School Librarians Are Teaching Digital Citizenship

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

The first National Educational Technology Plan (NETP) appeared in a 1996 report from the Department of Education, proposing strategies for meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge issued by President Bill Clinton, which strongly advocated that U.S. students be technologically literate by early in the 21st century.Kathy Lester, school library media specialist and technology coach at East Middle School in Michigan's Plymouth-Canton district and a colleague of Marchesano's, notes: "I teach students to be safe online, and to make ethical decisions."According to Lester, the lesson includes "digital footprint, cyberbullying, and a game they can play that shows how fast information can spread on the internet.ALSC created a Google document titled "ALSC Supporting Librarians in a Post-Election Environment," and the organization partnered with AASL in March for a community forum for members called "Digital Literacy and Digital Citizenship for Children in Libraries," which focused on the topic of fake news.

FULL TEXT

As technology and social media play an increasingly big role in the classroom, educators are faced with challenges of teaching students how to use technologies in appropriate ways, and how to be safe and responsible online--the basic tenets of what is known as digital citizenship, a close relative of digital literacy. Fortunately, classroom teachers often have an expert ally to assist them in getting the job done: their school librarian or media specialist. "Digital citizenship and digital literacy--and, in the bigger picture, information literacy--whether it's print or digital, that is our curriculum," says Gwenn Marchesano, a middle school librarian in Plymouth, Mich. "That's what school librarians teach."

When educator Mike Ribble first started writing about digital citizenship in the early 2000s, the term was unfamiliar to many people. The core definition he uses on his website (digitalcitizenship.org) states that digital citizenship is "the norms of appropriate, responsible beha-vior with regard to technology use." By 2008, Ribble's book on the topic with coauthor Gerald Bailey, Digital Citizenship in Schools , which outlines nine major themes for digital citizenship (see sidebar, page 39), helped make him one of the founding fathers of a movement to incorporate this concept into K-12 curricula. Today it's a buzzword in educator circles around the world.

Though our nation has been riding a wave of technological advances for several decades, educational standards incorporating technology education have not always kept pace. The idea of using technology to help students learn found solid footing in 1979 when David Moursund, a professor, mathematician, and computer scientist, founded the International Council for Computers in Education, now known as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). The first National Educational Technology Plan (NETP) appeared in a 1996 report from the Department of Education, proposing strategies for meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge issued by President Bill Clinton, which strongly advocated that U.S. students be technologically literate by early in the 21st century.

In 2015, ISTE petitioned the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, asking that a dedicated digital learning program be included in the replacement of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was enacted in 2002. In December 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), legislation that replaced NCLB and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. ESSA includes

education technology in its Title IV flexible block grant funding. The NETP was updated in January 2017, offering educators and stakeholders recommendations and real-world success stories of "the transformation enabled by the effective use of technology." Today, individual states and school districts devise their own plans and standards for advancing education through technology, and those standards are often informed by the ISTE standards and other sources, which may include the American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner.

"Digital citizenship is the art of knowing how to conduct yourself professionally and respectfully while in a digital setting," says April Wathen, teacher librarian at George W. Carver Elementary School in Lexington Park, Md. "This is a key piece of digital literacy. If one does not understand how to behave in a polite manner online, then navigating the waters of the internet will most likely prove challenging."

Kathy Lester, school library media specialist and technology coach at East Middle School in Michigan's Plymouth-Canton district and a colleague of Marchesano's, notes: "I teach students to be safe online, and to make ethical decisions." Like many of her colleagues, Lester believes that digital citizenship includes "that information literacy piece about students being smart and critical thinkers when they evaluate resources and knowing about copyright and intellectual property. Digital citizenship encompasses all of those things."

Marchesano describes digital citizenship as "trying to make sure our students are responsible, safe, and ethical users and creators of information. They are members of a big digital community, and they need to know how to behave appropriately in that world, just like they need to know how to behave appropriately in their face-to-face culture."

Most educators agree that digital citizenship skills can't really be taught in a single class, or even a series of classes. The best practice is to incorporate age-appropriate lessons in a manner that's relevant to students. As Marchesano puts it, "The majority of this is taught in context, in conjunction with what's being taught in the classroom." She says that, when classes are conducting research, she teams up with colleagues. "I will partner with the history teacher or the language arts teacher, and we will find ways to integrate digital literacy concepts at the same time learning classroom content," she says.

