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*Lynn University*

Iris K. Thompson  
*Lynn University*

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PARENTAL STRATEGIES

*Parental Strategies to Promote Mental Health in Digital Citizens of Grades 6-8*

By

Maria Cavallo Benkirane and Iris K. Thompson

A Dissertation in Practice

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate in Education

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Lynn University

Ross College of Education

2021

### **Abstract**

The research conducted in this study was done to discern the best parental strategies to promote mental health in digital citizens of grades 6-8. The world of technology is very dynamic, and often these days children are advancing much faster than their parents. The purpose of this research study was to keep parents informed and educated of the latest trends, tools, and dangers in the digital world today. To achieve this goal the researchers held four online workshops over the course of two months to provide parents the tools necessary to raise responsible digital citizens. The results of the study proved that the workshops provided parents the knowledge they needed to promote digital citizens in the middle school aged child. The majority of the results from the comparison of the pre and post assessment survey were statistically significant with 90 - 95% certainty depending on the question. In the future, the researchers believe the effectiveness of the development of digital citizenship among middle school students would be improved if their families were introduced to the topic earlier in their educational journey, such as elementary school. Another recommendation would be yearly workshops to continue growth and understanding of digital citizenship. In conclusion, the data collected from the post survey indicates that overall, parents/guardians became empowered and knowledgeable in digital citizenship and were able to better guide their middle school aged child to become responsible digital citizens.

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### **Dedication**

We dedicate this research to our children, Ryaan and Zachary Benkirane and Matthew and Avery Thompson. We hope that from this experience you have learned that hard work pays off and you can truly accomplish anything you set your mind to. We love you more than words can say.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Problem Statement

“Kids are growing up on digital playgrounds and too often no one is on recess duty” (Honeycutt, 2018). This quote resonates with middle school aged children and their parents/guardians as society becomes more dependent on technology. Parents/guardians need to be aware of their child's involvement with the digital world and everything it entails (Ribble 2019). Americans spend nearly 42% of their waking hours on a screen (Schmall, 2018). This problem is compounded when the subjects are between the ages of 11-14 who do not have the cognitive development necessary to truly understand the ramifications of technology misuse (Koutrodimos, 2013). This study will provide parents/guardians the necessary tools and guidelines to help their children become successful digital citizens. A digital citizen refers to a person utilizing digital technology in order to engage in society (Mossberger et al, 2008). More specifically, a digital citizen is defined as one who uses technology appropriately and operates online safely and knowledgeably (Mossberger et al, 2008). Parents/guardians need to understand how to teach their children to interact using social media and technology in ways that help them and not hurt them. Gallagher (2017) argues, “There is a common assumption that because children and teens are “digital natives” they are more knowledgeable about how to best use that technology than adults.” This is not always the case. Children and especially middle school age children may seem comfortable trying out new apps, and many parents/guardians do not find the need to guide their child (Gallagher, 2017). However, proper guidance from the parent/guardian is needed more than ever. Parents/guardians and teachers can assist the middle school age child how to use digital tools in a positive, safe and productive way. Parents/guardians may not be all

that tech savvy, yet they can learn key terms and safety measures how to appropriately use technology. Once the parents/guardians are given the proper tools necessary, they can guide their middle school child using healthy technology. They can incorporate media literacy and learn how to protect their child utilizing privacy, security, and safety. According to Gallagher (2017), “Children need guidance from their parents/guardians and teachers to learn these skills. A bit of adult wisdom and common sense also come in handy.” As technology advances, a knowledge gap is widening between parents/guardians and children (Koutrodimos, 2013). Do parents/guardians know what apps their child is navigating, who they are speaking to online, and what they are posting for all to see? Prior research indicates a lack of parental awareness regarding media usage by their children (Vittrup, 2014). The researchers ascertain that parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen.

### **Purpose of Study**

A responsible digital citizen is one who uses technology appropriately and operates online safely and knowledgeably (Mossberger et al, 2008). The technology gap between what parents/guardians think they know and what their child is actually doing online is increasing exponentially as technology advances (Magid, 2012). There are skill sets that parents/guardians need to acquire in order to nurture the middle school digital learner. Teens and tweens spend an average of five to seven hours a day on screen media for entertainment and that doesn't include time spent using screens for school and homework (Rogers, 2019). Application of specific skills can help create a digital learner that is successful. Parental awareness on how the use of

technology can affect their child in grades 6-8 is key to creating a safe digital environment. The objectives of the study were two-fold:

- Middle school age children need digital citizenship skills to participate responsibly in daily life.
- Giving parents/guardians the knowledge to guide their middle school age children in the digital world will allow children to become responsible digital citizens.

Solutions strategies to guide parents/guardians in bridging the technology gap began with a pre-assessment survey to determine what prior knowledge parents/guardians have regarding digital citizenship. Once the results of the survey were analyzed, parent/guardian workshops were designed to give parents/guardians the tools needed to foster responsible digital citizens. Once a series of four parent/guardian workshops were completed, a post-assessment survey was administered at the culmination of the final workshop to determine if the workshops were successful in increasing parental knowledge of digital citizenship.

### **Research Questions**

1. What strategies do parents/guardians need to implement in order to guide their middle school child in becoming responsible digital citizens?
2. How does educating parents/guardians via workshops about the impact of technology on the social emotional well-being of their middle school aged child help parents/guardians to empower their child to become a responsible digital citizen?
3. How effective was educating the parents/guardians of children in middle school about responsible digital citizenship in alleviating parental concerns regarding their child's technology use?

**Significance of Study**

The significance of this study is to give parents/guardians the tools to prevent at risk behavior and promote mental health of digital citizens in grades 6-8. It is no great revelation that middle school aged children spend much of their time on various technical devices. This can include computers, portable tablets and phones. In addition, many parents/guardians are not aware exactly how their child spends their time on these devices. Their time is most likely distributed between academics, communication with friends and loved ones, social media sites, as well as gaming , videos, and other websites or applications. Although many parents/guardians are aware of the amount of time their child spends “connected”, many are lacking the tools to ensure the mental, emotional and physical safety of their child while plugged into these devices.

**Rationale**

As technology plays a larger and larger role in our society, it is important that parents/guardians not only know what their middle school aged children are looking at on their devices, but also to understand the various applications and websites and their potential harmful effects (Holland, 2017). The pressures and turmoil social media can impart to a young adult are substantial and can take a great toll on their social and emotional development, as well as potentially increase at risk behaviors. The problem being studied in this research is that many parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen (Mills 2014). In essence this means that parents/guardians do not understand the apps their child uses several hours a day, and are thus ill equipped to guide their child through the potential pressures and adverse effects using these apps can have on their social and emotional well being. Changes in the world of technology are occurring at such a rapid pace and



can be a challenge to stay abreast with the changes that are occurring (Butler, 2016). The problem is compounded with adults who are, for the most part, new to the use of technology. Most parents/guardians today did not use or come into contact with social media during their teenage years, and this lack of understanding and education causes the knowledge gap between parents/guardians and their teens to widen even more (Coaxum & Coaxum, 2013). Therefore, this leaves parents/guardians without the tools they need to successfully educate and protect their middle school teens from the pressures and potential problems they will face on the road to becoming responsible digital citizens. Teenagers are often the first to use new social media and digital technology. Stopbullying.org (2018) states that “95% of American youth aged 12–17 use the internet. Among U.S. teens that use social media, 88% witnessed mean or cruel behavior, 67% observe others joining in those negative behaviors, and 21% admit to joining in at least once in a while.” Not only do students behave in ways that are irresponsible and possibly cruel, they can just as easily be the victim of this bullying, thus increasing the rates of depression and teen suicide (Nguyễn, T., & Mark, L., 2014). In addition, teens are not educated as to what is acceptable to post on social media and what may not be. If these middle school students post provocative images or images of behavior of them doing something potentially illegal, this may likely have negative effects on their ability to be successful adults. If parents/guardians are not educated on how to create responsible digital citizens, then these young adults may have a higher incidence of at risk behaviors that could have compounded and long lasting effects into adulthood.

### **Solution Strategies**

- Pre-assessment survey to create workshops which will be implemented to give

parents/guardians the tools needed to foster responsible digital citizens.

