

Rationale:

While the multitude of social sectors feel the importance of developing good citizens, it often falls to Education to introduce and build the specific skills necessary for people to move from childhood to productive adulthood. However, as has been long known, it takes more than a school to produce these model citizens. Once technology moved into schools, the definition of responsible and productive citizen had to change to accommodate the impact of instant global communication. Yet, almost 40 years after the introduction of ICT into schools, many jurisdictions are only now looking to catch up to where they feel they can manage interactions students and teachers are having with learning via the Internet. If we include the exponential growth of mobile technologies, we can be assured that we will struggle to only pay catch-up to the growth in technology impacting education.

Knowing that we are stuck in a position of playing catch-up, it would seem to make more sense to accept that technology will continue to change and develop and look for ways to ensure that our children are taught how to not only utilize technology, but incorporate it into their educational and personal development in constructive ways. We need to develop strategies that build and model the skills that need to be internalized in order to be responsible and ethical citizens. Any strategies we conceive, should be done with the guidance of non-restrictive policies that turn away from those based on fear-mongering, to ones based on fear-management and eventually to those that are based on fear-dismantling.

For this to be successful, there needs to be honest and accepted input from various sectors of society. We cannot assume that the community that is expected to raise a child is the one where the child lives. Due to the easy access to the internet, children are exposed to a far broader community than their parents and grand parents were. It would make sense that the same broader community is also acknowledged when gathering the data needed to build our strategies to develop a new definition of citizen.

Definitions:

These are some of the key terms, which are important to define for clarity when discussing this proposal.

School Authority

This term refers to the [Department of Education](#) in Yukon Territory. The school authority would include any reference to the officers that have responsibility to directly to the Minister of Education such as the Deputy Minister, the Assistant Deputy Minister, Superintendents, and various department Directors.

Policy

For the purpose of this proposal, policy refers to all elements of regulation within the School Authority as established in the [Education Act](#). This includes any School Authority approved policies, any associated administrative regulations and guidelines.

Educational Web 2.0 Tools

As defined on [Dictionary.com](#):

“A loosely defined term for web applications that go beyond displaying individual pages of static content and allow a community of users to interact with the site and each other by adding or updating the content.

Examples include social-networking sites like [Facebook](#) and other web-based communities, hosted services like Google Docs, web applications like GMail, video-sharing sites ([Youtube](#)), wikis (Wikipedia), web logs, [mashups](#) and [folksonomies](#).”

Cloud Computing

Cloud computing refers to the sharing of computer resources rather than having local servers or computers manage applications. It is a way of linking many different servers together to provide a simulation of a super-computer, which can access and process information much more quickly than a stand-alone computer. These computers are linked through the Internet and thus can be located anywhere in the world. Of course, this creates potentially huge risks for users, especially schools, whose primary users are all minors. Protection of privacy becomes questionable when engaged in cloud computing. Internet security adviser, Rodger Grimes (2013), identifies 5 key risks associated with cloud computing; Shared Access, which means many users share the same computing resources; Virtual Exploits, which refers to the relationships in shared computing resources; Authentication, Authorization, and Access Control, which refers basically to data protection; Availability, referring to how securely stored your data is and if it has virtual back-ups ensured by the cloud provider; Ownership, which, surprisingly, means that you may not be the only owner of your data.

Each of these risks requires extensive research and knowledge by the IT specialists employed by the School Authority.

Digital Citizenship

Perhaps the most pertinent definition for this proposal is that of digital citizenship. Much of the underlying purpose of the educational system is to prepare students for full citizenship in the society in which they will live and work. A typical definition of citizenship would describe three basic elements. That citizenship occurs in a particular community, community members have rights, and these same members also have responsibilities. As our students move into secondary school, they make final preparations for inclusion into this definition with the help of direction by their teachers and even specific courses designed to help them learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Courses such as Planning 10 and Grad Transitions build awareness of key skills and attributes for transition to the 'real world'.

Digital citizenship creates another unique set of differences that are additional to the traditional definition. This is centered in what now constitutes a community. The internet provides limitless possibilities for joining communities, and, as with our traditional sense of community, these also require membership through rights and responsibilities. We cannot stop the exposure to this digital world of online communities so, as K – 12 educators, we need to help our students manage their digital lifestyles in a way that is safe, responsible, and still exciting. Jason Ohler (Ohler, 2015) has focused on the nature of digital citizenship in the context of education. He points out that we have shifted from technological stewardship to how we now gather and behave locally and globally within this networked environment. He points out the emergent hot-button topics related to networking through mobile technology have moved from [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), to sexting and using adult content resources like [YouTube](#). He maintains that our kids' need to stay connected through mobile technologies have propelled digital citizenship into our schools as an area of primary concern.

