

CANYON VIEWS

Code of conduct needed for digital world



COMMENTARY
MARGARET MCGOVERN

In one of the early Spider-Man comics the narrator said, "with great power there must also come great responsibility!" As technology evolves every day, adding new apps, devices and ways for kids to connect, students should learn to harness this new power in a responsible manner, whether using it for learning or just for fun.

This week, on Feb. 23, educators and families across the country celebrate the 5th annual Digital Learning Day, showcasing the technological advancements that have enhanced the learning experiences for today's K-12 students. Every year it becomes more important for students to embrace not only digital literacy but also digital citizenship.

When we talk about digital literacy, it means having the ability to learn about different technologies and the skills to use them in everyday life. Digital citizenship is most commonly defined as the standards of appropriate, responsible behavior when using technology.

Just like children often have a code of conduct for their daily lives, be it formal or unwritten, they also need one for using the Internet and digital devices. This digital citizenship code can help teachers, parents, and technology developers guide students on how to use various computer and mobile applications appropriately.

The concept of digital citizenship has gained more attention as children grow more tech savvy. A recent national survey found that teens (ages 13-18) spent almost nine hours a day outside school and homework time using media, including the Internet, TV, video games, social media, and music. For tweens (ages 8-12)

the number was around 6 hours per day. Other studies have shown that three-quarters of teens (78 percent) check their devices hourly, and over half of teens are hindering their own learning by multitasking with social media while doing homework.

Several professional groups have done extensive research on digital citizenship, and now list nine elements to guide a good digital citizen. These include digital access, commerce, communications, etiquette, health and wellness, law, literacy, rights and responsibilities, security and safety. While I could discuss each aspect at length, I'd like to focus on a few that students and parents should address first. You can read more about all nine elements at www.digitalcitizenship.net.

Digital Etiquette

This is a basic set of rules to follow when communicating with others on the Internet, sometimes called "netiquette." Just like parents would expect a certain type of manners at home, digital etiquette is a way to govern behavior with online manners. We recognize inappropriate and unethical digital citizenship when people make hurtful comments, or send humiliating photos.

Remember the Golden Rule? Teach children not to say anything online if they don't have something nice to say, or resolve the issue in person. Ask them to use the acronym T.H.I.N.K. before they send a text or post on social media — Is it Thoughtful? Is it Helpful? Is it Intelligent? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind? Remind students to treat others as they want to be treated, with politeness and respect.

Digital Rights and Responsibilities

In the U.S. Constitution, we have a Bill of Rights. There is also a basic set of rights for every digital citizen, including the rights to privacy and free speech. These privileges and freedoms also come with responsibilities, in order for

everyone's rights to be equally protected.

One of the growing concerns online is cyberbullying, because it's often hard for children to talk about or ask adults for help. Watch for offensive or abusive messages posted in emails, texts, instant messaging programs, or chat rooms accessed by children — a technique often called flaming. Teach children not to open a cyberbully's messages or meet them in person, and parents should contact school officials or local authorities if needed. There are also techniques to ward off cyberbullying, including privacy settings on mobile devices and social networking sites.

Digital Security and Safety:

There are certain technological and practical precautions students can take to ensure their personal safety and the security of their network in the digital world.

For example, children should learn how to create a secure password and never share it with friends. Just like the locks on the doors of our homes to protect our families, parents can demonstrate to children the importance of having virus protection and surge controls on computer equipment. It's all part of being a safe and secure digital citizen.

Being safe on social media can offer other teachable moments for students. Responsible digital citizens protect the privacy of themselves and others. Children should learn not to post personal information like their address, phone number or birth date on social media. Digital footprints are hard to erase and they can impact students later in life, given that many college admissions officers and job recruiters now check social media profiles when making decisions.

In addition to these tips, there are many great resources about digital citizenship, including the International Society for Technology in Education

www.iste.org, and the Federal Trade Commission website Protecting Kids Online, www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/protecting-kids-online.

