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TEACHER TALK

Is Digital Citizenship A Problem in Your School? (Teaching Digital Citizenship)

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Misusing technology is becoming a major problem in our schools and in society as a whole. Where do children learn to be productive members of a digital society? Do they learn to be good digital citizens in school? Do they learn good digital behavior from parents and friends? Are Acceptable Use Policies effective in teaching appropriate digital behavior?

Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of behavior with regard to technology use.

Find out how your school is doing by taking this digital citizenship audit. Rate your school according to the scale below. Then total up your points and measure your results according to the scale.

5 - frequently
4 - occasionally
3 - sometimes
2 - rarely
1 - never

1. Students use digital cameras to take pictures of a test.
2. Teachers print excess copies of color materials.
3. Students copy material from the Internet without giving credit.
4. Students log onto school programs with another's username and password.
5. Teachers do not use tables or chairs at the correct height for using technology.
6. Teachers and students leave cellphone ringer on during public events.
7. Students use text-messaging during class.
8. Teachers do not show students how to make intelligent purchases online.
9. Teachers and students fail to keep up with virus protection and back-up files.
10. Teachers do not provide technology access to those who do not have technology at home.

Is digital citizenship a high priority in your school? Why or why not?

Respond

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If your score is 31 or above, this shows that technology use is high in your district. Unfortunately, technology misuse and abuse are also very high.

If your score is 21-30, your school has average technology use, but your may be at risk for abuse.

If your score was 19 or below, either your school is not using a great deal of technology or you are unaware of technology misuse and abuse.

We believe that schools need to engage students in a dialog about digital citizenship. Teaching the next generation about digital citizenship must become a high priority in our schools.

[Editor's note: For more information on digital citizenship, see the authors' Web site featured under Teacher Created Web Site in this issue.]

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Stopping Up "Rat-Holes": An Essay On Cyber-Cheating
Randal Garrison, Language Arts Department Chair, Freedom High School, Morganton, NC

Long gone are the days when desperate college students pulled small paper tabs off of advertisement pages, called a mysterious number, and purchased a ready-written term paper for $25.00.

Today, hundreds of Web sites exist for the express purpose of delivering term papers, organized by subject and length, directly onto students' desktops. Some of these sites are free, adopting a guerilla warfare approach for "beating the system." Others offer papers for sale, giving students a chance to trade their (or their parents') hard-earned dollars for the opportunity to slack off.

A national survey by Rutgers' Management Education Center of 4,500 high school students found that 75 percent of them engage in serious cheating. More than half have plagiarized work they found on the Internet. Many of them do not see anything wrong with cheating as some 50 percent responding said they don't think copying questions and answers from a test is even cheating. Education World's online newsletter's recent Weekly Survey Question for teachers was: About how many times a year do you spot plagiarism? Results as of November 16, 2005, were:

- 6.2% Never
- 56.2% Between 1-5 times a year
- 18.8% Between 6-10 times a year
- 18.8% More than 10 times a year*

From these hundreds of "cheating-made-easy" sites have sprung even more Web sites dedicated to finding and identifying the cheaters (for a small fee). This booming cottage industry of cheaters and cheater-catchers springs from one main issue: students who would rather expend massive amounts of time and money in order to avoid learning research and writing skills.

Educators are forced to play at least a portion of this game in order to plug the "rat holes" that students gnaw in order to avoid real work. Many writing teachers subscribe to an online site that allows them to

check for plagiarism. At the very least, teachers resort to "googling" lines from student papers hoping to get a hit. In addition, teachers are requiring students to turn in source copies along with note cards and source cards to verify internal citations.

Another avenue for the creative cheater is to use a camera phone to send shots of tests to other anxious cheaters, as well as text messages that deliver stolen information. Even worse, students who take an entire course online have the option of asking, or hiring, anyone to take the course for them. When quizzes and tests aren't monitored, they can be downloaded and given to others. After much time spent trying to outthink their students, even the most dedicated teachers must ask themselves how many thousands of valuable teaching hours are being wasted with this high-tech police work?

There are some measures to take to discourage cyber-cheating. Explaining the gravity of plagiarism to students is an essential first step. In addition, creating "cheater-proof" assignments is fairly straightforward. For example, teachers can use materials not readily accessible online in their classroom. I started using a novel titled *The Outlaws of Sherwood* years ago because it was not available in film version or Cliff Notes. In addition, when I give quizzes on assigned novels, I'll occasionally throw in a "red-herring question," or one that purposely addresses a difference between the novel and the movie version of the novel. For instance, in *Lord of the Flies*, if a student tells me that the boys were rescued by a helicopter, I know that he or she has only seen the movie and not read the book. In addition, I assign many in-class writing assignments to cut down on plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

Although most students are honest, cheating has been an issue in the classroom since the one-room schoolhouse. As cheating methods evolve, we as teachers have to not only keep up, but stay ahead of the cheating game in order to ensure that each student learns the subject taught, not how to get around it. Cheating in the classroom doesn't have to be seen as an insurmountable problem, but rather as an opportunity to use our good humor and imagination to make sure we reach all of our students, even the ones who would rather have someone else do the work for them.

*www.educationworld.com

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