

Positive Impacts of Digital Citizenship in K-12

Learn how educators are making positive impacts on their students, technology integration efforts, and school culture through Nearpod & Common Sense Education's Digital Citizenship curriculum.



Since the beginning of the 2014 - 2015 school year, over 1.5M students from around the world have used Nearpod & Common Sense Education's K-12 Digital Citizenship curriculum to learn how to think critically and behave responsibly online. We profiled four educators who are using the curriculum to make a difference in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Learn how these teachers and administrators are helping students become safe and responsible digital citizens.

Julia Maynard

6th grade teacher, Willie Brown Middle School,
San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, CA

Julia Maynard is a sixth-grade teacher at Willie Brown Middle School in the Bayview neighborhood of San Francisco. She has been teaching middle school for 10 years as an english, history, and humanities teacher. She currently teaches history and a technology class.

Background

Willie Brown Middle School is a brand new school in the Bayview community in San Francisco. Last year was our first year of operation, and we have students coming from several elementary schools in the city, so there are a lot of kids coming together from different neighborhoods around San Francisco. The Bayview community is traditionally an underserved population, so we're working hard to build community and to focus on building not only academic skills, but also social-emotional learning and healthy lifestyles. Nearpod and the digital citizenship curriculum fit nicely with what we're trying to do at our new school.



My favorite thing about teaching is the “aha moment” that happens you have a kid who is struggling, he or she doesn’t totally understand a concept, then suddenly they “gets it.” They can explain it, they’re visibly excited to share their learning, they look and act confident, and look forward to sharing their new knowledge or skill with me and their classmates.

Overcoming challenges with online behavior

Most adults don’t know how to protect themselves online, and we’re expected to teach the principles of online safety and responsibility to our students. It’s not something most teachers grew up with, and it’s also something that parents oftentimes don’t how to talk to kids about. My kids posted inappropriate things on Instagram, students made fake accounts, and unfortunately students shared inappropriate pictures and texts with each other. They didn’t realize that what they send can’t be taken back and can be hurtful to their classmates. It was a big problem in the school last year, and this year the digital citizenship curriculum has helped our students think about these issues in a new way.

Additionally, as many middle school teachers know, students can sometimes be mean to each other. They’re not sure how to relate to each other, and when they don’t have a face-to-face interaction, it’s a lot easier to be mean. Kids don’t really think about their actions online the same way they think about their actions in person, and this curriculum has helped bridge that gap.

In general, the most challenging part of my job is finding ways to get kids engaged and to keep them motivated to learn. Finding things that pique their interest while trying to compete with cellphones and video games is a challenging task. Most of my students come to school with devices that are unlocked and interconnected, yet we (school staff) expect them to do exactly what we want them to do, not what they normally do when they have those devices.

Nearpod and Digital Citizenship

I've used Nearpod for a long time, and was excited when we found out that we had access to extra features and curriculum through the SFUSD license. Nearpod is awesome because it delivers the lesson to the students' hands. I don't have to worry about the kids who are sitting in the back or kids who are shy, everyone is on the same playing field. There's instant engagement when kids can share their work, I can share their answers back to the class, and I can poll the class to see how they're feeling. All of the kids answer all of the questions, and I get to see what they know and how they're progressing with new information in real-time.

Digital citizenship is such an important topic to cover with students, and with Nearpod, it's easy to teach. The Nearpod and Common Sense Digital Citizenship lessons are high quality resources. There are a lot of topics that I wouldn't have thought to discuss with my students, but the curriculum is comprehensive. On Nearpod, the lessons are great because I can download, review, and teach immediately! There's minimal prep work, I don't have to spend a lot of time researching and curating resources, and the lessons are easy to use with students. Additionally, kids have multiple ways to answer questions and demonstrate understanding of key concepts.

Building a positive community through Digital Citizenship

One of the things that surprised me about this curriculum was the strong community building aspect. Not simply building a digital community, but building community in the classroom, too. We continue to teach even more digital citizenship lessons because it's a great way to build a positive community. We have a brand-new school, so at the same time we're building a curriculum for the year, we're building a school culture and community, too. Finding ways to facilitate serious conversations has made a noticeable difference in how my kids talk to and interact with each other.

“ We continue to teach even more digital citizenship lessons because it's a great way to build a positive community. ”

Alex Springer-Post

K-5 Instructional Technology Coach,
Seldens Landing Elementary School, Loudoun County, Virginia

Alex is a K-5 instructional technology coach in Loudoun County Public Schools in Virginia. She previously taught in North Carolina and West Virginia, where she was the first teacher in a computer lab at her school.

