DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

Empowering Students to Engage in Online Communities

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About the Author

Dr. Kristen Mattson is a wife, mother of three, former English teacher, and current high school Library Media Center Director in Aurora, Illinois. She partners with teachers in all content areas to integrate digital literacy, research skills, creation, and innovation in the classroom. In addition to supporting teachers, Kristen finds joy in supporting fellow librarians by hosting site visits, facilitating professional development, and blogging about her experiences.

Kristen holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education and a Master's Degree in Instructional Design and Technology. She earned her Doctoral Degree in Curriculum and Instruction Leadership from Northern Illinois University in 2016 after conducting a critical discourse analysis on secondary digital citizenship curriculum.

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Dedication

To Marybeth and Dolores; two strong women in their own right who set the course for generations of strong women to follow.

Thanks for dreaming with me and never doubting that I would grow up to be exactly what I wanted to be.

Contents

Foreword

All of us live in two places at once, at every moment, wherever we go. First, we live in real life, or RL, as we now refer to it. Once simply referred to as "life," we have had to rename it in order to distinguish it from the second place we now live, which I call IR, or immersive reality. Regardless of what name you use, this second reality consists of the ubiquitous, massively interconnected, parallel universe on the other end of our smart devices that provides integrated functionality for every aspect of our lives. Our devices are, to quote MIT's Sherry Turkle, "always on and always on us," immersing us in a secondary source of information and a sense of place, wherever we are. Although we could turn this second reality off anytime we like, the reality is that we are never going to. It is here to stay and will become more indispensable as its power evolves.

We also live in a third world: the world of imagination. It is here that we can dream boldly about how to integrate RL and IR, and how to shape the endless possibilities that living a digital lifestyle presents us. And it's here that we have let ourselves and our students down in terms of an approach to digital citizenship. The education world has imagined mostly fear. And most importantly, it has imagined our new digital world largely without student voice.

In fact, the most important digital citizenship conversations we can have are with our children. If we are looking for a focus for that conversation, let it be the following question: How can we make the internet a positive influence in the lives of our children? Unfortunately, that conversation rarely occurs and when it does it is often one-sided, with adults handing out lists of "don'ts" to students about how to behave online. There are rarely "do's" to go along with the don'ts, and students often have no hand in crafting the internet user agreements that define their virtual lives as they are lived at school.

That's why when I imagine how to approach digital citizenship in schools, in my mind's eye I see an end to adults making all the internet rules for students without their participation. Of course, we should be involved. But when we make all the rules, we rob our students of the opportunities they need and deserve to see the bigger picture and to apply their understanding of that bigger picture to themselves and the digital lifestyles that they live. If we don't ask them to help frame the system, they tend to game the system. That is, when we make the rules, it's "game on" for them in terms of figuring out how to circumvent those rules. But when the rules are their rules, their approach shifts. I have worked with thousands of students using an activity I call "You're in Charge" in which I ask them to create policies about using technology and the internet in their schools that they will have to live by. In every case, students tend to become much more adult and conservative in their perspective than when they are not involved. They want their online spaces to be safe and respectful and look at activities such as cyberbullying as a kind of virtual vandalism. Why don't we know this? Because we often don't involve them in the discussion.

There is another very important reason we need students to actively participate in imagining their digital citizenship identities, which is neurological in nature. The part of the brain that is primarily involved in ethical decision-making is not fully developed until our early 20s. Yet, managing our virtual decision-making requires weighing very sophisticated ethical considerations long before then. My colleagues in the neurological sciences tell me there is only one way to jumpstart the development of those skills earlier in life: practice. But when the adults make all the decisions without student participation, this can't happen. Students need to practice thinking about and acting within the online commons.

Again, the message is clear. We need students' active participation to create the kinds of digital lifestyles we all consider healthy and hopeful. At the end of the day, we want students to be able to strike a balance between outrageous opportunity and informed awareness; between passionate engagement and reflective action; between being absorbed at the keyboard and stepping back from the screen. Achieving this balance lies at the heart of dancing gracefully and purposefully with digital change. And we can't get there without student participation.

Kristen Mattson hits this issue head-on in her timely and articulate book by recasting the digital citizenship landscape as one that values "…possibilities over problems, opportunities over risks, and community successes over personal gain." She offers practical ways to move forward, by creating space for students to practice digital citizenship, and provides examples of school success as guidelines for educators to consider. She deconstructs current digital citizenship practices and methodically updates them to reflect more student involvement and more informed, effective professional practice. Her book is at once practical, but also visionary, calling for a new way of seeing digital citizenship. As Mattson says, "A participatory approach to digital citizenship education recognizes that all members of the digital community are valuable, deserve to have a voice, and can make positive contributions to various groups." This is where we need to head if we want to create the kinds of online communities in which we all want to live.

—Jason Ohler
Professor Emeritus of Educational Technology and Virtual Learning, University of Alaska; and Professor of the Media Psychology PhD Program, Fielding Graduate University

Introduction

I saw this image on Twitter the other day. It made me chuckle. It made me think. I retweeted it with this accompanying message: “Let’s make sure our #digcit stances keep up with the times.”

Digital citizenship, commonly shortened to #digcit on Twitter, is a concept that has gained traction with K–12 educators since it was first introduced in 2004 by Dr. Mike Ribble. Ribble’s initial “Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship” encouraged educators to provide direct instruction in digital norms and in concepts such as digital law, digital commerce, and digital health and wellness (Ribble, 2015).

Digital citizenship came to mind when I saw the image above Tweeted out because, unfortunately, much of the free, readily available curricula for schools are written as if we were living in 1998: do not talk to strangers; do not post information that would help someone figure out your identity; do not share addresses, phone numbers, or passwords. As Mattson (2016) has noted, the list of “do nots” usually includes language about cyberbullying, safety, security, and privacy. While these lessons have a place in conversations about our digital world, the heavy emphasis on the “do nots” leaves me wondering if our curricula are sometimes met with eye rolls

because, to some, the messages sound like outdated tidbits from a generation that is still a little leery of all these new-fangled ride-sharing businesses.

I am not the only educator who has recognized the abundance of "do nots" in the digital citizenship discourse. Like most curriculum in education, the digital citizenship pendulum is starting to swing. Many more voices are emerging to say, "Why aren't we teaching kids the power of social media?" As a result, research has indicated that educators, consultants, and technology companies are ditching the once familiar rhetoric of not posting anything that could get you in trouble, and are attempting to rebrand the term "digital citizenship," teaching students to positively portray themselves online so as to stand out for future scholarships and job opportunities (Couros, 2015; Passeport, 2017; Singer, 2016).

Whether your curriculum falls in line with the "do nots" or has started to shift toward building a desirable online presence, the truth is that both of these stances focus heavily on the individual digital user. The egocentric messages of "protect yourself" or "market yourself" restrict us from digging into one of the most important aspects of what it means to be a citizen—to be in community with others.

Digital citizenship curricula must strive to show students possibilities over problems, opportunities over risks, and community successes over personal gain.

If we take a moment to look back at citizenship education as it has existed in schools for more than a hundred years, only a very small portion of that education was about rules, morality, and personal betterment. The goal of education was to develop citizens who would stay informed about and contribute to the societies of which they were a part (Dewey 1909, 1916). Today, citizenship education continues in many forms through character education, sure, but also through social studies and civics courses, taken from kindergarten through high school, which introduce students to communities of the family, classroom, school, town, state, nation, and globe. Today we are citizens of digital communities as well—communities that may include people we know and people we've never met face to face.

If your definition of a good citizen is someone who is moral and ethical, a curriculum of "do nots," or even one of "personal branding," makes sense. I see ethics as only a very small aspect of citizenship, however. If you believe that citizens have a responsibility to give back to their communities, the process of contribution looks very different in digital spaces than it does in traditional ones. Being able to connect globally offers a magnitude of possibilities for learning, collaborating, and even working together to change the world, but that means digital citizenship curricula must strive to show students possibilities over problems, opportunities over risks, and community successes over personal gain.

What's in This Book

In this book, I'd like to get you thinking about digital citizenship as more than a conversation about personal responsibility. The ideas put forth in this book will challenge you to create opportunities in the classroom for students to become *participatory citizens*—citizens who actively engage in multiple levels of community and who can develop, as noted by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), "relationships, common understandings, trust, and collective commitments" with other citizens in those spaces (p. 242).

With this in mind, each chapter will include the following:

- Highlights of some of the current approaches to teaching digital citizenship to help you identify easy places to make change
- Suggestions for moving beyond personal responsibility lessons into opportunities for participatory citizenship
- A featured activity to bring into your classroom and try with students
- "Spotlight Stories" that feature one or more communities of teachers and learners that are embracing the notion of participatory digital citizenship and doing amazing things as a result
- A summarizing "You Can Do It!" section with words of encouragement and final advice to get you started

Throughout the book, you will also see references to the ISTE Standards for Students (International Society for Technology in Education [ISTE], 2016). These Student Standards are designed to help teachers purposefully use and thoughtfully integrate technology in the classroom as a vehicle for developing both content knowledge and skill. Where appropriate, I will show you how the Student Standards can support your goal of equipping participatory digital citizens with the skills they need to succeed.

Who This Book Is For

This book is intended for teachers of Grades 6–12, school librarians, administrators, and other adults in the school community who are responsible for developing and delivering digital citizenship lessons.

Digital citizenship conversations should start as soon as students begin using devices, but I have chosen to focus on adolescent digital citizenship in this book for several reasons. First, my own experiences as both a middle school teacher and a high school teacher-librarian coupled with my research into existing digital citizenship curricula for high school students allow me to write about secondary digital citizenship from both a theoretical and a practical perspective.

Additionally, the largest bodies of research on adolescent digital behavior center around students ages 12–17 (boyd, 2014; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Ito et al., 2009; Lenhart et al., 2011). These studies provided vital insights that have informed the ideas you will read in this book. Finally, by the age of 13, students are legally able to join many online communities and will need the skills discussed in this text to help them participate effectively.

If you are ready to take your digital citizenship lessons to the next level and engage your students in productive, supportive digital communities, you've chosen the right book!

Enjoy,

1

Creating Space for Digital Citizenship

Imagine this. You enter your child's middle school to volunteer for a few hours in the library. Walking down the halls, you encounter a poster encouraging students to THINK before they post on social media (Shannon, 2014). You smile to yourself knowing that your own 11-year-old is not using most of these apps or websites due to the 13 and up age restrictions to create an account. You also feel relief knowing that most of the social media sites on the poster are blocked at your child's school (Figure 1.1).

You walk a few more feet down the hall, passing an open classroom door. Students are sitting quietly at their desks, which are arranged in straight rows, facing the front of the room. They furiously scribble information into their notebooks as the teacher recites important facts and gestures toward bullet points on the PowerPoint slide behind him.

Figure 1.1 This popular poster encourages students to consider what they say on social media before they press the Post button.

Wow, you think to yourself. This teacher has everything under control. That's just the way I remember school! Before moving on, another poster catches your eye. This one is hanging just outside of the classroom door—visible to all who enter. It reminds students to put away their devices before coming into the room (Figure 1.2).

You feel your phone buzz in your pocket, reminding you of your scheduled volunteer time, and hustle away to the library, feeling confident that your child's teachers have this whole technology thing under control.

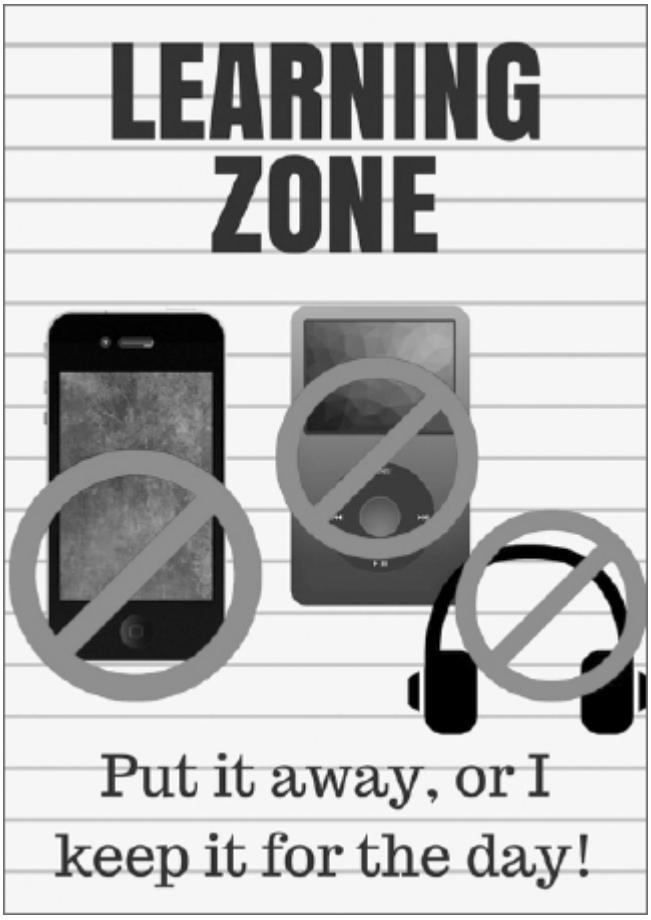

Figure 1.2 The message this poster sends is that technology is a distraction from learning and does not belong in the classroom.

Current Approaches to Digital Citizenship

If you are a teacher or administrator, you may have posters like those in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 hanging in your school or classroom. You may have also participated in "Digital Citizenship Week," taught lessons about cyberbullying during an advisory period, or attended an assembly where your school resource officer spoke about the legal ramifications of online harassment, sexting, or sharing images of illegal behaviors.

Oftentimes, digital citizenship education is relegated to isolated lessons, events, posters, or messages presented to students outside of the context of their typical, daily learning experiences. Ironically, these messages of online safety are delivered in the same classrooms that may have a "no device" poster hanging on the door. In fact, as Mattson (2016) has pointed out, many

free, readily available digital citizenship lessons found online can be completed without students even touching a device.

> **How can we ensure that we are teaching all aspects of citizenship, digital citizenship included, through life experiences and not solely through lecture?**

Because these lessons, parent nights, posters, and slogans deliver messages outside of authentic digital contexts, they're often relegated to a list of rules and guidelines for students to follow when they *do* enter a digital space. I've come to think of these rules as the personal responsibilities of digital citizens. While online, we all have a responsibility to be respectful to ourselves and others, to follow acceptable use policies, and to make healthy decisions, in the same ways that we must follow laws and respect others in our physical communities.

The difference between the traditional citizenship education our students receive and the digital citizenship lessons they are given is often a difference in contexts—experiential learning as opposed to more abstract, classroom-based techniques. When children are young, for example, they learn about safe ways to cross the street as they walk to school. They learn about sharing, disagreement, and compromise as they argue over toys in their preschool classroom or negotiate the ways to work on a group assignment in the fifth grade.

Our middle school students experience what it means to be a contributing citizen of a school community when they decorate their hallways for a big game, serve as student council volunteers, and navigate their way through changing friendships and social dynamics. By high school, our students are choosing communities of their own as they find clubs, sports, activities, and even places of part-time employment to join, learn from, and contribute to.

Through all of these experiences—whether it's learning that cutting in line is socially unacceptable or it's figuring out how to live in a community of people from a variety of backgrounds and with life experiences different from theirs—students are by and large learning aspects of citizenship, civil

life, and community engagement under the tutelage and guidance of adult mentors in the form of parents, religious leaders, coaches, and teachers.

And yet, in online spaces, we have come to accept a mentorship gap between children and adults. As noted by James (2014), we feel an obligation to tell our students the "rules of the road," but policy, fear, expectations, or curricular priorities keep us from jumping in the passenger seat and guiding our students as they navigate new digital terrain.

So how can we close this mentorship gap? How can we ensure that we are teaching all aspects of citizenship, digital citizenship included, through life experiences and not solely through lecture? As educators, part of our responsibility is to create time and space for this type of learning to occur.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

I was at a fairly large educational technology conference earlier this year and sat in a session that required participants to share an edtech success story with other people at our table. When it was my turn, I told the group about a community bulletin board website called Padlet that I enjoy using with students. The tool had enabled my high schoolers to organize their learning collaboratively and through the use of multimedia. Instead of relying on a static notebook filled with information they wrote down, students now had a dynamic, collaborative space for keeping track of information. As the class learned new content, students were able to rearrange information on their digital boards, allowing them to make connections to previous learning and create space for new ideas to come.

The man to my right, however, had not had such a fabulous experience using Padlet in his own high school classroom. He had given it a try, but quickly gave up because the teens could not refrain from posting inappropriate content to the boards. The teacher declared that he would no longer be offering his class opportunities to use this digital tool because students simply could not handle the responsibility of collaborative, online curation and discussion.