- Four online workshops will be conducted and family media agreement distributed.
- Post-assessment survey will be sent at the culmination of the final workshop to identify increased knowledge

### **Background**

The importance of parental involvement and parental understanding of digital citizenship is an integral for children's academic success and development in grades 6-8. Parents/guardians and families, along with the school, are partners in helping their children develop digital citizenship skills (Lohmann, 2018). Educators and parents/guardians both understand the importance of social emotional skills and understand the need to manage emotions, to empathize, and being a responsible digital citizen in school and in life. Schools and families are not always on the same page on how to develop those abilities (CASEL Cares: SEL Resource, n.d.). Schools nationwide implement some programming with regards to digital citizenship. According to CASEL, consistency is key to build these skills. When schools and families have shared expectations and a common language for digital citizenship, it can help students thrive and be successful in the digital world (CASEL Cares: SEL Resource, n.d.). To involve parents/guardians in better understanding the digital world, invite parents/guardians to take a pre-assessment survey by asking what they know about digital citizenship. The use of the pre-assessment survey will give the researcher a better understanding of what the needs of the parents/guardians are. Parent/guardian workshops can be created which may guide them to a better understanding of digital citizenship.

Innovations in the digital world occur so fast that parents/guardians may feel they cannot keep up with the latest app or hack. Teenagers are often the first to use new social media and digital technology. Stopbullying.org (2018) states research shows that 95% of American youth aged 12–17 use the internet. Stopbullying.org (2018) also states that among U.S. teens that use social media, 88% witnessed mean or cruel behavior, 67% observe others joining in those negative behaviors, and 21% admit to joining in at least once in a while. Parents/guardians are important stakeholders in teaching their middle school aged child the safe and ethical way to navigate and represent themselves on various applications and on the internet (Magid, 2012). Digital etiquette is very important for parents/guardians to teach because it goes beyond the classroom (Stopbullying.org, 2018). “Kids rely on parents/guardians to both nurture their digital skills and set the boundaries for healthy and appropriate behavior”, says Dr. David Walsh, founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, and author of parenting books in his article ‘How Parents Can Instill Good Technology Habits in Children’ (2013).

### **Definition of Terms**

***Digital citizenship:*** Digital citizenship encompasses all technology and online opportunities that leave users safe, ethical, responsible, and informed of specific skills within the digital community (Ribble, 2019).

***Digital Citizen:*** a person who develops the skills and knowledge to effectively use the Internet and other digital technology, especially in order to participate responsibly in social and civic activities (Mossberger et al, 2008).

***Workshop:*** a usually brief intensive educational program for a relatively small group of people that focuses especially on techniques and skills in a particular field

***Social emotional learning:*** process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Overview of SEL. n.d.).

***Digital etiquette:*** refers to an individual's conduct online and in their use of technology (Digital Citizenship Skills, 2020).

***Digital literacy:*** refers to an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and compose clear information through writing and other mediums on various digital platforms (Digital Citizenship Skills, 2020).

***Digital Footprint:*** all the ways a personal trail is left when computers are used

***Media Literacy:*** smart consumption and ability to participate in online conversations

***Digital Security:*** keeping technical devices free from malware and protecting self from data loss

***Ethics:*** following personal values, community values and legal standards in the digital sphere

***Harmful Content:*** anything online which causes a person distress or harm

***Digital Safety:*** staying safe online from physical harms such as predators

***Cyberbullying:*** overt and covert intimidation using technical media

***Sexting:*** sending explicit photos or texts through digital means

***Digital native:*** a person born or brought up during the age of digital technology and therefore familiar with computers and the Internet from an early age

**Assumptions**

As researchers, assumptions clearly go with the topic being studied, however, not all may be accurate. Social media is a tremendous part of a middle school age student and they rely on various platforms to socialize and be part of different social groups (Martin et al., 2019). An assumption would be that parents/guardians do not have the same level of knowledge when it comes to social media and the components that go along with it. It is assumed that parents/guardians do not understand the relevance social media plays in their teens life as well. There are so many different types of social media platforms, do parents/guardians recognize how many middle school age students utilize it? Parents/guardians do not have a complete understanding of the level of distractibility social media causes including the social emotional aspect. The phenomenon under investigation is somewhat lawful and predictable because middle school age students were born into the digital era and they appear to know a tremendous amount when it comes to social media. Parents/guardians may know some but not all there is to know when it comes to the details in the numerous choices that social media has to offer. Middle school age students need to be educated on the risks social media poses. If parents/guardians are not properly educated, negative consequences could occur that could potentially last a lifetime. Parents/guardians need to comprehend the social media risks and how to properly educate their child.

**Delimitations**

A delimitation is defined as something outside the boundaries a researcher outlines by making something beyond the scope of the research project. There are several potential delimiters to this study. The first of these is that the independent variable in this study is

educating the parents/guardians on how to guide their middle school child to become a responsible digital citizen. This study does not focus on teacher intervention, nor does it focus on the digital relationship amongst the middle school aged students themselves. Another delimiter is that this study focuses on parents/guardians of middle school aged children, grades 6-8, and not the younger or older age groups. Middle school aged children are very unique in their needs as they are just entering their teens and very often do not have the maturity, either physically or emotionally, to deal with the pressures that social media can bring to their lives. Another delimiter is this study will focus on digital citizenship with regards specifically to social media and its dangers, and not on other aspects of technology dealing with understanding and utilizing it in reference to school assignments.

### **Theoretical Frameworks and Conceptual Theory**

Digital citizenship in general is important because it is the ability to participate intelligently, productively, safely and responsibly in the digital world for all people (W, Nina 2019). However, digital citizenship is especially important to middle school age students and can often be challenging for educators and parents/guardians to know where to learn more about digital citizenship or where to find digital citizenship lessons (Ribble, 2019). Mike Ribble's Digital Citizenship in Schools (2019) outlines nine core elements that create a culture of good digital citizens. The correct use of social media, etiquette, digital commerce, and dealing with cyberbullying and plagiarism, are all integral parts of becoming a responsible digital citizen. Swan (2018) states that just as motorists take driving education, digital age students need a course in how to navigate precarious situations online just as motorists take driver's education to learn how to recognize and react to road situations online. With this specific designed course

they developed the Digital Driver's License (DDL) project. Schools need to utilize this program as a guide and create a program that would measure digital citizenship proficiency. According to Swan (2018) the content should cover a broad range of topics, such as digital communications, etiquette, security, commerce, law, media fluency, and health and wellness.

One program, Cyber Civics (2020), sees digital citizenship as a positive, proactive approach to empowering young people to use technology with intelligence and confidence. This program addresses concerns such as cyberbullying, sexting, and online safety (Teach Students How To, n.d.). Although these are areas with which to be concerned, society wants younger people to learn positive ways to prevent these negative issues by learning in a purposeful way. Programs for digital citizenship can work, they just need to be implemented in a meaningful way that uses a positive approach that educates middle school age children so they are open to receive information (Ribble, 2019).

### **Data Collection Method**

This case study discusses parental involvement for safe online behaviors of students in grades 6-8. This study created effective workshops to increase parental awareness with regards to their grade 6-8 digital citizens. The objective of this study is to:

- Providing parents/guardians of middle school age children the digital citizenship skills they need to guide their child to participate responsibly in daily life.
- By empowering parents/guardians with the knowledge to guide their middle school age children through the digital world this will allow children to become responsible digital citizens.

For this case study, the parents/guardians are the research participants. Four online workshops will be created based on data collected via a google form pre-assessment survey done on a Likert scale to determine what skills the parent/guardian is not knowledgeable in and what gaps are present in this knowledge to help foster responsible digital citizenship in their child. The workshops will create opportunities for families to learn more about digital citizenship through presentations and provide parents/guardians with ideas on how they can build those skills at home. Following the workshops, a google form post-assessment survey will be administered to identify if parental concerns regarding their child's technology use were addressed and an increase in their knowledge base.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Middle school age children need digital citizenship skills to participate responsibly in daily life. With the increased use of technology such as cellphones, instant messaging, social networking sites, and online virtual communities amongst youths, these children are in dire need of support to develop into socially responsible citizens of the internet age (Wang, X., & Xing, W., 2018). Mike Ribble (2019) defines digital citizenship as, “a concept which helps teachers, technology leaders, and parents/guardians to understand what students/children/technology users should know to use technology appropriately.” Parents/guardians in the United States are still the primary gatekeepers and managers of their teens’ internet experience (Lenhart, et.al, 2011). Good digital citizenship starts at home. Instead of placing fear in parents/guardians, show them how to lead the way (Zuger, S. 2016).

