

Project Proposal:

Digital Citizenship in the Intermediate Classroom

by

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Introduction

In today's technology equipped classrooms there is a distinct need for Digital Citizenship awareness and practices. Teachers are more regularly making use of technology in their classrooms as it progresses to allow for better online research, collaboration and presentations. Students now have access to a vast amount of information on the internet and embrace the ability to connect and collaborate with others instantly through a variety of social media tools and online resources. It is often found, however, that youth are ill-prepared for using such online resources effectively and appropriately. Illegal downloading, cyberbullying and use of technology at inappropriate times and in inappropriate ways are just a few issues that today's students face, both in and out of the classroom. Studies show that students often befriend people unknown to them, share information and pictures that could potentially compromise their safety and/or reputation and tend to hide behind the illusion of anonymity when commenting or posting on other people's profiles. Incidences of file sharing and downloading of music, games, movies and television shows, often illegally, are also on the rise. These behaviours not only put students at risk in the short term, but can also affect their future college or career applications due to the image that they are creating for themselves based on what they are posting online.

As educators it is imperative that we provide our students with a strong foundation in the principles of being a responsible digital citizen in order to encourage online practices that are consistently safe, respectful and legal. We also need to make students aware of the types and amount of information that they can safely share online and how to navigate the internet in controlled and meaningful way that will allow them to get the most out of their learning while protecting them from the potential threat of bullies, hackers or stalkers. By teaching students digital

citizenship skills it will help to develop a consistent standard of online behaviours that will provide a safe learning environment for everyone.

There are currently a number of online resources that focus their efforts on educating youth in proper online practices. Typically these sites focus on one aspect of digital citizenship, for instance online safety, responsible downloading practices or the sharing of information online. What is missing is a comprehensive collection of all aspects of digital citizenship, from illegal file sharing to proper copyrighting issues, from posting pictures online to refining profile settings and maintaining a safe online presence, from avoiding online predators to dealing with incidents or issues that might arise from technology use.

Through this Master's project I propose to develop a comprehensive curriculum, usable with intermediate students (grades 4, 5 and 6), that will help to foster such effective online practices. The compilation of pertinent topics will identify major themes in online safety such as copyright, account security, effective online interactions and critically analyzing and finding reliable online sources, and provide a rationale as to why each is an important topic of study in today's classroom. The resulting collection of tools and resources will also provide a variety of lesson and activity ideas to enable teachers to help their students develop a solid understanding of how to effectively work and play online. After the curriculum is completed, it will be made available for sharing via my website and a presentation will be developed to accompany the curriculum that will guide teachers through the important aspects of each topic and assist them in presenting the information to their own classes. By providing more opportunities for students to understand how to safely and effectively use digital resources, my hope is that students will be more likely to incorporate these skills into their everyday dealings with technology and a safer online learning environment will result.

Proposed Methodology

Using a variety of online and published resources, a comprehensive curriculum will be developed that will cover many aspects of Digital Citizenship including copyright, attribution of content, online safety and sharing of information, analysis of websites and information found online, social media use and the building of effective digital footprints. Each topic to be included will be developed separately as part of the overall curriculum, with more topics being added as research and development proceeds, and will include an overview, purpose, outline of a lesson, activity ideas and adaptation ideas for younger, older or struggling students.

Throughout July and August of 2014 I will develop the lessons and areas of study, along with activities that will challenge and engage students in learning about the effective use of online tools and resources. Each lesson will identify a potential challenge or issue in working online or with technology and help students to develop an understanding of why the situation is important and how to safely deal with each issue.

The overall project will be guided in its development by the proposed Digital Framework, developed by the BC Ministry of Education and available at: https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/digital-literacy.htm. A variety of books and online resources will also be referenced for topics, activities and ideas in the building of this curriculum. Further, educators in my district, as well as members of my OLTD cohort, will be surveyed for topic ideas in the realm of digital citizenship lessons in the classroom.