So why did one tool work so fabulously with my students while it was a total flop for another group of kids the same age? One possible reason could be

attributed to the work I had done with my students earlier in the year. Before even introducing the technology to the class, I modeled the types of posts I wanted to see and demonstrated how this process of community note-taking would be different from the individual note-taking students were used to. During our units, I was also continuously monitoring, mentoring, and providing feedback and redirection as students contributed to the community bulletin boards. After I shared this experience at the conference session, the teacher agreed he could have done a lot more to teach, model, and hold students accountable for the type of interactions he was hoping for.

You see, it's simply not enough to give students a technology tool and ask them to use it while silently hoping for the best. In order for your students to become participatory digital citizens, they are going to need some space to practice under your mentorship. This space does not have to be the most popular social media platform that all the "cool kids" are using. It's perfectly acceptable to help students learn about digital communities in spaces designed for education, such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Canvas, and a variety of other educational technology tools like the Padlet boards I used with my students.

In order for your students to become participatory digital citizens, they are going to need some space to practice under your mentorship.

Creating a digital space is a start, and maybe you already have an online presence for your class. There are unique aspects, however, that can differentiate a classroom website from a true digital learning community. Classroom websites are often places for one-way communication from teachers to students and parents. On such class websites, the teacher is the only person posting content. A digital learning community, on the other hand, is a space where many voices are invited to contribute, collaborate with one another, and think critically together.

Allowing your students to collaborate with one another in digital communities can be a little scary at first, but remember that when you take this leap in your classroom, you are providing students with an awesome opportunity to participate as digital citizens in spaces that are authentic,

purposeful, and guided. The digital space you create will be a safe place for students to try something new, make mistakes they can grow from, and experience successes they can be proud of—all while learning what it takes to be a citizen of many different types of spaces. These digital communities, when designed and executed with these goals in mind, can mimic the types of online spaces that students will share with friends, relatives, and eventually, the world!

If you are ready to set up a digital learning community for your students, here are some excellent first steps.

> 
> **A digital learning community… is a space where many voices are invited to contribute, collaborate with one another, and think critically together.**

Investigate

Talk with your colleagues, the school librarian, and your building administrators about digital tools that you may already have access to through building or district subscriptions. You must also consider the age of your students. If they are under 13, any digital tool you use with them may require parental consent to set up accounts. Again, your school librarian or administrator that handles digital subscriptions should be able to help you with any legalities, permissions forms, and account setups.

Communicate

Talk to your students and their parents. What would they like to use a digital learning community for? What other digital spaces do they already belong to? What skills would they like to practice? Besides one another, is there a larger audience your students would like to connect with? Use the answers to these questions to help you choose a digital platform and develop a space that will meet your class's needs as well as your own curricular goals.

Build a Support Network

Find a "partner in crime" who will support you in your attempt to try something new. Is there another teacher on your team who wants to try this with you? If not, is there a teacher in another building who is already doing

some great work with digital communities and might serve as your mentor? Do you have a tech-savvy neighbor, parent, or friend that you could bounce ideas around with? Identifying a person or two who can cheer you on when you hit a bump in the road is vital to your professional growth—as it is to anyone's! It's also important to make sure to communicate your goals with your administrators. Let them know you want to try something new and ask for their support in the process.

Set Learning Targets and Give Direct Instruction

You know the curricular goals you have to meet, but what other life skills might your students gain in a digital community? The following ISTE Standards for Students (2016) can serve as guidelines as you start to develop learning targets for your class:

- **Empowered Learner** (1b): Students build networks and customize their learning environments in ways that support the learning process.
- **Digital Citizen** (2b): Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.
- **Global Collaborator** (7b): Students use collaborative technologies to work with others, including peers, experts or community members, to examine issues and problems from multiple viewpoints.

In the same way that you would model and support content learning, you must also spend time giving direct instruction about and modeling the types of interactions you wish to see in your digital classroom space. Remember that online interaction in a classroom setting might be a new skill for your students. Be patient, flexible, and willing to redirect rather than punish, when one of them makes a mistake.

Start Slow, then Grow

Keep your communities small and slowly expand outward. Let students learn, make mistakes, and grow in the safety of your own classroom community. Once students have learned the ropes and met your expectations, start to expand the community. If you teach multiple sections of a course, consider starting a discussion board that students in all of your class periods can

contribute to. Pair up with another teacher in the building and let your students communicate with his or her students. When you're ready to give students an even larger community, try collaborating with a class in another building in the school district. Over time, your students will be ready to join larger, global communities.

Avoid Rookie Mistakes

To help you and your students get the most benefit from a digital learning community regardless of the platform you choose, Table 1.1 lists some common mistakes to avoid and best practices to embrace.

TABLE 1.1 Common Mistakes and Best Practices

Avoid…	Instead…
Getting caught off guard by questions you cannot answer.	**Spend time exploring the platform before introducing it to students; consider setting up a phony student account with your personal email address so you can see the platform from your students' perspective in addition to your own.**
Using all the bells and whistles built into your digital space (discussion boards, small group spaces, instant message features, etc.) all at once.	**Introduce areas of the digital community one by one, model how they work, discuss when they can and should be used, and give students time and space to practice.**
Requiring students to express themselves and their ideas in only one format.	**Encourage the production and sharing of all types of media, including text, video, audio, and even memes!**
Dominating conversations or expecting students to deliver a "right answer."	**Post thought-provoking questions, articles, images, or video, and allow students to discuss, debate, research, and refute with one another.**
Setting up all of the rules and expectations for the digital learning community yourself.	**Read Chapter 2 of this book!**

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

“Getting to Know You” Digital Citizen Survey

Many teachers start the school year by giving students a “getting to know you” survey that includes questions about favorite books and movies, family life and friends, activities they enjoy outside of school, and goals for the year. The answers to these surveys help teachers know their students a little better and often provide insights that can help start conversation, build rapport, and foster community.

Think of this featured activity as a “getting to know you” survey for the digital citizen. The questions are grouped into categories related to access, online activity, and skill level. It is not recommended that you have students answer every single question listed. The questions you choose to include, perhaps a few from each category, will depend on the age of your students, the digital tools that may or may not be available to them, and the type of digital citizenship work you and your school are already doing.

You can turn these questions into a digital survey by using a tool such as Google Forms, or you could ask students to reflect on paper. Whatever format you choose, ideally you will receive answers that can help you better understand your students’ digital experiences, provide you with opportunities to make connections with kids, and identify areas where you have the most opportunity to help them grow as digital citizens.

💬 Questions about Access:

- Do you have a computer or laptop in your home? If so, is it yours or is it shared among family members?
- Do you have internet access at home?
- Do you have a smartphone?
- Are you allowed to use social media? If so, which websites or apps do you use?
- Which adults do you friend or follow on social media? Parents? Teachers? Celebrities? Athletes?

- Who are your social media "role models," and why?
- Are most of your social media friends and followers people you have met offline? If you communicate online with people you have not met in person, what drew you together?

Questions about Online Activity:

- When you are online, what websites do you spend the most time on?
- What are your preferred methods for communicating with friends? Family members? Parents? Teachers? Why do you think those methods of communication are the same or different?
- If you consider all of the time you spend on your device in one week, what percentage of that time is spent reading/researching/learning for school? Reading/researching/learning for your own interests? Watching videos? Playing games? Communicating with friends? Creating something original to share? Doing something else?
- Do you pay attention to local and world news? If so, where do you get your news?
- Have you ever purchased something online? If so, what was it?
- Have you ever been in an online community with a teacher and your classmates? If so, what platform did you use? What were your experiences like?
- What is one thing adults falsely assume about teenagers and technology?
- What is one thing you wish adults knew about teenagers and technology?

Questions about Skill Level:

- Describe how you keep your digital files organized.
- When you are not sure how to do something with technology (inserting a YouTube video into a slideshow, for example), what steps do you usually take to get an answer?
- When someone uses an abbreviation, symbol, gif, emoji, or meme on social media and you're not sure what message the poster is trying to

communicate, what steps do you usually take to get clarification?

- Describe how you would handle a situation in which someone publicly insults you on social media.
- What technological skill(s) do you have that you could teach to someone else?
- What is one technical skill that you wish you were better with?

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Online Literature Circles

Jessica Conlon (@ms_jcon) is a first-year librarian at Still Middle School in Aurora, Illinois, and a former seventh- and eighth-grade English teacher. She transformed her traditional classroom literature circles into an exciting opportunity for students to experience digital community. Jessica provides a unique perspective to the digital citizenship conversation because her own coming of age as a student and educator coincided with the rise of educational technology. As a seventh-grade student in 2001, Jessica's experiences with technology were limited to word processing, online gradebooks, and "stranger danger" conversations. When she entered the other side of the classroom in 2011 as a teacher, technology's role in education had already begun to change.

As a teacher, Jessica found success by giving students time and space to practice their digital citizenship skills while still learning subject area content. In her first year as a middle school English teacher, Jessica and another teacher in her district facilitated cross-building literature circles with their students. The notion of digitally pairing students in two different buildings was overwhelming at first, but ultimately the teachers were excited about what the students would learn. "We wanted to give them an authentic audience for their work, and a chance to practice the communication skills they had been working on all year long in a totally different format."

The teachers developed a three-week long unit that required students to work with peers from both their own school and the middle school across town. In doing so, students were not limited to discussing their reading inside their classroom only; they were able to communicate and collaborate with peers they had never met. Groups were assigned a book to read and a series of tasks to complete using an assigned

web platform, including designing websites about their book and participating in online discussion boards.

Modeling Appropriate Interactions

Because Jessica and the other teacher were in two separate buildings, they modeled using the same digital tools and the type of interactions they expected from their students while using those tools.

The colleagues found that students needed a lot of modeling before they became proficient at discussion board conversations. When the teachers posted questions to the board, students had the tendency to simply read the question and type an answer, almost like they were completing an item on a worksheet. In classroom communities, students are expected to listen to what others have to say and take that information into account before crafting their own responses. In the digital space, Jessica and her colleague had to model this behavior, showing students ways that they could acknowledge what others had said and either expand upon those ideas or disagree with them. Kids from both schools had been practicing these skills in the classroom all year, but when the format changed, the students needed adult mentors to help them navigate this new type of conversation.

Student Reflections on the Project

Through the project, students had the chance to practice all the skills that were required by their English curriculum—reading, writing, research, and communication. Because of the format, students learned digital citizenship skills as well. When the project was done, students anonymously shared their reflections with the two teachers:

- “It was a pretty unique and fun project to work with people in another school instead of always being in groups with the students we know.”

- “It was really fun to build a website. I never knew how links and pages worked until now!”
- “I learned that online communication is more about planning. When we didn’t plan, communication was bad and things didn’t get done.”
- “Sharing my thoughts on paper was hard. I feel that I was too wordy at times and that the team couldn’t understand me.”

Curricular and Social-Emotional Growth

Jessica looks back fondly at this project and cannot help but feel proud of the work her students put in. Every group experienced a productive struggle as they grappled with the responsibilities and opportunities that accompany digital learning. Students’ growth was both curricular and social-emotional as they practiced reading and writing skills while also learning how to effectively collaborate online.

Witnessing what her students were able to do and create within a digital learning context shed light for Jessica on how binary her own experiences with technology were as a student. Jessica knew that designing and facilitating digital learning experiences for her students were important, so she continued to find small opportunities for collaborating and sharing her work with willing colleagues. Now, as a library media center director, Jessica’s experiences have come full circle. Students and teachers with varying levels of experience and interest in technology can venture into the library to create, discover, and most importantly, participate, as digital citizens of our constantly changing world.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

#LeydenPride

Creating a safe space for students to practice life as digital citizens can certainly happen at the classroom level, but it can also be fostered through schoolwide and districtwide opportunities created by those in educational leadership positions. Jason Markey, principal at East Leyden High School, located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, has been recognized as a pioneer in fostering and supporting school community by allowing his students to demonstrate the positive power of connecting as digital citizens. The successes East Leyden experienced have had a ripple effect, not only to their sister high school, West Leyden, but with school leaders throughout the country. This is the story of the #LeydenPride community.

When East and West Leyden first went 1:1 with Chromebooks back in the 2012–13 school year, Twitter was one social media tool not caught by the school's filters. Students quickly flocked to the platform as the place where they could be social on their school-issued devices. According to student blogger Maja Bulka (2014), the freedom to socialize was short lived: "As Twitter feeds became cluttered by 140-character hate rants on school, homework, teachers, other people and illegal activities, Twitter became a thing of the past on our Chromebooks…. Students abused their powers and didn't heed the warnings, so the administration took action. Gone were the good days of Twitter on Chromebooks."

Changing the Narrative

Jason Markey saw power in social media tools such as Twitter, however. And the possibilities he envisioned went beyond using digital tools to quickly and effectively communicate mass messages

to students and parents in his school community. Jason wanted to engage his students in a conversation—one that was authentic and productive. He wanted students and teachers to see that social media posts could be more than just white noise.

Jason set out on several simultaneous endeavors: to connect with other school leaders from around the country for his own personal learning, to gather his school community around a social media hashtag, and to start a crowdsourced blog space to amplify the voices at East Leyden. All of these projects were intended to model the power of being a connected citizen in a digital world.

When Jason's students started the social media #LeydenPride in the winter of 2012, he, the activity director, and a few students were pretty much the only ones using the hashtag to share out the great things they saw happening in the school. Jason remained persistent, though, and over time, the hashtag caught on. As more teachers, clubs, athletic teams, and parents began using the hashtag across multiple social media platforms, Bulka (2014) claimed it really began "redefining what it meant to be a part of our school—a definition that would mesh together exemplary digital citizenship and school pride."

In the years that followed those early attempts to get #LeydenPride off the ground, Jason has seen some amazing things happen. He created an @leydenpride Twitter account, and turned it over to a different student each week, which empowered student voice but also allowed for diversity in the experiences and stories being shared with the larger community.

West Leyden staff and students as well as district administrators also began using the hashtag, and suddenly school district accounts were seen less as a one-way communication tool. Social media became a community space for educators, administrators, parents, and students across the two campuses. Jason watched in awe as students used the hashtag to pressure administrators into an additional school dance, and then used the same hashtag to celebrate and encourage their teachers and peers publicly during Make a Difference Day.

Essentially, "#LeydenPride set the precedent for 1:1 districts everywhere," wrote Bulka (2014). "Instead of repressing Twitter and restricting students from using it, [the] principal steered the use of it away from mindless tweeting and created #LeydenPride….the trend gradually caught on as the use of Twitter became something more than just an outlet for boredom." The community has since used #LeydenPride to do everything from celebrate their academic and athletic achievements to find a safe space to share in their grief, which is what happened when an East Leyden graduate lost her life in a car accident during the summer of 2013.

More Than Just a Hashtag

Jason knew that his students and teachers had more to share than could be captured in 140-character Tweets or in Instagram photos and captions, so he also started the Leyden Learn365 blog. The work of junior Maja Bulka, whose quotes appear in this Spotlight Story, is featured there along with dozens of other posts. The blog is not only a collaboration between the two high schools, but also one among students, teachers, and administrators alike.

On the blog, teachers share their experiences with trying new things in the classroom—everything from rolling out 20% time in a business class to an English teacher bringing her own toddler to school in an effort to reignite the joy of reading in her high schoolers. Another English teacher wrote up her reflections after shadowing a high school freshman for a day, making a plea to her colleagues to remember what high school was like and to have empathy for the pressures their students feel each day. The student blogs are equally, if not more impactful. They write about life as English Language Learners and the importance of kindness in their school culture, as well as celebrate finding their safe spaces in clubs, sports, and school activities.

And while Jason Markey has gotten a lot of national attention for his work in the Leyden community over the last few years, he had some

humble reflections on those accomplishments: “Because of Leyden, I’ve had the good fortune to present all over the continent, as people are endlessly interested in our endeavors. In every trip I make, my goal is not to tell others schools how to mirror Leyden’s actions” (2016).

Instead, Jason said that his goal is the same as that of any other educator—to do what is best for kids. But, to do that, we need to be willing to learn and grow from one another and show our students how to do the same. “If chance can favor the connected school then we owe it to our students to give them an environment full of opportunity. It’s my goal [to build] a culture in our schools where connection is not accidental, but intentional” (Markey, 2016).

You Can Do It!

Setting up your digital space might seem like a daunting task at first, but once you have the digital community in place, there are amazing learning opportunities like the ones Jessica’s and Jason’s students had waiting for your students too! Consider all the ways you can help foster positive digital citizenship as a mentor, and support students on their learning journey as you enter into online communities together. What are you waiting for?

2

Acknowledging Student Voice in Digital Spaces

After the 2016 U.S. presidential election, something very interesting started happening in my social media feeds. People were posting status updates begging their friends to stop sharing so much political commentary. There were rounds of posts encouraging people to change the tone of their feeds by sharing pictures of cute kittens and tagging and challenging ten of their friends to do the same. My own mother started begging her social media friends to stop talking about the election and start sharing posts of their favorite recipes again. She frequently told me, both in person and online, that it was time to stop talking politics and just move on!