### **Middle School Students General Information**

A typical middle school student in the United States is aged between eleven and fourteen and enters middle school in sixth grade. As they enter the 6th grade, the student is considered an early adolescent, they emerge three years later as an adolescent. During these early adolescent years, the middle school child will experience the beginning stages of puberty and go through tremendous social and emotional changes (Morin, 2019). Early adolescence and entry into middle school reflect change on multiple levels.

The middle schooler has more freedom compared to younger children, is engaged in higher academic requirements, and has greater organizational expectations. The child is now switching from class to class and is learning a new set of rules and responsibility for each class. Typically, five core classes with two electives. The middle school years are transitional years

where major changes in adolescent development occur (Pickhardt, 2011). These changes include biological and cognitive growth, social development, and changes in family relationships, especially the parent-adolescent relationship (Pickhardt, 2011).

### **Physical Development of Middle School Students.**

The middle school years are a time of extreme growth and development. The changes that occur during these years are vast when one considers the physical changes that occur during this time frame. Many students during this time are much more physically mature than they are emotionally mature. They start communicating more with their bodies, rather than verbally. This includes changes in posture and body language (Morin, 2019). These years mark the beginnings of puberty in both genders. Most girls will begin their menstrual cycle during these years and will deal with the accompanying changes to their bodies such as breast, hair growth, and weight changes (Puberty and growing up, n.d.). Boys will also experience physical changes such as body and hair growth, changes in voice, and development of the Adam's apple. During this time most young people become less coordinated and their height and weight shift rapidly. They often need more rest than in previous years due to the growth spurts that occur during this time. Although girls tend to mature earlier both physically and emotionally, both genders will become better at fine and gross motor skills towards the end of these years. Both genders will become stronger, however, boys will develop a higher percentage of muscle mass than their female counterparts (Puberty and growing up, n.d.).

There is a tremendous amount of brain development that occurs during this time. Adolescents begin moving from concrete to abstract thinking and to the beginnings of metacognition, which is the active monitoring and regulation of thinking processes. The middle

school child is developing skills in deductive reasoning, problem solving, and generalizing (Holland, 2017). This period of brain growth marks the beginning of a person's ability to do problem solving, think critically, plan, and control impulses. At this point the youngster still lacks full executive functioning of the brain. This is important to remember and consider when one looks at the effects of technology and social media during this developmental period.

(Morin, 2019)

As there are so many physical transformations already occurring during the adolescent stage, these changes are now happening alongside the added influence of social media and technology. *“Dopamine is known as the feel-good neurotransmitter—a chemical that ferries information between neurons”* (Dopamine, n.d.). It gets released when delicious food is eaten, after we exercise, or have a pleasant social interaction. It is part of the pleasure sensors of the brain. The increased release of dopamine is associated with high levels of gambling, and even cocaine use. There are four neural pathways responsible for the release of dopamine. In persons who may suffer some sort of addiction, one or more of these pathways is said to be malfunctioning (Haynes, 2018). When a person is exposed to a positive stimulus, three or four of these pathways get activated and thus release dopamine (Haynes, 2018). While social media itself does not cause the release of dopamine, the feeling individuals get when they receive “likes” or “loves” on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat have now become that positive stimulus needed to release dopamine. According to Chamath Palihapitiya, former Vice President of User Growth at Facebook, *“The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works. Smartphones and social media platforms they support are turning us into bona fide addicts.”* (Haynes, 2018). This problem is exacerbated in young

teens, as they are particularly sensitive to these releases of dopamine and will do anything they can to repeat the positive feelings they get from social media.

### **Cognitive Development of Middle School Students**

Cognitive skills develop a great deal between sixth and eighth grade. Many students start to pay more attention to their reasoning skills, especially ones that involve making decisions on their own (Morin, 2019). Much of their focus prior to these years has been on their parents/guardians' choices for them, their classes, their clothes, their food, even their friends. Once they reach middle school, many youngsters become more involved in their own choices. This is also a time when organizational skills begin to develop. They begin to organize their time, their ideas, and their academics on their own, rather than having it done for them. During the years of eleven to fourteen young people often begin to question things around them, rather than just accepting what they are told at face value.

This questioning leads to the development of higher order thinking. They also begin to develop something called flexible thinking, wherein they are open to changing their thoughts or approach to something. There may not be only one way to do something, the idea that others can be right begins to develop. They begin to question how their current actions may affect not only their future, but the future of the world around them. Concepts like climate change, political power, and influential people begin to make sense to them. They begin to develop their own sense or view of the world and to develop their own unique sense of values (Morin, 2019). There is a growing concern about how social media and technology use will affect the cognitive development of children between the ages of eleven to fourteen.

In one study completed by Mills (2015) from the University of Oregon, researchers found that internet use could affect a cognitive change in adolescents because of the ease of information retrieval. They found that when students expected to have easy future access to information, they were more likely to remember where to find that information, rather than the information themselves. Students may feel that remembering many pieces of information is less efficient than remembering where to obtain that information (Mills, 2015). Another concern of constant internet use is that it can lead to shallower thinking. The underlying hypothesis is that having constant access to limitless information removes the need for higher order cognitive thinking and analyzing.

In another recent study by Common Sense Media in 2015, it was reported that over 50% of students use social media simultaneously while doing their homework. Although when asked, the teens did not feel that this affected their performance on their homework. However, it is shown that multitasking, or the quick switching from task to task, in this way does show a decrease in academic performance and of information retention (Bryant, 2018). If this behavior continues through middle school and into high school years, the cumulative effects on their cognitive development could be substantial.

### **Social Development of Middle School Students**

Adolescence is a time in which students hone their social and emotional cues and learn how to navigate the world around them. The middle school years are a time of great social and emotional growth and development. The children begin to seek for their own individuality as they search for ways to fit in and find their place. Often their parents/guardians' opinions do not matter as much as they used to. Children may even go so far as to feel that their

parents/guardians opinions are invalid or even downright wrong. This is a period filled with peer pressure, cyberbullying, moodiness, insecurity, and secret keeping (Bryant, 2018). However, not all social development that takes place during these years is entirely negative. Youngsters often develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and may become aware of their own value and skills. They often become more introspective, thinking and looking within themselves for answers rather than seeking this information from others. They begin to pick up on social cues, becoming more aware of what is acceptable or not acceptable to say in a conversation with adults, or even their peers (Morin, 2019). One of the most common online activities is the use of social media, or communicating with others online. Using social media sites can have divergent effects. According to Mills, the use of social networking sites is associated with having a greater feeling of peer affiliation and less peer related loneliness than those who did not use social networking sites (Mills, 2015). This study suggests that adolescents who use social media are developing skills necessary to develop healthy peer relationships. However, when an individual's social cognitive skills are underdeveloped, such as those youngsters between the ages of eleven to fifteen, social networking sites may not foster development of healthy peer relationships. These individuals have not yet developed the necessary social skills at this age, and thus if their social development is stunted, they may suffer increased peer related loneliness through the years. These individuals may not develop the skills needed for direct face to face interactions and thus have not learned the social cues necessary to foster healthy social relationships (Bryant, 2018).

Another concern about being online almost continually is that it could make a child feel as though they were constantly being evaluated or watched (Bryant, 2018). This could become

problematic for adolescents who are already highly sensitive to being included or excluded amongst their peers. This could lead to increased incidences of depression or anxiety, feeling that they are not good enough, or what they said is “stupid.” A final potential hazard is cyberbullying. In the past if a child was bullied, at least when they arrived home they perceived they were safe, for the rest of the day or evening. In our digital age, this is not the case. Students may be bombarded with posts, texts or instant messages of why they are bad, wrong or unworthy (Bryant, 2018).

### **What is Digital Citizenship?**

Mike Ribble (2019) defines digital citizenship as, “*Digital citizenship is the continuously developing norms of appropriate, responsible, and empowered technology use.*” He further elaborates that people should “*lead and assist others in building positive digital experiences, recognize that their actions have consequences to others, and participate in a manner for the common good.*” Mike Ribble (2019) defines the nine themes of digital citizenship as:

**“1. Digital Access** is about the equitable distribution of technology and online resources.

Teachers and administrators need to be aware of their community and who may or may not have access, not only in school but at home as well. Educators need to provide options for lessons and data collection such as free access in the community or provide resources for the home.

**2. Digital Commerce** is the electronic buying and selling of goods and focuses on the tools and safeguards in place to assist those buying, selling, banking, or using money in any way in the digital space. Career and technical education use the tools of technology to show students the path for their future.

**3. Digital Communication and Collaboration** is the electronic exchange of information. All users need to define how they will share their thoughts so that others understand the message.

