



CREATING ACCESS TO

Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy Education

Common Sense Kids Action works with policymakers, business leaders, and other advocates to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed. With millions of Common Sense parents, educators, and potential advocates in homes and schools across the nation, Common Sense's advocacy platform is building a movement dedicated to making kids America's top priority.



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A legislative solution to support digital learning in public schools

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FOREWORD

Kids and teens today are using the immense power of digital media to explore, connect, create, and learn in ways never before imagined. With this power, young people have extraordinary opportunities, yet they face potential pitfalls. Schools are dealing with the associated ramifications — such as cyberbullying, digital cheating, and safety and security concerns. These issues underscore the need for students to learn — and for teachers to teach — digital citizenship and media literacy skills.

Kids have never had as much access to the internet and mobile technologies at home and at school as they do today. Schools can play a critical role in ensuring students learn how to safely, ethically, and responsibly use media and technology resources. While media and technology have great promise for learning, young people need support and education to learn how to make sound judgments when navigating the digital world.

Policymakers around the country are now seeking policy solutions. In 2016, Washington state championed the nation's first comprehensive digital citizenship and media literacy legislation. The approach convenes a state advisory committee composed of researchers, administrators, educators, and others to review digital citizenship and media literacy curriculum and policy with the purpose of developing best practices and resources. The bill calls on the state education agency to develop and distribute a list of digital citizenship and media literacy best practices and recommendations to school administrators.

Additional states are taking notice. In 2017, 11 states introduced legislation that would expand access to digital citizenship and media literacy resources. Eight states have considered the model adopted in Washington state, with three additional states adopting the policy.

Policymakers understand the risks. This policy paper seeks to provide a background on the issue at hand, key definitions, and a detailed explanation of the successful efforts in Washington state that have now been duplicated throughout the country.

JR Starrett
Senior Director of National Advocacy
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THE WASHINGTON STORY

By State Sen. Marko Liias, Washington

In our increasingly digital age, it is imperative that parents and schools do everything possible to help young students learn how to responsibly assess digital opportunities and access them safely and productively. From media messages, both direct and indirect, to cyberbullying to privacy, today's kids face both opportunities and challenges we are only now beginning to understand.

Initially, the phrases "digital citizenship" and "media literacy" were foreign to me, but I was fortunate enough to meet with a constituent who was able to contextualize the importance of these concepts. Claire Beach, a retired media literacy educator and longtime Edmonds-Woodway High School teacher, reached out to me because she saw firsthand the need for a raised level of awareness. Claire's passion and determination made it clear to me that our schools can, and must, play a leading role in empowering and helping students become responsible users of digital resources in an increasingly complex communications environment.

It is clear that today's kids, whether they are consuming media, accessing online information, or communicating with their peers, face an entirely new ecosystem of communication and social norms. What can a legislature do to solve a multifaceted issue such as this? The key is focusing on what we teach students in school as they learn to navigate our world of digital information. If we are successful, they can learn to engage and succeed within the digital landscape, as well as protect themselves from missteps and malignant actions by others.

In Washington state, we decided the best approach to promote media literacy was to first establish a framework that we could build on for years to come. Our bill set up a process whereby students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, volunteers, other school employees, and community representatives

can engage in an ongoing discussion concerning safe technology use and digital citizenship.

Now, after a year of meetings by our media literacy workgroup, we have a set of recommendations that we can advocate for in the legislature and strive to deliver to our schools. While we may not be able to immediately implement every recommendation, we can now take the appropriate steps to continue to grow media literacy education in our state.

What I have found most encouraging is how receptive people across the political spectrum are to the concept. Legislators on both sides of the aisle are open to the idea that all our students need to have the tools and skills necessary to navigate the digital age. The important first step is exposing your colleagues to the concepts of "media literacy" and "digital citizenship" to promote a dialogue around their definitions and implications. Once there was an understanding of how important these concepts are for the safety, health, and success of our state's young people, we were able to achieve nearly unanimous support for the bill.

Ultimately, what we achieved is only the first step in getting our state on track for promoting media literacy in our schools. Nevertheless, it was important in establishing a base for us to grow from. It is imperative that we continue to educate and inform our friends, neighbors, and colleagues of the importance of promoting thoughtful, safe, and effective use of technology and media.