My mom and I certainly did not see eye to eye on the purpose of our social media communities in the days and weeks after the election. While she was eager to return to a feed filled with pictures of her friends' grandchildren, I reveled in the opportunity to engage in dialogue around politics with my peers. Admittedly, I felt that people like my mom, who were taking themselves out of the conversation by posting "no more politics" messages, were engaged in shallow attempts to bury their heads in the sand.

My mom, on the other hand, felt she should not have to be subjected to my political conversations every time she logged in to Facebook. At one point, she even posted on my wall a bright collage called "Make Facebook Fun Again." It looked like a colorful mind map and was filled with the written commands in vibrant bubbles: "Show pictures of your kids & family," "Make me laugh," "Give me a reason to smile," and "No politics!"

So, who was right in this situation? Is it possible that we both were? As I reflected on the debate my mom and I had about the purposes of social media in those weeks after the election, I came away with a few important realizations about how our digital communities work.

Have we given our students the tools to shape their own digital communities in ways that are reasonable, empowering, and valid?

The internet, and social media spaces in particular, are not static sources of information set out for easy consumption. The internet is a mere conglomeration of people with vastly different life experiences, sharing a space together. We make our digital communities what we want them to be, and we have some measure of control over the social media experiences we want to have. My mom, and perhaps others who shared her viewpoint, felt shaken by the change in norms they had come to expect from their online communities in those days after the election. Her posts, begging friends to stop talking about politics and to start sharing recipes again, were simply an attempt to reset the standard operating procedures of the space that she had come to know and rely on.

I found myself frustrated with my mom, though, because it felt as though she wanted me to change my online behaviors for her benefit. Instead of taking simple measures, such as scrolling past my posts without reading them, or more drastic measures, such as unfollowing me, my mom just begged me to post more of what she liked to read. I felt frustrated that she could not see social media as an ideal space for me to engage in political dialogue with others. And as much as I wanted to oblige by her request, I felt that I would have more to lose than gain by doing so.

Naturally, I began thinking about the implication of these reflections for curriculum. Do our students feel like I did when we tell them how to behave online without taking the time to listen to their point of view? Is our curriculum an attempt to manage our own online, and sometimes offline, experiences by telling our students what kind of online lives they can or should lead? Have we given our students the tools to shape their own digital communities in ways that are reasonable, empowering, and valid?

Current Approaches to Digital Citizenship

Many digital citizenship curricula are full of rules and expectations for students to follow. Some are packaged as eye-catching classroom posters such as those in the introduction of this book. As noted by Mattson (2016), others attempt to call out and redirect specific "noncitizen-like" behaviors through the use of scenarios and reflection questions. While posters of expectations and opportunities for discussion and self-assessment are not inherently negative approaches to teaching digital citizenship, they are a packaged set of lessons that have rules and objectives set by outsiders—adult curricula writers who are not in a digital community with the students whose experiences they are trying to shape.

Research shows that as a society, cultural norms—that is, expectations and standards for moral and ethical behavior—and how teens see themselves within these norms are changing. James (2014) has pointed out that, increasingly, conversations about morals and ethics are tied to the idea that what is "right" is in the eye of the beholder, and there is a lesser degree of respect for rules dictated by authority figures, including classroom teachers and institutions such as schools. Young adults today are less likely to determine their identities and moral codes by tradition or inner voice than their parents were. This generation's decision-making and identity development are guided by a mass-created authority with whom they are constantly connected by way of the devices in their pockets (Gardner & Davis, 2013).

In school, however, students are being told how to behave online by teachers and administrators and through curricula that have been designed and developed without students' input. Teens report very little dialogue with adults in their schools about issues related to online behavior, although many report having sat through large group assemblies in which they were lectured to about internet safety. Teens also report that the majority of messages delivered in these assemblies were full of fear-based tactics that focused on the risks, rather than the rewards, associated with participation in digital spaces (James, 2014).

While it is tempting for adults to try to dictate digital behavior from the outside, there is no denying that young adults are the ones leading change in

digital spaces. For example, many methods of digital communication, such as text messaging, began as a popular youth behavior and now persist as a standard form of connection that cuts across age groups. Teens also tend to be early adopters of new social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat, using them extensively with their peer groups before the platforms become more mainstream and are adopted by a much broader population (Ito, 2009). While teens may not have the digital superpowers some people allude to by giving them labels such as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), adolescents *are* willing to take risks, try new things, explore new media, and help usher in digital change. Research also shows that teens are able to create multiple media identities for themselves, moving fluidly between digital spaces with different group norms, and learning the rules and expectations in those spaces through careful observation and participation in each digital community (Ito et al., 2009).

This generation's decision-making and identity development are guided by a mass-created authority with whom they are constantly connected by way of the devices in their pockets.

What this means for curriculum is that we cannot set out a list of rules for digital communities that will be all encompassing. The norms for behavior will change depending upon the space an adolescent is in, and even in those spaces where teens feel comfortable, there may be times when the status quo is challenged and they find themselves facing a changing digital landscape.

While schools may not feel comfortable giving up complete control, there must be some recognition that students—teenagers especially—are already engaging in digital communities with their own sets of norms that are citizen-created, not generated from an outside entity such as a school. When we choose a curriculum of rules created by outsiders that leaves no room for student voice, we do so with blatant disregard for the experiences students are already having in their digital communities. Instead of favoring easy lectures about "right" and "wrong" online behavior, we must be willing to listen to our students' experiences and empower them with a variety of skills to be successful participants in various digital communities.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

The ISTE Standards for Students (2016) recognized that teens are actively participating in online communities. By giving your students voice and ownership in the digital citizenship opportunities they have in your classroom, they will be better equipped to meet the following Student Standards:

- **Digital Citizen (**2a): Cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and [be] aware of the permanence of their actions in the digital world.
- **Digital Citizen** (2b): Engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.

A participatory approach to digital citizenship education recognizes that all members of the digital community are valuable, deserve to have a voice, and can make positive contributions to various groups. Your students may need some guidance, though, to help them see their role as digital citizens and recognize the power of that voice. You can begin by having them set the norms for their digital classroom community.

Helping Students Set Expectations

It might be tempting to approach students with a list of your expectations for using this new space you've created for them. But, instead of telling students how to behave, embrace this perfect opportunity to listen more than you speak, showing students the power they have in shaping the norms and interactions in that space.

To help students collectively create the expectations and norms for their digital classroom, facilitate a whole-class discussion. Here are a few guiding questions that can help you and your students get the conversation started:

- What type of posts do you expect to see in our space? What type of information do you not want to see?
- How formal should our English be? Are abbreviations okay?

- Can anyone begin a discussion thread? Are any topics off-limits?
- Do we need to have a separate space (depending on platform) to discuss different topics?
- Should everyone be required to participate in the online community? Do we need to set a minimum and/or maximum number of posts?
- How will we uphold our community standards?

It is also important to have students discuss and decide how members will hold one another accountable for respecting and upholding the norms they have just set. Ask students to brainstorm ideas for how the community members will respectfully respond if a classmate deviates from the community expectations. Post the newly agreed upon community norms in both the digital classroom and the physical one.

Facilitating Student Reflection

Students should have a voice in creating community norms, but it's also important that they reflect on the ways they've chosen to uphold or disregard those standards, both individually and as a group. After a few weeks of working together in the digital classroom community, set aside time for the students to observe and reflect on the community standards they've collectively set. Pose questions such as these to the class:

- How easy or difficult has it been for you to uphold the community norms?
- Have the community standards changed over time? Were these changes purposeful and deliberate, or did they just start to happen?
- Can you pinpoint instances in which you saw someone deviate from the norms? What happened as a result?
- Do the agreed-upon guidelines need to change to better serve your digital community? If so, how?
- Has our work in the classroom digital community made you reflect at all on your role in other digital communities you belong to? How so?

When students are given time to reflect on their role in the online community, they are not only self-assessing their work as students in your classroom, but also simultaneously exploring the part they play in all digital spaces. You can continue facilitating this metacognitive reflection by allowing your students to consider the roles, responsibilities, and experiences they have as digital citizens in digital communities outside of school.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Empowering Student Voice through Public Service Announcements

Laura Gardner (@LibrarianMsG) is a library media specialist at Dartmouth Middle School in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Like many states, Massachusetts law requires schools to have a plan for teaching students about the consequences of cyberbullying. This task has fallen to Laura as well as a health teacher and computer teacher in her building. Even though the law mentions only cyberbullying education, Laura knows that digital citizenship encompasses so much more. She wants her students to have a positive online presence and does her best to model that type of presence with school library accounts across various social media platforms.

“I want my students to think, and I want them to be engaged in active learning,” Laura says. So instead of lecture-style lessons that tell students how to behave online, Laura prefers giving her sixth graders the opportunity to explore with one another issues such as privacy, reality versus perception, reputation, and community. For a final digital citizenship unit of the year, Laura designed an experience that not only got her kids thinking about the role they play in online communities, but also helped them meet learning targets related to identifying problems and proposing solutions, creating messages for authentic audiences, and using effective persuasion and advertising techniques.;

Laura showed her students many public service announcements (PSAs) and introduced them to a variety of persuasion techniques used in the videos. She helped the students see how each PSA identified a problem and proposed a solution to its audience. Then, it

was time for Laura's sixth graders to make some PSAs of their own. Students brainstormed problems they had personally seen in online communities or had heard about from their friends and relatives. They then did more research about the problem, brainstormed possible solutions, and chose an audience for their message.

Figure 2.1 Students at Dartmouth Middle School enjoy a red carpet premier of their digital citizenship public service announcements.

The sixth graders took what they had learned about issues in online communities, wrote scripts that employed at least two persuasive advertising techniques, acted out their PSAs in front of a green screen, and did some editing to bring their messages to life.

To make this unit even more impactful, Laura knew that the students' PSAs had to reach an audience larger than herself. In class, groups of students showed their one-minute messages to one another. The top six videos, as determined by a rubric, were chosen to be part of an extra-special red carpet event attended by students, their families, and even the local newspaper. The students got to see their PSAs on the big screen, played as previews before an evening showing of the documentary *Screenagers* in the school auditorium.

By allowing her students to take ownership in this unit, Laura witnessed them dive deeply into their feelings about "likes" and "followers," cyberbullies, privacy in digital communities, and even

norms related to the ways they use their devices in face-to-face meetups with friends. By extending this project into an evening event for families, Laura opened up more opportunities for parents, children, and peers to have honest discussions about what it means to be citizens in a digital age (Figure 2.1).

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

Image-Inspired Conversations

It can be difficult to get students talking about their online lives, and if you are not sure how to kick off the conversation, things can get awkward fast! Luckily, there are dozens of artists who are making powerful statements about our lives as digital citizens, and you can employ the power of image to get your students thinking and talking.

In an English, health, or social studies class, use pictures such as the one in Figure 2.2 as bell ringer activities. Project the image and have students spend just five minutes journaling their thoughts about the picture.

If students feel stuck or you think they may need some prompting to get started, you can pose questions along with the image:

- What do you think the artist is trying to say about society through this image?
- Do you agree with the artist's message? Why or why not?
- Can you or any of your friends relate to this message?
- What does the statement made by this image mean for our society?

Once students have had an opportunity to reflect on the image, you can have them share their thoughts with a peer or even with the whole class, if they feel comfortable. As an extension, you can show students images with opposing viewpoints and have them choose the one they agree with, justifying their answer with some examples from their own experience.

Students may also enjoy creating their own thought-provoking images, portraying a piece of their life as a digital citizen.

Figure 2.2 Images that make powerful statements can get students talking about their digital lives.

Note: For an ever-growing collection of images to provoke thinking, writing, discussion, and reflecting on our lives as digital citizens, visit the Dig Cit Discussions Pinterest board (https://www.pinterest.com/kmattson1105/dig-cit-discussions).

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Embracing Voice with a Student-Written Curricula

Digital citizenship is often a topic of conversation when school districts make the decision to go 1:1. In Gurnee, Illinois, a team of administrators from Warren Township High School (WTHS) were in the process of developing a series of digital citizenship lessons in preparation for their own rollout when a sexting incident came to their attention. This incident reinforced the need for a future digital citizenship curriculum, but administrators also knew they needed a more immediate message and intervention that would reach all facets of the school community. In response to that immediate need, administrators from WTHS pulled a series of digital citizenship lessons from the internet and required all teachers in the building to deliver the lessons during specified periods of the school day, thus ensuring that all students in the high school were exposed to each lesson.

Cheryl Parmenter (@DrParmenter), a 9th- and 10th-grade social studies teacher at the school, admits that the rollout of these prepackaged lessons was well intended, but not the right fit for the students and staff at WTHS. “Most of the student body was unaware that there had even been a sexting incident. They were so confused about why we were interrupting our classroom lessons to talk about these issues.” Some teachers felt uneasy about the lessons, too. Many expressed that they were not adequately prepared to have tough conversations with their students on the first day of school, and they also struggled with the rigid schedule of lessons interrupting the flow of their own curricular goals. To both students and staff, some of the digital citizenship lessons felt inauthentic and outdated.

A digital citizenship committee of administrators and teachers, including Cheryl, recognized the flaws in their approach to digital citizenship education. It was driven by an outside curricula that became one more thing to do, rather than an embedded part of the culture at Warren. There was a huge focus on negative behaviors and rules without a lot of conversation about the power of digital tools. And to many on the committee, one of the biggest issues with their approach is that it did not include student voice. Enough of the teachers and administrators in the building saw a need to modify the approach, and a digital citizenship committee was formed to address those concerns.

Giving Voice to Students

The digital citizenship committee was "founded on the belief that it should empower students in the process of developing and creating digital citizenship lessons with guidance from teachers." In the first student committee meeting, the kids were brutally honest about the digital citizenship lessons they had just received, but also said they were willing to help make the learning experience better. According to Cheryl, the team developed a long-term goal "to successfully integrate digital citizenship into school culture, so that it can be perceived less as a separate program and more as a way of life."

In the early stages of the committee work, the teachers encouraged students to brainstorm. What were the most relevant topics to students at their school? What did teens want to have conversations about with adult mentors? Older students wondered about the impact of social media on the college application process. Other kids wanted to know if technology addiction was a real thing. Together, the team landed on ten topics that they felt were important enough to be addressed schoolwide, and then narrowed those topics down to a list of six.

Toward a Collaboration-Based Curriculum

The committee of students, with guidance from the teachers, went to work developing curricular resources. The teacher team developed the overarching question, “What does it mean to be digitally responsible?” and encouraged the students to tie each lesson back to that essential question. The students created short videos, slideshow presentations, and both large and small group discussion questions for teachers to use in their classrooms. The school administrators set a more flexible schedule for the delivery of the lessons, and the team of both students and teachers met throughout the year to reflect on their work as it was rolled out in the school.

Although the team is still focused on improving the stand-alone nature of the lessons they developed, the schoolwide, student-designed curriculum has received compliments from both teachers and students. The next step for the team now is to identify best fits in the established high school curriculum for their priority topics to be addressed, moving closer to the goal of digital citizenship education as a natural part of the school experience, rather than an isolated monthly event. And, you guessed it, students will be at be at the center of this important work.

You Can Do It!

One reason adolescents love being in digital communities with their peers is because their voices can be heard. When you put aside a prepackaged lesson in favor of opportunities for students to self-reflect and share their voices, not only will you be blown away by the depth and complexity of their thinking, but you will help students see the power they have to co-create, enforce, and modify digital norms in the communities they belong to.

In your classroom, regardless of the content you teach, remember that you have the power to do the following:

- Listen to and acknowledge the digital experiences students bring to the classroom.

- Facilitate the co-creation of norms in your digital classroom community.
- Help students thoughtfully reflect on their lives and experiences as digital citizens.

3

Helping Students Understand Their Roles in Digital Communities

A pretty standard question that adults ask kids is “What do you want to be when you grow up?” This question is a fun way to get a glimpse into the mind of a child, but it also carries some assumptions with it. Adults inherently recognize that there are many distinct roles we play in our communities—doctors, teachers, police officers, business owners, parents, spouses. As we grow, we figure out our gifts and talents, and attempt to take on a role that will not only make us happy, but will simultaneously contribute something to the community we live in.

Traditional schooling allows students to explore a variety of roles they might play in society. In elementary school, kids are excited to take turns with classroom jobs such as line leader and paper passer. By middle school, students have the chance to be a band kid, an athlete, a student council member, an honors student, an artist, a gamer. They often jump into and out of different groups as they attempt to figure out where they best fit in the school community. By high school, these roles become less fluid as students settle into areas they enjoy and begin thinking about future roles as employees, college students, or service members to our country.

In the previous two chapters, I discussed how students need a place to practice life in a digital community and that their voices and experiences in those spaces should be both heard and fostered. This chapter is dedicated to helping students explore the roles they currently and will eventually play as digital citizens in global communities.