For students struggling to understand their place in the world, technology can help them find their own voices and express themselves.

**4. Digital Etiquette** refers to electronic standards of conduct or procedures and has to do with the process of thinking about others when using digital devices. Teachers can include Digital Etiquette as part of the classroom rules or academic goals. Whether in the classroom or online, being aware of others is an important idea for everyone.

**5. Digital Fluency** is the process of understanding technology and its use. The better educated or “digitally fluent,” students are, the more likely they are to make good decisions online, like supporting others instead of making negative comments. Digital literacy includes the discussion of media literacy and the ability to discern good information from poor, such as “fake news” from real news.

**6. Digital Health and Welfare** refers to the physical and psychological well-being in a digital world. Technology provides many opportunities and enjoyment, but knowing how to segment use with the needs of ourselves and others is key to a healthy, balanced life. Educators, especially in 1:1 schools or classrooms need to ask the question of how much screen time is appropriate for students. Common Sense media has developed a guide on this topic.

**7. Digital Law** refers to the electronic responsibility for actions and deeds and has to do with the creation of rules and policies that address issues related to the online world. Just as in the real world, the online world has had to create structure to protect those using these digital devices from harm. Support for issues such as cyberbullying and sexting are available from School



Resource Officers and other school counsel. Administrators need to come up with positive approaches to these issues in their schools and districts.

**8. Digital Rights and Responsibility** are those requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world. This area of Digital Citizenship is about helping students understand that when they are provided opportunities, such as the access to the Internet and use of online products, they need to be diligent in helping others as well, such as informing adults of potential problems. Educators must help students understand that protecting others both online and in the real world are essential skills to have.

**9. Digital Security and Privacy** is the electronic precautions to guarantee safety. Viruses, worms and other bots can be passed along from one system to another just like an illness. When using devices in school or at home, understanding and being aware of attacks and how to prevent them are important skills for today and into the future.”

One study discusses Ribble’s nine elements and how important it is to educate children in these nine realms. Ribble continues to work with school leaders on best practices for incorporating digital citizenship in school. He also emphasizes the importance of having all the stakeholders on board with the process so that it can translate into the community and home. Recently, Ribble along with his nine principles included the following three guiding principles: Safe, Savvy and Social also known as S3. Each of the above nine themes has three levels of support. The focus on Safety is on protecting the digital citizen. As technology is changing day by day and more and more students are using technology not only at home but also at school, one must protect themselves. Savvy focuses on creating educated digital citizens. This refers to one who understands how to make good judgments. Lastly, the focus of Social is on respecting

yourself as a digital citizen.

### **Middle School Families**

Parents/guardians of digital learners in grades six through eight all have good intentions when parenting their children. However, most are unaware that their parenting style could have negative as well as positive ramifications when related to digital citizenship. The following four parenting styles; authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and laissez-faire(uninvolved) all play a huge role in the way the child will ultimately feel about themselves and in their confidence to navigate the challenges they will face in the world (Rise and the Rise, 2018).

#### **Authoritarian parenting**

This style of parenting can be defined as a parent/guardian who does not take their child's feelings into consideration and always believes in the “my way or the highway” mindset (Rise and the Rise, 2018). These parents/guardians believe that their child should follow their instructions without question and do not consider the child's opinion or input. This parenting style creates a child who does not feel that they go to their parents/guardians and thus will seek others on the internet for advice or as a sounding board. This can lead to exploitation of the child and to poor digital citizenship.

#### **Authoritative parenting**

This style of parent/guardian supports the belief that parents/guardians enforce rules, give consequences for violation of the rules, and take their child's opinion into consideration. While value is placed on their child's feelings and emotions, it is understood that the adults are in charge. This parenting style creates a child with strong decision making skills, and thus has the greatest likelihood of creating a responsible digital citizen (Rise and the Rise, 2018).

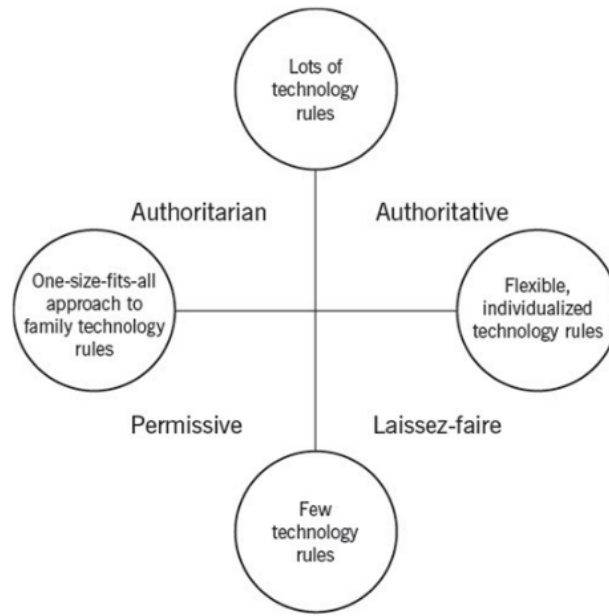
**Permissive parenting**

This style of parenting simply talks and talks to the child without putting definitive consequences on the child. Therefore the child feels they can do whatever they want without repercussions. This parent/guardian focuses on being their child's friend rather than their parent/guardian. With regards to digital citizenship this could cause the child to be involved in inappropriate behavior and may lead to exploitation or other dangerous situations (Rise and the Rise, 2018).

**Laissez-Faire (Uninvolved Parenting)**

This style of parenting is where the parent/guardian is not involved in the child's day to day routine. This style is dangerous for the child, especially in the age of digital citizenship. The child does not share anything with the parent/guardian and the parents/guardians are completely unaware of their child's behavior and interactions. This can lead to digital dangers, digital predators, and result in a breach of digital privacy amongst other things (Rise and the Rise, 2018). Figure 1, below, illustrates all above mentioned parenting types and their relationship to internet control with their children.

The type of parenting style utilized in the home may have a great effect upon the level of control the parents/guardians have over their child's technology use. The Laissez-Faire parent is at greater risk for having a child that may encounter unsafe areas on the internet, since they have very few restrictions exerted on them. The combination of the type of hands off parenting, combined with the lack of brain development in young people of this age and poor decision making, may lead to more dangerous technology use with potentially serious ramifications.

**Figure 1:** Parent Internet Control types

Parenting styles and Internet control. Based on Valcke et al.<sup>6</sup>

### Family Engagement

When a parent/guardian takes an active interest in the well being of their child, it is known that the child will learn more and behave more appropriately (Rise and the Rise, 2018). Another known is that parental involvement with their child declines with age, specifically when the child transitions to middle school. Middle school is a crucial time when children are faced with choices where they might not make the right decision. There are a variety of strategies to engage parents/guardians. One way is for the teacher to create a blog. This way families can peruse through student work that has been completed and get a better idea of what is happening

in the classroom. Google forms is a tool that teachers can use with parents/guardians to survey them and see what they actually know about digital citizenship. Teachers like to use common sense media as a go to place for readily available material to share with parents/guardians.

Including parents/guardians in the day to day affairs of middle school so they know that it is a team effort. “As we transform learning with emerging technologies, so must we reinvent the teacher- student-parent/guardian triangle that is the foundation of student success” (Bishop and Downes, 2014).

In a study conducted by Martin, et.al (2019), a pre-assessment survey was done to measure the typical middle school’s student use of social media to develop a digital citizenship curriculum. The results of this study benefits everyone that has a connection to middle school students. The results show that the middle school students reported using social media most often to connect with their friends, share pictures, and find out what others are doing (Martin et al. 2019). The study also shows that Instagram (27%), Snapchat (25%) and YouTube (25%) were their most used social media sites. The student participants have concerns about social media due to inappropriate postings, getting hacked, getting their feelings hurt, lack of privacy, inappropriate pictures, bullying, negativity, and stalkers. Students are beginning to use social media at a very young age and it is necessary to educate the students, their teachers and parents/guardians on cyberbullying, digital identity, impact of digital footprints, and use of inappropriate social media. As students are increasingly using technology and begin cyber learning at a young age, there is an increased concern for their safety (Martin et al., 2019).