State Sen. Marko Liias
Washington



It is clear that today's kids, whether they are consuming media, accessing online information, or communicating with their peers, face an entirely new ecosystem of communication and social norms.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WASHINGTON STATE SENATE BILL 6273

In my role as Educational Technology Director at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), I had the privilege of convening and working with the Digital Citizenship Advisory Committee established by the 2016 bill sponsored by Sen. Liias (SB 6273). Our initial challenge was to come to common ground and shared definitions among the various interest groups called out to be part of the advisory committee, as each had a passionate interest in supporting students and educators, but had varied perspectives and hoped-for outcomes. Once we established trust and clarified what was realistic to expect from the legislation, we decided to focus on what's right for students and the benefits of proactive education. Along the way, we incorporated these strategies to maximize our impact:

- We tried to learn from successful practices already employed in some districts.
- We talked to a number of students, educators, and parents to get their insights and good ideas.
- We identified high-quality, vetted, and predominantly free and open resources already available.
- We highlighted existing model policies from several districts and the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA).
- We looked for ways educators can integrate this within existing curriculum and school structures (particularly in the absence of new state or federal funding or mandates).
- We identified partners to assist in providing critically important professional development (in our case, the Washington State Library and the teacher-librarian professional organization).

Here are their recommendations, included as part of their Digital Citizenship Report to the Legislature:

1. Convene a working group to update the state K-12 learning standards for educational technology that align with the advisory group's definitions of digital citizenship and media literacy, national standards, and learning standards in all subjects.
2. Consider possible revisions to district policies to better support digital citizenship, media literacy, or internet safety in schools.
3. Create a web-based location to recommend successful practices and resources and work with the K-12 community and other stakeholders to identify and develop additional Open Educational Resources to support digital citizenship, media literacy, and internet safety in schools.
4. Provide support for professional development for teachers, focused on integrating digital citizenship and media literacy in all core standards, starting with English Language Arts and Social Studies.
5. Examine improvements in districts' library information and technology programs as defined in state law to determine ways in which teacher librarians can lead, teach, and support digital citizenship and media literacy across all grades and content areas.

The 2017 Legislature is considering a bill sponsored by Sen. Liias that would support three of these recommendations. Senate Substitute Bill 5449 would require the Washington State School Directors Association to review and revise its model policy and

procedures on electronic resources and internet safety, as well as develop a checklist of items for school districts to consider when updating their policy and procedures. It would also require OSPI to survey teacher-librarians, principals, and technology directors to understand how they are currently integrating digital citizenship and media literacy education in their curriculum, as well as create a web-based location with links to recommended successful practices and resources to support digital citizenship, media literacy, and internet safety, including the information gathered in the survey. The media literacy resources would be required to consist of a balance of sources and perspectives.

In addition, OSPI has partnered with the Washington State Librarian and the teacher-librarians professional organization to provide free six-hour "Digital Citizenship Leadership for Teacher-Librarians" training at various locations around the state in March-June 2017. This free workshop is primarily for teacher-librarians, but is open to all interested educators and addresses these big questions:

- What are digital citizenship and media literacy? Why do they matter?
- How teacher-librarians are instructional leaders in digital citizenship and media literacy training.
- Successful models for integrating digital citizenship and media literacy training across the curriculum.
- Where to find high-quality resources to support the work of teachers and students.
- Interactive, takeaway activities that can be implemented in schools and districts.

Dennis Small
Education Technology Director
Office of Superintendent of
Public Instruction



Once we established trust and clarified what was realistic to expect from the legislation, we decided to focus on "what's right for students" and the benefits of proactive education.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cyberbullying The use of digital media tools, such as the internet, cell phones, and social media, to deliberately upset or harass others.

Digital Citizenship Digital citizenship is a set of skills for thinking critically, behaving safely, and participating responsibly in the digital world. It includes appropriate, responsible behaviors in areas such as internet safety, privacy, reputation, identity, communication, collaboration, copyright, creativity, and skills around finding and evaluating trustworthy information online. In addition, digital citizenship includes the deliberate, age-appropriate use of digital tools to have a positive impact on personal, family, school, social, and community life. Digital citizenship goes hand in hand with media literacy education.

Digital Literacy Digital literacy consists of the skills and perspectives needed to read and write using a range of digital devices, typically in a networked environment.

Information Literacy Information literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information from a variety of sources. It includes the ability to search for and effectively find information, but also to critically analyze the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of information sources. In addition, information literacy includes the ability to effectively use sources according to copyright and fair use and to cite sources appropriately (such as via MLA, APA, Chicago Manual). Finally, the ability to meaningfully curate sources is an important skill.

Internet Safety Internet safety refers to staying safe from online risk, such as avoiding risky online talk or encounters with inappropriate and harmful content.

Media Literacy Media literacy is an augmented conception of literacy that can respond to and reflect communication in the digital age. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate using information in all forms. Media literacy is composed of competencies in understanding and using fundamental dimensions of communication, including but not limited to authorship, message construction, message purpose (both implicit and explicit), audience, aesthetic and technical elements of production, and message effects.