Part of the process of developing digital citizenship will require research into a program for our students on digital literacy. Participants in the draft policy process will examine the requirements for implementing such a program. The policy framework will also guide educators in developing policies, guidelines and regulations to address the challenges that students will encounter on their digital citizenship journey.

Invitation for Participation

If the development of digital citizenship is truly seen as important by the community in which the students are living, then there has to be a very transparent process for stakeholders to participate in the discussions leading up to the development of any policies. Alberta Education has developed the Digital Citizenship Policy

Development Guide (2012) to address this process. It recognized that the stakeholders felt that the process of getting to the policy was much more important than the product itself. They felt that the stakeholders participating in the policy development process were more likely to feel a sense of commitment to the policy because of meaningful involvement. Thus, when initiating the process of policy development, it will be critical to have an open invitation for stakeholders to participate in meaningful ways. This will include, research, legal interpretations, draft writing, literature review, gathering feedback, and legislative alignment.

A point to discuss for initiating this work will be how to gather enough information through collaborative means to make stakeholders feel that there was meaningful involvement. Certainly a detailed and exhaustive literature review is necessary as well as talking to a wide range of educational leaders in the Territory. Finally, ways need to be found to readily share findings, ask for feedback, and carry on a continuing conversation of the policy direction. Such avenues as blogs and wikis are easy to set up and host. This continuing conversation is a very important part of the overall process.

Areas to Consider for Digital Citizenship

A question we need to ponder is what we want our children to learn as part of a continuum that does not segregate school-time from home-time. We will continue to play catch-up with our kids and technology if we try to have them separate their lives into digitally unplugged while at school and a digitally saturated life away from school. To do this, is to place them into a situation where they have to learn to navigate the digital world alone and puzzle through the pitfalls such as cybersafety, privacy, digital footprint, and so on. We can see this has been largely the norm in our country when it comes to policy development. This usually results in our policies being seen as punitive for when our students do something wrong, rather than policies that support responsibility and forward thinking.

To focus on what a digital citizenship policy might contain, we can look at Mike Ribble's Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship (2015). Ribble defines digital citizenship as the norms of responsible and appropriate behavior we need to expect when using ICT. The themes are as follows:

1. *Digital Access: full electronic participation in society*
2. *Digital Commerce: electronic buying and selling of goods*
3. *Digital Communication: electronic exchange of information*
4. *Digital Literacy: process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.*
5. *Digital Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure*
6. *Digital Law: electronic responsibility for actions and deeds*
7. *Digital Rights & Responsibilities: those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.*

8. *Digital Health & Wellness*: physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.
9. *Digital Security (self-protection)*: electronic precautions to guarantee safety.

Local School Internet Use Policies and Codes of Conduct

Likely, all of our schools have policies in place that pertain to a specific code of conduct for each school that addresses how students and teachers are expected to act while in attendance. In addition, since the inclusion of ICT in our schools, administrators have had to develop policies governing the use of the internet and general expectations for online behavior. Both of these types of policies tend to require pointing out the negative behaviours that have been displayed at some point by students. To develop an overarching digital citizenship policy, we need to create a clear distinction between digital citizenship and acceptable use.

Digital Citizenship vs. Acceptable Use

We need to move away from the watchdog mentality that has developed in response to the overwhelming amount of media that is easily accessed via the internet. We know that there is as much media there that will harm our children as help them. Our problem is that we have focused on trying to find way to prevent our kids from accessing these “bad” types of media. Thus, our policies and guidelines have tended to be restrictive and punitive in nature. They emphasize the challenges and issues, especially those relating to behavior. These policies become restrictive and assume that digital access is not really a fundamental learning tool.

Conversely, digital citizenship policies look at how to support student learning. These policies focus more on how to teach students to exist as a positive member of digital environments, rather than trying to control their behavior. We are long past being able to take away the connectivity students have through ICTs. Rather than fight a losing battle, we need to recognize that students will be using online technologies as part of their learning experience and these technologies need to be used to prepare them for life in a society that is globally connected.

Digital Poverty

Digital poverty or the Digital Divide is the discrepancy between those that are able to have immediate and consistent access to the internet using ICTs. While it is important for us to develop policies addressing digital citizenship, we cannot ignore the reality that many children either go home to where internet connections or technology is very limited due to cost, or live in an area where there is little or no connectivity to the internet. We cannot assume that everyone has equal access to technology. Our policy development process must look at ways to bring all of the

children in our school system and our communities to a place where the final policy makes sense for everyone.

Conclusion

The development of a digital citizenship policy framework will be a long and exhaustive process. The success of the endeavor depends largely on our involvement of critical stakeholders in the process with opportunities for ongoing dialogue. While acceptable use policies have served a valuable purpose for many years, we need to move away from restrictive and punitive policies towards ones that support students in their navigation and integration in a globally connected and networked society.

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