Background

A few years ago, I became the first technology resource teacher in a computer lab in a West Virginia middle school. I began to build my online community and to find effective edtech resources and strategies, so I attended my first education technology conference, where someone introduced me to Nearpod. At the time, I was looking for resources to create hands-on coding lessons. Nearpod was a great fit, so I started using Nearpod by adapting code.org lessons to Nearpod for my class. When I moved to Virginia, I took on a new role as an instructional technology coach because I have always loved using technology in the classroom and I wanted to share the techniques and strategies that helped me engage my students with other teachers.

The Nearpod Difference

Before I used the Nearpod & Common Sense curriculum I had students sit in a circle on the floor to complete pencil and paper digital citizenship activities and few students raised their hands to add to the discussion. With Nearpod, more kids participate and more of them feel comfortable contributing to the lesson.

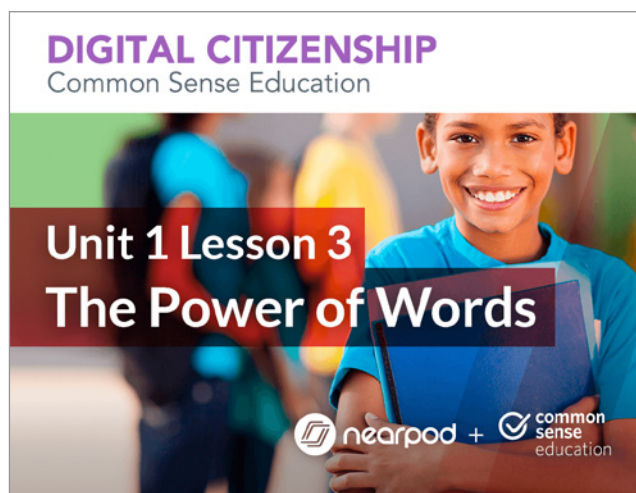
There's safety in Nearpod, and my class has been impacted in a positive way. I have a student with selective mutism who can now participate and share his thoughts in the lesson! I share student responses, but I keep the responses anonymous, so we're able to stay on topic and

keep the discussion focused. Lots of students are excited when I share their answer so they aren't afraid to take credit. In my classroom, I set the expectation that students don't call each other out, and Nearpod helps to encourage that expectation.

When we're dealing with topics like digital drama, self-identify, and cyberbullying, Nearpod is especially helpful because students are more comfortable sharing answers that are personal or scary to them. My students don't have to raise their hand and broadcast their answer to everybody, but they also don't have to search for me afterwards if they need to explain something. They can share their thoughts and feelings without feeling self-conscious. Some of the topics are especially sensitive because kids don't want to seem "uncool," admit that they were hurt, or that someone made fun of them.

Impact on Students

In my 5th grade class, we completed a "Power of Words" lesson, and it was interesting to see the way students reacted to cyberbullying and the difference between each class. I had one class last year who was a challenging group. In one of the Digital Citizenship lessons, students were asked to agree or disagree with the statement "sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never never hurt me." 65% of the class thought that this was a true statement, and many of these kids had no idea the impact their words could have on others!



“ *No one wanted the lesson to end. When it was over, many questioned “class is over already!?” How often does that happen as a teacher?* ”

It sparked an interesting and productive conversation, and also enlightened the rest of my colleagues to the importance of being attentive and intentional regarding students' choice of language. Our class discussion about the impact words can have on others hit

home with many students, who realized that they have been hurt by the words of others, and then made the connection to what they were saying and posting online. The connections they were making between in-person and online interactions was so productive for how they treated each other moving forward.

No one wanted the lesson to end. When it was over, many questioned “class is over already!? How often does that happen as a teacher? After my students left class, they treated each other with a higher level of respect, and they were more likely to take each other’s feelings into consideration when choosing what to say online or off.

The Importance of Digital Citizenship

Our students are on the internet every day. When I talk to younger students, even my K-2 students, they’re playing games, and a lot of games have the ability to chat. I asked my second graders “have you seen anyone write a mean comment to someone else online?” Unfortunately, I’ve started to skip over that question, because the answer is nearly 100% yes. Some of them were scared, some of them don’t know what to do in that situation, and they don’t want to tell their parents because oftentimes they’ll lose their devices.



The concept of a “digital footprint” is great to introduce to younger students because many of them already share their words online and they leaving something behind. It may not be attached to them because they usually don’t share their private information, but they have to know that future employers, colleges, friends, and loved ones have the ability to find things you said or did when you were younger, and what they do or say now has the ability to impact their future.

