

Digital Citizenship



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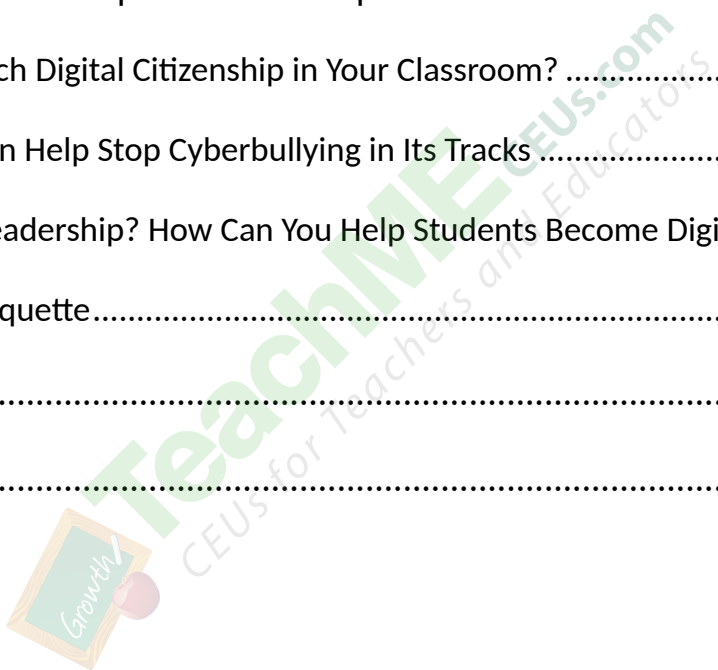
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Introduction

If you're a teacher in a 21st-century classroom and you're looking for modules to put in your curriculum, digital citizenship is, perhaps, a good subject on which to focus. It's gaining popularity in lesson plans nationwide. According to the Common Sense Census, digital citizenship is now one of ISTE's standards for students - and 60% of educators teach some kind of skill relating to digital citizenship every month (Vega and Robb, 2019).

With all of this interest, it's clear that digital citizenship as a subject matter is here to stay. However, that's not a very compelling reason to teach it in your classroom. What is digital citizenship, and why is it so important? If you're going to help your students become competent digital citizens, how should you incorporate lessons into their day-to-day?

In this course, we'll go over the elements of digital citizenship as well as its importance for your students. Then, in Part Two, we'll discuss the different practical pieces of knowledge you'll need to impart, as well as strategies for doing so in your classroom.

Section 1: What Digital Citizenship Is, and Why It Matters

What Is Digital Citizenship?

Let's start with a definition of regular citizenship. If you're a citizen of a country or a city, such as the United States or your hometown, you may have an idea that being a 'good citizen' refers to being a good member of your community.

As such, citizenship is far more than simply a matter of belonging. To be a good citizen, you need an in-depth knowledge of the history of your community as well as your community's traditions, ethics, and normal interactions. You'll use all of that information to inform the way that you respond to others within that community.

Digital citizenship is at heart no different. However, since some members of the online community may be more or less invisible, and because the online community is more diverse and of greater magnitude than the one you might interact with in person, some different aspects of that basic definition come into play. Experts at TeachThought, an online resource for educators, define digital citizenship as "the self-monitored habits that sustain and improve the digital communities you enjoy or depend on" (Heick, 2020).

Some Classic Examples of Digital Citizenship At Work

When your students have become reliable, competent digital citizens, you'll be able to tell because they'll be enabled to:

- Confidently use a mouse, type accurately, and utilize computers with ease
- Avoid hateful or harassing speech while they're talking to others on the internet
- Help others practice smart and respectful internet practices, such as avoiding plagiarizing, illegal downloads, or other harmful habits (Waterford, 2019).

Why is Digital Citizenship Important?

As teachers, it might seem strange that we're now being asked to help guide students through internet literacy. After all, that's not a traditional academic subject. In many cases, our students can seem far more literate with new apps and the internet than we are, anyway!

However, that doesn't mean that we don't have an avenue for helping children improve their lives and others with digital citizenship.