Another investigation completed by Khurana (2015) took a survey of 593 middle school students about digital footprints and concerns about social media. The results show that 17%

start using social media at age nine or younger, 40% accept friend requests from people they do not know, and 40% reported that their parents/guardians did not monitor their social media use. The purpose of this study was to understand how parental monitoring and strategies parents/guardians use to regulate children's internet use (i.e., internet restriction) can help reduce online harassment among adolescents. Online survey data was collected from a nationally representative sample of parents/guardians and their 12–17 year old adolescents. Adolescents' report that parental monitoring and regulation of internet use were associated with reduced rates of online harassment. Specifically, the effect of parental monitoring was largely direct and 26 times greater than parental internet restriction (Khurana et.al., 2015). Specific restriction strategies such as regulating internet time and content can also help reduce the risk of online harassment.

Teachers are not the only adults who play a role in educating students about Internet safety and digital citizenship. When dealing with internet safety and digital citizenship, it is imperative to have a partnership between school and parents/guardians. Not all adults understand the importance of digital citizenship or how to implement it with the child (Nguyễn & Mark, 2014). This is why educating students about Internet safety goes beyond the technology itself, and should focus on the digital citizenship development of a child and the ethical decision making that goes synonymously with being safe both online and off (Nguyễn & Mark, 2014). In this study parents/guardians and educators were surveyed on their understanding and awareness of online activities. Their awareness level and perspectives were compared. In this comparative study, the researchers found that school faculty and parents/guardians have significant differences in their understanding of how to be safe online.

Parents/guardians stated that they trusted their children online much more than educators. While the parent/guardian has trust in the child, digital divide (generational gap) may cause parents/guardians to not fully understand what is happening in the cyber world. Most adults use technology as part of their professional lives, but children use technology as part of their educational and personal lives. This situation widens the gap between parents/guardians and their children. Parents/guardians should also model proper online usage to encourage strong digital citizenship. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to model appropriate behavior regarding the amount of time spent in front of the screen and what is actually being done (Are You A Good, 2019). Some tips suggested are to not spend too much time on social media, do not play games on your computer, and enjoy meals as a family without any screens present at the table (Are You A Good, 2019).

### **Digital Students**

There is a shift in teaching and pedagogy with the use of digital tools. The shift relies on digital citizenship. Digital Citizen standard is where “students (will) recognize the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical” (Smith & Mader, 2016). This can be cultivated by having students manage their digital identity and reputation and having an awareness of their actions in the digital world. Also, by managing their personal data to keep digital privacy. Lastly, by engaging in a secure, positive, safe, legal, and ethical manner when using technology. There is a need for teachers and parents/guardians to safeguard their students and guide them to understand digital privacy and personal data such as full name and date of birth. Teachers can have students engage in classroom activities that promote safe and ethical

behavior. The skills students develop in the classroom can benefit them outside of school as well. The parent/guardian student educator triangle is the foundation of student success and all adults in the child's life must work together (Smith & Mader, 2016).

Digital citizenship hones in on a wide variety of behaviors with various degrees of risk and possible negative consequences. When there is a lack of digital citizenship awareness it can and has led to troublesome, even risky student conduct. American youth are introduced to digital media at a very young age at home and the use of digital media in schools also begins at a young age. Mike Ribble (2019) discusses the importance of digital citizenship as, “a concept which helps teachers, technology leaders, and parents/guardians to understand what students/children/technology users should know to use technology appropriately” (Hollandsworth, et.al etal., 2011). He further elaborates that digital citizenship is a way to prepare students, children, and technology users for a society full of technology. To guide our youth on the course of digital citizenship, it requires the support of parents/guardians, teachers, administration and the students.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) states that the following standards spell out the need for digital responsibility:

- Respect copyright/ intellectual property rights of creators and producers.
- Seek divergent perspectives during information gathering and assessment.
- Follow ethical and legal guidelines in gathering and using information.
- Contribute to the exchange of ideas within the learning community.
- Use information technology responsibly (Iste, 2020).



Parents/guardians have to be more involved and students must become role models (Hollandsworth, et.al etal., 2011). Students will need guidance, accountability, and the opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them.

### **Internet Safety Programs**

There are many resources available to parents/guardians to guide them in the direction of fostering strong digital citizenship in their child. Most of these, of course, are online themselves and should be used with caution. The user should be wary of the source of the article or program and make sure that the source is reliable and trustworthy. Many online sites are often written by an author to advance a particular agenda. Discussed below are some reliable sources parents/guardians may turn to for guidance when discussing digital citizenship with their middle school aged child. **Common Sense Media's Digital Citizenship Resources for the Home**

The basic premise of this program is how to go about having “the talk” with your child regarding being safe when engaging in social media and technology. The article proposes covering five basic topics when speaking to your middle school aged child about this topic.

“ **1. Be Kind:** The authors discuss instilling a sense of empathy in your child. Try to treat other children the way you would like to be treated. Ask your child “What kinds of things have you seen others do online?” Try to post positive comments if possible and avoid getting in contentious online discussion or wars. Have them ask themselves the overall question, “What kinds of positive behaviors have you seen online?” Their goal should be to emulate these behaviors and bring someone up, rather than down. (Digital Sense Resources for, n.d.)

**2. Teach your child to keep things private.** Let them know what is OK to share online and what is not. Do not broadcast your location, send photos to strangers, share passwords with

friends, or give personal information such as your name, address, school, or even something as simple as your age.

**3. Do not believe everything you see.** Understand that not everyone is who they say they are. Teach them signs or red flags that may suggest the person they are communicating with is an imposter. Also, understand that smiles in pictures do not mean that the imposter's life is perfect. Teach your children to put things in perspective.

**4. Do not overshare.** Teach your child that everyone can see what they are sharing online, not just the person they are sharing with. Have them think about how what they are sharing will be viewed by others. Is this something they may regret posting in the future?

**5. Stand up for Others.** If someone is getting picked on or bullied, report it to your school, your parents/guardians, or another adult to authority in your life. Teach your child to be kind and to watch out for the underdog (Digital Sense Resources for, n.d.)”

### **International Society for Technology in Education**

This organization emphasizes a list of the do's and don'ts to create thoughtful, safe, empathetic digital citizens who can work to make themselves and their community better. It includes things such as engaging respectfully online with others that disagree with you, using your voice to influence and shape public policy, and learning how to determine the safety and validity of online information. The goal is to empower learners on how to use the tools of technology in an inspiring way and how to become active citizens who see possibilities instead of only problems and to leave behind a positive digital footprint. (Culcatta, n.d).

**Harvard Graduate School of Education's (HGSE) Digital Citizenship Resource List**

This article combines a useful list of resources for educators and families to offer a holistic approach to digital citizenship for young people. This includes helping students understand their rights and responsibilities, to recognize the ethical and personal implications of their actions, as well as the benefits and risks that the digital world brings with it. The list offers useful information, activities, curricula, programs, and websites and has a section dedicated to educators that includes Common Sense Education, Edutopia's Digital Citizenship Resource Roundup and PLC which is a Professional Learning Community. There is also a separate section dedicated to parents/guardians that includes a Parent Guide to Cyber Safety, and Net Cetera, which is an online communication forum that teaches parents/guardians how to impart useful information to their kids about digital citizenship. The guide addresses general safety topics as well as key considerations by age (For Educators: Digital Citizenship, n.d.)

**Google's Be Internet Awesome**

This website boasts a series of videos, articles and resources for parents/guardians and children to help them navigate the online world safely, ethically and responsibly. It's opening page has the following quote front and center: "To make the most of the Internet, kids need to be prepared to make smart decisions. Be Internet Awesome teaches kids the fundamentals of digital citizenship and safety so they can explore the online world with confidence" (Be Internet Awesome, n.d.). The website highlights some of the major themes of responsible digital citizenship such as Share with Care, Don't Fall for Fake, Secure your Secrets, It's Cool to be Kind, When in Doubt, Talk it Out, and finally, Play Safe, Learn Safe, Stay Safe (Be Internet Awesome, n.d.). Each of the aforementioned categories has several resources parents/guardians

and children can use individually and together to reach the ultimate goal of creating a future generation of responsible digital citizens.