Current Approaches to Digital Citizenship

Because so much digital citizenship curricula are written from a perspective of individual responsibility, there is not a lot of overt conversation about the ways communities function as a whole. Digital citizenship lessons that are written from a place of behavior management inadvertently, yet consistently, portray adults as having all of the power and control while teens are described as victims that need protecting from abusers, troublemakers that need punishing, or mistake makers who need someone to intervene on their behalf (Mattson, 2016).

Figure 3.1 shows the six roles that teens and adults are given in three of the leading digital citizenship curricular packages written for high school students.

In many digital citizenship lessons, adults are not only the rule makers, they are also portrayed as the internet police when students make mistakes or as the saviors who will swoop in to protect young people when something goes wrong. We tell kids to report cyberbullying to an adult and to tell a parent if they come across online content that makes them feel uncomfortable. While these messages make sense for some of our youngest digital citizens, by the time our students are in their teens, we really should be empowering them with the skills they need to be less dependent on adult intervention, and showing them a more realistic picture of the roles that adults and adolescents take in digital spaces (Gardner & Davis, 2013).

I noticed this overreliance on adult intervention in a recent news story that came out of a high school near my home. A student had taken screenshots of two very racist, very offensive Tweets written by two different students at the school. The screenshots were put on a poster alongside the Tweeters' profile pictures, full first and last names, their grade levels, and a list of their extracurricular activities. The poster included the phrases "Is this your friend?," "Is this your student?," and "Is this what we will tolerate at our school?" Whoever anonymously created the poster made dozens of copies and hung them all over the hallways of the high school (Martin, 2017).

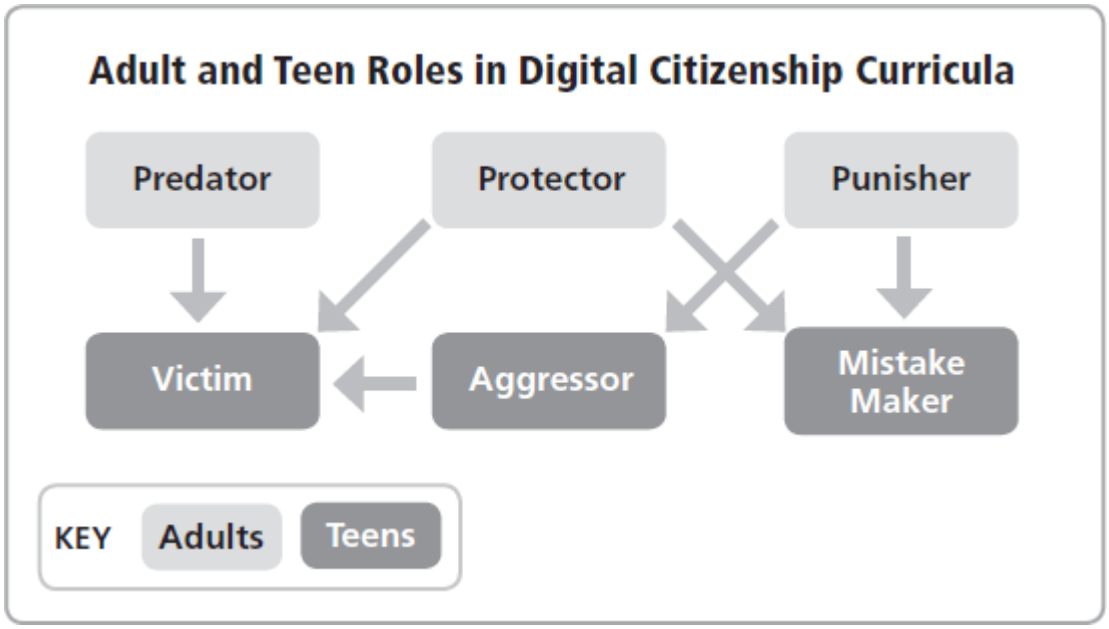

Figure 3.1 Adults and teens are portrayed in one of six ways in the leading digital citizenship curriculum for high school students.

It did not take long for the poster maker to reveal herself on social media, though. Both the student (who I will call Maya for the sake of her privacy) and her mother were proud to announce that Maya was the one who created and hung the posters around the school. I connected with Maya and she agreed to answer some of my questions through private messaging.

According to Maya, there are students at her school who make racist remarks on social media quite regularly. Although Maya says she has never felt unsafe at school or personally threatened by any of these students, she did take her concerns to the school administration prior to making the posters. Apparently, the school refused to punish the students who had put their offensive opinions online. When more of the same posts appeared, Maya decided it was up to her to make sure the adults in her school were listening.

If Maya's experiences with digital citizenship curriculum mirrored the findings of the Mattson (2016) study (shown in Figure 3.1), it is easy to see why she was frustrated by the perceived lack of action from the adults in her school. Maya felt offended by the posts and was looking for an adult to step in and protect her from seeing more of the same messages. She also anticipated that an adult at her school could act in the role of punisher,

making sure that her fellow students received some type of consequence for making racist statements online.

What likely happened in this case was not an uncaring administration, but a gray area where free speech, hate speech, cyberbullying, and school law mingle. When hate speech makes its way into a school building, administration has every right to step in and limit the free speech rights of individuals in order to protect the safety, security, and learning environment for all other students (Warnick, 2013). But, the school's reach can only go so far. School administrators do not have the authority to limit the free speech of students who are communicating on personal devices outside of the school day unless those comments carry over into the school and cause a disruption to the learning environment (Meyer, 2016). This caveat is what Maya was describing when she said she had never felt personally threatened or intimidated at school by her fellow students. Unfortunately, most digital citizenship curricula, with their sweeping generalizations about "being nice" and "not cyberbullying" and "telling a grown-up" are not helping students navigate these legal nuances.

Students must be given opportunities to explore the gray areas of free speech and participation in digital spaces.

Because the school was not legally able to step in and intervene, what other choices did Maya have for dealing with these offensive messages? If you look back at the framework for adult and teen relationships in most digital citizenship curricula, Maya did exactly what traditional digital citizenship lessons conditioned her to do. In them, the only role a teen can take that has any sort of power is the role of the aggressor who acts upon his or her victims. Someone who feels victimized, like Maya did, is shown as powerless.

In considering the curricular implications of Maya's story, it's clear we have a lot of work to do. Students must be given opportunities to explore the gray areas of free speech and participation in digital spaces. High school students, especially, need to be taught ways to intervene respectfully and on their own behalves when they encounter hateful or derogatory remarks.

More importantly, our curricula need to be rewritten to better reflect the roles, relationships, and power dynamics of people in digital communities. When the curriculum narrowly defines teens as troublemakers and victims, and adults as predators or punishers, students have very limited models of what they can be "when they grow up" in a digital space.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

A participatory citizenship approach to digital communities recognizes that all digital citizens, regardless of age, contribute to and consume from digital spaces. When people come together in communities and exchange ideas as both consumers and contributors, dialogue and deliberation happen. Rather than picturing the relationships between teens and adults in online communities as positions of power or weakness, I prefer a model such as the one in Figure 3.2.

Consuming and Contributing

Digital consumers are those who use the internet to gain information or entertainment. In the role of consumer, we enter into digital communities with the intention of taking something away. A digital contributor, on the other hand, is interested in adding his or her voice to a digital space. Contributors may share their opinions in a comments section, put up original content—images, blog posts, videos, etc.—for others to see, or provide feedback to companies by writing reviews of products and services. In online spaces, both teens and adults have the power to determine the value of their digital contributions and the ways they interact with the digital contributions of others. I think it's worth noting that both consumption and contribution can happen in isolation. When I write a blog post, I am contributing content to my community of followers. When I read someone else's blog post, I am consuming content they've written. The two roles only overlap when users enter into conversation with one another around a shared piece of content. When I can consume someone else's viewpoint and contribute my own back, I begin a dialogue that moves both me and the other user into a space of conversation, whereby we are simultaneously consuming and contributing.

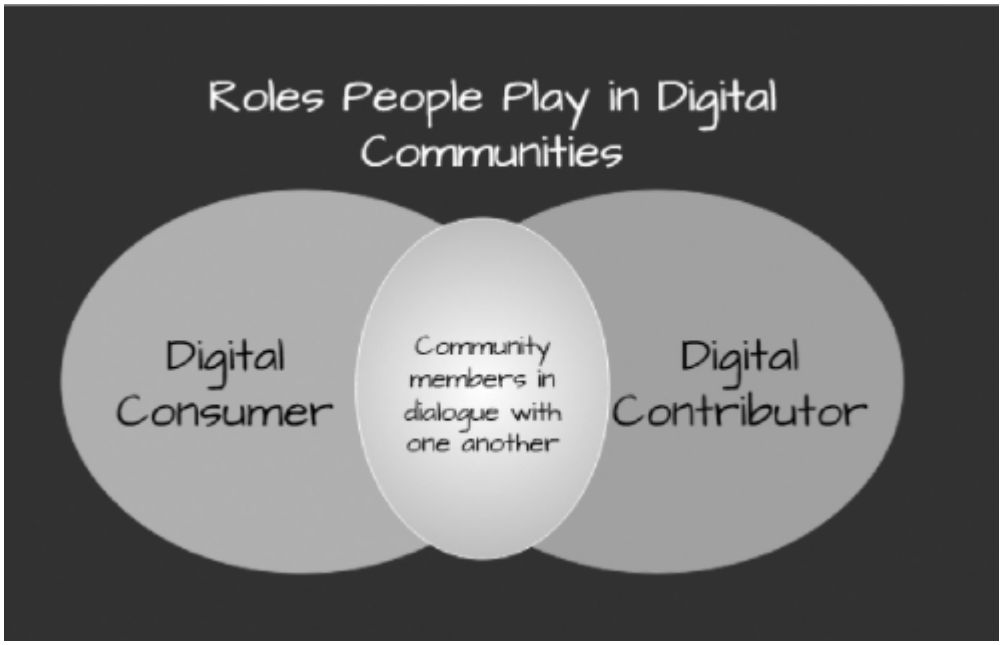

Figure 3.2 Digital citizens of all ages play the roles of consumers and contributors in digital communities.

When students like Maya, whom you met in the opening of this chapter, are taught through a lens of consumption and contribution rather than approached as troublemakers or victims, a teacher's opportunity to grow a variety of student skills sets emerges. Had Maya understood the rights of other community contributors, been taught techniques for controlling the types of information coming her way, and had some practice with digital deliberation and discussion under the mentorship of an adult, her story may have ended very differently.

We can have students explore their roles as consumers and contributors in a variety of ways because digital citizenship conversations fit well in many different content areas. Anywhere in the curriculum that explores people in community with one another is an easy place to extend that conversation into online spaces by simply "hacking" the learning standards.

Hacking the Standards

To "hack" learning standards, simply take the original and add a few words or phrases that will help you consider the ways your curriculum can address the roles of students as citizens in both physical communities and digital ones. Please note that hacking your standards does not mean scrapping parts

of the curriculum or completely changing what students will learn. You are simply identifying opportunities in your existing units to extend and deepen what is already happening in your classroom.

> **A participatory citizenship approach to digital communities recognizes that all digital citizens, regardless of age, contribute to and consume from digital spaces.**

Try hacking a few of your classroom learning targets like I did for the following health standards, giving students more opportunities to explore their roles as digital citizens in ways that are authentically integrated into the curriculum rather than presented to them as stand-alone topics.

These standards were taken from the National Health Education Standards (Joint Committee on National Health Education, 2007), but you can find similar standards in many state and local curricula as well. Whatever set of curricular standards you use will work just fine for a hack as long as you can think about them through a digital citizenship lens.

HEALTH STANDARDS

- 2.12.3 Analyze how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
- 5.12.1 Examine barriers that can hinder healthy decision making.

HACKED HEALTH STANDARDS

2.12.3 Analyze how peers influence healthy and unhealthy *digital* behaviors.

5.12.1 Examine barriers that can hinder healthy *online* decision making.

Hacking your learning standards can allow you to cover the content you are required to teach while also helping students explore how those curricular concepts impact their lives as digital citizens. The featured activity that follows can be an excellent fit in a health class unit on relationships.

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

Consume or Contribute

A participatory citizen never acts in isolation, so student behaviors can be personally healthy or unhealthy, but can also impact the larger digital community in positive and negative ways. Help students reflect on their digital behaviors and roles as consumers and contributors with this simple activity.

Before starting the activity, use Table 3.1 “How Do Our Behaviors Impact Digital Communities?” to prepare an index card for each student in the class. On each card, write a behavior from the first column on one side and a behavior from the second column on the other side. Label the cards Side A and Side B so that students can easily tell which side you want them to refer to during the lesson.

Table 3.1 How Do Our Behaviors Impact Digital Communities?

Contribute or Consume?	Contributions: Positive, Negative or Neutral?
Leave a nasty comment on someone's Instagram post. Read online news articles. Play Xbox Live with others. Use Google Maps to get directions. Check show times on a movie theater website. Listen to a new track on SoundCloud. Send a text to a friend. Share a news article on Twitter. Watch videos on YouTube. Create videos and post them on YouTube. Edit incorrect information on an athlete's Wikipedia page. Listen to podcasts. Create a website to promote a personal project. Make a purchase on Amazon. Stream a movie from Netflix. Write a Tweet that insults someone's religion.	Reply to a Tweet by calling the person a loser and an idiot. Like a post on Facebook. Create an anonymous Twitter account to send out compliments. Follow the school library on Instagram. Use racial slurs while playing Call of Duty. Create a "We Hate Our School" Facebook group. Leave a nasty comment on someone's Instagram post. Post how-to videos on YouTube. Create a website to share original poetry. Share a picture of a meal on Instagram. Edit incorrect information on an athlete's Wikipedia page. Post thoughts about a book on a class message board. Tweet a picture before a game. Subtweet a mean comment without mentioning anyone's name.

Send a Snap to a boyfriend/girlfriend.

Post thoughts about a book on a class message board.

Email a teacher a question about an assignment.

Write a product review on Amazon.

Like a post on Facebook.

Share a picture of a meal on Instagram.

“Check in” to the gym.

Share a piece of original artwork on DeviantArt.

Scroll through Twitter while waiting for a ride.

Click on an ad inside an article.

Get interviewed for a school newscast.

Retweet the school principal.

Compliment a friend’s new haircut through a text.

Do a Google image search for a prom dress.

Design a file on Tinkercad to print on a 3-D printer.

Play Candy Crush or 8 Ball Pool on a phone.

Write a blog post about a family vacation.

Post an Instagram story about a personal accomplishment.

Write a product review on Amazon.

Send 50 texts to a boyfriend or girlfriend in one day.

Read a book to a kindergarten class over Google Hangouts.

Write a blog post about a family vacation.

Retweet the school principal.

Send a Snap of a cat to a friend.

Leave derogatory comments about women on a story about equal pay.

Post pictures of a teacher with a caption about her horrible outfit.

Share writing on a fan fiction website.

Teach someone how to modify settings on an iPhone.

Start using a schoolwide hashtag to celebrate achievements.

Create a phony Facebook account to troll stories put out by the school.

Make a video of someone changing in the locker room without his or her knowledge and then share it.

Tweet out a favorite song lyric.

Post a funny cat video to Facebook.

Read a book to a kindergarten class through Google Hangouts. Check out an ebook through the public library.	Screenshot a Tweet from a protected account and share it publicly. Text a friend an animated gif to wish them a happy birthday. Connect with a nonprofit organization via LinkedIn. Start a petition on Change.org.

To begin, ask students to tell you ways they contribute to their school as well as ways they consume from it. Students may talk about consuming lessons or learning materials and contributing through their involvement in clubs, athletics, and participation in service projects. Once it's clear they understand the difference between consume and contribute, hand out the index cards and ask students to look at Side A.

As students look at the digital behavior on Side A of their card, have them move to one side of the room if they are holding a digital contribution and to the opposite side of the room if they are holding a digital consumption. Some behaviors, such as "Retweeting the school principal," may not have an obvious answer, and that's okay! Allow students to move as they see fit.

While still standing on one side of the room, have students pair up with the classmate closest to them and discuss the behaviors:

- Share the behavior on your card with your discussion partner. Does he or she agree that it is a contribution/consumption?
- Ask your partner these questions: Is this contribution/consumption something that you do or have done? If so, what influences you to adopt that behavior? If not, what influences you to reject that behavior?

Next, ask students to find a discussion partner on the opposite side of the room, so that one contributor is standing with one consumer. Have students answer the same questions listed above with their new discussion partner and then return to their seats.

Once students are seated, point out that it was pretty easy for them to recognize consumption in digital communities because it typically looked like the user taking something away, whether that something was information or entertainment. The contributions were a little trickier to discern, though.

> **When students are taught through a lens of consumption and contribution rather than approached as troublemakers or victims, a teacher's opportunity to grow a variety of student skills sets emerges.**

While we typically think of a contribution as a positive thing, not all contributions are made equally. When someone contributes graffiti to the school bathroom, for example, it actually creates a mess that the maintenance staff has to clean up. Digital contributions are the same way. We all add to digital spaces in many ways, shapes, and forms, but what we add has different levels of value.