Modern life is moving increasingly toward models where most communication is conducted online. There are new apps, websites, and online services being invented and marketed every day. Being able to navigate new technology, communicate with ease and finesse online, and make the most of the vast amounts of information online without getting distracted or duped are all crucial skills for modern students.

Equipping students with the tools of digital citizenship ensures that they have the resources to succeed in modern life. It will also help them engage with others in safe and constructive ways, and to have a positive and meaningful impact on the safety and efficacy of the internet.

There are five specific reasons that digital citizenship is extremely important for today's students:

1. **Information Literacy:** The internet abounds with helpful tools and services to help you find the answer to any question you could ever ask. Whether you're in need of a dictionary, a thesaurus, or any other type of reference material, there will always be more answers than you need on the internet. Today's students need to be able to sift through this information with confidence. They need to know how to use reliable tools quickly, and how to discern a source they can trust from one that is trying to sell

them something. With internet literacy and digital citizenship, students are empowered to have the understanding and skills to use the information on the internet to their advantage, as well as to the benefit of others. These skills may be second nature to those who have grown up with the internet, but this should never be assumed. Appropriate discernment usually needs to be taught; and simply assuming that children know how to find reliable answers to their questions usually results in mass ignorance and confusion.

2. **Cyberbullying Prevention:** In order to reduce currently distressing rates of cyberbullying, students need to learn the necessity of engaging respectfully with others online. Understanding that the same rules that guide polite, productive conversations in person generally extend to the internet may not be an intuitive leap for many. Reinforcing the idea that online communication and etiquette are not optional but necessary for your students will help them become better citizens of the internet - and will, in turn, make the internet a safer place for anyone who wishes to surf. As you're helping your students learn to be better digital citizens, you can also help them be aware of the dangers of cyberbullying. By learning to address, call out, and prevent all instances of cyberbullying whenever students see it, students can directly contribute to their own mental health and the well-being of their peers.
3. **Online Safety:** The internet can seem like a fun and fascinating place at first glance. It's true that it can be the source of a lot of help and entertainment for modern life. However, it can also be a place where students fall victim to threats from strangers. When you're teaching your students how to be good digital citizens, you need to ensure that they know how to protect themselves as well as their identities. Teach your students that it's best to stay away from some types of websites, that they shouldn't post overly personal information about themselves, and that if something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't! If your students are able to hone these skills, their digital citizenship might very well help protect their personal safety.
4. **Digital Responsibility:** With the advent of the internet came the potential for each of us, our students included, to have a relatively large audience. With a single click, we can disseminate information that reaches hundreds or thousands of people. Your students need to know that this is a responsibility. Part of digital citizenship is an awareness of threats like piracy, viruses, plagiarizing, and hacking. Your students need to be aware that these internet-related threats can result in real-world consequences, and that what they post matters. Helping your students set protective boundaries and

realize what is appropriate and safe (and what isn't) can set your students up for a lifetime of safe, responsible use of the internet.

5. **The Digital World and Wellness Online:** Once your students have moved past simply learning about what can go wrong with internet usage, they can start to understand how using the internet can be a way to increase the quality of their lives - or, of course, how it can be detrimental to their well-being. The internet can sometimes be addictive. Recent studies have shown that overuse of technology has been linked to eye problems, mental stress, low physical fitness, and other chronic problems. Your students need to be aware that just as they're going to need boundaries surrounding how they act online, they'll also need boundaries limiting how much time they're staring at a screen. Understanding that this is not a punitive or random measure and instead is very much meant for their wellness is a crucial step. Learning to balance time spent online or viewing digital or social media with time spent with friends, pursuing physical activity, or other real-world events is a vital part of digital citizenship (W., 2019).

Why Should Every Classroom Teach Digital Citizenship?

