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Digital Citizenship

As time spent in the digital world increase for people the responsibility of that time takes a more important role. With more and more information available issues of accessibility, plagiarism and copyrights become more prevalent. Teaching students to take on this responsibility is of utmost importance. They must be empowered to be responsible in their technological endeavors. However, as educators we must make available the resources and knowledge to make this empowerment possible.

Accessibility issues should be of a great concern to educators. Students with handicaps or less powerful computing devices may not be able to access information inside of technological resources. To combat this educators must be prepared in multiple ways to make this information accessible. First teachers must make time outside of the classroom to afford students the technology to complete assignments. This could mean providing time in their class after school, scheduling sufficient computer lab time or even ensuring multiple computing device compatibility with information they provide. Secondly teachers must not just post videos or pictures. They must provide descriptions of the material in text to describe and supplement the audio-visual material. This will enable those with audio or visual handicaps to access the information.

Digital responsibility also falls into two separate categories: plagiarism and copyright issues. Teachers must use plagiarism-checking websites to ensure responsible work of the students. They cannot simply use these websites but explain to the students the utter disadvantage of plagiarism. Plagiarism not only prevents true learning but it hinders the ability of students to think for themselves. Are humans simply allowed to find

answers to real life issues and copy and paste? No! The consequences of plagiarism are great and are simply not worth it. Why save an hour to write a paper when that hour saved will equal severe punishment or even expulsion? That hour saved will soon turn into hours and hours of headaches and *will* affect the rest of their lives.

Finally we come to copyright issues. The government is stepping up copyright infringement penalties and enforcement. Is a movie torrented off the internet worth multi-thousand dollar fines? Is that illegally downloaded movie worth jail time? Is that movie worth expulsion from your school or termination from your job? Students must realize the seriousness of these laws. Teachers can demonstrate this by having students do an assignment with coming up with an invention. The teacher then should have the students turn in said invention and present it to the class as their own idea. This would demonstrate to the students the feeling of someone else taking credit for their work and profiting from their work. A real example for students is a powerful tool.

In summary, digital citizenship is becoming more and more applicable as access and the depth of information online is widened. With this increase also comes an increase in monitoring. What was once considered only taboo (Napster, torrents, copy and paste articles) is now considered illegal and met with stiff penalties.