Some of you may wonder what we, as teachers at an online public school, do to teach our students to be good digital citizens. At Oregon Connections Academy, students sign a special code of conduct agreeing to act in a civil manner in all their online interactions with fellow students and teachers. They understand there are consequences for violations to that agreement. We also provide an Internet safety course for students and Learning Coaches, who are usually parents, which contains valuable information about practicing safe behaviors online.

Remember the old saying "do as I say, not as I do"? Parents can also be a good digital citizen and role model by practicing healthy digital habits, such as taking a time-out the next time a text alert comes or creating a 'no phones at dinner' family agreement.

As more and more schools add online courses, allow students to bring their own devices to class, and technological advancements continue to amaze, the topic of digital citizenship will spread. Several states have even adopted laws or other measures to require specific digital citizenship curriculum.

Digital citizenship is more than just a tool for parents and teachers to help children navigate technology, it's a set of social standards that can help students prepare for a successful future in academics, career, and life. We are all digital citizens, and we can all make a contribution to help the next generation thrive wherever technology takes us.

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Oregon labels 7 dams as 'unsatisfactory'

TRACY LOEW
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Oregon considers seven dams across the state to be in "unsatisfactory" condition.

That means those dams are more closely inspected, and could be declared unsafe if repairs aren't made, said Diana Enright, spokeswoman for the Oregon Water Resources Department.

The state has been getting lots of questions about dam safety, Enright said, as a slow disaster unfolds at Oroville Dam in California, where nearly 200,000 people have been evacuated due to the threat of a breach and uncontrolled flooding.

Officials at the Association of State Dam Safety say thousands of the nation's 84,000 regulated dams have the potential to fail.

States have permitting, inspection and enforcement authority for about 70 percent of those dams.

Inspection reports aren't routinely

released to the public, but Enright provided a list of troubled Oregon dams. They are:

- » Big Creek Reservoir # 1 (Lower) Dam, in Lincoln County: 21 feet high
- » Big Creek Reservoir #2 (Upper) Dam in Lincoln County: 56 feet high
- » Crowley Dam in Malheur County: 90 feet high
- » Willow Creek 3 in Malheur County: 110 feet high
- » Ferry Creek Dam in Curry County: 65 feet high
- » McMullen Dam in Josephine County: 33 feet high
- » Johnson Creek Dam in Crook County: 44 feet high

While it's hard to find out which dams have the potential to fail, a federal database lists those that would have catastrophic consequences if they did.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains the public National Inventory of Dams database.

It classifies dams as "high hazard potential," meaning dam failure would re-

sult in the loss of at least one human life; or "significant hazard potential," meaning dam failure could result in the loss of at least one human life, and likely would result in property or environmental destruction.

Other dams are classified as "low hazard," and some are "undetermined."

Detroit Lake in Linn County, which supplies Salem's drinking water, is a high hazard dam.

It's one of 16 Oregon dams operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Federally operated dams across the country are in good condition, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials said.

"Public safety is our first priority," said Michelle Helms, Corps spokeswoman. "As part of all that we have a rigorous inspection and monitoring program."

Oregon has a total of 869 dams in the NID database.

Of those, 150 are rated high hazard potential and 160 are rated significant hazard potential.

Twenty-four of those high hazard dams, and 93 of the significant hazard dams, are operating without required emergency action plans, documents that lay out everything from inundation maps to notification flowcharts to emergency response duties.

That means 38 percent of Oregon dams near populated areas lack emergency plans.

All seven Oregon dams deemed "unsatisfactory" for safety are high hazard dams.

In Marion and Polk counties, high hazard dams include Franzen Reservoir, Silver Creek Dam, Croft Reservoir and Mercer Reservoir.

Sixty-eight percent of Oregon's dams are privately owned. Fifty-nine percent are used for irrigation. Most of the state's dams were built between 1950 and 1969.

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