It can be tempting to wonder why teachers must specifically go out of their way to add digital citizenship to their curricula. It could seem that many of the tenets of digital citizenship might be successfully woven into other subjects. However, there are several good reasons that teachers should place a special emphasis on this topic:

- There is a very real gap between traditional curricula and ever-evolving technology. In fact, technology is changing so quickly that teachers could never quite hope to keep up with each fad. However, the fact of the matter is that students need to be equipped to handle each new wave of technology. There are certain constants that prevail as tech gets faster and more ubiquitous; and there are ways that teachers can help students prepare themselves for an increasingly digital age. To ignore technology completely, at this point, or to focus on outmoded apps would be foolhardy. Therefore, even though we as teachers can't focus on the complexities of each new social media platform, we have a duty to help students understand the overarching themes of comporting themselves on the internet with grace.
- Digital footprints are very real. These days, prospective employers and colleges will trace an applicant's internet history back for years. The way with which your students will be perceived by their online activities will make a very real impact on their lives. Even though this is a (relatively) well-known fact, many students don't think about the

fact that persons other than their immediate circle of friends will be viewing their posts online. Anything inappropriate will be seen by many. This makes basic awareness of digital citizenship essential in today's world.

- You need to meet your students where they are. Like it or not, your students are living on social media apps these days. In order for your lessons to be helpful and relevant for them, you need to be teaching them the skills that will help them in their milieus of choice. Right now - and, based on trends and speculation, in the future - that involves needing to know how to be a good citizen in an online environment.
- Your students need to be able to sift through the overwhelming amount of information on the internet with confidence. If they don't have proper tools for discernment, they could easily be led astray by a stranger who yells too loudly on any given website. Helping your students learn to develop a sense of curating reliable sources and sussing out suspicious content will set them up for a lifetime of using the internet well—instead of dangerously (Barnwell, 2019).

We've discussed why modern students need to be introduced to digital citizenship. In short, it will help them be successful and safe as they navigate their lives in the information age.

Now, we'll turn to the what of digital citizenship. When you're introducing these concepts to your students, what are you going to be discussing? We'll go into techniques for classroom immersion later, but next, we'll quickly discuss the elements that constitute the heart of digital citizenship.

What are the Elements of Digital Citizenship?

Many of your students have likely had technology in their lives for years. However, this doesn't mean that they're innately good at using it. In order to go from simply using the internet to using it well, students need to prioritize three basic categories of being a good digital citizen.

1. **Respect.** Your students need to learn how to respect themselves and others across the internet. This can be broken down into three discrete principles:
 - **Digital Access:** All persons need to have equal rights in digital spaces. This starts with equal access to the internet.

- **Digital Etiquette:** All people who use the internet need to go beyond just following rules to ensure appropriate behavior, and start learning how to promote polite, respectful communication online.
 - **Digital Law:** Everyone's content belongs to them and them alone. All who use the internet need to know how to share information and digital properties appropriately.
2. **Educate.** Your students need to be aware that the information they post online reaches a lot of people. Three principles logically follow:
- **Digital Communication:** There are myriad different ways to communicate online. Your students need to build comfortability with the various options they have and learn to choose the right method based on what they want to say.
 - **Digital Literacy:** With all the information available on the internet, students need to know how to evaluate the accuracy of sources and cite resources when they are used.
 - **Digital Commerce:** When your students make purchases online, they need to know who they are supporting and how to be an effective consumer.
3. **Protect.** Whether it's their own identity or property belonging to another, protecting privacy is a huge concern in the internet age. Your students will need to learn about three basic priorities in order to protect themselves and others well:
- **Digital Rights and Responsibilities:** Every user on the internet should know their basic rights, including privacy and freedom of speech. These rights bring along with them specific responsibilities.
 - **Digital Safety and Security:** People who are knowledgeable digital citizens are able to protect their own data and information through the appropriate use of privacy.
 - **Digital Health and Wellness:** Your students need to learn when it's time to get off the internet! Part of being good digital citizens involves knowing that a healthy life prioritizes balance (Ribble, 2020).

As we've discussed, being a digital citizen on the internet is not that different from being a conscientious citizen in real-life communities. Being a sensible member of either sphere is dependent upon adherence to an agreed-upon moral code. Remembering that

you and your students need to know how to respect, educate, and protect themselves and others online is a good place to start in your group efforts to become digital citizens.

