Research and Resources - Digital Citizenship

Introduction

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child; however, the focus for "success" has expanded beyond academics. Society continues to transform through global connectivity, technological advancements and more open entrepreneurial activities. As a result, it is imperative to prepare our students with skills that will enable them to be confident and competitive in whatever career pathway they pursue. One specific skill is that of digital citizenship, or the ability to work respectfully and safely online.

School districts across the province continue to focus on digital citizenship through their Technology and Learning Fund (TLF) Innovation Projects. They have considered digital citizenship as they identify their TLF theory of action, report student, teacher, and district learning, and scale their innovation projects. As classrooms, schools, and districts transform and provide greater opportunities for technology enhanced learning, digital citizenship will remain an important skill.

If you already have a digital citizenship project in place, this report may confirm or help realign your project. For those at the beginning the journey, this document will help you begin the conversation.

What are the Trends for Canadian Youth and the Use of Technology

Since 1999, the impact of communication technologies on the lives of youth have been documented through a research study, *Young Canadians in a Wired World* (mediasmarts.ca). In 2000, it was reported that students valued their online privacy and used various strategies to protect it. Fast-forward to today, the web continues to move from an information-driven, passive interaction, to interactivity that fosters user contribution. Trends and Recommendations/Tendances et recommendations (2015) highlights the current trends on how emerging communications technologies are affecting young people's daily lives. Some trends include:

- While digital tools are evolving, what remains the same is youth's interest in being socially connected - talking and playing games online.
- Wikipedia remains one of the favourite sources for students to gather information. As a result, teachers need to continue encouraging students to verify their sources of information.
- Connectedness with family is enjoyable when parents trust their children and don't use technology to spy. Parents can be reassured that most students look to parents first - 72% will go to parents to help develop a solution for online issues that are hurtful or uncomfortable.
- Both teachers and students are frustrated by blocked sites that they wish to use for educational purposes.

The research study makes the following recommendations:
- Digital literacy should include physical and mental health - with the continuous

use and connectedness of technology, students need to develop digital citizenship skills to know when to "power down."

- School districts need to revisit existing policies - monitoring and punishing is not an effective means for dealing with online conflict. The focus needs to be on teaching and learning that develops healthy relationships where respect and empathy are shown for all.

- Digital Literacy instruction needs to be part of all curriculum - not just technology and computer studies courses. Teachers need materials, training, and mentorship opportunities to embed digital literacy and to leverage technology to assist and enhance learning.

Digital Citizenship in Ontario
Ontario's renewed vision, *Achieving Excellence*, calls for more emphasis on higher-order skills, or competencies, such as creativity, communication and collaboration. Ontario has responded with a [DRAFT 21st Century/Global Competencies](#)/[Competences Du 21 Siecle](#) document that provides research and guides discussion. The document reinforces the importance of digital citizenship.

Within the TLF Innovation Projects, [Round 5 of Ontario research](#)/[Rapport de CSC - 2016 (phase 5)](#) indicates that 45 projects focused on Digital Citizenship (40 English and 5 French) as more districts are addressing these skills within the context of competencies. Some of these initiatives include:

- Algoma District School district [Standards for Digital Learning K-12](#) is supporting teachers by providing a guide to help integrate technology and digital learning into the Ontario Curriculum, teaching practice and students' repertoire of skills to support and enhance continuous learning.

- Bluewater District School district team, educators, administrators and central support staff, have collaborated to develop a continuum of Global Competencies and Citizenship. This will guide the educators in supporting student learning with technology as a learning tool.

- [Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est de l'Ontario](#) has integrated in its vision a [Digital Citizenship Plan](#), outlining nine key elements that define digital citizenship. They also prepared a tool for [parents](#) to help them understand digital citizenship.

- Conseil scolaire catholique Providence has developed a [5 year digital road map](#) to integrate technology and digital learning; digital citizenship being one of the key elements of this plan. They also created a [digital curriculum](#).

Useful Resources on Digital Citizenship

OSAPAC/CCPALO and the Ministry of Education together with educators and school leaders across the province co-created a Digital Citizenship Resource. This resource identifies categories and attributes of a digital citizen with K-12 learning materials and classroom connections. The School Leader Learning Series Part 1 addresses digital citizenship including "Big Ideas, Key Questions, Need to Know and Going Deeper" sections.

EduGAINS/EduSource highlight digital citizenship with examples of classroom connections and professional learning approaches. You may explore the resources under the site sections:

- Innovation in Action Videos
- Research - Readings
- Making Connections
- Document de fondements
- Resources et references
- Citoynnete numerique

A parent's guide has also been prepared by the 12 French-Language School districts to inform parents on the role of digital citizenship in new learning and teaching practices enhanced by technology.

The ministry has introduced a virtual learning space for communication, collaboration, curation, and creation. Digital citizenship programs shared by Ontario districts are highlighted along with provincially developed resources. The following questions are addressed

- What is digital citizenship?
- Why is digital citizenship important for student learning?
- Where are digital citizenship resources to support student learning?
- How is digital citizenship development embedded in student learning?

This 21st Century Teaching and Learning/Enseignement et apprentissage au 21^e siecle environment within the VLE is accessible through your eCommunity account. Contact your district's Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching (TELT) Contact for further support or email Karen.Beutler@Ontario.ca (English) and Noemie.Bergeron@Ontario.ca (French).