

## Districts should teach their students digital smarts

**Y**ou need a driver's license to drive. You need a pilot's license to fly. Why don't you need a license to navigate digital technology?

Consider the following scenarios:

1. A cell phone rings in class.
2. Students "flame" other students in e-mail messages.
3. Students share music files with each other on a regular basis.
4. Students copy online materials without giving credit to the source or authors.

Sound familiar? The problem is students are using and abusing technology without understanding digital citizenship. What is this? Digital citizenship is the norms of behavior with regard to technology use. Misusing technology is a major problem in schools. While it might sound like an extreme idea, we think schools should require a digital citizenship license. Teachers should issue this to each student before they begin to navigate the waters of technology.

What would a digital driver's license look like? The following items from a digital citizenship license/quiz will give you an idea. The questions cover a range of major themes, such as digital etiquette, security, responsibility and user rights. For the full quiz or more information on digital citizenship see [coe.ksu.edu/digitalcitizenship](http://coe.ksu.edu/digitalcitizenship).

### 1. During school hours the correct cell phone ringer setting is:

- A. low
- B. vibrate
- C. specialized ring tone
- D. high

### 2. Technology-based assignments should be:

- A. avoided because some students may not have access to technology at home
- B. integrated into the classroom

- C. approached cautiously for fear of offending someone
- D. assigned for out-of-class work only



**In many ways, a lawless digital society exists. Acceptable use policies are important, but they are not enough.**

### 3. Information on the Internet is:

- A. available for anyone to use as they want
- B. copyrighted and should be treated as other's property
- C. easy to copy and paste so it looks like something original
- D. unreliable and should be held suspect

### 4. If someone puts copyrighted material on the Internet and another person wants to use it, that person should:

- A. use it, if it is for educational use
- B. take it, and use it as they want
- C. not use the information because it is too much trouble
- D. ask permission from the author or at least cite the source

### 5. To protect a computer from virus, a user should:

- A. never open an e-mail message

- B. unplug your computer from the Internet
- C. keep up-to-date on virus protection
- D. trust your service provider to protect your computer

### Teaching Digital Citizenship

The merit of the driver's license metaphor is that it implies using technology is a privilege and not a right. There are rules to the road, and you must obey the law. Speed limits, stoplights and safety belts are part of being a good driver on the road. The same is true for navigating technology.

Digital citizenship should be taught at all levels in the K-12 curriculum and integrated in all subjects. While this quiz is suitable for middle school and high school students, elementary students need their own age-appropriate version of a digital citizenship driver's license.

There is considerable evidence that technology misuse and abuse is widespread and can be found inside and outside the school today. In many ways, a lawless society exists. While acceptable use policies are important, they are not enough. Students must understand what is appropriate and inappropriate and that comes through discussion and dialogue—not just following a set of rules.

Make digital citizenship a priority. Everyone—administrators, board members, teachers, parents and students—need to be involved in the dialogue about the appropriate use of technology.

Remember, the next time you hear a cell phone ring in a movie or at a wedding, ask the user if he or she has a technology driver's license. It is never too late to learn how to use technology appropriately. **DA**

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