At the middle school level, Marchesano says, "It's important that students are starting to be aware that they need to evaluate the validity of what they are reading." She has students in health class do research on illegal drugs, learning about what cocaine does to your body, including the long- and short-term effects. "If they're going to somebody's blog, they don't know if this is accurate information they are getting," Marchesano notes. "It's my job to come in and do a mini lesson about the things you want to look for when it comes to a source: Do we really know something about who the author is? Are they an expert on this drug, or are they just someone who has a bias to make sure that this drug becomes legal?"

Lester and Marchesano, along with the three other middle school media specialists in their district, have worked together to create a plan for teaching students (and other teachers) about technology. Plymouth-Canton is a 1:1 district; all middle school students in grades 6-8 have a Chromebook they can take home. "We've developed a Chromebook boot camp," says Lester. "We work with teachers to teach these lessons to students, and we've created lessons that we specifically bring into the classroom and teach."

Lester is proactive at the start of the school year. She teaches a course on digital citizenship for entering sixth graders before they even receive their Chromebooks. According to Lester, the lesson includes "digital footprint, cyberbullying, and a game they can play that shows how fast information can spread on the internet. I try to pull out different pieces, using video, games, or photos they have to respond to. I try to mix it up."

Throughout the school year, Lester, like Marchesano, collaborates with classroom teachers offering research lessons about finding and evaluating resources. "I teach a lesson on plagiarism and also creating citations and using their information responsibly," Lester says. "Those lessons are baked in throughout the process. We support the teacher and teach those information literacy pieces."

As part of the district's educational technology plan, Plymouth-Canton middle school students are introduced to Ignition, a digital literacy and responsibility course from Everfi, a provider of online digital resources for teachers. In

Michigan, access to Everfi is provided free to all schools in the state via a partnership with the National Hockey League and its local franchise, the Detroit Red Wings. (The partnership extends to all 30 NHL team markets in the U.S. and Canada, as well as to additional communities, and includes the Future Goals initiative for STEM education.) Lessons and quizzes address topics including storing data in the cloud and various technology terms. "Already in middle school, all my students have phones," says Lester. "So the Ignition course is not just about being responsible online, but being responsible on your cell phone as well. It's got a lot of pieces."

Steven Yates, AASL president and library educator, says that, in his former position as a high school librarian, pieces of digital citizenship were woven into the K-12 technology curriculum for his school district. "The instruction began as soon as students were interacting with technology and needing passwords and creating profiles," Yates says. "We were instilling early the whole idea that this is your private personal space, and if you're going to have a password-protected environment you want to make sure you protect your passwords. That may seem like a small piece, but I would argue a piece all of our society still struggles with: keeping our own information safe."

Librarians and teachers in Yates's former district then adapted lessons as warranted by student experience. "As the environment became more 1:1 ," Yates says, "it became more important to have that online reputation management piece and help students understand the lasting impact that your digital activity has. That memory does not go away." In Yates's view, digital citizenship is part of the larger idea of maintaining a responsible digital footprint as a student moves through elementary, middle, and high school. During that progression, he says, "you become a more savvy user of technology and your ability to think critically improves." He notes that pieces of digital citizenship are woven throughout the current version of the AASL's Standards for 21st-Century Learners and says, "I can only expect that to be even more robust with the rollout of our new standards this fall." The updated document will be unveiled in November at the AASL National Convention in Phoenix.

Wathen led a small group--the state's director of IT; a county supervisor; a local businesswoman; and a group of high school, middle school, and elementary school teacher librarians--to Annapolis last summer for the Maryland Teacher Leadership Summit. The goal was "to bring awareness to all stakeholders in the state that they play a critical role in actively promoting strong digital citizenship," Wathen says. Since then, her group has been offering presentations on the need for digital citizenship to be written into local education agencies' expected teachings and speaking to various conferences and groups; they will soon speak with assistant superintendents from across the state and bring their presentation to the AASL convention.

The topic of digital citizenship got its own dedicated month--October--last year in Wathen's library/learning commons. Echoing the strategy of others in the field, Wathen says she likes to scaffold her teaching when it comes to digital literacy. "In pre-K, we work on mouse skills, since students are accustomed to their parents' handheld devices or the touch screens at the local public library," she says. Next, kindergarteners and first graders work on "passwords being secret" and address cyber safety lessons like YAPPY (which stands for "don't share your name, addresses, phone number, passwords, your plans") with the Professor Garfield site featuring Garfield the cartoon cat. "The students love this," Wathen says.

