



Common Sense Digital Citizenship Recognized District: Montour School District

GRADES K-12 | ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

#MontourProud: It's a hashtag that represents an entire community's commitment to using social media responsibly to promote school culture. And it's just one of the many ways the Montour School District has made digital citizenship a priority and empowered students, parents, and teachers to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly online.

Montour, located in a suburban community a few miles outside Pittsburgh, has led a district-wide effort to implement Common Sense's Digital Citizenship Curriculum and earned Common Sense District Recognition (formerly called "Certification") for the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years.

Why Digital Citizenship?

The Montour School District first implemented a one-to-one technology program using Chromebooks with its high school students five years ago. Today, the district is nearing one-to-one in all grades from K-12.

When Montour High School made a commitment to a robust one-to-one digital environment, Superintendent Dr. Christopher Stone recognized the need for educating the staff and greater Montour community on the importance of digital citizenship. Dr. Stone is proud of the district's commitment to ensuring every student is safe and responsible online.

"Our tagline at Montour is 'Student-Centered; Future-Focused,'" Stone said. "To be true to our tagline, we must always put the students at every decision. But [we must] also be thinking about them now and in the future." He said working together with teachers, parents, and partners like Common Sense is essential in order to provide the resources and support students need going forward.

Justin Aglio, the director of academic achievement and district innovation for Montour, sees digital citizenship as a crucial component of a well-rounded curriculum. "If your mission and vision say that you want to produce good citizens for the 21st century, for me, it's 'common sense' to teach them to be safe and responsible in a 21st-century learning environment. We need to put our money where our mouth is and make digital citizenship a priority, just like you make math and literacy a priority."

Implementation

Pamela Diianni, a high school library media specialist who's been with the Montour School District for 13 years, started teaching digital citizenship lessons at Montour High School in 2013. At the time, the district had no formal program, but Diianni felt strongly that the students needed guidance in these essential skills. She started out with seniors, but quickly turned her focus to the ninth-grade students, whom she described as less "jaded" and more receptive to the lessons.

Inspired by Diianni's initiative at Montour High School, Aglio decided to implement Common Sense's Digital Citizenship Curriculum for all K-12 students in the district starting in 2015. With the support of Jennifer Eehalt, a Common Sense Education specialist, Aglio worked to develop a K-12 scope and sequence for the district.

By year two, Aglio settled on a blended approach to the district's digital citizenship implementation, which ensured buy-in from administration, teachers, staff, and students. Aglio felt it was

STATISTICS

No. of Students: 2,894

No. of Schools: 3

Ethnicity of Study Body:

White: 87%

African American: 5%

Asian American: 3%

Hispanic/Latino: 2%

Multiracial

(not Hispanic): 3%

Economically Disadvantaged Students: 27%

English-Language Learners: <1%

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important for the classroom teachers to introduce the digital citizenship lessons to students. "The teachers know their students best," he explains, plus "they get the chance to learn a lot about their students through these lessons."

At Montour, every K-8 teacher receives a digital citizenship training and access to a district-designed resource portal. From within the portal, teachers have access to three digital citizenship lessons per grade level along with related videos and Family Tip Sheets. All K-8 teachers in the Montour school district teach three digital citizenship lessons in the first several weeks of the school year.

Computer teacher Rick Barie, who works with students in grades K-4, extends and reinforces what students learn in those introductory lessons with Common Sense's Digital Passport game. Barie's students love Digital Passport so much, they'll even ask to play it more after they've finished their assignment. "If they have free time, they'll come and play the digital citizenship game," said Barie. "Not only is the game fun and enjoyable for students, but it also supports digital safety."

As for the high school, Diianni works with all of the freshmen and sophomores. For last year's freshmen, she used Common Sense Education lessons on Nearpod. "I would be in the classroom teaching the students formally, and then I would give them a Nearpod lesson and do a flipped lesson, so I could reach more topics in less time," Diianni explained. She chose the Digital Compass interactive for last year's sophomores. "Even though it said for up to eighth grade, there was a really good response to it. As the students were more mature, they were able to appreciate it better."

Impact

Since the implementation of the Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum at Montour, Barie sees positive changes in students' understanding of what should be shared on the internet, what's private information, and what can get you into trouble. Diianni also notices that students experience "lightbulb moments" with certain lessons, where their assumptions are challenged and their understanding of a topic deepens. Aglio sees how the digital citizenship lessons help teachers create a culture of digital citizenship in their classrooms. Though the topics are introduced early in the year, he explains that the teachers "touch back on those topics" later on.

But a true testament to the Montour community's commitment to embracing digital citizenship is #MontourProud, a student-led effort to promote the district on social media. Aglio asked high school students in a marketing class to develop a social media marketing campaign for the school system, and they transformed that initial plan into an ongoing effort. Students created social media accounts for the district, which they use to communicate announcements to the community. They also use the hashtag

#MontourProud to highlight the great work of students and educators in classrooms throughout the district. Montour School District's efforts to promote digital citizenship and positive social media were even featured in national magazines.

#MontourProud has also surfaced in parent feedback. When Aglio spoke recently at a conference at Robert Morris University, an attendee posed a question about parent engagement as it related to the district's digital citizenship efforts. Before

Aglio could answer, an audience member raised a hand and said, "I'm a teacher in another school district, but I'm also a parent in Montour School District, and I could not be more proud to send my child there. I am #MontourProud." Another audience member echoed the same sentiments, and Aglio was happy to see that parents were there to give feedback on the positive impact digital citizenship has had on them.

Overall, teachers at the district are thankful for the development of such a strong digital citizenship community within Montour. Barie describes teaching digital citizenship as "rewarding" because "you're helping kids not only in school, but outside of school as well." Diianni is also proud of how far the district has come. "Being one of the first [Common Sense Education] Recognized Districts is a huge success," she said. "We started out small, and five years later it's gone districtwide."

Moving forward, Superintendent Stone hopes to reassess the digital citizenship curriculum and look for more ways to weave it into their curriculum on a daily basis. In addition, Diianni, Barie, and Aglio all identified parent outreach as a priority in the upcoming years. They hope to engage with parents through info nights and presentations at PTA meetings that are both accessible and appealing. As a new school year begins, Aglio is confident in the growth of digital citizenship in the Pittsburgh region and in Pennsylvania as a whole.

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**DR. CHRISTOPHER STONE
SUPERINTENDENT**



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MONTOUR PARENT

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