
- INTAXICATON:** Euphoria at getting a tax refund, which lasts until you realise it was your money to start with.

- BOZONE:** The substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating. The bozone layer, unfortunately, shows little sign of breaking down in the near future.
- GIRAFFITI:** Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.
- SARCHASM:** The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.
- DECAFALON:** The grueling event of getting through the day consuming only things that are good for you.
- GLIBIDO:** All talk and no action.
- DOPELER EFFECT:** The tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.
- KARMAGEDDON:** It's like, when everybody is sending off all these really bad vibes, right? And then, like, the Earth explodes and it's like, a serious bummer.
- INOCULATTE:** To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.