At this point, have students turn their index card over to Side B, so that each one is looking at a digital contribution. Instruct students to move to the front of the room if their contribution is positive, the back of the room if it is negative, and the center of the room if it is neutral.

Just as before, have students pair up with someone standing close to them and discuss.

- Share the contribution on your card with your discussion partner. Does he or she agree that it is a positive/negative/neutral contribution?
- Ask your partner these questions: Is this contribution something that you do or have done? If so, what influences you? If not, what influences you to abstain?
- Ask your partner: How does this type of contribution impact the other people in your digital community?

As before, instruct students to find a partner whose contribution is in a different category from their own. A neutral contribution might pair up with a

positive one, for example. Have students answer the same questions listed above with their new partner.

When they are finished discussing, students should return to their seats and write a personal reflection on the following statements:

- In my online communities, I play the role of consumer when…
- In my online communities, I play the role of contributor when…
- When considering my own online behaviors, peers influence me by…
- I think people make negative contributions to online communities because…
- Some of the barriers that keep people from positively contributing to digital communities are…
- If I could change something about an online community I belong to, it would be…
- In reflecting on my own online behaviors, I could make healthier decisions by…

Ask students to share out their reflections in a whole-class discussion if time permits and they are comfortable doing so. When students are given time to reflect on the roles they play in their digital communities, they are more likely to see how their choices impact their experiences and the experiences of others.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Deliberating the Role of Outsiders in Digital Communities

Adam Dyche (@mrdyche) is a social studies department chair at Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora, Illinois. He hacked his content standards in order to help students explore the roles they play in digital communities while simultaneously considering the impact that outsiders can have.

In addition to their learning the curricular content in his semester-long class, American Government, Adam wanted his high school seniors to have guided practice with the types of learning experiences they would encounter after high school. This meant redesigning his class to include more flexibility in the student schedule, components of online learning, and a purposeful focus on life skills such as digital communication, self-advocacy, decision-making, time management, and adaptability.

The Role of Citizens and Government

The main focus of American Government is learning about and exploring the roles of citizens, the government, and the interactions between the two. Because Adam's class blends face-to-face instruction and digital learning, he wanted to help his students explore their roles as digital citizens as well as traditional ones, and looked for opportunities to extend his curricular goals into the digital realm.

One of the traditional curricular expectations for this course is that students explore and deliberate the complex nature of personal liberty and collective security. In the past, to teach his students about the

various civil liberties promised to them in the Constitution, Adam gave them examples of times when a governmental agency had to step in and remove those civil liberties in the name of collective security. Students explored Supreme Court cases such as New Jersey v. T.L.O., which ruled that schools can search student belongings if they have probable cause, and Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, which ruled that schools have the right to censor the student newspaper. While Adam still covered these issues with his students, he also wanted to hear their thoughts about how these same concepts may or may not be pertinent in digital spaces.

One of the most successful examples from the semester was an in-class deliberation over the guiding question: "Should 'outsiders' be able to regulate free speech in digital communities?" Before beginning the deliberation, Adam and his students had to collectively define both "outsiders" and "digital communities." They came to a consensus that a "digital community" was any group of people regularly interacting in a digital space. "Outsiders" were anyone who was not part of the community. These outsiders could include technology companies, parents, teachers, law enforcement, or any government agency.

Students were asked to locate two or three articles that could help them learn about the topic and also serve as support in their deliberation. As long as the articles were credible, students could bring in anything that helped them explore the guiding question. Using this method of inquiry-based instruction, Adam was able to emphasize that he was not looking for students to find a "correct answer" to the question. He merely wanted students to be able to make an argument, recognize competing viewpoints, and draw a consensus when possible.

Students Explore the Issue

Adam was surprised at the complexity of thought students brought to the conversation, and recorded some compelling sound bites in his

notes. Many of the teens felt that freedom of speech should extend into digital communities, regardless of what others in or outside of the community felt was appropriate. One student proclaimed, “If you aren’t willing to open yourself up for criticism and debate, log off and grab a newspaper.”

Another student agreed, wondering if “social media would lose its allure” if strict censorship was the norm by way of community standards or through digital algorithms. A third student pointed out that “censorship on social media can create more of the same thinking instead of allowing us to have more tough conversations.”

In any good deliberation, though, there is more than one perspective. A student brought up her younger sibling and wondered aloud if there should be some censorship online in order to protect child users. She worried that as her brother started exploring social media, he would be surprised at what he found there. The class agreed, but then started talking about who should be in charge of that type of censorship anyway. Is it the tech companies? The government? Adults?

Most students agreed that it was up to digital community members to set and uphold group standards. “It’s the responsibility of users to flag inappropriate content or bring threats to the attention of company owners or authorities.” Another student in the circle agreed: “Flagging social media content is better than a company trying to enforce a written policy because the community shapes the behavior of others in it.” And in the end, the class seemed to concede that, “it isn’t up to companies to draw a line; it is up to people to choose their social communities wisely.”

Adam was pleased with his students’ first attempt at an in-class deliberation, and overall he saw that students were engaged in the topic because it was relevant and genuine. “I don’t want my messages about online community with students to be limited to ‘treat others the way you want to be treated’,” Adam said. “In the same ways that aspects of government and citizenship are nuanced, so are aspects of life in digital communities. I do not have all of the answers, but I am

happy to provide a space for my students to discuss the subtleties of life in a digital age."

SPOTLIGHT STORY

CLICK

Nancy Watson (@NancyWTech) is a champion of digital citizenship and digital literacy who is challenging students to take on the role of contributor in a very meaningful way. As a technology specialist and instructional coach for Plano Independent School District in Texas, Nancy helps teachers integrate technology into their instruction in ways that enhance learning and benefit students. Her passion project, though, is one that puts students in the role of experts and helps them see the value of using their voices and skills sets while making contributions to digital communities.

In her role, Nancy recognizes that many students across the grade levels do not have the digital literacy skills necessary to be impactful digital citizens. Nancy says that as adults, "we often ascribe much more knowledge and understanding to our 'digital native' students than what is true. While some students do possess technology understanding, we can't assume that ALL students do."

Unfortunately, some teachers lack these technology skills as well, leaving a gap between what is expected of students through the curriculum and the supports students have at their disposal to help them meet those expectations. During Nancy's varied interactions with teachers and students, a thought lingered in the back of her mind: What if there were a safe, kid-friendly space for students to learn digital literacy skills from one another?

CLICK, which stands for Collaborate, Learn, Instruct, Create, Know, was Nancy's solution to that nagging question. She maintains the website, but all of its content is created by kids, for kids. CLICK is aligned to and organized around the ISTE Standards for Students (2016) and is essentially a library of short videos on various technology topics. In them, students demonstrate how to use

applications such as Google Drive, SketchUp, and Photoshop and tackle topics such as texting etiquette, digital privacy, and even appropriate ways to carry a Chromebook.

Reaction to the student-developed CLICK content has been positive. Teachers see it as a place to direct students who have technology questions, and are also finding value in the site for their own learning. One student review, in particular, made Nancy smile: "This is cool! Sometimes we can learn stuff better from another kid."

Nancy invests extra time in CLICK because she believes in its ability to foster digital literacy as well as a sense of digital community. "My hope is that CLICK will empower those students who do have an understanding of technology to use their voices to contribute to a project that will help many others—students, teachers, parents, grandparents. The student creators learn too—not only presentation skills, but also a reassurance that they know stuff, and what they say matters."

You Can Do It!

The exciting news is that you do not need a complete curricular overhaul or extra time for stand-alone digital citizenship lessons. You can help your students become amazing digital community members by making small changes to the individual units, lessons, or projects that already exist in your curriculum. As members of a classroom community, you can explore life in digital communities in ways that are purposeful and authentic rather than forced or added-on. For instance:

- Identify opportunities in which your current content standards can be "hacked" to include aspects of digital citizenship.
- Ask students if *they* can make connections between class lessons and their experiences in digital communities.

- Share stories like Maya's, and ask students how they may have responded in her situation.
- Encourage your students to contribute to, not just consume from, their digital communities.
- Celebrate students' digital creations as you would their physical ones: In addition to hanging students' artwork on a bulletin board, showcase a digital contribution, such as a student's original SoundCloud track, on your classroom website.

4

Participating through Respectful Discourse

In October of 2016, I attended the Digital Citizenship Summit at Twitter Headquarters in San Francisco, California. While there, I listened to a college freshman named Timmy Sullivan give a keynote address about his experiences with social media. During his senior year in high school, Timmy gave a fantastic TEDx Talk called "It's MY Education!," in which he advocated for more personalized learning opportunities and student voice in the design of classroom curricula. That same year, Timmy was also freelancing as a blogger, student voice advocate, and guest speaker at educational technology conferences.

During his keynote address at Twitter, Timmy praised the work of his teacher and mentor, Jennifer Scheffer. When Timmy was in her class, Jennifer asked all of the students to Google themselves. Then, in front of the class, Jennifer did the same with her own name. As a connected educator and blogger, Jennifer was able to show her high school students the positive ways that she was connecting with others and contributing ideas to her field through her social media presence, all of which came up in the Google search. Timmy was inspired and knew that he could utilize some of the same tools his teacher had to increase the spread of his own voice and ideas.

While I was impressed with Timmy's extensive resume and work in the fields of education and educational technology, it was his stance on the social media discourse in education that stuck with me the most. He made a bold, yet logical, assertion that if adults continue to frame social media negatively, students will continue that downward spiral in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. His message to the audience? Stop. Stop talking about all of the

mistakes people make with technology, and start encouraging students to emulate the positives that they see.

Timmy challenged all of us to "collectively divorce from the rhetoric of social media's explicitly harmful nature, [and] embrace the challenge to promote positive social media use in schools. Students can learn to leverage Twitter to build a global community of learners, use YouTube to share their content, connect with professionals via LinkedIn, and assert their voice through blogging. Through education, demonstration, and proactive conversation we can abolish cyber bullying—but we must first abolish our negative mentality" (Sullivan, 2016).

In many ways, Timmy's message is spot on. Students cannot be what they cannot see. If digital citizenship curriculum focuses solely on all of the things we do not want students to do in digital spaces, are we leaving them with any suggestions for how to effectively use these powerful tools?

Current Approaches to Digital Citizenship

We have all heard the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated. This rule is the center cog that keeps most digital citizenship curricula chugging along. In a 2011 survey by the American Association for School Librarians, the topics listed as most prevalent in digital citizenship curricula were cheating and dishonesty, cyberbullying, harassment, and stalking. In the younger grades especially, students are taught that cyberbullying is bad and that trolls will say mean things just to cause a stir. Students are given a few tactics for dealing with a bully, such as blocking the user or telling an adult.

What these curricula do *not* do well, however, is help students differentiate between true cyberbullying, generic hate speech, drama between peer groups, and simple disagreement of opinion. Many digital citizenship curricula also lack positive examples of what healthy online discussion and deliberation look like (Mattson, 2016).

Unless teens construct a perfect digital echo chamber for themselves, they are going to come across ideas, opinions, and content they do not immediately agree with. Unfortunately, as Timmy pointed out in his keynote, parents and

educators spend a lot of time telling kids how *not* to react to opposition—warning teens that if they post inappropriate language, harass other users, say something offensive, or post material deemed threatening they could face punishment from a myriad of authority figures. While this advice is not incorrect, it's very one-sided. When all of our tips come in the form of behaviors to avoid, students are left struggling to navigate that interaction on their own, without a model or guide for *how to* respond instead.

Stop talking about all of the mistakes people make with technology, and start encouraging students to emulate the positives that they see.

If we want our students to be participatory digital citizens, moving beyond a space of isolated consumption or contribution, they need something more than a list of "do nots," so that they can interact respectfully, intelligently, and fairly—especially when they meet people whose lives may be very different from their own.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

While sound argument and civic deliberation are cornerstones of both the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, educators are not required to help students translate these skills into digital communities. An inability to transfer these skills can be problematic, especially when people enter into online conversation without a clear purpose, agreed-upon process, or practiced conversation structure. Because digital conversations can happen across physical and cultural boundaries, oftentimes the participants' norms of offline conversation are not even the same. Unfortunately, these missteps can result in misunderstandings, hurt feelings, insults, and unproductive bickering.

Hacking the Standards

As I suggested in Chapter 3, teachers can hack their standards and learning targets, not to change what is being taught, but to expand the depth of student learning into online communities, making the relationships between offline citizenship and digital citizenship more explicit.

Here are a few examples of social studies and English standards that have been modified to reflect the skills we need to interact with others as both traditional and digital citizens. Whatever set of curricular standards you use will work just fine for a hack as long as you can think about them through a digital citizenship lens.

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

These standards are taken from the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), but you can find similar standards in many state and local curricula as well.

- D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
- D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

HACKED SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS:

- D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings, *including digital communities*.
- D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in *using digital tools and communications* for addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

These standards are taken from the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010), but you can find similar standards in many state and local curricula as well.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy SL.9-10.1.A. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy SL.9-10.1.C. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

HACKED ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy SL.9-10.1.A. Come to *digital* discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas *in online communities*.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy SL.9-10.1.C. Propel conversations *in digital spaces* by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

ISTE Standards for Students

We can also look to the following ISTE Standards for Students (2016) to further justify the need for explicit teaching of discussion and deliberation in digital communities as part of a comprehensive education for all digital citizens.

- Digital Citizen (2b): Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.
- Creative Communicator (6c): Students communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively by creating or using a variety of digital objects such as visualizations, models or simulations.
- Global Collaborator (7a): Students use digital tools to connect with learners from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, engaging with them in ways that broaden mutual understanding and learning.

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

Effective Versus Ineffective Online Discussions

In many social studies and English classrooms, discussion takes place in face-to-face settings in the form of Socratic seminars. In this type of seminar, students have had time to read a text and prepare notes from it, and the

teacher lays out clear guidelines for the discussion, often providing a written protocol for students to refer back to. If the Socratic seminar travels into unproductive territory, the teacher is there to redirect the discussion and correct any major missteps.

When students move into online deliberations, however, we often simply hope that they can carry over what they've learned in class to the digital spaces they visit. Instead, let's give them some guidance and practice with digital discussion as well. Begin by having students examine both effective and ineffective online conversations using an activity similar to the one I've outlined on the pages that follow.

Note: You may wish to compile all group answers into a T-chart of effective and ineffective online discussion strategies. Table 4.1 can serve as a reminder or reference for students as you engage them in further practice.

People converse, share their opinions, and even get into disagreements in online communities all the time, but the effectiveness of those discussion can vary greatly. For this activity, give small groups of students one effective discussion and one ineffective discussion from the samples that follow. Ask students to come up with a list of ways that the discussions are either effective or ineffective.

TABLE 4.1 Effective Versus Ineffective Online Discussions

Effective Online Discussion	Ineffective Online Discussion
Users take the time to read and understand the original post before commenting.	People add to the discussion before reading the original post or any of the other comments.
Ideas are exchanged between two or more users.	One person may dominate the conversation, unwilling to hear new ideas.
People tag one another or mention the name(s) of other community member(s) their thoughts are directed toward.	A user adds his or her thoughts without referencing a particular person, line of thinking, or portion of the original text.
People use an agreed-upon style of language and carefully craft their message so that it's easily understood and interpreted by others.	People make typos, write incomplete thoughts, or use uncommon slang, making it hard for others to understand their message.
Commenters refer back to specifics from the original post and other people's comments.	Commenters stray from the original topic.
People present evidence and personal experiences to support their opinions while also respecting the experiences of others.	Users resort to insults or name-calling, attacking other users who do not agree with their opinion.

The digital community has agreed-upon norms for interaction, and users uphold them in their discussion.	The digital community is unmoderated and users interact without agreed-upon standards.
People consume as much as they contribute, reading with the intention of understanding and learning more.	People argue without any intention of learning something new. Their only goal is to combat other people's opinions.

Effective Discussions

Let's start with some examples of effective discussions.

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION A

An article called “Dress Code Debate: Is the Fingertips Rule Outdated?” is shared on social media. The article is about a high school girl in Tennessee who started a petition. She convinced her school board to change the dress code from shorts that touch the bottoms of your fingertips to shorts that only need to go to the mid-thigh.

The following exchange was found in the comments section:

Shannon: When you live in a hot climate, common sense dictates that you will probably wear less clothing. Why is it that trying to stay cool in a school building that is not air conditioned becomes a shameful, sexual act? Girls should be able to dress for the weather and not have to cover up so the males are not “distracted.” Dress codes in school are an outdated concept in general if you ask me.

Riley: While I agree with your point about not making dress codes just to keep boys from “getting distracted at school,” I work in a junior high and see plenty of seventh-grade girls with their butt cheeks hanging out. There has to be some middle ground.

Shannon: Point taken. Butt cheeks hanging out is never a good choice—no matter how old you are!