As a teacher, you have a specific role in helping your students become the good internet users that they need to be. We've discussed what a good digital citizen is; now, how do you help someone else become one? We'll delve into strategies for helping your students become digital citizens in the next section.

Section 2: Digital Citizenship and Leadership in Your Classroom

We're living through the Internet Age. It's vital that the students in your classroom learn to become good citizens on the world wide web. However, it's also important to note that your classroom is likely filled with 'digital natives.' A digital native is very simply someone who has never known a world without technology (NetRef, 2019).

Because many of your students are younger and maybe more naturally familiar with technology and internet use (particularly with of-the-moment applications), it could be easy to assume that they know how to use the internet well. This is not the case. Like many skills, it may come easily to some, but for the most part it very much still needs to be taught.

How can You Teach Digital Citizenship in Your Classroom?

We've discussed the importance of digital citizenship. As a teacher, it's also important that you understand how to pass on this vital skill to your students. We'll discuss five simple ways that you can incorporate digital citizenship in your classroom next.

One good way to frame lessons in digital citizenship is to pair digital citizenship skills with ethical or moral lessons that your students have already likely learned. This will help it seem to your students that they're not learning something new (and therefore potentially overwhelming); they're just learning a new way to apply something they've known for a very long time. We'll follow that format in the below lesson prompts:

- 1. Teach your students to know the difference between right and wrong on the internet.** Just as your students can likely tell, viscerally and on their own, if something feels okay or if something feels off in real life, they can learn to hone their sense of 'okay-ness' or 'off-ness' on the internet. A practical way to help your students garner this skill involves teaching them the rules of proper 'netiquette'. We'll go more into

the rules of netiquette later, but, to start, just giving your students the idea that the internet is a place that has its own rules, expectations, and permanent repercussions will place them miles ahead of many others.

2. **Make sure your students understand that there are consequences for acting poorly on the internet.** Because conversing with other people on the internet can feel ephemeral and impermanent, or because posting a status or a picture can be done so easily, students can think that their actions don't have consequences. Introduce your students to the idea of a digital footprint to ensure that they know that the decisions they make online could affect how they can be perceived for years to come - including in the far-flung future when they want to get into a good school or apply for their dream job.
3. **Teach your students that stranger danger extends to the internet, too.** Many of your students were likely taught from a young age to avoid talking to strangers. Even though the internet makes those strangers much more accessible, it's important that your students know that they're no less dangerous. Talking with your students about the protective nature of strong passwords, two-step authentication processes, and other safe and secure practices, can help bring it home that a focus on online safety is paramount for your students' very real safety.
4. **Start telling your students now that playing fair is always the way to go, and lead this thought into a practical conversation about plagiarism.** Plagiarism is very seriously policed and punished at every academic level, from grade school through university and beyond. However, the specifics aren't always communicated very well, especially to students who are young. As a result, accidental plagiarism is very common—and it's often punished just as severely as very intentional copying. As part of your work with your students on digital citizenship, go over copyright, plagiarism, and the different permissions and citations that your students will need to obtain and use as they go throughout their life. Help the students navigate safe sites for image sourcing, interpretation of copyright rules, and the various ways to cite resources for any borrowed, paraphrased, or otherwise 'found and used' work (NetRef, 2019).
5. **Stress to your students the importance of choosing their friends with care.** On the internet, people can tend to feel much freer to treat others poorly or bully people indiscriminately, perhaps because they don't feel that they're interacting with real persons. In other cases, people feel freer to bully online because it can feel easier to say and do things in the cyber world that instigators would never do in real life. Bullying online is called 'cyberbullying', and it's a huge problem for teens - it may lead

to serious depression in middle and high-school students (University of Miami, 2020). Help your students get a sense of what cyberbullying is, teach them to recognize it when it's happening, and help them put together a strategy for stopping it (whether it's happening to them or another). We'll discuss specific actions that a student can take when they see cyberbullying in action in the next section (NetRef, 2019).

