# Safe & Caring Schools

## PROCEDURE 5
### Teaching Digital Citizenship

**Education**

# Teaching Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of safe, respectful and responsible behaviour with regard to the use of technology. Whether it is called digital citizenship, digital wellness or digital ethics, we need guidelines to determine what we should be teaching to our students concerning online behaviour.

## Online Resources to Promote Safe and Ethical Use of the Internet

Cybersafe Girl is a public education program developed by the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women. Its goal is to provide information to girls (and boys), parents and educators, about how girls can be safe online. This online resource is available at www.cybersafegirl.ca/.

The Provincial Government has also provided teachers and students with access to other online resources, designed to teach about the safe and ethical use of the Internet – particularly with respect to personal and private information posted online. The online tutorials and resources are provided through MediaSmarts, a Canadian not-for-profit organization which promotes digital and media literacy.

These resources allow students to learn to use different types of digital and social media and to think critically about how they are using them. Are they revealing too much information? Are they putting themselves in danger? Are they engaged in online activities that would be hurtful, or even dangerous to others?

The resources, which are available to all public schools, include:

- **Passport to the Internet:** This resource teaches younger students (Grades 4-8) to use online tools and websites in a secure and ethical manner. Using simulated models of the most popular Internet environments, this interactive resource focuses on online safety, how to determine whether information is credible, recognizing marketing ploys, protecting privacy, managing online relationships, and dealing with cyber-bullying.

- **My World:** This resource helps students in Grades 9-12 develop decision-making and analytical skills necessary to positively engage with digital media. My World uses imitations of online environments, such as search engines, instant messaging, social networking sites and file-sharing, to teach students digital literacy skills. Students engaged in My World assume a variety of roles – student, friend, peer and mentor – as they use simulated online tools to address bullying and ethical behaviour, do homework, manage relationships, and protect their privacy.

- **Web Awareness Workshop Series:** Six professional development workshops help educators and parents understand and address cyber-bullying issues, online safety, marketing, privacy and information authentication. This resource is for use with educators, parents and school district staff to facilitate workshops.

Teachers and students access the resources, available in French and English, by logging on to a website with a username and password that has been supplied by their school.

## Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship

The work of Mike Ribble (2013) outlines *Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship*. These can be grouped into three categories, and are summarized in the following graphic and described in the appendix.
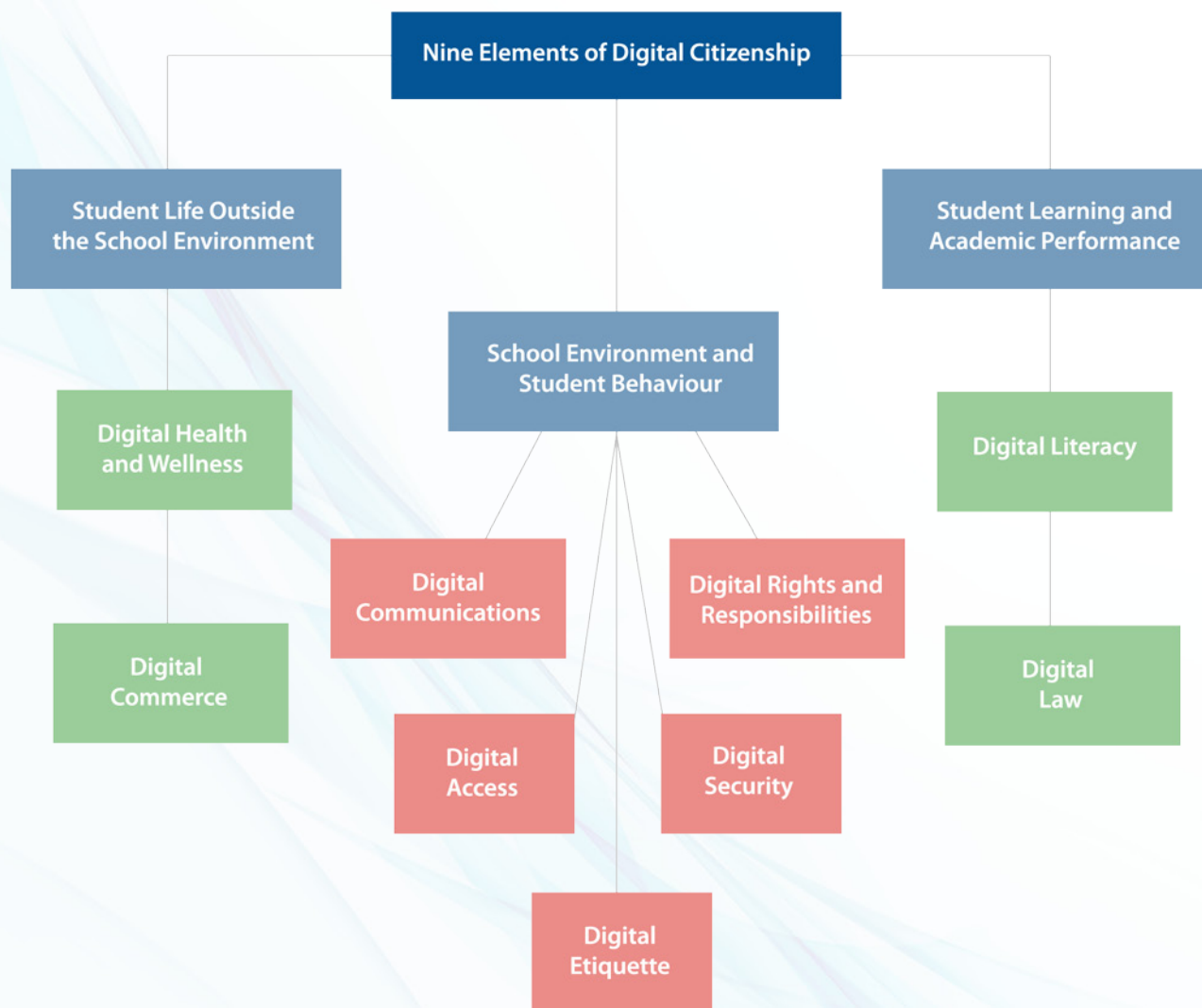