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION B

An article called “Social Media Posts Lead to a Suspension for a Texas Firefighter” is shared on social media. The article reports that a firefighter received a thirty-day suspension from his job for breaking the organization’s social media policy, which states that obscene language cannot be used to ridicule, belittle, or harass any other person.

The following exchange happened in the comments section:

Robert: Volunteer and career firefighters swear an oath to uphold and support the Constitution. Maybe it’s about time for the firefighters, such as myself, to give the fire service higher-ups an ultimatum. They need to accept the fact that firefighters are entitled to free speech, as the Constitution says, or we need to go. This is getting out of hand. This suspension is an attack on free speech.

Alejandro: Ok, does anyone commenting here really understand what freedom of speech means? It means that you can protest against the government without fear of imprisonment. It does not mean that a person whose sworn job is public safety can make a demeaning remark against minorities whom he is expected to help without prejudice. It brings into question whether he would do what’s expected of him when dealing with minorities and in turn it brings discredit to the organization.

Lisa: @Robert: The suspension is fair enough. His employment contract says that he cannot use social media to degrade other people or groups, and he did. Therefore, he broke a clause in his contract and deserves a punishment; that’s just how it works.

Robert: @Lisa, @Alejandro: I guess I could just throw my hands up and say that my superiors shouldn’t have a right to free speech while they are on or off duty either, but I wouldn’t do that because I believe in the rights of others. I did swear an oath to uphold and support the Constitution, which means a guy should have the freedom to say what he wants to say on Facebook. Sorry that I’m not sorry.

Heather: @Robert: I swore that same oath…but the freedom of speech never guaranteed that we are free from all consequences. That would mean chaos and anarchy, yes? You do not have to be sorry for your

opinion, but you do need to realize that words matter and actions have consequences.

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION C

A local online newspaper publishes a post about a dog park being built in the center of the community. The post details that the park will be surrounded by a tall fence and have lots of open grass, a few trees, drinking stations, and benches for dog owners. The park is being built on a piece of community-owned land that has been sitting empty for several years.

The following exchange happens in the comments section:

Bill: A dog park? Are you kidding me? How is that supposed to help our community? What we need is business. Business brings in tax dollars and helps all of us out. A lot of people I know don't even have a dog.

Lacey: @Bill We have a lot of businesses in our town already. In fact, we have some empty buildings that businesses could move into tomorrow if they wanted. We do not have a lot of places for people to just come together socially. I think this addition will be an awesome way to get neighbors out interacting and people exercising in a fun way with their pets.

Monica: @Lacey I second your opinion. I like having a place to go and be with friends or neighbors that doesn't cost me any money. Anytime I want to sit in public and chat with friends, I feel like I have to buy a coffee or a lunch to justify our presence there. I can definitely see meeting up with some people at this dog park.

Bill: @Lacey @Monica We have a great park district already. Here is a LINK to a list of all the parks that our community maintains. You and your friends can take your dogs to any of these spaces to walk on the trails, or to sit at a picnic table and chat. Our main downtown area should remain a business center.

Monica: @Bill Wow. Thanks for that LINK. I've only been in this neighborhood for about six months and didn't realize I had so many options. While I still think a designated dog park would be a good addition, I appreciate you sharing more choices with me.

Effective Discussion Review

Students may have lots of ideas about what made the discussions effective. Here are a few points students should consider:

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION A

In this discussion, Riley was able to respectfully affirm Shannon's opinion about school dress codes before challenging her to consider an alternative one. Shannon is able to see that her views may have been limited, and thanks Riley for her respectful counterargument. Riley and Shannon both walked away from the exchange better understanding a viewpoint other than their own.

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION B

This discussion is a good example of a conversation among several users in which there's an exchange of ideas, not just a stream of contributions. The commenters tag one another in their replies to indicate who they're addressing. While this conversation doesn't end with any of the users changing his or her opinion, everyone involved exchanges ideas in a respectful manner—no one resorts to name-calling, personal attacks, or belittling.

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION C

This discussion is an example of community members using a digital tool to engage with one another as an extension of their local community. While the people in the conversation have different opinions, they are able to back up their reasoning with authentic experiences and examples. Bill also sees an opportunity to share a hyperlink with a member of his community, thus helping her see his point of view more clearly and gain new information that will benefit her.

Ineffective Discussions

The following exchanges should be given to students as examples of ineffective discussions. The digital citizens in these examples have chosen to move from a space of independent consumption or contribution into a place of dialogue, but the results are not very valuable. Ask students to list the characteristics of ineffective discussion that they see in these three samples.

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION A

An article about a police officer who gave himself a speeding ticket is posted on social media. A private citizen filmed the officer traveling at speeds near 80 miles per hour. When the citizen sent the video into the station, the officer admitted his guilt, issued a public apology, and stated that he was writing himself a $300 speeding ticket. The article also says that people in the community are thanking the officer for doing the right thing by leaving comments on the police station's social media page.

The following discussion happened in the comments section:

Kyle: What an idiot. Did he stop himself on the roadway or did he wait until he got back into his comfortable office to write it up?

Spencer: @Kyle You are the idiot. Did you even read the article?

Maya: He probably feels guilty for all the free donuts and coffee he gets around town.

Amjest: This is not doing the right thing. The right thing would be not speeding in the first place.

Steve: He looks kind of fat in this picture. Aren't there health requirements to be a cop?

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION B

A local newspaper shared a story on its Facebook page. The article was about an armed robbery at a video game store in the center of town. According to employees, two men in ski masks entered the store around 8:45 p.m. and demanded money from the register. They fled in a car that witnesses could not give a description of. People with information or leads were encouraged to call the county crime stopper hotline.

The following discussion happens in the comments section:

Tyler: That store is terrible anyway. They only gave me $15 for the ten used games I brought in.

Sam: @Tyler What kind of games? I know a guy who is always looking to buy and he is willing to give a lot more cash than that.

Tyler: @Sam Mostly old stuff, but still….

Melissa: This is craziness. I moved into this town because I thought it was safe. I cannot believe I have to worry about armed robberies so close to home.

Harold: Oh boy. Can't wait for all of the crazies on this thread to start yelling about the need for more gun control! It's called the 2nd amendment. Let people have their guns!

Suzanne: These boys need some religion in their lives. All are welcome to come to my church on 3rd Street. We have a 9 a.m. and an 11 a.m. service.

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION C

Someone posts an opinion piece entitled “Many Ways Technology Is Interrupting Our Lives.” The piece talks about ways that technology can make it hard to focus on tasks, can be a distraction when we are with friends and loved ones, and can make it harder for people to break away from work once they leave the office.

The following is posted in the comments section:

Pablo: Isn’t it ironic that we are all reading this on our phones?

Sarah: Isn’t it ironic a guy named Pablo can actually read?

Don: It would be nice if this article would also talk about nine ways technology is helping us. I feel like too often technology articles focus on the bad, when there are so many awesome ways technology helps us too. It’s all about balance, really.

Sarah: It would be really great if technology could make you less ugly, Don.

Todd: Wow, Sarah. Your a real peach. Maybe you should take a little technology break.

Sarah: *you’re

Sarah: The only bad thing about technology is that I have to deal with morons like you making idiotic comments all day. It’s tough to combat stupidity, but someone has to try….

Ineffective Discussion Review

Students may have lots of ideas about what made these discussions ineffective. Here are a few key points for you to reinforce:

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION A

This is not even a discussion. Various people are contributing, but no one is listening. The only back and forth exchange between people is to name call. Nothing productive results from these posts—they are simply opinions and white noise that do nothing to further the knowledge or experience of other users.

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION B

This thread is an example of how people can get away from a topic and try to forward their own agendas. After time, the comments are not even related to the original article. No one is conversing—everyone is posting their own random thoughts.

INEFFECTIVE DISCUSSION C

This thread is an example of one person making negative contributions just for the sake of it. Sarah seems to want to pick a fight with anyone who comments on the article. It's unlikely that a meaningful dialogue will happen on this thread because Sarah is busy derailing anyone's attempt to start a conversation.

There are both productive and unproductive ways to engage in online discussion, as these examples show. Hopefully your class is able to come up with a pretty exhaustive list after this activity, but if students are struggling to articulate their ideas, or you would like to have a comprehensive list to refer back to, you can use Table 4.1.

Once students understand that effective online discussion is a respectful, purposeful exchange of ideas, they will need more examples, your modeling and guidance, as well as reference tools to help them engage in this way.

Sample Sentence Frames

One tool that your students can use, both in class and online, is a set of sample sentence structures that can help them organize their ideas for thoughtful, respectful, and productive discussion. The following sentence frames are based on ideas from the book *They Say, I Say: The Moves That*

Matter in Academic Writing (Graff, Birkenstein, & Durst, 2006) but have been modified to better reflect the types of discussion students may have in digital communities (Figure 4.1).

To **Introduce an Idea** Rooted in Evidence or Experience

Reading about _____ led me to think about _____.

According to _____, we should consider _____.

Because of my experience with _____, I believe _____.

This article defines _____ as _____.

Some important historical/contextual facts to consider are _____.

To **Acknowledge and Further** Someone Else's Viewpoint

The ideas presented by _____ are also seen in _____.

Thank you, _____, for presenting your viewpoint. I agree because _____.

The facts presented by _____ are also supported through _____.

To **Present** an Opposing Idea

_____ said _____, but the evidence I found says _____.

While _____ said _____, I think it is important to remember _____ because____.

I appreciate the experiences shared by _____, but in my experience _____.

To **Ask Questions** and Involve Others

I realize my views on _____ are limited. Does anyone here have experience with ____?

I am curious how others in the group view the notion of _____.

This article says _____. What are the group's thoughts about the quote?

_____, I am not sure what you meant by _____. Can you elaborate?

To **Demonstrate Understanding**

I have never thought about _____ in this way until _____.

I used to think _____ but now I understand

I used to think _____, but now I understand _____.

The ideas mentioned in _____ helped me to see _____.

I appreciate the perspectives of _____ because _____.

Figure 4.1 Sentence frames can help students develop thoughtful, respectful responses in online conversations.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Respectful Dialogue Starts with Empathy

Andrea Trudeau (@Andrea_Trudeau) is a library media specialist at Alan B. Shepard Middle School in Deerfield, Illinois. Like many school librarians, Andrea is responsible for delivering her district's agreed-upon scope and sequence of digital citizenship lessons, mostly through partnerships with other teachers in her building. Her formal lessons cover most of the topics we've come to expect from digital citizenship curricula: password management, the permanence of online posts, copyright, fair use, and cyberbullying. But Andrea also includes the definition of a digital citizen as someone who is "respectful, empathetic, and willing to contribute to the world around them."

It's easy to tell students they must respect the people they meet online and in person, but what can we do to help students feel empathy for people they've never met or for someone who may be living in a situation very different from their own? Andrea and the teachers she partners with are making a concerted effort to do just that.

Enriching Lessons through AR/VR

Through the use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), Andrea has transported her students to places around the world—from a dirt-floored schoolhouse in South Africa to the underground remains of the Paris Catacombs. Using one of her favorite virtual reality apps, Andrea has taken her students to the shores of a Greek island where they watch Syrian refugees arrive by boat. The students hear the sounds of the waves, look up and down the coastline, and

literally stand in the middle of refugee camps littered with tents and discarded life vests. “Virtual reality is such a fantastic way to help a student ‘walk in someone else’s shoes,’” says Andrea. “It is even more powerful than reading an article, viewing a photo, or watching a 2-D video. There’s something about seeing a 360-degree view that brings the experience to life for a student” (Figure 4.2).

In Andrea’s school, teachers from all curricular areas have been able to connect the virtual field trips with their content. Social studies teachers, in particular, are using the virtual reality experiences to enrich lessons on human rights as well as to bring current events to life in the classroom. After the virtual experiences, students’ organic class discussions—often driven by the students themselves—reveal that their previously held viewpoints are being challenged, their perceptions of the world are being stretched, and their compassion and appreciation for varied human experiences are growing.

Empathy to Drive Change

Andrea’s empathy work recently translated into a genuine opportunity for her students to make change in their corner of the world. A temple in Andrea’s community supports a Syrian refugee family from Aleppo. Of course, the family struggles with resources, but it is also trying to quickly acclimate to American culture. When the family’s two young children, ages 6 and 8, found they had a lot to learn about going to school in the United States, two social studies teachers, backed by Andrea’s support, connected with the temple and asked if their students could help. Now, the eighth graders at Shepard Middle School are making short videos that welcome the family to the community, introduce aspects of American culture, and help them adapt to their new life here. The videos are housed in a Facebook group that can be easily accessed at any time. As Andrea points out, it can be easy for many of us to simply make a cash donation to someone in need, but the videos her eighth graders are making are done from the heart.

Figure 4.2 Shepard Middle School students Grace Friedman and Brady Fisher learn what life is like for other people through a virtual reality experience in their school library.

There are times when Andrea must deliver a stand-alone digital citizenship lesson or two, but she finds that when her messages are integrated seamlessly into everyday learning experiences, the students are more receptive to what she has to say about life in a digital space. Through the learning opportunities Andrea has given to students, both by introducing them to various cultures, viewpoints, and experiences and by modeling ways to contribute back through digital means, students are more apt to see how technology can teach us, connect us, and help us understand one another as citizens of a global society.

Encouraging Observation and Reflection

When students practice both in-person and online discussions in your classroom community, they are in a safe space that has some agreed-upon expectations, structures, and guidance from you. As they move into unmoderated digital communities, though, students have to consider whether or not to engage in discussion with various digital citizens, many of whom they have not met face to face. While we can all learn a lot from people whose life experiences are different from our own, we also run the risk of

meeting digital citizens who are not in our communities for the same purposes we are.

As students consider their roles in digital communities and whether to move into a space of digital discussion and interaction with other community members, their powers of observation and self-reflection will be important. Encourage students to consider some of the following questions before making the leap from isolated consumers or contributors into a space of dialogue and deliberation:

- Am I willing to engage in an open-minded discussion with these community members, even if their opinions are different from my own?
- By engaging in this discussion, do I have the possibility of learning something new?
- By joining this discussion, do I have a different perspective to respectfully offer?
- Do these community members seem willing to learn and grow with me or do they have a history of negative contributions?
- Is the topic of conversation one I have personal experience with?

The more "yes" answers students can give to these questions, the more likely they are to have a positive interaction in their digital communities. You can model this questioning process for students by pulling up any article on social media or even looking through the comments section on a YouTube video. As you read through the comments, ask yourself some of the questions and answer them aloud, in front of the class. The students will witness your deliberation and see your thought process for deciding whether to stop at consumption or to join the discussion.

As students consider their roles in digital communities and whether to move into a space of digital discussion and interaction with other community members, their powers of observation and self-reflection will be important.

Let students know that even when we make thoughtful choices about when to engage in dialogue, we may still be confronted with ineffective, or even derogatory, online contributions from other digital citizens. Of course, when this happens, students can inform a trusted adult, but we can also teach them to do the following:

- Consider the digital community itself: Is the community worth staying in? Do the norms of acceptable behavior and dialogue in that space match your own? If you find yourself constantly upset by others in the community, it may be time to leave it altogether.
- Remind others of community standards: When a community member makes comments that do not fit in with the standards of the space, approach that member about it. This does not need to be done in a mean, confrontational way. Contact the user through a private message, if possible. Remind the member that there are agreed-upon rules to follow if he or she wants to remain in the community. Express that you appreciate the user's presence in the community and that you would hate to see him or her removed from the space.
- Report it, when necessary: If someone is breaking the agreed-upon rules of a community and has not responded well to your polite reminder, it's probably time to report that user to either the community moderator or the technology company itself. You can also block or remove this person from your own circles so that you do not need to interact with him or her again.

Additional classroom ideas to help students recognize, practice, and promote respectful discussion in online communities include the following:

- Have students find examples of effective and ineffective online discussions in their own digital communities. Students can bring in the examples along with a description of what makes the discussions effective or ineffective.
- Have students read an argument from the *New York Times* Room for Debate website (www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate). Ask them to judge the effectiveness of the conversations that follow in the comments section.

- Use the Writing Prompts section on the *New York Times* Learning Network website (www.nytimes.com/section/learning) to connect students, ages 13 and up, with middle and high school students around the country. The Learning Network website provides new writing prompts each week and encourages students to engage in conversation in their moderated comments section.
- Use your own digital classroom community as a space to practice respectful dialogue by posting articles, images, or video prompts that will incite discussion about your content.

Remember, students learn best from modeling, guided practice, and a gradual release of responsibility. The more opportunities your students have to converse with people both known and unknown to them in digital spaces, the more likely they are to develop the skills of responsible, respectful digital citizens.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

THINK BIG

Elaine McDonald, a third-year teacher at White River High School in Buckley, Washington, has one overarching expectation in her World History and AP Government classes: THINK BIG. This mantra applies to all sorts of learning opportunities, but when Elaine engages her students in conversation about digital citizenship, the motto is easy to reinforce.