The National Center for Missing &Exploited Children's program Netsmartz is the go-to choice for grades 2-3. "We hold engaging conversations based on some video clips and thoughtful questions," Wathen notes. And, in grades 4 and 5, Wathen uses Common Sense Media digital citizenship lessons via the Nearpod mobile platform, which allows teachers to display presentations on students' devices and see in real time who is participating. "It never fails that we get really deep, rich conversations about things that are not traditionally addressed in the classroom," she says. "Students know the library is a safe place to share things they have learned and experienced, without consequence. We hit real-world issues, and without a doubt the students teach me something each year."

In the 2017-2018 school year, Wathen says she will be looking for ways to embed Google's Be Internet Awesome curriculum, launched in June, into her lessons. She has partnered with her local library for a project in which her students will use digital tools to create educational components for a "story walk" display at the library.

In addition to their individual lesson plans and collaborations, all the librarians interviewed for this article cited the K-12 digital citizenship program on the Common Sense Media website as a valuable resource. "Many of my

students and colleagues as well as AASL members rely on Common Sense Media," says Yates. "Their digital citizenship program covers information literacy, relationships and communication, and a lot of other topics using solid information and high-quality graphics."

Identifying Fake News

"The current political climate has brought two different conversations to the forefront," Yates says. "For one, communities are maybe seeing the impact that school librarians have when being able to determine source bias. And the second discussion is cyberbullying. Those are two critical aspects of digital citizenship."

When providing instruction on effective searching, educators address how to determine bias. Yates lists some sample questions that could be included. "Is there an 'about' page?" he asks. "Have they received funding from certain groups? How do you determine bias of funding groups? What does it mean if a site is supported by Greenpeace? What does it mean if something is supported by the NRA?" Using this approach, says Yates, helps instructors tease out critical issues.

But in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, according to Yates, there have been a number of discussions among administrators and in communities stressing the need to "make sure our students are discerning." Librarians are quick to answer that call by saying, "Let's make more time for our librarians to provide that instruction. It's piqued people's interest again, or maybe for the first time, about better understanding what source bias looks like, and how teachers and students can better understand where their news is coming from."

A number of organizations, including AASL and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), moved quickly after the election to respond with resources to help librarians. ALSC created a Google document titled "ALSC Supporting Librarians in a Post-Election Environment," and the organization partnered with AASL in March for a community forum for members called "Digital Literacy and Digital Citizenship for Children in Libraries," which focused on the topic of fake news.

"Kids have heard the term 'fake news' and they laugh about it," says Lester. "But I can use that and go in and show them examples to emphasize the point that it is something they need to pay attention to." She notes that using current examples with kids makes the topic more meaningful to them. "Studies show a lot of kids are getting their news from social media," Lester says. "Being more aware of that and being able to talk to kids about it helps us make sure they are learning to be critical thinkers about what they're reading before passing it on."

In Marchesano's view, "There's a blurring now of what's news and what's gossip. They're so intertwined we have to make sure that students are thinking beyond the knee-jerk, 'Hey, here's an interesting piece of information, I'm going to share this.' " There is great concern that things get spread so quickly online. "Kids need to be smart consumers of what they're reading," Marchesano adds.

Teaming Up to Prevent Cyberbullying

School librarians often lead the discussion at parents' night or open houses to help them understand different types of cyberbullying. "That leads to not only instruction not happening at school, but a community conversation and a familywide conversation outside of school," Yates notes. "When I was growing up, it was, 'This is how you act in public.' Now it extends conversation to 'This is how you act online.' " Approaches vary, and they may include elements of broader character education, but, Yates says, "our members are talking a lot more about how they can contribute to that conversation."

Marchesano says of cyberbullying, "I see it happening younger and younger, as devices are in the hands of younger kids who don't necessarily have the same impulse control as more mature students or adults would have." In her seventh grade lesson on the topic, Marchesano uses recent news articles about cyberbullying from around the world. "I want them to be aware that this doesn't just happen in the United States, or Michigan," she says. Students read the articles and work together to create informational web pages to put on their school's site. "It helps the parents understand cyberbullying," she says. "What it is, how you can prevent it, some statistics, and what to do if it happens to you."