How Students Can Help Stop Cyberbullying in Its Tracks

Bullying doesn't always happen in school playgrounds or hallways. Whether your students see it happening in real life or on the internet, they should know that they have a responsibility to stop it from happening - to protect themselves and others. Here are a few ways that your students can be good digital citizens by stopping cyberbullying safely whenever they see that it's a problem:

- **Students need to know that cyberbullying is not their fault if they simply see it happening.** Merely viewing someone else being treated poorly is enough to make some sensitive children feel guilt-stricken - which in turn can lead to them turning a blind eye. If your students see cyberbullying happening, they need to know that they're not responsible. They do have a responsibility to do all they can to stop it from happening, however. Likewise, when students are victims of cyberbullying, they may have been manipulated to believe that they're at fault. If they are experiencing cruel treatment, they need to feel empowered to seek help - not participate in their own victimization.
- **Whether your students see cyberbullying happening to another or are experiencing it themselves, they need to be careful to avoid direct retaliation as they step in to help resolve the situation.** First of all, this can be dangerous. Secondly, that's often exactly what aggressors are looking for. Thirdly, more bullying never resolves bullying in the first place! Teach your students not to respond or retaliate to cyberbullying. That dignifies it. That helps perpetuate it. If your students become victims, tell them that they can walk away: minimize the messenger app, turn off their phone, log out of the website, and simply stop. Then, once they've gotten a clear head, they can seek help from an adult or another authority to end the cyberbullying actions more permanently.
- **Teach your students to take advantage of the permanence of the internet.** One of the only benefits that there is to cyber-bullying when compared to more traditional actions of playground bullies is that everything is documented. When your students realize that cyberbullying is happening, whether they're a victim or a bystander, have

your students capture screenshots or otherwise save evidence of what's occurring. That way, it'll be much easier to help stop it from happening ever again. Additionally, in the event that the cyberbullying escalates or the instigator tries to turn the blame onto the victim, evidence will make it much harder for the instigator to get away without justice.

- **When it's time to stop cyberbullying from happening, teach your students that sometimes the simplest course of action is also the most effective.** It takes a lot of courage to stand up to a bully, and if your students don't feel comfortable doing so, they shouldn't - they should find an adult to intervene instead. However, if your student is able to stand up and tell the bully to stop, making it completely clear that such treatment will not be tolerated, that will send a very concise message. Tell your student that it's best to state your case and then leave quickly, so the bully doesn't have a chance to grandstand or make a rebuttal. In many cases, simply relieving a bully of the audience will make bullying far less attractive. Standing up to bullies does take practice, so roleplaying a scenario in which a student can stand up to a bully may help.
- **Teach your students that asking for help is not only okay, it's preferred.** A cyberbully can make it very difficult for a victim to feel okay getting an adult involved, whether it's through bribery or guilt or coercion. Because of this, victims might not always say anything. If your student notices that one student is bullying another, make it clear that you (and other adults, such as parents or other teachers) will always be a helpful, empathetic resource when it comes to stopping cyberbullying.
- **Let your students know that there are many tools that technology has given them to reduce unwanted online encounters.** Because cyberbullying has become such a large problem, many social media apps (and other online services) have made it very easy to block, report, or unfollow people with whom you (or your students) no longer wish to engage. Teach your students about these options. If your student is experiencing harassment, your student always has the option to block or report the other user. However, make it clear that this might not fix the problem. Particularly if your student is receiving physical threats, simply tuning the perpetrator out may not make the harm go away. Encourage your students to gather evidence, make sure an adult is aware of the situation and that due precautions are taken to ensure that no harm will come their way, and then block or tune the person out so that the student no longer has to see or hear harassing statements.

- **Impress upon your students the necessity of keeping their accounts secure.**

Teenagers often share many things that should be kept relatively private as a show of trust and unity. In many cases, this is a wonderful way to bond and make friendships stronger. Passwords to online accounts, phones, or computers should never make it into those categories. Make sure that your students are aware of the dangers of identity theft and other ramifications of shared or leaked passwords (ConnectSafely, 2018).

