Digital citizenship is the norms of appropriate, responsible technology use. Too often, both adults and children misuse and abuse technology. Digital citizenship helps us to understand what technology users, no matter their age, should know to use technology appropriately.

Why Teach Digital Citizenship?

- It is an important skill for the 21st century. Your children need to be able to communicate and collaborate safely and effectively online, as well as be aware of the things people face in the digital world.
- Many children use technology every day without understanding the consequences.
- We live in a digital world where colleges, future employers, and people sometimes judge you based on your online or social media profile.
- Cyberbullying is a real problem for many children (and adults), so it’s important to teach about the negative effects it can have.
- Digital citizenship teaches students how to search for, select, and organize information and how to choose real and authentic sources of information. This is important because there is a lot of misinformation online.

No matter what you do online it’s important that you know what kind of trail you’re leaving and what possible effects it can have. Therefore, we should know about digital footprint and teach our children about their digital footprint. Your digital footprint is the trail, traces, or “footprints” that you leave online when you go on social media, send emails and attachments, and upload videos and digital images, among other things.

To manage yours and your child’s digital footprint, consider the following:

- Never post anything that you might find embarrassing later.
- Think before posting pictures or videos.
- Change privacy settings on social networking sites.
- Do not post things to bully or hurt others.
- Remove information or posts that others post if you don’t want it out there.

Additionally, there are nine elements of digital citizenship that you should remember. The International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) has proposed these elements, which are divided into three categories: Respect, Educate, and Protect.

**RESPECT**
- **ETIQUETTE** – Understand that your technology use affects others.
- **ACCESS** – Remember that not everyone has the same opportunities with technology. Those who have more access might want to help those who have less.
- **LAW** – Online tools have allowed some people to steal, harass, and cause problems for others online. It’s illegal to take others’ information without permission

**EDUCATE**
- **LITERACY** – Learning happens everywhere. Technology can help our children (and us) learn new skills for the future.
- **COMMUNICATION** – Knowing when and where to use technology is important.
- **COMMERCE** – Technology allows us to buy and sell across the globe – be careful about sharing personal information, credit card details, etc.

**PROTECT**
- **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES** - Build trust so that if something happens online, your child is willing to share their problems or concerns with you.
- **SECURITY** – Know that it is everyone’s responsibility to guard their tools and data by having software that protect them from online intruders.
- **HEALTH AND WELLNESS** – Set limits with technology so your children can spend quality face-to-face time with friends and family.
CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

February is Black History Month! You can use this opportunity as a starting point to teach your child how to respect and value others’ differences. Consider:

- Buying a book or borrowing a library book by a Black author or illustrator and make it a part of your child’s collection. Books offer a fun and easy way to introduce your child to new cultures and to help them explore the experiences of people from different backgrounds.
- Teaching your child not only about black “history,” but also about current events, people, and accomplishments. In addition to books, art, music, and food are some great ways to introduce your child to the vibrance of black cultures around the world.

Remember, you can celebrate Black history and cultural diversity all year long, not just in February!

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

EMPATHY

In this issue, we are going to discuss empathy. Many experts have referred to empathy, which involves an ability to understand others’ feelings (and to recognize our own emotions), as the most important 21st century skill. Research shows that empathy is a skill that can be taught. Having empathy can help make you (and your child) a better team player. It has even been shown to predict success in a person’s career. The two most common ways to teach your child empathy are to 1) model it, and 2) demonstrate it through stories. The next time you read a story that illustrates empathy, be sure to discuss with your child. Ask open ended questions like “What happened to character x?” and “How did character y respond to character x?” to get your child to think about what empathy might look like in real life.

BRAIN TEASER: NUMBER PUZZLE

See if you can solve these with your child without looking at the answer!

1. This refers to anything related to technology or the internet.
2. The proper use of technology is known as this (HINT: This clue has more than one answer).
3. Because our computers can have viruses and people sometimes hack (or break into) our personal information online, we need this.

TECH TALK

Here are some tech tools that teach your child about empathy.

- Be a Buddy, Not a Bully—A Tales of Midlandia Storybook. This app teaches your child how to handle conflict and bullying. It is designed for kids and grown-ups to use together. Parents can read with young children and talk about friendship and tolerance. The app includes questions that prompt kids to think about others’ feelings and how to manage emotions like anger and sadness.
- If your child is on social media (e.g., Facebook or Instagram), model how they can respectfully engage with others. This is a great way to teach both empathy and digital citizenship.

To be a good digital citizen, your child must also follow these rules.

- BE KIND!
- KEEP PRIVATE THINGS PRIVATE!
- DON’T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SEE!
- DON’T OVERSHARE!
- STAND UP FOR OTHERS!

If you don’t have internet at home, but are interested in services, there are free and reduced-cost programs in many communities such as Comcast’s Internet Essentials and AT&T’s Access, Spectrum Internet Assist and Centurylink’s Internet Basics. These programs provide high-speed broadband, typically for about $10 a month and may also include free or low-cost hardware, including computers, for use at home. Check with your local internet service providers and community social service agencies to see what’s available in your community. In addition, most public and school libraries provide free WiFi access as well as device access. You might also be able to access free wi-fi through local organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, houses of worship and other community agencies. For more information, visit https://www.connectsafely.org/edtech/.