Her goal is to have her students be leaders in their own community to prevent cyberbullying. "I encourage students to initiate those conversations with their parents and their friends to prevent it from happening," Marchesano says.

A key component, she adds, is that students and parents have a common understanding so that parents will not just take away devices and punish kids who tell them about cyberbullying, but that they will work through the situation together.

Lester's strategy to combat cyberbullying is to remind her students to use positive messages. She picked up some tips on executing that approach during summer gatherings including Nerd Camp in Parma, Mich., and the ISTE conference in San Antonio. "This year, my plan is that I'm going to pull together a crew of kids who are going to help me," Lester says. I'm going to get the kids to be the ones putting out positive messages. I definitely think that's a good way to get kids involved with it."

Social Media and Beyond

The use of social media by students is a topic that overlaps with almost every tenet of digital citizenship. And, due to the earlier adoption of devices and digital behaviors, Marchesano says she's had to start teaching some lessons earlier. "It used to be that protecting your identity because you are worried about identity theft was something I taught older students as they were getting ready to head into high school or go on to college," she says. "Now I'm having to share that information with younger students -- that there are people out there trying to get their information. They're so happy to share things about themselves online."

Like Wathen, Lester plans to use some aspects of the new Google Be Internet Awesome program with her students this school year. She also cited the new book Social LEADia: Moving Students from Digital Citizenship to Digital Leadership by Jennifer Casa-Todd. "There is a whole movement about how we are not going to be able to tell kids 'don't' all the time, but we can teach them to how to use social media in positive ways," Lester says.

Wathen says the bottom line is that "our students need to be taught, and we need to model positive interactions online." She cites the oft-mentioned link between kids' emotional health and online behavior. "As anxiety in children skyrockets and suicides abound, we need students to know that their self-worth is not based on the number of likes they get," she says. "We need to teach students to respect themselves, steer clear of sexting and other such pressures, and advocate for themselves, and encourage them to lead others in a positive way with their digital choices."

As a general guideline, Wathen adds, "If you would not show your digital interactions to your grandma or stand on a stage to share them, then you should probably make a different choice." She says she no longer thinks in terms of digital footprint so much as "digital tattoo. It never leaves someone's cloud. Whatever you post or share will be there and can be recalled at any point in time."

Teaching digital citizenship and digital literacy is critical because "they're basically lifelong skills," says Lester. "Students need to be able to locate quality, reliable sources of information that they can use in life, career, college-- all the things that they'll be facing."

Just because students are digital natives who have grown up with devices, Marchesano says, we can't assume that they know now to use them properly, safely, or efficiently. "We need to show them; we need to model and intentionally teach the skills and disposition so that they will be good digital citizens," she adds. "We're trying to teach our students skills that will serve them throughout their lives. It's not just about being college- and career-ready, but for their own personal growth for lifelong learning. They need to be able to navigate this digital world to meet their information needs."

Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship

In his writings and on his website, digitalcitizenship.org, educator Mike Ribble identifies nine themes to guide teachers and parents in teaching students how to use technology responsibly.

1. Support for equal digital access: Users need to be aware that not everyone in society has the same access to electronic and online resources, and work to end this inequity.

2. A savvy approach to digital commerce: Users must learn how to distinguish legitimate online commerce from that which is in conflict with laws or morals.

3. Good judgment about digital communication: Users need to develop the ability to make appropriate choices when exchanging information electronically (e.g., when to make a phone call instead of sending a text message,

and how to properly compose an email).

4. The ability to leverage digital literacy: Users need to develop the ability to learn via new information dissemination, sharing, and teaching technologies.

5. Good digital etiquette: Users need to practice appropriate conduct when using electronic methods of communication (e.g., being respectful of others and not posting hurtful things on social media).

6. Adherence to digital law: Users must abide by the laws of society that prohibit causing damage to others' work, identity, or property online, including by hacking, plagiarism, pirating e-books or audiobooks, identity theft, or sending spam.

7. Comprehension of digital rights and responsibilities: Users must understand and help refine the rights and responsibilities of digital citizens.

8. Protection of digital health and wellness: Users need to learn how to protect their physical and psychological well-being from such things as repetitive stress syndrome, internet addiction, and eyestrain.

9. Good habits for digital security: Users must learn how to protect their safety online (e.g. virus protection, backups of data, and so on).

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