Elaine teaches her students that in both physical and digital communities, it is easy for humans to get caught up in silos of thinking. People are naturally drawn into friendships with those who have similar life experiences. Online, we make conscious decisions about what to read and who to follow, and are unconsciously trapped into echo chambers through the digital algorithms that feed us more of the content we interact with most.

Learning to Engage with Others

Elaine helps her students see how easy it is to get caught up in a space of "us versus them," especially when we join conversations online and are suddenly confronted by ideas very different from our own. Instead of sheltering her students from conflict or simply reminding them to be nice online, Elaine challenges teens to THINK BIG; that is, to engage in conversations that might be outside of their comfort zones and to explore complex topics and problems that do not have easy answers.

So how does Elaine accomplish this monumental task? Not with a single mini-lesson. Not with one major assignment or assessment. In Elaine's classroom, relevant deliberation through research and the

challenging of one another's ideas is part of the classroom culture she fosters from day one.

All year, students practice generating authentic research questions, evaluating the credibility and relevance of the information they find to answer those questions, and presenting claims to one another that are backed by solid evidence. It isn't uncommon to hear students ask each other, "Where did you find that source?" or "Are you sure those statistics are reliable?" as they present their ideas to one another. In whole-class Socratic seminars, students wrestle with questions such as, "Can a biased article or piece of evidence still be credible?" Elaine finds herself having these types of challenging conversations with her students while supporting them through daily opportunities for interaction and deliberation.

Applying Authentic Learning in the Community

After a full year of practicing these skills in the classroom, Elaine gives her students an authentic assignment requiring them to THINK BIG and use the skills they have acquired to make a contribution in both the local community and in a digital one.

Students in Elaine's class, as well as students in two other teachers' classrooms, are instructed to go out into the community and gather questions people have about history. They then bring the questions back to their class, research answers, and write articles to present answers back out to the community through publication on Google Sites.

Before the articles go live, however, students are expected to digitally critique the articles written by students in another class. The three teachers model how to make value-added comments, as well as how to respectfully leave feedback that is specific and meaningful, something the students innately struggle with. Elaine helps students make connections between the digital community and the physical one by inviting them to reflect on the ways their comments and suggestions would be helpful or meaningless in face-to-face

collaboration. At the conclusion of the project, each group's final articles are published and shared with the community members who originally asked the question.

Elaine feels that in the end, it is the job of educators to challenge all students to THINK BIG—to realize they are part of an interconnected, global community full of people with varied viewpoints, experiences, and perspectives. Students must be given opportunities to recognize their biases, thoughtfully consider what they see, and contribute to larger societal conversations in ways that add value to their physical and digital communities.

You Can Do It!

While students need to understand some of the realistic consequences that can result from making poor choices online, they also need to see models of respectful online deliberation—just like they need to see models of any new skill you teach. Make it a point to extend the digital citizenship conversation with your students past a list of "do nots" and provide them with the following tools:

- Samples of effective and ineffective online discussion
- Sentence frames to help them craft their own respectful responses
- Opportunities to practice debating and deliberating various viewpoints, both in the classroom and online

5

Networking to Make Meaningful Connections

In October of 2016, I had the pleasure of meeting a very bubbly, sweet, intelligent, 9-year-old girl named Olivia Van Ledtje (@thelivbits). Olivia, better known as LivBit to her 25,000 Twitter followers, is a champion of reading and uses her Vimeo channel, mom-moderated Twitter and Instagram accounts, and a smartphone to film "The LivBits"—a series of one- to three-minute videos in which she shares her reading and thinking about the world around her.

Olivia and her mom started the project after Olivia's looping experience at school left her in the classroom with the same group of cliquish girls two years in a row. These girls did not share her passions for science, sharks, books, and ballet, and were purposefully leaving Olivia out and picking on her. Even though Olivia was feeling bad, her mom, Cyndi, knew that she was an amazing girl with an important voice that should be heard. So she and Olivia started making videos about Olivia's reading and thinking, and together they used social media to connect Olivia with others who shared her passions (Van Ledtje, 2017).

Just twelve short months after her first video, The LivBits has grown tremendously! Olivia has created over seventy videos and interviewed some of her favorite authors, such as Mo Willems. Her work has been featured all over the world, including at educational conferences in Taiwan, Singapore, and England, and she has presented with accomplished authors at national conferences and conventions, including those for NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), ISTE, and ILA (International Literacy Association). Olivia

also visits elementary schools to share her bullying story, her love of reading, and to model positive uses of technology for her peers. Her work inspires both kids and their teachers to share their voices and to make connections that matter.

Traditional Approaches to Digital Citizenship

Traditional approaches to digital citizenship focus on connections forged for entertainment, socialization, or even ill intent, such as harassment or hacking. Lessons about cyberbullying, sexting, and internet addiction reinforce the notion that the internet is mainly a place for inherently negative or shallow, unimportant interactions. When school district policies and web filters restrict students from popular platforms for connecting, such as Facebook and Twitter, it's often because these spaces are considered distractions from, rather than tools for, learning.

Digital citizenship messages that discourage participation by inducing fear—focusing on the negative uses of social media and the consequences of breaking rules or making mistakes—miss the mark in helping students understand how they can make connections that matter.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

If digital citizenship curriculum is designed from a place of assumed participation, we can show our students the value of connecting for reasons other than entertainment and socialization, and help them see the possibilities for unhindered learning, collaborative problem solving, and even opportunities to change the world with the devices in their pockets.

The first step in making this idea a reality is to change the ways we talk about social media in schools. When educators get tired of lessons that focus negatively on social media, they often flip the message and begin talking to students about the value of social media for personal branding and getting noticed. For example, instead of telling students not to post derogatory remarks that a scholarship committee might see, they teach students to post examples of their best self. That way, when students are Googled by a college admissions officer or future employer, all of the amazing things they've done will shine.

While discussions about personal branding are certainly an improvement over messages that focus on what not to post, branding is also not a participatory concept. Branding is a very personal activity that can happen in isolation and does not necessarily result in learning, growth, or valuable connections for the individual using social media to gain attention. In order to move students from independent branders of their own worth to digital citizens seeking valuable connections, we must also teach them how to network.

A network is generally defined as a group or system of interconnected people or things. As educators, we can help students build a network of people they can learn from, offer ideas to, and work with on common interests, much as Oliva from the opening vignette has done.

Table 5.1 helps further differentiate the concepts of branding and networking mindsets.

TABLE 5.1 Branding Mindset Versus Networking Mindset

Branding Mindset	Networking Mindset
How can I get noticed? **How can I be visible on every social media platform?** **How can I create an impressive "look" and "feel" to increase my followers?** **What will people offer me because of my brand?**	**How can I become connected with a community?** **Which social media platforms are used by people in the field?** **How can I create ongoing relationships through technology?** **What can I offer to the community?**

There are five simple steps you can give students to help them find and connect with personal learning networks:

1. **Reflect.** Spend time considering what types of networks you want to join. Do you wish to perfect a new skill? Learn more about a career field you've considered? Do you want to connect with others who have similar talents? What about finding other people who want to tackle the same problems you do?

2. **Research.** Once you have a purpose for finding a network, it's time to do a little research. Where are people with interests like yours connecting? Many educators, for example, use Twitter as a place to collaborate and share. Crafters flock to Pinterest and Etsy. Artists share their work on DeviantArt. Business professionals follow one another on LinkedIn. Although you have preferred social networks for connecting with friends, you may need to seek out additional platforms that will connect you with a broader network of individuals that you can learn from.

3. **Connect.** Once you have figured out where to connect with others, it's time to get started! Create an account on the appropriate platform(s), if you have not done so already. Search for and follow some of the major people, companies, and accounts in your area of interest.

4. **Observe.** Pay careful attention to the norms of behavior and interaction in the community. How formal is the language? How do people show approval and disapproval of ideas? Who is allowed to start conversations? Is there a community moderator? Spend a sufficient amount of time watching how others in the network interact so that when you are ready to, you will be able to engage thoughtfully and respectfully within the norms of the community.

5. **Contribute.** Networking means learning from others, but also giving some of your experiences and expertise to others in the community as well. Encourage other people's ideas, watch for opportunities to help someone grow, and offer up new ideas where appropriate.

Before long, student will find themselves connected with a network of individuals, building mutually beneficial relationships and using technology to learn and grow in ways they could have never imagined!

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

Connecting with the Broader Community

One of the most rewarding ways to use the internet is to connect your students with people outside of your physical community. Whether you are teaching a foreign language course, a social studies class, or a piece of literature from a different part of the world, there is value in helping students connect on a personal level with people from the regions of the world they are studying, and there are plenty of platforms and tools to use. Here are a few to help you get started.

Mystery Skype

A Mystery Skype is best described as a game of twenty questions between two classrooms in different parts of the world. The classrooms might be 30 or 3,000 miles apart, but they are linked together via Skype. Students in the classrooms take turns asking one another yes or no questions, attempting to guess the location of their opponent before their own location is guessed.

As students engage in the game, they use their communication skills as well as their abilities in geography and deductive reasoning. Once the game is over, teachers typically give students time to ask one another more personal questions about their schools, lifestyles, and cultures. To get started with Mystery Skype, just head on over to the Skype in the Classroom website (https://education.microsoft.com/skype-in-the-classroom/overview) to learn more. You can also connect with fellow educators who are interested in Skype experiences through the Mystery Skype Facebook group and on Twitter by searching for #MysterySkype.

PenPal Schools

If you and your students are interested in making more in-depth, longer lasting connections, PenPal Schools could be a perfect platform for you! Teachers create a free account at the PenPal Schools website (penpalschools.com) and search for projects to join. Projects are designed to help students grow in world knowledge and build skills for empathizing and perspective-taking while also practicing skills in digital and traditional literacy.

PenPal Schools does all of the difficult work of pairing your students with from one to four pen pals from around the globe. Pen pals log in to the platform asynchronously and learn from various media, including texts, images, and video. Pen pals are also given discussion question on the content to help them start a dialogue about what they've just learned. These projects range from short, one-week opportunities for students to connect, share, and reflect on cultural similarities and differences, to in-depth, six-week-long collaborations that help students dig deeply into topics such as discrimination, immigration, and social justice.

Global Read Aloud

One way to help students learn about varied cultures and parts of the world is to help them explore what makes people unique. Another approach to global collaboration is connecting over shared experiences. The Global Read Aloud began with one teacher making a few connections with others via social media and deciding to share a reading experience among their classrooms. Today, the Global Read Aloud is an opportunity to connect your students with students in other parts of the country around a shared book.

Since its inception seven years ago, the project has continued to grow, and to date, nearly two million students have taken part (Ripp, n.d.). Every year, multiple books are selected for the Global Read Aloud so that students of all ages can participate. During the six-week window for the project, students and their teachers read one or more of the selected books for that year. At the same time, teachers make as many or as few connections as they desire with other participating classrooms. Students are able to share their experiences with the text and hear the perspectives of other readers.

You can learn more and sign up to get started by visiting the Global Read Aloud website (theglobalreadaloud.com). There is also a Global Read Aloud Facebook page and you can connect with the founder of the project, Pernille Ripp on Twitter (@pernilleripp).

Connect with Experts

Skype in the Classroom (https://education.microsoft.com/skype-in-the-classroom/overview) has a whole library of guest experts from around the globe who are available to connect with schools, share their stories, and

answer questions from students. Guest speakers include authors and poets, business leaders, scientists, pilots, and even zoo keepers. They are ready and excited to connect with your students, free of charge. Bringing experts into your classroom is an easy way to model what it means to make connections that matter and show your students that learning extends beyond the walls of your classroom.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

From Rural to Global

Ali Schilpp (@AliSchilpp) is a library media specialist at Northern Middle School in Accident, Maryland, a small rural ski town in Garrett County, with a population of less than 500 residents. Ali doesn't let the size of her community stop her students from making connections with people all around the world, though! Ali believes digital citizens should be able to use the tools available to them to learn and grow by connecting with information and experts from around the world.

Ali and her middle school students have reached out to and connected with numerous children's authors thanks to the power of Skype. Her students have been able to have conversations with Tom Angleberger, author of *Origami Yoda*; Margaret Peterson Haddix, author of two famous series—the Shadow Children and The Missing; Gennifer Choldenko, Newberry Award–winning author of *Al Capone Does My Shirts*; and Chris Grabenstein, the hilarious mind behind the series Mr. Lemoncello's Library.

Students thought it was pretty amazing to hear their principal converse with Chris Grabenstein about both growing up in Western Maryland. Through a series of questions and answers, the two determined that their families had both lived on the same street in Cumberland, Maryland! Margaret Peterson Haddix shared funny stories about growing up in rural Ohio; stories that were very relatable to the students in rural Accident. Making these connections helped Ali's middle schoolers realize that not only are best-selling and award-winning authors just a click away, but it's also very possible for rural kids like themselves to grow up and achieve amazing things.

Connecting for Common Goals

While it is certainly fun to connect with famous authors, Ali also wants her students to see how everyday people can use the internet to connect and collaborate around a common goal or problem. Using a web-conferencing tool and some makerspace materials, students from Northern Middle School collaborated with nearly 3,000 other students around the state of Maryland in a "catapult challenge" for Digital Learning Day, a nationwide event promoted by the Alliance for Excellent Education. Students collaborated on teams to build a pom-pom catapult from basic materials like cardboard, plastic spoons, rubber bands, string, and tape. By accessing the webcam, kids in Ali's school were able to share ideas about their innovations and learn from other students all over the state. The students had fun, and teachers were pleased at their ability to work collaboratively in groups, to create and innovate, and to share their ideas with peers they had only met online.

Sharing Life Experiences and Culture

Finally, Ali wants her students to see how they can use the internet to learn about people whose life experiences, backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs may be different from their own. In collaboration with a social studies teacher in her school as well as other school librarians Ali had connected with through a Future Ready Librarians Facebook group, sixth graders at Northern Middle had the opportunity to be "Travel Pals" with other sixth graders from around the country. Students connected via Edmodo and Seesaw to learn more about life in each other's hometowns. By the end of the project, the Northern Middle sixth graders had connected with students from four different states. In addition to learning about geography and practicing their communication skills in very authentic ways, students were visibly excited to connect and correspond in the online forum. –

Being a digital citizen brings so many exciting opportunities for learning, growing, connecting, and collaborating with other digital citizens around the world. Ali, in reflecting on her unique experiences in various public schools, both urban and suburban, and now rural, says that her "goal has always been to provide the most memorable learning experience and to make the library a highly innovative and engaging space, regardless of location. I have found that living in a remote area, though, has been the best incentive to provide new learning opportunities for my students, and feel it has made me a better educator. Making these digital connections with my students has been life-changing."

You Can Do It!

One of the most amazing aspects of the internet is the ability to connect with so many different people who all have stories, experiences, and knowledge to share. I have grown tremendously as an educator and scholar because of the connections the internet has allowed me to make with others in my field. Who wouldn't want their students to have exciting learning opportunities, such as the ones Olivia and her mom are carving out with a smartphone and an internet connection? How excited would your students be if you were able to open up new parts of the world to them, the way Ali in rural Maryland did?

The best way to get started is to start small and reflect on your own curricular goals by asking these questions:

- Whom might my students benefit from networking with?
- What one unit, lesson, or project might be even better with the help of a guest expert?
- What might my students be able to contribute to a network of other learners?

6

Making Contributions That Matter

Back in 2009, I was a young second-year teacher at a middle school in Oswego, Illinois. I was teaching three sections of eighth-grade English language arts, and after having been through a year of the curriculum already, I was feeling a little more confident about ways to get creative in my teaching.

One of the assignments that had been passed down over time was how to write a business letter. Students were expected to use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting to write a formal business letter to a celebrity or athlete they admired. We used a few websites to look up addresses and sent the letters off in the mail. Throughout my first year of teaching, a few students received mail back, but most of the letters went unanswered.

As I was planning to roll out the business letter assignment for year two, I got a flyer in the mail from Scholastic Reading Club. Scholastic announced that it was partnering with a nonprofit organization called the Pajama Program, which collects brand-new pairs of pajamas for children in foster care and homeless shelters. Scholastic was offering to donate a bedtime story to go along with every pair of brand-new pajamas that schools could raise during a designated window of time.

Something about that flyer made a lightbulb go off in my head, and the business letter assignment got a major makeover! Instead of writing letters to celebrities, my students wrote letters to businesses in our community asking for their support to collect 100 pairs of new pajamas to donate to the Pajama Program. In addition, students wrote friendly letters asking for support from family members and friends.

When students are given authentic audiences for their work, genuine opportunities to make positive contributions to their communities, and the support and guidance of adult mentors, they can do some truly amazing things!

My classes got incredibly excited when the first few letters came back from our community. Local clothing stores sent gift cards, inviting us to come in and choose some pajamas for our project. A few restaurants in town offered to be designated drop-off locations for community members who wanted to donate. Several parents wrote back saying that they were excited about the project and wanted to spread the word in their own workplaces.