Amy Klabunde

School technology lead & computer lab teacher,
Baltimore City Public Schools

Amy is a 15 year veteran educator in Baltimore City Public Schools. She is currently a school technology leader and a computer lab teacher for a Title 1 school in Baltimore.

Background

My school has a population of 468 students and we're a 100% free and reduced lunch school in Baltimore City, so our resources are low. I began my career as a music teacher 15 years ago, and technology is something that I've always loved and incorporated into my classroom. Three years ago I was part of a pilot program in Baltimore City Public Schools to be a tech leader. I was interested in teaching with technology and teaching students about technology, so I became the tech guru at my building, which inspired my principal to start a technology class. We have one computer lab with 30 computers and we have one working laptop cart.

Differentiation with Nearpod

A lot of the curriculum in my technology class is related to digital citizenship. My district wants our kids to understand that the Internet can be very helpful, but it's a place where they have to be thoughtful, careful, and responsible. Nearpod's student-paced option for teaching digital citizenship lessons is amazing, especially because I teach students who have vastly different reading levels and writing skills. Initially, with the teacher paced option, it was challenging to keep everyone on the same page. Now students can complete activities at a pace where they feel comfortable. Other students can take extra time and ask clarifying questions, and while the rest of the class can progress without frustration or too much idle time. The student-paced option has made this school year so much better because my kids feel more in control of their learning.

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Reflecting on Digital Footprints

With the Nearpod and Common Sense digital citizenship curriculum, I've seen a lot of changes in my students. The curriculum itself encourages students to think about their presence on the internet. I recently completed the "Trillion Dollar Footprint" lesson with my 8th graders. We started the lesson with the prompt "Google your name and see what appears." Some of the students were very upset about what they found publicly available about themselves. They asked "Why did my facebook page pop up? Why did my Twitter profile pop up? Anyone can see this?!" Many were not aware of privacy settings or what data could be accessed by billions of people around the world on the internet.

Before I led the the digital footprint lesson, a lot of my students didn't understand what it meant to have a digital footprint. They didn't grasp that their comments, posts, and pictures on the Internet could last forever. A lot of students understood this concept once they saw it in print and saw that they could tailor their profile to convey a specific message. They learned that they have the choice about what to share with others online.

The curriculum is great because it makes kids think and reflect about their actions online and offline. During the digital footprint lesson, students reflected on the question "Am I the person I see on the Internet when I google my name? Is this how I want to present myself to the world?"

After the lesson, my students began to understand that there's a difference between making themselves look "cool" and purposefully sharing what they post on the internet. That made me happy, because a lot of kids think that the purpose of Facebook and Instagram is to show off and put on a facade, but that's not necessarily the best representation of themselves.

The next step for my class was to create a "digital footprint", where we each made a physical footprint that doubled as an infographic to hang outside of my classroom. The footprint included how my kids wanted to represent themselves to others online. For the longest time, most of my kids didn't have access to computers, so to discuss their online life at this level of detail is a huge step in the right direction.



Reducing Cyberbullying

We had cyberbullying occur a lot last year. Kids wrote negative comments about other students online and thought it was private or that teachers and parents wouldn't discover it. The cyberbullying spilled into the school building, causing fights in hallway after school. When we investigated what caused the problems, it often stemmed from comment or post on social media.

“*A lot of our social media drama has declined since we made an effort to teach digital citizenship.*”

After we rolled out the curriculum, students began to think “I don't want to be portrayed as a mean person, so I want present myself as a better person online.” A lot of our social media drama has declined since we made an effort to teach digital citizenship. Once we discussed the specifics of cyberbullying, digital identity, and digital footprint, my students realized that their words online could have a negative impact on their classmates, they understood the permanence of their comments, and built up empathy for what it would be like on the other side of the bullying situation. Many of the online troublemakers realized “wow, this can have a negative impact on my classmates and the community in general.”

We've had a lot fewer problems this year that started on social media, and in my opinion it's because of the digital citizenship curriculum. Having the conversations as a class has made a big difference in how the kids think and act when they're online.

Ease of Use

With the digital citizenship curriculum, I rarely need to supplement or modify the lessons. The kids can relate to the content, it's kid-friendly language, and it also helps build their vocabulary. Even for my eighth graders who often think they're “too cool for school,” they get excited about the next activity in the lesson, they look forward to learning the key concepts, and they're excited about how much they get to participate and voice their opinion.