What Is Digital Leadership? How Can You Help Students Become Digital Leaders?

Once your students have successfully become digital citizens (or are well on their way to being ones), it's time to start thinking about what's next. Just as in real life, after students are able to comport themselves successfully in their environments, we encourage them to take on leadership positions. Digital leading then becomes the natural step following digital citizenship.

What does this step entail? How can we help students make this defining transition? We'll talk about this in the next section. In short, when we can shine a light on the benefits of technology and how it enables us to reach and help more people, we are pointing the way for our students to take ownership of their goals and help make the internet (and culture itself) much happier and healthier.

Helping Students Transition from Digital Citizenship to Digital Leadership

Being a digital leader could simply be defined as taking digital citizenship one step further. Instead of coexisting peacefully and professionally with the other citizens of the online world, a digital leader steps up to make changes where they are needed.

For example, digital leaders:

- Make sure to use social media and other online platforms to empower their audiences and share ideas worth sharing
- Prioritize the process of collaboration and connection in order to learn more about the world in which they live
- Are not afraid of healthy vulnerability, of showing their work, and of being creative in order to promote the greater good

- Have an open mind when it comes to arguments on the internet, and show respect for others in every response

Whereas digital citizenship can typically be taught, because much of it has to do with the rules of netiquette and other expected polite and professional practices, leadership needs to be owned by the students themselves. One way to help students along, however, is very simple. As a teacher, you need to model digital leadership yourself in your day to day instruction and interactions.

As a teacher, you can help your students by telling them about how you use the internet as a leader. You can relate examples of how you've handled online arguments, how you've posted to praise and support others, and how you've learned more about the world by having an open mind and reading varied sources to learn the different aspects of nuanced stories.

You can assign your students projects to help them develop these necessary leadership skills. Alternatively, you can simply make it clear to your students that you are open to hearing and helping when they want to 'run with' a project, support another student, learn more about a subject, or otherwise do a deep-dive into something that really matters to them.

From a strictly utilitarian point of view, future colleges and employers love to see stories of students taking the initiative to do good in their communities. However, in a much more real sense, by giving your students the tools to become digital leaders, you're helping them become the people they need to be—and helping influence even larger groups of people, through them, to try to do their part to make the world a slightly better place (Plemmons, 2019).

The Rules of Netiquette

If your students are going to become good citizens of the internet, that involves learning and following the distinct rules that can make the web a safe and enjoyable place to be. These rules - or 'internet etiquette', often shortened to 'netiquette' - are often summarized as follows:

1. **Think carefully about the tone of your words.** When we speak, we're able to pretty naturally modulate how something sounds, which has a direct impact on how our words are perceived. On the internet, with the exception of videos, everything is text-based. It can be much more difficult to make a joke or show emotion safely because the subtext and nuance that can make those more complicated communications

possible is often lost on people on the other side of the screen. In many cases, jokes are often taken as rude, and simple statements are perceived as subtle threats. To alleviate this wherever possible, teach your students to think twice (and very carefully) about capitalization, italics, and other modes of differentiating text. An innocuous statement interpreted poorly can make the difference between a helpful conversation online and a horrendous argument waiting to happen.

- 2. Prioritize accuracy whenever you're making statements online.** The internet is a vast place that is full of incredible amounts of information. There is also a lot of misinformation to be found. If your student has found a piece of information that seems suspect, he or she has a responsibility not to share it, thereby amplifying the number of people who are being misinformed. Teach your students to do their own research, and to be very sure of the factual nature of anything they plan to post online. There are usually very simple ways to fact-check any data that your students plan to use, but they do need to be aware of these methods and the importance of using them. Part of being a good digital citizen is not leading other people astray with badly chosen facts. Help your students have the means to choose well whenever they post online.
- 3. As a rule, impress upon your students the importance of searching for their own data and answers online before posting a question to social media.** This is secondary to the previous point, but bears mentioning! Almost everyone uses or has access to the internet. Each user has a different history, educational experience, bias, and familiarity with any topic that you'd be interested in knowing more about. Throwing a question out into the void of the internet, therefore, can bring back incredibly diverse and perhaps only marginally helpful answers. Before students decide to do this, it's a good idea to have them ask a teacher or parent for an answer, or specifically to do research in reliable, trustworthy online databases.
- 4. It's a good idea to be as polite as you are in person when you're communicating online.** (Imagine how many social media comment wars would be very different if we all followed this rule!) Teach your students to remember that individuals on the internet are real people behind computers or phones, and to treat them as such. They shouldn't say anything to an online avatar that they wouldn't be comfortable saying to someone's face. This principle alone would likely greatly reduce the amount of cyberbullying that many students face, so make sure to reiterate it when you're going over digital citizenship with your students.

5. **When your students are writing online, they should always use proper grammar and punctuation to convey their thoughts and comments most efficiently.** As the saying goes, you need to learn the rules before you can break them - so students need to learn how to communicate properly online before they can (or should) start using abbreviations, emoticons, and gifs. Regardless of what students do in their spare time, it's a good idea to enforce completely correct punctuation and grammar in all school-related online communications. To influence what your students do on the internet when off-campus, remind your students that good punctuation and grammar vastly improve their online perception. When students use English correctly, they're seen as smart, reliable, trustworthy, and professional. (It can also help to show your students that correct use of text does not have to be mutually exclusive with humor or wit).
6. **Stress to your students the importance of staying on topic.** If there's a discussion happening on a social media post or in an email chain, one of the least helpful ways to derail the productivity of that conversation is to bring up a different topic. Make sure that whenever your students post a comment, they're using that opportunity to bring something helpful and relevant to the conversation. It'll be that much more helpful for the original poster, and it'll help your students become better conversationalists both on- and off-line.
7. **It's very important that your students remember that there is no such thing as privacy on the internet!** The second your students post something, it's going to be around for a long time. They need to know that even if they delete posts, there may still be a record of them somewhere - and, regardless, they won't know if someone saw a post and took a picture of it before it went down! Because of this, your students need to develop a little bit of perspective or foresight about what is permissible to be posted - and what won't be helpful for their future selves. It's impossible to look into the future, so a good rule of thumb for your students is to steer clear of anything that might be rude or inappropriate when posting.
8. **That said, when your students begin interacting with others on the internet, they should be aware that they need to afford other people as much privacy as they can.** Even though your students may have access to the personal information of others (such as whereabouts, social media handles, pictures, or email addresses), they shouldn't share any of that with another person without explicit permission. It may feel like a very safe interaction - for example, just sharing a picture with a friend, or passing a student's contact information to another teacher - but students always need

to respect that other people have the right to moderate access to this type of personal data. Teach your students to always ask for permission before distributing any information online that involves another person.

9. **Finally, just as your students need to respect the privacy of others, they also need to learn to respect other people's opinions online.** Your students may have already encountered the fact that they will not always agree with other people in real life. They may have developed a system for acting polite in a face to face situation, even if they strongly feel that another person is wrong. Because the internet offers relative anonymity and ease of communication, your students may not have a similar system for respecting different opinions online. Teach your students that they can disagree with others but respect their right to express themselves at the same time. It's a trite saying, but the old 'if you can't say anything nice, say nothing' may be a good rule of thumb to follow on the internet (UOTP Marketing, 2020).

Conclusion

Becoming and being a good digital citizen and leader may not seem like the most academic of pursuits. However, the reality of modern life reflects the fact that the internet is here to stay - and, increasingly, schools and businesses are conducting their day-to-day tasks and communications online.

In addition, your students likely spend a good amount of time navigating social media and other online resources. Giving your students the tools to wade through the vast amount of information on the internet isn't an optional extra in your classroom; it's necessary assistance to ensure that your student is able to go through modern life with ease. Strategizing with your students to ensure that they're able to contribute to the online discourse, support causes about which they are passionate, and keep themselves and others safe, is certainly a priority for every 21st-century classroom.

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