Once the proposed curriculum is compiled, it will be posted on a website (yet to be created) and I will request a peer review where educators, members of my OLTD cohort and people in the technology education community will be able to use, critique and share the information as well as

provide feedback via an ongoing blog on the same site. This will allow other educators to add their feedback or suggest further topics of study to be included and ensure that relevant and timely issues have been addressed and any discrepancies or missing items are noted. Feedback will also be collected via informal discussions and reviews with teachers and other staff in my school district who may benefit from using such a curriculum (ie. intermediate teachers). From there a thorough review of the project will be undertaken and amendments made. Recommendations for the distribution of the curriculum will be accompanied by a presentation that will enable educators to immediately implement the curriculum in their classroom. My goal is to have this comprehensive curriculum ready by September of 2014.

As the practicing teacher in this study, I take full responsibility for researching, developing, testing and revising the lessons and activities to be contained in the final Digital Citizenship Curriculum. Because activities and topics will be housed online and only printed off for the purposes of my Master's Process Paper, there will be no printing or publishing costs involved. There will also be no extra costs to my school district or any school site in the development and preparation of this curriculum; however, during the implementation of this curriculum, school resources such as computers, iPods and iPads, internet access and any necessary printing or access points would potentially be used at a cost to the school district in which it was being implemented. Upon completion, the curriculum will be shared via the VIU website, my personal website, and hopefully on the Chilliwack School District (33) website (my present employer), then posted via twitter and through various Google + communities in order to provide access and solicit continuous feedback from as many educators and members of the technology community as possible. Because of the continual feedback requested, the hope is that this curriculum will be an evolving project that will continue beyond the timeline and scope of my Master's project.

Proposed Timeline

The proposed timeline for each chapter of my Master's project is outlined below in the form of 'due dates' which I will endeavor to have the work completed by. As the overall completion date for our Master's work is not until December of 2014 there is sufficient time to work with in case one or more of these deadlines are not met; however, I also have a personal goal of handing in my Master's work prior to my 40th birthday in September and plan to focus my efforts on completing the work this summer to achieve that goal, as well as to have it completed and ready to implement for the start of the new school year in September.

Project component	Due Date
Project Proposal & Timeline	July 15
Chapter 1 – Introduction	July 18
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	July 23
Development of curriculum and completion of website to house curriculum	Ongoing until August 8
Chapter 3 – Procedures and Methods	August 15
Peer and Educator review	Ongoing until August 20
Chapter 4 – Field/Beta Testing & Findings	August 22
Chapter 5 – Conclusions & Recommendations	August 29
Full Reference and Appendices Lists	August 29
Presentation Ready for sharing of Master's work	September 3
Master's Project completed and ready for submission	September 3, 2014

Deliverables

For this Master's project there will be 4 items handed in:

- 1) Master's project – Digital Citizenship Curriculum for use in the intermediate classroom that will include a variety of topics, lesson plans, activity ideas and resources.
- 2) Website – a space that will house all aspects of the Digital Citizenship curriculum and invite feedback on each topic via a blog.
- 3) Process Paper – outlining how and why the Master's project was completed.
- 4) Powerpoint Presentation – to accompany the curriculum so that teachers have an understanding of how and why to implement the curriculum

Proposed Resources

British Columbia Ministry of Education (n.d.). DRAFT Digital Literacy Framework. Retrieved from: https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/digital-literacy.htm

CyberSmart!. (n.d.). *CyberSmart!*. Retrieved May 18, 2014, from <http://www.cybersmart.org/>

Digital Literacy and Citizenship Classroom Curriculum. (n.d.). *Reviews & Age Ratings*. Retrieved May 18, 2014, from <https://www.common sense media.org/educators/curriculum>

Hengstler, J. (2013). A K-12 Primer for British Columbia Teachers Posting Students' Work Online. *jhengstlers blog*. Retrieved May 18, 2014, from <http://jhengstler.wordpress.com/2013/05/17/a-k-12-primer-for-british-columbia-teachers-posting-students-work-online/>

Netsafe (n.d.). *OWLS Wise words on Privacy*. Retrieved July 14, 2014, from <http://www.netsafe.org.nz/owls/>

Ribble, M. (2011). *Digital citizenship in schools* (2nd ed.). Eugene, Or. International Society for Technology in Education.