The project took much longer than I anticipated, because it just kept growing! Eventually, the students made commercials to share with other students in the school, created a website to update the community on our progress, and wrote dozens of thank-you notes and emails to companies and community members alike. The students smashed their goal of 100 pairs of pajamas, covering my classroom in nearly 750 pairs.

I was so proud of my students and loved seeing their excitement as the piles of pajamas continued to grow. As a young teacher, I thought I was just taking advantage of a cool opportunity to get my students interested in writing. As a more veteran teacher, I can look back now and see that the success of this project was not an accident.

When students are given authentic audiences for their work, genuine opportunities to make positive contributions to their communities, and the support and guidance of adult mentors, they can do some truly amazing things!

Traditional Approaches to Digital Citizenship

As discussed in Chapter 3, not all contributions are considered equal, and unfortunately, most digital citizenship curricula focus more heavily on behavior management than on positive, productive skill development.

Only 8% of the lessons reviewed in the Mattson (2016) study were designed to teach skills that students would need to make positive contributions in their online communities. This is because lessons about community participation are typically scenario based, whereby a student is given an example of an irresponsible or inappropriate contribution, and is then told what the consequences of such contributions could be. As participants, students are simply told they have a responsibility to avoid behavior that would harm others or ruin their own reputations. While these messages seem logical, the lessons are not introducing students to any alternative forms of contribution.

Imagine how less memorable my business letter unit would have been if I had merely collected papers from students, marked them up with red ink, and handed them back with a reminder not to make the same grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors again. Instead, I chose to show my students a brand-new possibility for their writing—an opportunity to have their voices heard in a way they never had been before. Of course, I was there to support students on each step of the journey as they discovered positive ways to contribute to their community.

Participatory Citizenship Approach

Aside from the opportunities to interact with others in a digital space, digital citizens need a myriad of skills that will allow them to move beyond consumption or connection into meaningful contribution.

In order to help students learn beyond boundaries, engage in meaningful dialogue, and make contributions to digital communities that matter, we have an obligation to foster particular skills through the ways we structure our classrooms and the opportunities we present to our students as digital citizens.

Leveraging Media Literacy to Drive Meaningful Contributions

Many educators use the terms *technological literacy, digital literacy, media literacy,* and sometimes *digital citizenship,* almost interchangeably. It's important to understand the differences between these literacies, however, so

that you can see how each one lends itself to a student's ability to make meaningful contribution, and then purposefully foster each one in your own classroom. Here, I'll define each of these areas and explain how media literacy, in particular, can help in the development of participatory citizens.

Digital citizens need a myriad of skills that will allow them to move beyond consumption or connection into meaningful contribution.

Technological literacy is the ability to operate a device, set up accounts, move around a particular platform or interface, and troubleshoot problems when necessary. It's the most basic of the literacies that students need to possess before gaining entry into a digital community.

Digital literacy includes more than the ability to operate a device. While a variety of definitions and frameworks for digital literacy exist, the most commonly agreed-upon competencies are 1) the ability to decipher meaning from a variety of contexts including audio, images, and video; 2) the ability to match medium, purpose, and audience when communicating; and 3) the ability to locate, analyze, and use reliable sources of information online.

Media literacy is a set of key concepts that help students become critical consumers and intelligent contributors of media in a networked world. While traditional and digital literacies help students access and understand digital information, media literacy helps students critically think about the information they find. Essentially, media literacy is

> the set of abilities and skills where aural, visual, and digital literacy overlap. These include the ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognize and use that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to distribute them pervasively, and to easily adapt them to new forms (New Media Consortium, 2005, p. 8).

A curriculum rich in media literacy has benefits that are clearly tied to the development of participatory digital citizens who can make meaningful

contributions. According to research, media literacy education achieves the following:

- Teaches individuals to become active, engaged media producers and users rather than passive consumers (MediaSmarts, 2015)
- Engages students in real-world issues that allow them to be active citizens and make contributions to civil debate (Jenkins, et.al, 2009; MediaSmarts, 2015)
- Deepens young people's understanding of diversity, identity, perception, and the connections between popular culture, their choices, self-image, and role in their community (MediaSmarts, 2015)

Taking Action to Make a Difference

Meaningful, participatory digital citizenship can be cultivated through direct instruction in technological, digital, and media literacies and by engaging students in participatory, online cultures, encouraging them to explore local and global issues and to use the collaborative technologies at their disposal to work with others and investigate solutions.

These learning opportunities can happen across the curriculum. For example, students in a technology class could give basic computer lessons to senior citizens in a local nursing home. Students could use science classes to identify problems in the local community, such as a littered park, and then use social media to rally support and organize volunteers for a cleanup event. Students in mathematics courses could offer online office hours to help students in their feeder elementary or middle schools with evening homework.

There is also a natural fit for action-based, participatory digital citizenship in social studies education. "Social studies is the ideal staging ground for taking informed action because of its unique role in preparing students for civic life. In social studies, students use disciplinary knowledge, skills, and perspectives to inquire about problems involved in public issues; deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues; take constructive, independent, and collaborative action; reflect on their actions; and create and sustain groups" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, pg. 62).

So how can we get students excited about and involved in this type of action-based, participatory work, allowing them to see how their digital contributions can actually make a difference in the world?

- **Give Examples.** Students cannot be what they cannot see, so make sure to show them plenty of examples of citizens coming together to make a positive impact in their local and digital communities. An example of a growing list of young digital citizens who are making a difference can be found on the DigCitUtah website (digcitutah.com/digital-citizenship-kids).

- **Identify Injustices.** Encourage students to brainstorm about injustices they see around them. What are some local issues they feel passionate about? Are there global problems they want to solve? Show students the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals website (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment) and have them read about various ways to improve the world.

- **Connect.** Use technological connections to find others who are passionate about the work. Are there Facebook groups to join or Twitter accounts to follow? What nonprofit organizations already exist for this type of work?

- **Research.** Have students investigate ways they can contribute to the work that's already being done by others. If they find that no one is taking action yet, have them start digging into the reasons why. As students read, connect, and learn about issues that are most important to them, they should consider what gifts, talents, and ideas they have to offer to the cause and how they can begin to make a difference.

- **Take Action.** Action will look different depending on the work to be done. Your students' first step might be to build a larger network of people to help them. They may need to craft messages for varied audiences, such as lawmakers and legislators as well as the general public. Students may decide a fundraising campaign is necessary or that they need to organize a protest or petition. Whatever the case may be, taking informed action is the only way to truly make a difference.

FEATURED ACTIVITY:

Is Slacktivism Equal to Activism?

Saturday Night Live recently aired a sketch entitled "Thank You, Scott" (C. K., 2017), a tongue-in-cheek nod to a man named Scott who champions the underprivileged, the marginalized, and the oppressed through his witty Tweets, Facebook comments, likes, and shares on social media—all from the comfort of his couch.

People like Scott are sometimes referred to as "armchair activists" or "slacktivists," and there is a lot of debate about the impact, or lack of impact, that social media can have on a particular issue or cause (Seay, 2014). Proponents claim that social media sharing can raise awareness about important issues and spur people toward action. Others say that social media posts are nothing more than token displays of support intended to make users feel good about themselves, and that these tokens do not lead to more meaningful contributions offline (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014).

In this featured activity, you and your students will explore the ideas of activism and slacktivism in an attempt to answer this essential question: "Is slacktivism a valid form of activism?"

First, preview the *Saturday Night Live* sketch, "Thank You Scott" (C. K., 2017), which can be found on YouTube. If you find it's appropriate for the grade level you teach, show it to your students to get them engaged in the topic. Explain that this satirical piece is one portrayal of the ways people attempt to use social media to bring about change. While the writers of this sketch poked fun at Scott's contributions, others might argue that his posts were worthwhile. Tell students it will be up to them to decide just how meaningful slacktivism is.

Define the following terms for your students:

- **Activism:** "A practice that emphasizes direct, vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue" (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

- **Slacktivism:** "Actions performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement, for example signing an online petition or joining a campaign group on social media" (Oxford Dictionary, 2017).

Allow students to do some research, either independently or in small groups. They should locate articles and examples that will allow them to develop a claim about the value of slacktivism and support it. Please note that there is no one correct answer to the essential question, "Is slacktivism a valid form of activism?" The purpose of this activity is to simply get students exploring the issues and forming a conclusion that they can back with evidence.

Student claims might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Slacktivism is not a valid form of activism.
- Slacktivism is an important form of activism.
- Slacktivism can lead to tangible change.
- Activism can be enhanced by the work of slacktivists.
- Slacktivism had a huge impact on _____.

For students who need additional support while exploring the issues of activism and slacktivism, you can encourage them to conduct internet searches on:

- ALS Ice Bucket Challenge
- GoFundMe success stories
- Hashtags and social justice
- Activism vs. slacktivism

For students who can be challenged to go deeper with this assignment, ask them to find information on the following:

- Any correlation between a person's social media slacktivism and their offline contributions

- The components of a successful social media campaign for change
- Simple steps people can take to move beyond slacktivism, if they so desire

After students have completed their research and developed a claim about slacktivism and activism that can be supported, there are many ways that they can show what they've learned. Students could write a short essay, stating their claim and then providing examples to support it. You could facilitate a whole-class deliberation, allowing students to talk out their ideas and evidence in a large group setting. Students could also choose to film a persuasive video, either encouraging or discouraging engagement through slacktivism. The final product is up to you!

Whether your students are determined to change the world or are just dipping their toes into the waters of community contribution, this research activity can allow them to see the relationships between their online and offline contributions.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Open World Cause

The story of Open World Cause is a long, but inspiring one that started with a teacher's challenge and a student willing to take up the call to action in a very real way. In 2010, Benjamin Honeycutt was starting his senior year of high school in Kansas. He anticipated an easy year, but when his senior class was challenged by one of their English teachers to "leave behind a legacy," Ben felt compelled to act (Open World Cause, 2015a).

Ben's father put him in touch with an educator in Nepal named Govinda, who was committed to providing an affordable education to the students in his community of Bageswori. During his senior year, Ben raised enough awareness and money to send the Shantideep Adarsh Vidhyasadan (SAV) School two laptops, internet access, and a small library. In April, 2011, Ben had his first successful Skype call with Govinda and his students (Open World Cause, 2013). Ben pulled up a chair to his webcam along with his dad and his friend Connor Janzen, and the three of them exchanged hellos and waves with the smiling faces at the SAV School that they had been able to support from halfway around the world.

The summer after Ben and Connor's senior year, monsoon season destroyed two of the classrooms in the SAV School. The boys knew they could not simply turn their backs on Govinda and his students now that their senior year was complete. Together, they committed to keeping the project going. Connor built a new website for the project, and the boys raised enough money to rebuild the demolished classrooms. That fall, the boys took the Open World Cause with them to the University of Kansas as a student organization (Open World Cause, 2015a).

The work that Ben and Connor did to help the SAV School during and just after their senior year is only the beginning of this inspiring story. Just as their senior English teacher ignited a spark of passion in the boys, their work has influenced many others to take up the torch for global collaboration and social justice, too.

Growing a Team of Helping Hands

In August of 2013, third-grade teacher Wendi Pillars had the opportunity to spend three weeks at the SAV School as a visiting teacher and representative of Open World Cause. Before she left her third-grade students in North Carolina, she showed them some photos of the school. Wendi's students, from low-income homes themselves, were stunned by the generally poor classroom conditions including a lack of electricity and running water. By lunchtime, four of Wendi's students had started a fundraising campaign to support the students in Nepal. Over the weeks that followed, the students decorated donation boxes, partnered with fifth graders to put a message on the school's morning news broadcast, and sacrificed their own spare change as they watched their total grow (Open World Cause, 2015c). Wendi's third graders got to Skype with Govinda too, which further fueled their interest in the country of Nepal and the SAV School. By the time Wendi left for SAV, her students had raised $248, enough to sponsor a Pre–K classroom for an entire year (Pillars, 2013).

Connor and Ben also inspired another classroom teacher, Kim Herron, who was teaching sixth grade in Kansas in 2013. With the support of Open World Cause, Kim's students partnered with Govinda's to design a dream school. The students in Nepal drew pictures of their ideal school building, and Kim's students turned those drawings into 3-D images using Google SketchUp (Open World Cause, 2015b). The Google SketchUp designs were printed on the 3-D printer at Kim's school and shown to Govinda's students through blog postings and a Skype call between the schools (Herron, 2013). The collaboration gave Kim's students an opportunity to use a variety of skills for an authentic purpose and gave Govinda's students a

chance to see their dream school drawings realized. Both groups of students benefitted from the opportunity to interact and learn from and about one another as well.

One of the most remarkable pieces of this story is that Ben and Connor really did leave a legacy at their high school, the way their senior English teacher challenged them to. Little did the boys know, but there was a freshman paying attention to the work Ben and Connor were doing, and he felt inspired by it. When Garrett Wilkinson started his senior year and was challenged with the same legacy project, he knew he wanted to contribute to the work Ben and Connor had started three years earlier. Garrett's dream was to provide clean water to populations that lacked access to it. He learned that water-borne illnesses were a serious threat to students from Govinda's SAV School, with at least one student a day missing out on classes because of sickness (Open World Cause, 2015a).

Garrett joined the Open World Cause team in 2014 as the executive director of their clean water outreach known as Project Purus. Garrett's work has helped Open World Cause distribute Sawyer PointONE™ water filtration systems to families through partnerships with SAV School, Trika School, Child Protection Centers, the Umbrella Foundation, and Next Generation Nepal in Nepal. Recently, the work of Project Purus has extended to churches and community centers in Haiti as well (Open World Cause, 2015b).

The Power at Our Fingertips

In 2015, Ben, Connor, and Garrett had the opportunity to travel to Nepal for the first time, meeting Govinda and working in the community. Later that year, Open World Cause transitioned into an official nonprofit organization. The trio has brought on a team of dedicated volunteers and continues to look for partnerships in the United States and abroad. Open World Cause is currently serving communities in multiple countries, including Nepal, Haiti, and Kenya.

> What started as a challenge from a high school teacher has turned into a full-fledged mission with digital citizenship as just one of its guiding principles: “the power of globalization through digital resources has utterly changed the way humans see and interact with the world. We do our part to seek out common tools that can change a person’s life for the better. Immense power rests within our fingertips and in our devices, so what’s stopping us?” (Open World Cause, 2015d).

You Can Do It!

Changing the world isn’t easy, but the internet can help us find people who share our passions and care about the same causes. And, as cliché as it sounds, two heads are better than one when it comes to making a difference! Try the following activities with your students to help inspire them to make contributions that matter:

- Share stories of other teens that are making a difference.
- Collaborate as a class on a service project that aligns with your curriculum.
- Help your students use digital tools to connect with causes they care about.

Conclusion

For far too long, adults have talked about digital citizenship as a list of rules for students to follow. I propose that we expand our conceptual understanding of the term and begin thinking about well-rounded digital citizens as an outcome goal of a future-ready education.

The citizens of today are not only members of their physical communities, but are also members of digital ones. Just as social studies and civics education is intended to create well-rounded members of our physical societies, digital citizenship education should equip students with the skills and competencies to be intelligent consumers, meaningful contributors, and thoughtful collaborators in online spaces.

My challenge to educators is to find opportunities to be in digital community with your students. Use those opportunities to encourage student voice, empower students as members of the community, model meaningful dialogue, and allow students to reflect upon the roles they play in our global society. Help students see that the connections they forge online can help them learn and grow, but can also lead to opportunities for changing the world.

I certainly cannot flip the script on the perceived value of digital citizenship education overnight, but my hope is that the ideas presented in this book will allow you to start a conversation with a colleague, an administrator, or even your students about the ways our definitions of community and citizenship are ever-evolving.

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DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

Empowering Students to Engage in Online Communities

Increasingly, the conversation around digital citizenship has been shifting from a focus on "don'ts" to how students can positively brand themselves to stand out for future scholarships and job opportunities. However, both messages fail to address one of the most important aspects of citizenship: being in community with others. As citizens, we have a responsibility to give back to the community and to work toward social justice and equity.

In *Digital Citizenship in Action,* you'll find practical ways to take digital citizenship lessons to the next level, creating opportunities for students to engage in multiple levels of community and develop relationships based on mutual trust and understanding with others in these spaces.

This book includes:

- Tips for creating a digital space where students can try something new, grow through mistakes and learn what it means to be a participatory digital citizen.
- "Spotlight Stories" from teachers that demonstrate how the ideas of participatory digital citizenship play out in classrooms.
- Featured activities to help you integrate these ideas with relative ease.

About the Author

Kristen Mattson, Ed.D., is a high school library media center director in Aurora, Illinois. As part of a Future Ready school district, she has embraced the Future Ready Librarians framework to transform her school's library space and practices. She enjoys supporting fellow librarians by presenting at conferences, facilitating professional development and blogging at drkmattson.com.

Audience

6-12 educators, curriculum directors and library media specialists

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