Ribble has also developed a model for the teaching of digital citizenship in the classroom, from kindergarten to grade 12. Ribble suggests that the larger concepts of **Respect** for self and others; **Educate** yourself and connect with others; and **Protect** yourself and others (REP), should be taught at each level – primary/elementary, junior high and senior high. He suggests that in primary/elementary, teachers should focus on etiquette, communication, and rights and responsibilities. In junior high teachers should focus on access, literacy, and safety (security). In high school lessons on digital citizenship should focus on law, commerce, and health and welfare.

# Ribble's REPS

|  | Primary/Elementary | Junior High | Senior High |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Respect For Self and Others** | Etiquette | Access | Law |
| **Educate yourself and connect with others** | Communication | Literacy | Commerce |
| **Prottect yourself and others** | Rights and Responsibility | Safety (Security) | Health and Welfare |

**Common Sense Media** is a national, nonpartisan organization that provides information and resources, free of charge, to educators, parents, and the public, on issues that shape the media's impact on students. Schools and individual teachers can register at www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/scope-and-sequence. Registration provides access to lesson plans for teaching digital citizenship and each grade level. Common Sense Media has provided an overview of the lessons for each grade level:

**Grades K-2:** Start building a foundation of great digital citizenship skills by reinforcing the ideas of kindness, curiosity, and safety that permeate early elementary education. These age-appropriate, 45-minute lessons introduce young learners to concrete concepts and behaviours within the abstract world of digital literacy and citizenship. These fifteen lessons give students a safe way to explore all that technology affords by delving into the basics of Internet safety, privacy, and security; introducing concepts of information literacy; and emphasizing online interpersonal skills

**Digital Literacy and Citizenship for Grades 3-5:** Help upper elementary students learn to balance the responsibility that comes with accessing our ever-evolving digital world. The lessons in these units revisit the fundamentals of Internet safety, privacy, security, and information literacy covered in the units for grades K-2, while weaving in the challenges and opportunities of collaborating in online communities. These 45-minute lessons put more emphasis on the concepts of becoming a responsible and respectful communicator online than those designed for lower elementary school students. Register for Digital Passport, the FREE interactive companion to Unit 1, as a way to introduce students to the fundamentals of digital literacy and citizenship.

**Digital Literacy and Citizenship for Grades 6-8:** Support middle school students' desire to experiment and explore online with these fifteen lessons. Empower them to reflect critically on their digital lives: their use of media, their understanding of the broader landscape, and their participation in the always-on community. These developmentally-appropriate lessons encourage middle schoolers to hone their digital literacy and citizenship skills by putting a particular emphasis on how individuals interact with and impact others in the digital world. Topics include maintaining healthy relationships, communicating respectfully, and developing a positive online reputation.

**Digital Literacy and Citizenship for Grades 9-12:** Challenge high school students to take perspective on the opportunities and potential pitfalls of the digital world. These age-appropriate, 45-minute lessons use rich discussions and ethical debates to cover the digital literacy and citizenship topics including relationships, identity, respect, and privacy. The lessons highlight how teens can be mindful when curating their digital footprints and how they can take ownership of their digital roles by using today's technologies to create, publish, and share their own creative work.

# Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship

1. **Digital Access:** *full electronic participation in society.*
Technology users need to be aware that not everyone has the same opportunities when it comes to technology. Working toward equal digital rights and supporting electronic access is the starting point of Digital Citizenship. Digital exclusion makes it difficult to grow as a society increasingly using these tools. Helping to provide and expand access to technology should be goal of all digital citizens. Users need to keep in mind that there are some who may have limited access, so other resources may need to be provided. To become productive citizens, we need to be committed to make sure that no one is denied digital access.

2. **Digital Commerce:** *electronic buying and selling of goods.*
Technology users need to understand that a large share of market economy is being done electronically. Legitimate and legal exchanges are occurring, but the buyer or seller needs to be aware of the issues associated with it. The mainstream availability of Internet purchases of toys, clothing, cars, food, etc. has become commonplace to many users. At the same time, an equal amount of goods and services which are in conflict with the laws or morals of some countries are surfacing (which might include activities such as illegal downloading, pornography, and gambling). Users need to learn about how to be effective consumers in a new digital economy.

3. **Digital Communication:** *electronic exchange of information.*
One of the significant changes within the digital revolution is a person's ability to communicate with other people. In the 19th century, forms of communication were limited. In the 21st century, communication options have exploded to offer a wide variety of choices (e.g., e-mail, cellular phones, instant messaging). The expanding digital communication options have changed everything because people are able to keep in constant communication with anyone else. Now everyone has the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with anyone from anywhere and anytime. Unfortunately, many users have not been taught how to make appropriate decisions when faced with so many different digital communication options.

4. **Digital Literacy:** *process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.*
While schools have made great progress in the area of technology infusion, much remains to be done. A renewed focus must be made on what technologies must be taught as well as how it should be used. New technologies that are finding their way into the work place are not being used in schools (e.g., Videoconferencing, online sharing spaces such as wikis). In addition, workers in many different occupations need immediate information (just-in-time information). This process requires sophisticated searching and processing skills (i.e., information literacy). Learners must be taught how to learn in a digital society. In other words, learners must be taught to learn anything, anytime, anywhere. Business, military, and medicine are excellent examples of how technology is being used differently in the 21st century. As new technologies emerge, learners need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately. Digital Citizenship involves educating people in a new way— these individuals need a high degree of information literacy skills.

5. **Digital Etiquette:** *electronic standards of conduct or procedure.*
Technology users often see this area as one of the most pressing problems when dealing with Digital Citizenship. We recognize inappropriate behavior when we see it, but before people use technology they do not learn digital etiquette (i.e., appropriate conduct). Many people feel uncomfortable talking to others about their digital etiquette. Often rules and regulations are created or the technology is simply banned to stop inappropriate use. It is not enough to create rules and policy, we must teach everyone to become responsible digital citizens in this new society.

6. **Digital Law:** *electronic responsibility for actions and deeds*

Digital law deals with the ethics of technology within a society. Unethical use manifests itself in form of theft and/or crime. Ethical use manifests itself in the form of abiding by the laws of society. Users need to understand that stealing or causing damage to other people's work, identity, or property online is a crime. There are certain rules of society that users need to be aware in a ethical society. These laws apply to anyone who works or plays online. Hacking into others information, downloading illegal music, plagiarizing, creating destructive worms, viruses or creating Trojan Horses, sending spam, or stealing anyone's identify or property is unethical.

7. **Digital Rights & Responsibilities:** *those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.*

Just as in the American Constitution where there is a Bill of Rights, there is a basic set of rights extended to every digital citizen. Digital citizens have the right to privacy, free speech, etc. Basic digital rights must be addressed, discussed, and understood in the digital world. With these rights also come responsibilities as well. Users must help define how the technology is to be used in an appropriate manner. In a digital society these two areas must work together for everyone to be productive.

8. **Digital Health & Wellness:** *physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.*

Eye safety, repetitive stress syndrome, and sound ergonomic practices are issues that need to be addressed in a new technological world. Beyond the physical issues are the psychological issues that are becoming more prevalent, such as Internet addiction. Users need to be taught that there inherent dangers of technology. Digital Citizenship includes a culture where technology users are taught how to protect themselves through education and training.

9. **Digital Security (self-protection):** *electronic precautions to guarantee safety.*

In any society, there are individuals who steal, deface, or disrupt other people. The same is true for the digital community. It is not enough to trust other members in the community for our own safety. In our own homes, we put locks on our doors and fire alarms in our houses to provide some level of protection. The same must be true for the digital security. We need to have virus protection, backups of data, and surge control of our equipment. As responsible citizens, we must protect our information from outside forces that might cause disruption or harm.