### **DQ Institute (Learning Digital Education, Culture and Innovation)**

This website focuses on improving the digital standard in our world today. It works together with the Coalition for Digital Intelligence and combines their goal is to “improve digital intelligence by coordinating efforts across educational and technology communities through multi stakeholder collaborations” (DQInstitute, 2019). This site offers videos, press releases, various resources, multiple tabs and links on how to improve the global standard of technology in our digital age. This resource can be used by parents/guardians and education professionals as a means of acquiring the most up to date information on digital literacy, safety, and security. It’s reach now exceeds 110 countries, 21 languages, 700,000 children, and over 100 partners. These partners are all united in the same goal: “To set a global standard of digital citizenship for all children around the world” (DQInstitute, 2019).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The increasing use of technology and social media is strongly influencing the development of students in grades six through eight. Guiding the ways in which parents/guardians and teachers effectively promote healthy physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development in early adolescents is imperative. While students are learning digital citizenship through school, this learning must continue into the home as all of the stakeholders involved in the child's life must play an active role in creating a responsible digital citizen. Students in grades six through eight require effective supervision from parents/guardians and teachers as they begin to use technology autonomously and further develop their social

independence, self-assuredness, and decision making abilities. Effective parenting practices play a vital role in preventing and reducing youth problem behaviors. Specifically, parents/guardians who stay informed about their child's activities, pay attention to their child's behavior, and structure their child's environment have children with better outcomes and will become responsible digital citizens.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

#### **Summary of Problem Statement and Significance of Study**

“Kids are growing up on digital playgrounds and too often no one is on recess duty” (Honeycutt, 2018). This quote resonates with middle school aged children and their parents/guardians as society becomes more dependent on technology. Parents/guardians need to be aware of their child's involvement with the digital world and everything it entails. According to the New York Post, in 2018 Americans spend nearly 42% of their waking hours on a screen. This problem is compounded when the subjects are between the ages of 11-14 who do not have the cognitive development necessary to truly understand the ramifications of technology misuse and spend six hours a day on screen time (Bhattacharjee, 2017). This study will provide parents/guardians the necessary tools and guidelines to help their children become successful digital citizens.

A digital citizen refers to a person utilizing digital technology in order to engage in society (Mossberger et al, 2008). More specifically, a digital citizen is defined as those who use the internet on a daily and effective basis. Parents/guardians need to understand how to teach their children to interact using social media and technology in ways that help them and not hurt them. By doing this, they can help to keep their child safe by talking to them about their Internet use, teaching them about online dangers, and learning everything they can about the Internet so the child can make informed decisions. As technology advances, a knowledge gap is widening between parents/guardians and children (Magid, 2012). Do parents/guardians know what apps their child is navigating, who they are speaking to online, and what they are posting for all to see? Prior research indicates a lack of parental awareness regarding media usage by their

children (Kaiser Family Foundation 2003). The researchers ascertain that parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen.

### **Purpose**

This study explores the priori hypothesis that parents/guardians with a better understanding of what a digital citizenship is, will give their children in grades 6-8 better guidance. The researchers are expecting to see that through parent/guardian workshops, parents/guardians gain a better understanding of what their child is doing in the digital world and this will teach them how to help their child become a better digital citizen. The pre-assessment survey may identify any areas of weakness in the parents/guardians' knowledge of responsible digital citizenship and what it means for their middle school aged child to be a good digital citizen and why. These areas of need will be addressed via four monthly parent/guardian workshops. At the culmination of the workshops, the goal is that parents/guardians will have a better understanding and can guide their child towards safe online behavior.

### **Significance of Study**

This study may give parents/guardians the tools to prevent at risk behavior and promote positive mental health of digital citizens grades 6-8. It may also help the researchers connect with the parents/guardians and help them develop a greater understanding of how to play an active role in exposing digital and social media to their children. Through the use of a case study design, the researchers may gain insight of the parents/guardians' needs and perceptions of digital citizenship for their middle school child. The researchers will implement strategies to assist the parents/guardians to develop a responsible digital citizen in grades 6-8.

### **Design of the Study**

Qualitative research design is a research method used extensively by scientists and researchers studying human behavior, opinions, themes and motivations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This qualitative research case study design discusses parental involvement for safe online behaviors of students in grades 6-8. This study will be created to provide effective workshops to increase parental awareness with regards to their grade 6-8 digital citizen. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used in the study to give parents/guardians the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen. Specifically, the chapter will provide a description of the design and context of the study, the research participants, the collection and treatment of data, the data analysis and measures taken to ensure trustworthiness. The objectives of this study are to:

- Parents/guardians need to know how the use of technology can affect their child physiologically, socially and emotionally, and academically in grades 6-8.
- Empower parents/guardians with the knowledge to aid their middle school age children through the effects of the digital world with the intent to guide them in the use of technology responsibly.
- Impart to parents/guardians the most current technological knowledge of this generation and the positive and negative effects of digital citizenship.

### **Population and Sample**

Population and sample are the parents/guardians of middle school students in grades 6-8. Permission (Appendix A) has been granted to survey 100+ parents/guardians of middle school aged children grades 6-8 within two private schools within southeast Florida.



The sample will be drawn from a population of men and women who have children in grades 6-8. Parents/guardians could be working full- or part-time and there was no age limitation. All participants had to be fluent in the English language, but English did not have to be their native language. All participants should have at least a high school level education.

The sample size must be large enough so that results are deemed trustworthy. Researchers ascertain that a sample size of 100+ participants is large enough to confer accurate results. If the target sample size is not achieved, the study will proceed with the number of respondents who have participated.

### **Setting**

The researchers selected parents/guardians of 6th through 8th grade students from southeast Florida. Workshops will be held virtually. The pre-assessment survey will be distributed through two private schools in southeast Florida. The post survey along with a copy of the presentations will be emailed to all participants at the culmination of the final workshop.

### **Procedures**

For this case study, the parents/guardians are the research participants and an informed consent must be signed and dated by all participants (Appendix C). Participants may withdraw from the study at any time as indicated on the Informed Consent. The participants will be parents/guardians of middle school aged children attending a high ranked private school with two locations, located in southeast Florida. The parents/guardians will learn of the workshop via email communication. (Appendix B). Four workshops will be created based on data collected via a pre-assessment survey (Appendix D) done on a Likert Scale created by the researchers. In 1932, Likert devised an approach measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of

statements about a topic. The researchers will use this survey done on a Likert scale to determine what skills they want and need to learn, and the knowledge needed to help their child to develop positive digital citizenship. The pre-assessment survey results showing parental knowledge of digital citizenship will be analyzed using the mode, which is the value that occurs most often, and four workshops will be created based on these results. These workshops will present opportunities for families to learn more about digital citizenship through presentations and provide parents/guardians with ideas on how they can build those skills at home.

Following the workshops, a post assessment survey will be sent to assess increased knowledge of digital citizenship with their middle school child at home. Also, a family media agreement will be provided to assist with digital citizenship reinforcement at home that both parents/guardians and child will sign. This may aid parents/guardians in navigating the world of technology with the purpose of guiding their middle school child to become a responsible digital citizen who uses technology appropriately and operates safely and knowledgeably online. At the completion of the workshops, a post-assessment survey (Appendix E) will be given to identify if the parent has increased knowledge of the curriculum and which workshop they attended.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used in the study to give parents/guardians the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen. Specifically, the chapter will provide a description of the design and context of the study, the research participants, the collection and treatment of data, the data analysis and measures taken to ensure trustworthiness.

The data in this study will be collected using several different methods. An initial pre assessment will be conducted to determine the parental knowledge base in regards to promoting digital citizenship for their middle school aged child. their current digital citizenship. Once this information has been gathered and analyzed, a series of four workshops will be completed to teach parents/guardians how to understand current technology, social media exposure and pressures that their middle school age child contends with on a daily basis. Discussions will include how the child is affected physiologically, socially, emotionally, and academically. A post assessment survey will be completed by 100+ participants and this data will be analyzed by the aforementioned methods to ascertain if parents/guardians' digital prowess in regards to their middle schooler has increased. The following considerations need to be studied: the trustworthiness of the workshops, the significance of the study, and once those have been proven, then the results need to be analyzed as to the success of the four workshops. In this case, success is defined as enhancing the literacy of technology and social media of the parents/guardians and providing them with the tools to discuss and teach their middle school aged child how to be responsible digital citizens in this modern era.

### **Research Questions**

Through the implementation of a qualitative research design, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What strategies do parents/guardians need to implement in order to guide their middle school child in becoming responsible digital citizens?
2. How does educating parents/guardians via workshops about the impact of technology on the social emotional well-being of their middle school aged child

help parents/guardians to empower their child to become a responsible digital citizen?

3. How effective was educating the parents/guardians of children in middle school about responsible digital citizenship in alleviating parental concerns regarding their child's technology use?