News Literacy News literacy is the application of critical thinking skills to the identification and consumption of news and journalistic information. News literacy includes skills in analyzing and evaluating the reliability of news information, specifically in discerning fact from opinion, bias, or agenda. As with other forms of literacy, production skills are essential to becoming news literate.

Sexting A play on “texting,” the voluntary or involuntary sharing of one’s own nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit photographs, videos, or description in the online space.

THE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND MEDIA LITERACY ACT

An act relating to digital citizenship and media literacy in public schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE:

SEC. 1.

The legislature recognizes that media and technology have become pervasive in all areas of our lives. In our classrooms, students must learn how to safely, ethically, responsibly, and effectively use media and technology resources. Kids have never had as much access to the internet, media, and mobile technologies at home and school as they do today. Schools can play a critical role by educating, empowering, and engaging children with the best practices around technology use. While media and technology have great promise for learning, young people need support and education to learn how to make sound judgments when navigating the digital world. School administrators and educators are now faced with new and at times overwhelming challenges, such as those related to privacy, digital footprints, cyberbullying, and sexting. The legislature intends to provide a process by which students, parents or guardians, teachers, teacher-librarians, other school employees, administrators, and community representatives will engage in an ongoing discussion on safe media and technology use, with the goal of establishing digital citizenship and media literacy as part of the state's basic education goals and essential academic learning requirements.

SEC. 2.

(1) For the purposes of this section, "digital citizenship" and "media literacy" are broad terms that encompass consumption and production of media and digital products. "Digital citizenship" requires a diverse set of skills related to current technology and social media use and includes the norms of appropriate, responsible, and healthy behavior. Major areas include safety concerns such as cyberbullying prevention. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, develop, produce, and interpret media, and encompasses the foundational skills that lead to digital citizenship. Digital citizenship and media literacy education provides digital technology skills essential for success in the 21st century.

(2)(a) By DATE, the State Education Agency shall identify best practices and recommendations for instruction in digital citizenship and media literacy, and report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on strategies to implement the best practices and recommendations statewide. The best practices and recommendations must be developed in consultation with an advisory committee as specified in paragraph (b) of this subsection. Best practices and recommendations must include instruction that provides guidance about thoughtful, safe, and strategic uses of online and other media resources and education on how to apply critical thinking skills when consuming and producing media in any form.

(2)(b) The State Education Agency must convene and consult with an advisory committee when developing best practices and recommendations for instruction in digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy. The advisory committee must include representatives from the School Superintendents Association; experts in digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy; and other stakeholders,

including teacher-librarians, parent organizations, educators, and administrators. Recommendations produced by the committee may include, but are not limited to:

(i) Revisions to the state learning standards and (or) the state educational technology plan.

(ii) Revisions to the model policies and procedures on digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy developed by the School Superintendents Association.

(iii) School district processes necessary to develop customized district policies and procedures on electronic resources and internet safety that can be used within a district technology plan.

(iv) Best practices, resources, and models for instruction in digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy.

(v) Best practices, resources, and models for instruction of digital citizenship, including media literacy, that are compliant with federal E-rate programs and federal mandates established in the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

(vi) Strategies that will support school districts in local implementation of the best practices and recommendations developed by the State Education Agency, including strategies for delivering professional development to educators and administrators.

(3) Beginning in the YEAR school year, a school district shall annually review its policy and procedures on digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy. In reviewing and amending the policy and procedures, a school district must:

(3)(a) Involve a representation of parents or guardians, teachers, teacher-librarians, other school employees, administrators, students, and community representatives with experience or expertise in digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy issues;

(3)(b) Consider customizing the model policy and procedures on electronic resources and internet safety;

(3)(c) Consider existing school district resources; and

(3)(d) Consider best practices, resources, and models for instruction in digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy, including methods to involve parents.

ABOUT US



Common Sense Kids Action

Common Sense Kids Action has been a leading resource for policymakers, school administrators, educators, and parents interested in learning additional ways to help kids thrive in a world driven by media and technology. We believe good online behavior mimics good offline behavior and that there is no differentiating between the two when it comes to safety, responsibility, and respect.



Media Literacy Now

Media literacy advocacy empowers grassroots groups of parents and concerned individuals in their push to bring classroom curriculum to local schools. Media Literacy Now provides policy and advocacy information, expertise, and resources to develop state laws to implement media literacy education in schools.



NAMLE

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) is a professional association for educators, academics, activists, and students with a passion for understanding how the media we use and create affects our lives and the lives of others in our communities and the world. The NAMLE vision is to see media literacy be highly valued and widely practiced as an essential life skill for the 21st century.



SETDA

Founded in 2001, the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) is the principal nonprofit membership association representing U.S. state and territorial educational technology leaders. Our mission is to build and increase the capacity of state and national leaders to improve education through technology policy and practice.

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