I find the lessons easy to plan and execute on Nearpod, and if I want more information or want to read the lesson plan, I can visit Common Sense's website. In addition, I have the Nearpod app on my phone, so I can easily preview any lesson wherever I am, make sure I know what I'm going to

teach, find points in the lesson where I'll need to add a deeper explanation, and make sure that all the websites work with our content filter. My district also has a requirement that we post our lesson plan each day, and it's easy to print a copy of the lesson plan from Common Sense or print out the Nearpod lesson and post it near my door in case I have a visitor.

Before I found the Nearpod & Common Sense digital citizenship curriculum it took me at least an hour to plan for each digital citizenship lesson because I had to make sure every website worked, think through the flow and timing of the lesson, and build in procedural time for directing students to online resources. But with the Nearpod and Common Sense curriculum, everything is packaged together, and it's easy for my kids to understand.

A lot of the topics like gender stereotypes, sexting, and cyberbullying are difficult to discuss if you don't have a thoughtful, well-designed lesson. The curriculum developers definitely understand how to be age appropriate and sensitive to developmental stages of my students.

Impact on school culture

Discussing digital citizenship makes our lives as teachers a lot less complicated as we're not trying to mediate issues that we don't even know about. We're not friends with our kids on Facebook or Snapchat, so we don't know about problems that start online, and we're taken by surprise when the problems enter the building.

“Online issues have not spilled over into the school building this year, which creates a safer environment for our kids.”

Since we're now proactive about these topics, kids can identify and solve problems online before they escalate. Now, it's impossible to know if all of the students are behaving appropriately online all the time, but online issues have not spilled over into the school building this year, which creates a safer environment for our kids. Teaching digital citizenship on Nearpod makes my students feel like they can express themselves honestly and not feel embarrassed or scared of the reactions of others. That makes Nearpod lessons much more powerful than using the paper-based lessons, because the kids have an added sense of security to be themselves because their answers will be shared anonymously. Even when you create a classroom community where teachers and students

have high expectations and respect for each other, there are still kids who shy away from sharing their thoughts. I find that kids respond better if they can write without the fear of judgement, then they're confident and excited when I share their answer. It's awesome to look over and see the smiles on my shy students' faces when their answer appears in front of their classmates. It allows the class to see the value of diverse perspectives and start a discussion around the topic of the lesson rather than the student whose answer is shared.

Harmony Cano

Educational technology coach.

Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, CA.

Harmony is one of two education technology coaches in Pasadena Unified School District, serving 30 school sites and 1000+ teachers across the district. She previously taught middle school social studies and ELA in Pasadena.

Background

I'm one of two education technology coaches in Pasadena Unified School District. My colleague and I help 1000+ teachers at 30 school sites with classroom technology integration. Since we have so many school sites and there are only two of us in the district, it's challenging to get out to all the sites to create curriculum and to assist with hands-on technology integration. We used the Common Sense Digital Citizenship curriculum before we used the Nearpod & Common Sense curriculum. Before the Nearpod curriculum launched, it was overwhelming for teachers to use the curriculum and challenging for us to coordinate. Common Sense & Nearpod's partnership has been a huge asset to our district.



District-wide benefits of using Nearpod & Common Sense

The curriculum is delivered in a way that's student and teacher-friendly. There is minimal prep time for teachers, the lesson plans are easy to follow, teachers can preview the lessons, there are interactive activities, and links to other resources that teachers can use. It has made life easier for everyone, and the digital citizenship roll-out in our district has been a success. The way this curriculum is built makes it easy for everyone involved.

The Nearpod platform has helped our small technology team deploy digital citizenship lessons to teachers around the district, whereas beforehand, distributing the lessons to 1000+ teachers every year was a difficult task! With this curriculum, it was easy to build a library of digital citizenship lessons in our district Nearpod account where teachers accessed and downloaded the lessons in a ready-to-teach format. Additionally, we now have reports in Nearpod that we can send to the state, and Nearpod has helped tremendously with the paperwork we have to complete for e-rate compliance.

“*The digital citizenship roll-out in our district has been a success. The way this curriculum is built makes it easy for everyone involved.*”

Efficient lesson prep

The teachers' favorite aspect of the lessons is how age appropriate they are. Teachers don't have to plan the lessons and consider how to approach the principles of digital citizenship for different age groups. The students are really engaged, and developmentally the lessons catch the students' attention. They can easily access and interact with the curriculum, and they feel like they're learning from their peers because there are videos from kids their age, and teachers can easily share responses from their classmates. We love the curriculum, and we're excited and blessed to have it. I look forward to continue using this great resource from Neapod & Common Sense!



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