5 tips for teaching Digital Citizenship

The new digital citizenship empowers learners to become proactive agents of change. Leverage this advice from educators to help students use technology conscientiously to make the world a better place.

"If every teacher, in every classroom, every day said just one phrase or sentence about digital citizenship, a student would hear thousands of **'Here's how to do it right'** messages over the course of his or her school career. It doesn't need to be a separate lesson! Messages like, 'I got the nicest compliment on Twitter yesterday' or 'I knew I was too mad to respond to that person right then, so I just put my phone down so I could cool off and think about it' take mere seconds to say, but **their impact can really add up!"**

—Nancy Watson, @NancyWTech, instructional technology specialist, Plano ISD, Plano, Texas

"One of the first steps we can take to get started with digital citizenship and media literacy is to **start observing.** What content is out there? What are you consuming? **Don't make anything off limits.** Are you on Snapchat? Are you on Instagram? These are powerful forms of communication that kids are using right now. **Part of what we need to be able to do is take what they're doing in their own lives and bring that into the classroom**, rather than trying to block it out."

—Michael Hernandez, @cinehead, teacher of cinema and journalism, Mira Costa High School, Manhattan Beach, California

"Digital citizenship curricula should strive to **show students possibilities over problems,** opportunities over risks and community successes over personal gain. Teachers can accomplish this mission by **engaging in digital learning communities** with their students, providing opportunities for students to connect with learners and experts outside of the classroom and **modeling the use of digital tools for social good."**

—Kristen Mattson, @DrKMattson, library media director, Waubonsie Valley High School, Aurora, Illinois

"There's a shift happening in digital citizenship right now where the focus is evolving from monitoring to mentoring. We're trying to change the narrative in the conversation from what to avoid — 'don't do this, don't do that' — to what to encourage and the positive impact digital citizens can have. If we really want digital learners to become happy, healthy digital citizens, then **we have to promote the positive and amplify student voice."**

—Marialice B.F.X. Curran, @mbfxc, Founder and CEO, Digital Citizenship Institute

As educators, **we teach positive analog citizenship every day** to help students effectively and harmoniously navigate the world. These intangible skills like communication, etiquette, adaptability and conflict resolution are equally as important in the digital age. We can now foster and embed these soft skills in our classrooms and on our campuses to create better digital citizens who are able to leverage technology and social media to effectively and harmoniously **navigate the digital world."**

—Mason Mason, @EdTechMason, education technology instructor, Dallas, Texas