### **Problem Statement (Hypothesis)**

Parents/guardians need to be aware of their child's involvement with the digital world and everything it entails (Ribble, 2019). According to the New York Post (2018), Americans spend nearly 42% of their waking hours on a screen. "Assuming the average American gets eight hours of beauty rest a night, that means they spend six hours and 43 minutes a day looking at a screen, or 7,956 days of their life" (Schmall, 2018). This problem is compounded when the subjects are between the ages of 11-14 who do not have the cognitive development necessary to truly understand the ramifications of technology misuse. This study may provide parents/guardians the necessary tools and guidelines to help their children become successful digital citizens. A digital citizen refers to a person utilizing digital technology in order to engage in society (Mossberger et al, 2008). More specifically, a digital citizen is defined as those who use the internet regularly and effectively. parents/guardians need to understand how to teach their children to interact using social media and technology in ways that help them and not hurt them. As technology advances, a knowledge gap is widening between parents/guardians and children. Do parents/guardians know what apps their child is navigating, who they are speaking to online, and what they are posting for all to see? Prior research indicates a lack of parental awareness regarding media

usage by their children(Vittrup, 2014). The researchers ascertain that parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen.

### **Identify and Define Key Variables**

**Independent variable** - Parental knowledge and perception of their knowledge of technology

The independent variable is one that is manipulated, worked on, or tested on. It's variation does not depend on that of another. It is the variable that is changed throughout the experiment and not kept at constant conditions. Often it is the only variable that changes throughout one's experiment. In this case the parental knowledge and perception of that knowledge is the independent variable because the parent/guardian is the one being taught, helped, or guided in the tools they need to in turn pass on to their child so their child can become a responsible digital citizen. The researchers will be guiding the parents/guardians via parent/guardian workshop. The goal is to give parents/guardians the understanding of technology and its proper uses and dangers so that they can guide their children in the digital world of today. The parents/guardians' learning will be assessed via pre-assessment and post-assessment surveys, to ascertain that digital citizenship learning has taken place and that the parents/guardians were more empowered with the knowledge needed to direct their child after having taken the professional development provided by the researchers.

### **Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable is essentially the measurable outcome of the experiment. In this case the researchers are trying to impart a greater knowledge with regard to digital citizenship of their middle school child. Through manipulation of the independent variable, in this case this

manipulation will be completed by the parents/guardians attending the workshops, the dependent variable, or the change in parental digital citizenship knowledge, is hypothesized to increase.

### **Characteristics, Conditions and Behaviors**

Several characteristics and conditions will have to be met to keep this a controlled experiment. First, all parents/guardians need to have a middle school aged or a rising middle school aged child. According to the Pew Research Center, 95% of teens have a smartphone or access to one, and 45% of those teens say they are online almost constantly (Burns, 2019). They all must have a concern or a willingness to attend a parent/guardian workshop on digital citizenship given by the researchers. The parents/guardians all must be willing to take a pre-assessment and post-assessment survey and complete it in a timely manner. Prior to completing this survey the parents/guardians must complete an informed consent giving the researchers permission to use the survey results towards their dissertation. Parents/guardians must feel that their knowledge of digital citizenship when it comes to their middle school aged child is lacking. They will attend the parent/guardian workshops to gain a deeper understanding of what it takes to make their middle schooler a responsible digital citizen.

### **Instrumentation**

For this case study, the parents/guardians are the research participants and an informed consent must be signed and dated by all participants. Four workshops will be created based on data collected via a pre-assessment survey done on a Likert Scale. In 1932, Likert devised an approach measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic. The researchers will create this survey on a Likert scale to determine what skills they want and need to learn, and the knowledge needed to help their child to develop positive digital

citizenship. Sample questions will include, “how many hours per day does your middle school aged child spend on the internet, and while your child is on the internet, are they being supervised? If they are being supervised, is an adult present through the duration of the activity?” The pre-assessment survey results will be analyzed using the mode, which is the value that occurs most often, and four workshops will be created based on these results. These workshops will present opportunities for families to learn more about digital citizenship through presentations and provide parents/guardians with ideas on how they can build those skills at home.

A family media agreement will be provided to assist with digital citizenship reinforcement at home that both parents/guardians and child will sign. This will aid parents/guardians in navigating the world of technology with the purpose of guiding their middle school child to become a responsible digital citizen who uses technology appropriately and operates safely and knowledgeably online. At the completion of the workshops, a post-assessment survey will be given to identify if the parent/guardian has increased knowledge of the curriculum and what workshop they attended.

### **Data**

Since the purpose of the study was to assess the needs of the parents/guardians of the grades 6 - 8 middle school child in respect to digital citizenship, the researchers worked with a group of parents/guardians to understand their needs to help raise a responsible digital citizen in grades 6-8. A sample of 100+ parents/guardians of Middle School aged children grades 6-8 in southeast Florida was taken. The sample was drawn from a population of men and women who have children in grades 6-8. parents/guardians could be working full- or part-time and there was

no age limitation. All participants had to be fluent in the English language, but English did not have to be their native language. All participants should have at least a high school level education. Sample size must be large enough so that results are deemed trustworthy. If the target sample size is not achieved, the study will proceed with the actual number of respondents who have agreed to participate.

### **Coding**

Coding the surveys, or breaking them down into meaningful and manageable chunks of data, is a critical part of the data analysis. This will help the researchers focus on all topics, rather than placing too much importance on one aspect of another. Coding will be used by the researchers to break down social, emotional, academic, and physiological effects and their corresponding responses. This is critical in being able to properly analyze the data in understanding the effects of social media and technology on all four major aspects of this study. There will be at least 100 participants that complete both the pre-assessment and post-assessment surveys. The results will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the more open ended questions, the researchers will organize and interpret the results by coding, and creating themes which will assist the researchers in improving their workshops. Another way of analyzing the data would be to use a Chi Squared test. The Chi Square is a statistical sample test where the overall significance of the results are analyzed. This is done by creating a null hypothesis which basically states that there is no significant difference between populations, and any observed difference is due to sampling or experimental error. The goal of a Chi squared test is to prove the null hypothesis true, thus showing the results are significant. Another possibility of analysis can



be a t-test. A t-test is a type of statistics used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of the groups. Using a t-test requires using at least 3 data points or groups.

### **Trustworthiness**

Creswell (2018) believes Lincoln and Guba's criteria of trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity should be employed when evaluating qualitative research. The researchers addressed the parents/guardians' questions through continued workshops. These workshops will present opportunities for families to learn more about digital citizenship through presentations and provide parents/guardians with ideas on how they can build those skills at home. Following the workshops, a post-assessment survey will be administered at the culmination of the workshops to determine if the workshops were successful in increasing parental knowledge of digital citizenship. This process helps keep the researcher accountable (Savin-Baden, 2013). Attendance will be required at at least two of the four workshops to complete the post-assessment survey. Members of the same household may each complete a pre-assessment survey and post-assessment survey respectively, as each individual person may bring their own knowledge of digital citizenship or lack thereof.

Creating a confidential survey for parents/guardians who participated would help obtain necessary information needed without risking potential data collector bias due to the fact that parents/guardians may feel embarrassed because they may not be knowledgeable in a particular area. Keeping the survey short assisted in a respectable and timely response rate.

### **Delimitations**

A delimitation is defined as something outside the boundaries of a researcher outlined by making something beyond the scope of a research project. There are several potential delimiters

to this study. The first of these is that the independent variable in this study is educating the parents/guardians/guardians on how to guide their middle school aged child to become a responsible digital citizen. This study does not focus on teacher intervention, nor does it focus on the digital relationship amongst the middle school aged students themselves. Another delimiter is that this study focuses on parents/guardians of middle school aged children, grades 6-8, and not the younger or older age groups. Another delimiter is this study will focus on digital citizenship with regards specifically to social media and its dangers, and not on other aspects of technology dealing with understanding and utilizing it in reference to school assignments.

### **Biases**

A bias is something that affects the trustworthiness of the findings in qualitative research. More specifically, a bias is something that alters the truth and skews results. One way to minimize bias is to set clear rules and expectations to all participants and the researchers and adhere strictly to these rules. One potential bias that may be brought into this research is the fact that the researchers are parents/guardians themselves and have their own personal opinions and set of experiences to draw from when dealing with their own children with regards to social media and technology. Each has had both positive and negative experiences in their personal lives, and must be vigilant that these experiences do not transfer over or taint this research in any way. Both researchers are also educators, and have had experiences with technology and social media in their classrooms and schools. They must take care to keep these experiences out of the research as well in order for the study to remain unbiased, or unprejudiced. Another issue can occur if there are two parents/guardians in the same household. If both parents/guardians attend and skew each other's results, that can increase bias.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The process of analyzing and comparing data (old data compared to existing) is called constant comparison (Mills, 2016). The study under consideration is qualitative rather than quantitative, and this puts it in the category of descriptive statistics. Since descriptive statistics do not always form a normal distribution curve, their analysis can be more complex. There are several possible means of data analysis in this case. The data will be collected using a Likert scale in the form of a pre-assessment survey prior to the workshops, and a post-assessment survey following the completion of the workshops.

