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Digital Citizenship

It would be nearly impossible to identify a segment of our society that has not been impacted by social media and technology. According to a recent poll conducted by Common Sense Media 48% of parents and 72% of teens feel the need to immediately respond to texts, social networking messages, and other notifications. 69% of parents and 78% of teens check their devices hourly! With these facts in mind we need to have a candid conversation about what it means to be a responsible digital citizen. I am proud to say we have started just such a conversation here in Ramsey Public Schools.

Three years ago, we adopted and implemented the Common Sense Education's K-12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum. We are directly addressing topics such as Privacy and Security, Relationships and Communication, Cyberbullying and Digital Drama, Digital Footprint and Reputation, Self Image and Identify, Information Literacy, and Creative Credit and Copyright. Mike Ribble, in According to Digital Citizenship summarizes it concisely, with so many communication options available, students need to learn how to make appropriate decisions, how to learn in a digital society, and how to be effective consumers in a digital economy.

Last we started Parent Academies on the component topics of Digital Citizenship and I am proud to say that we are once again offering them. These academies are aimed at helping our parents help their children as well as providing support for each other. As a parent of a 16-year-old and 13-year-old, I am constantly reminded that our children are Digital Natives, and we are the Digital Immigrants! I still don't understand Snapchat.

I recognize both the benefits and liabilities of social media. It provides important information quickly, shares the great work going on in our classrooms and community, and serves as a tool to promote positive social change. In the past, a family would have to wait for the occasional newsletter or paper update from the district office to know what was happening in a child's school. Today, with the easy access and instantaneous reach of social media, students and families are in a continuous loop of information. However, this same benefit can potentially become a tremendous liability to the work of the district and/or a community by causing unnecessary distractions and spreading misleading information. We need to remember that we are setting an example when posting things online. The age-old axiom, "children become what they see," is more true today than ever. Every single time someone uses social media to comment on something we are sending our children a message about the kind of person you expect him or her to be. Many of us have read and, unfortunately, have been the target of absolutely vicious personal attacks on social media. **Please do not forget that the children are watching.**

As you can see, we have been very proactive in our approach to Digital Citizenship; yet, I also recognize that there is much more to do in an ever-changing environment. If you are looking for additional resources, I highly recommend visiting www.commonsense.org. You will discover a wealth of resources. As always, I invite and encourage you to send me any feedback. My email address: mmurphy@ramsey.k12.nj.us and you can follow me via Twitter: @drmatthewmurphy.

CITIZENSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Many of the hallmarks of any good citizen — from being respectful and responsible to doing what's right — are key elements of digital citizenship as well. But students must learn how to apply these tried and true qualities to the realities of the digital age.

A GOOD CITIZEN...

1 Advocates for equal human rights for all.

2 Treats others courteously and never bullies.

3 Does not steal or damage others' property or persons.

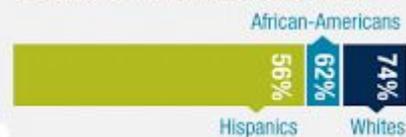
4 Communicates clearly, respectfully and with empathy.

5 Actively pursues an education and develops habits for lifelong learning.

A GOOD DIGITAL CITIZEN...

Advocates for equal digital rights and access for all.

U.S. citizens with internet access at home:



Treats others with respect in online spaces and never cyberbullies.



88% of social media-using teens have witnessed someone being mean or cruel.

Does not steal or damage others' digital work, identity or property.



The average teen's media player contains **800** illegally downloaded or shared songs.

Makes appropriate decisions when communicating through a variety of digital channels.

SIX MILLION teens report that they have received sexually suggestive images from someone they know.

Uses digital tools to advance their learning and keeps up with changing technologies.

Working Americans who use digital tools on the job:

