Digital Life Newsletter For Parents

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This week (October 18 -22) is Digital Citizenship Week. Here is a list of things you can do to raise good digital citizens.

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The Internet has made our lives better and easier in a lot of ways, but it's also created new ways of getting into trouble, too. Encourage your child to be a good digital citizen with these six tips.

The digital world and the physical world are more alike than people think.

Social media isn't going anywhere, and instead of reacting against it and micromanaging students' online behavior, we should mentor them. It should fall on adults to encourage kids to behave responsibly and to become good digital citizens.

Actions performed in the digital world have real-life consequences, which is something kids lose sight of easily when they're in the midst of scrolling through a feed or leaving a comment on someone's status update. Just as a student should strive to be a good citizen in her daily life, she should carry these principles into cyberspace.

1. Leave a positive digital footprint.

Using social media and the Internet more broadly can have both positive and negative effects. Anything posted there may become part of a student's — both those elements of her online presence that he/she actively curates and those that are left behind unintentionally.

A Kaplan survey found that 35 percent of college admissions officers in 2014 said they visited an applicant's social media pages to learn more about him/her. Some online presence, or a positive digital footprint, can be good thing!

If students are taught how to be good digital citizens, their online actions won't come back to haunt them when it's time to apply to colleges or begin their careers.

2. Know the (other) golden rule.

The anonymity of the Internet leads many to ignore or forget the implications of what they write before posting or sending. Regardless of privacy settings, students need to assume that anything they do on social media is public, and that everything they post can be traced back to them. Every time they share something online, they should assume that a parent, teacher, or potential employer might one day find it with a Google search.

3. Always be nice (and encourage others to be nice, too).

Cyberbullying is a real problem. Instead of insulting or harassing a peer face-to-face, students turn to social media. This may happen in a place where the student may see it, or it may happen out of her sight. But a rumor about (or an embarrassing photo of) another person, if shared online, has the power to impact the subject's social life, emotional and mental well-being, and school performance.

Students need to practice treating each other with the same respect online as they do in person. We should remind students to think twice before posting anything online. They should ask themselves the following question every time they mention someone else online: How would you feel if the same thing were posted about you?

It is the job of parents and guardians to teach kids to think about how their posts look to others outside their communities. For example, what would a college admissions officer think about the way a given student talks about peers, teachers, or school in general?

4. Avoid suggestive material.

As a parent, it can be uncomfortable thinking about some of the inappropriate situations teens may put themselves in. One of these — sending sexually suggestive messages ("sexting") is a risky behavior that many teens cop to doing. According to a recent Drexel University survey, 54 percent of college students admitted that they sent or received "sexually explicit text messages or images" before they turned 18. (It's worth noting that this is a crime when either party is a minor.)

Once a student sends someone a picture or a video, it is no longer under his/her control. Not only does this create a permanent digital record — the receiving party can do whatever he/she wants with it. The

best way to combat this is to talk to students both about potential legal and social risks involved with this inappropriate behavior.

5. Beware of stranger danger.

A common (but often overlooked) aspect of the Internet is that people lie. That supposed 17-year-old from another school your child has been talking to on Twitter or Instagram could actually be someone lying about his/her identity in order to steal personal information.

This sort of behavior can become dangerous if your child begins sharing specific locations where he/she and his/her friends hang out or where they go to school. Establish a set of general rules about best privacy practices to be safe online.

These should include not giving out addresses, current location, login information for any site, and bank or credit card information. It's even important to avoid mention of these things in emails. If someone is able to obtain an email username and password, a simple search could give this person access to lots of sensitive stuff, like banking and credit card accounts, not to mention PayPal and Venmo.

By avoiding unknown people online and enabling strict privacy settings, students can be more confident about knowing who they're communicating with.

6. Don't steal.

With research and other information so readily available, students need to be extremely cautious about plagiarism or otherwise appropriating someone's work in an illegal or improper way. Not only is it considered cheating to hand in a paper or homework assignment using words or thoughts taken from another source (accidentally or on purpose), but it may in some cases be considered a criminal offense punishable by law.

To avoid plagiarism, students should keep up-to-date on MLA, APA, or any other citation style their school uses, and record sources as they research. They should also get into the habit of attributing every source, even if it's a small, independent blog. In a similar vein (and it should go without saying), students should never share test questions or answers online.

This advice is not limited to words and thoughts — videos, music, and images are also the property of their original creators, and students must receive permission or provide appropriate citation to use them in any way.

Even when students are posting photos they've taken of other individuals (like their friends) on social media, it's polite to ask permission first. As mentioned above, once someone snaps a photo, it has the

potential to end up anywhere. Even if you know and trust a given friend, chances are you don't know and trust *all* of that person's friends, especially on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat.

It's unrealistic to think that students will forgo social media (or using the Internet in general) for the sake of school or work, but maintaining a healthy, positive, and clean Web presence will help your child to stay out of trouble with the law, his/her peers, teachers, and potential bosses.

Il the information in this issue was taken from the following website:

https://www.noodle.com/articles/6-rules-for-raising-good-citizens-in-the-digital-world