As a general rule, mean and standard deviation are not accurate parameters to use for descriptive statistics. The mean refers to the average and the standard deviation refers to the extent of deviation for the group as a whole. More applicable ways of analyzing qualitative data taken on a Likert Scale would be by taking rank, median, mode, or range. In this case rank refers to numbering the responses from most common to less common, median is the middle response, mode is the most common response, and range is the distribution from one end of the data to the other. Included in the post- assessment survey, there will be open-ended questions where parents/guardians can provide feedback to ascertain if they implemented strategies learned in the workshop and if they found the information useful in helping their child become a responsible digital citizen. These will be analyzed for potential inclusion into the workshops. They will also be reviewed for potential use in any future workshops

The researchers will also conduct a One Sample  $t$  test. The One Sample  $t$  Test determines whether the sample mean is statistically different from a known or hypothesized value of the

population mean. To clarify, this test is used to determine if the observed results are statistically different from the expected or hypothesized results (SPSS tutorials: One Sample, 2020).

### **Ethical Principles/Human Subject Compliance**

Following the methods as outlined in this chapter will ensure the trustworthiness of the study. For this case study, the parents/guardians are the research participants and an informed consent must be signed and dated by all participants. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time as indicated on the informed consent. The researchers ensure that ethics will be a top priority throughout this study. The pre-assessment survey will be sent out via email to parents/guardians of students in grades 6-8 and the responses will be confidential and anonymous. The surveys will be organized into online folders labeled pre survey and post-assessment survey. Each of these folders will be stored in a shared drive in which only the researchers have access to. Within each of these folders parent/guardian responses will be labeled according to their name. In this way the researchers will be able to compare the pre-assessment and post-assessment surveys of the participants. Once the data is collected from the pre-assessment survey, the workshops will be created. All participants attending the workshops will be over 21 years of age and have at least one child that is in grades 6-8. Meeting these criteria will qualify them as participants in this study. After completion of the workshops, a post-assessment survey will be given via email and those responses will remain confidential as well using the methods mentioned above. Additionally, all survey materials will be discarded after 5 years, following final approval by the research committee, minimizing any future risks related to confidentiality. All persons will participate voluntarily in this study. The risks to human subjects associated with this study will be minimal. This means that the probability of

harm to the participants of the research study are not greater than any other routine performance or activity in everyday life (UCSF Human Research, 2015). It would be unacceptable for the participants to suffer a greater than minimal risk, which would mean that there is a high probability that serious or prolonged permanent damage could result due to participation in this research study (UCSF Human Research, 2015). Once the surveys have been collected and analyzed using methods stated above the original surveys will be destroyed after 5 years to reduce any risk that may be incurred by participants. This will be accomplished by permanently deleting online files, and shredding any paper results.

### **Summary of the Methods Chapter**

The researchers realize that parents/guardians need to be aware of their child's involvement with the digital world and everything it entails. This problem is a serious issue because students between the ages of 11-14 do not have the cognitive development necessary to truly understand the issues that could occur when digital citizenship is not applied. This study may provide parents/guardians the necessary tools and guidelines to help their children become successful digital citizens. A digital citizen refers to a person utilizing digital technology in order to engage in society. Parents/guardians may understand how to teach their children to interact using social media and technology in ways that help them succeed in life. The researchers ascertain that parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen. Through this study, the researchers may assist the parents/guardians of middle school aged children to feel confident and knowledgeable with digital citizenship and may be able to impart this knowledge to their child in order to foster responsible digital citizenship. This qualitative research design study discusses parental involvement for safe online

behaviors of students in grades 6-8. This study was created to provide effective workshops to increase parental awareness with regards to their grade 6-8 digital citizen.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

In the modern digital world, it can often be daunting for a parent to stay abreast of the dynamic world of technology their children are navigating. Many parents feel unprepared to tackle the issues they face when dealing with the tumults of their middle school aged child, especially when it comes to technology and specifically social media. This goal of this study is to provide parents/guardians the necessary tools and guidelines to help their children become successful digital citizens. Parents/guardians need to understand how to teach their children to interact using social media and technology in ways that help them and not hurt them. Children and especially middle school age children may seem comfortable trying out new apps, and many parents/guardians do not find the need to guide their child (Gallagher, 2017). However, proper guidance from the parent/guardian is needed more than ever. It is the job of parents/guardians to assist the middle school age child how to use digital tools in a positive, safe and productive way. Parents/guardians may not be all that tech savvy, yet they can learn key terms and safety measures how to appropriately use technology. Once the parents/guardians are given the proper tools necessary, they can guide their middle school child using healthy technology. They can incorporate media literacy and learn how to protect their child utilizing privacy, security, and safety. The researchers ascertain that parents/guardians lack the tools to guide their middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen. This study provided those tools in the form of four workshops conducted over a six week time frame. The success of the workshops was analyzed comparing the results of a pre-assessment survey taken prior to the start of the workshops, and a post-assessment survey taken at the termination of the workshops.

### Summary of Analysis

The results of this research study were analyzed by calculating the  $p$  value. The  $p$  value, or probability value, tells you how likely it is that your data could have occurred under the null hypothesis. The  $p$  value tells you how often you would expect to see a test statistic as extreme or more extreme than the one calculated by your statistical test if the null hypothesis of that test was true (Bevans, 2020). The smaller the  $p$  value, the more likely you are to reject the null hypothesis. All statistical tests have a null hypothesis. For most tests, the null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between your variables of interest or that there is no difference among groups. For example, in the one proportion  $z$  test conducted here, the null hypothesis is that the difference between two groups, meaning pre and post assessment, is zero (Bevans, 2020). The  $p$  value is a proportion: if your  $p$  value is 0.05, that means that 5% of the time you would see a test statistic at least as extreme as the one you found if the null hypothesis was true.  $P$  values are most often used by researchers to say whether a certain pattern being measured is statistically significant. Statistical significance is another way of saying that the  $p$  value of a statistical test is small enough to reject the null hypothesis of the test. The threshold value for determining statistical significance is also known as the alpha value (Bevans, 2020). Since this research is comparing two variables with normal distribution, the pre and post assessment, then a one proportion  $z$  test is an effective way to compare the groups. Results were analyzed using a  $p$  value of .05 and again with a  $p$  value of .1. To clarify, we reject the null hypothesis when the  $p$  value is less than  $\alpha$  (Frost, 2021).



**Table 1 - One Proportion Z Test Results**

	Pre										Post							
					Assumption Verification		Pooled S.D.	z (test-statistic)	P-Value	If alpha = .05	If alpha = .10	Assumption Verification		sample				
	Yes	Sometimes	No	size	Success	Failure						Success	Failure	size	Yes	Sometimes	No	
Are devices allowed to remain in your child's bedroom when they go to sleep?	44	13	48	71	29.75238	41.2476	0.083709788	1.304369136	0.192107753	Fail to Reject	Fail to Reject	22	49	71	22	7	42	
Do you feel your child is addicted to technology?	37	49	19	71	25.01905	45.981	0.083383726	-0.16569457	0.868397319	Fail to Reject	Fail to Reject	26	45	71	26	23	22	
Do you supervise your child while they are on the internet at home?	18	44	9	71	18	53	0.078543819	-1.793203756	0.07294035	Fail to Reject	Reject	28	43	71	28	34	9	
Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is?	50	0	21	71	50	21	0.06491023	-3.471750336	0.000517077	Reject	Reject	66	5	71	66	0	5	
Do you know if your child has a VPN (Virtual Private Network) on their device?	16	0	55	71	16	55	0.081176518	-3.643598619	0.000268853	Reject	Reject	37	34	71	37	0	34	
To your knowledge, does your child use the privacy setting on social media accounts or online game	39	12	20	71	39	32	0.078905653	-1.539001688	0.123803884	Fail to Reject	Reject	55	27	82	55	11	16	
Do you know what a Finsta is?	18	0	53	71	18	53	0.083909812	-6.042705165	1.51551E-09	Reject	Reject	54	17	71	54	0	17	
													Reject = statistically significant.					

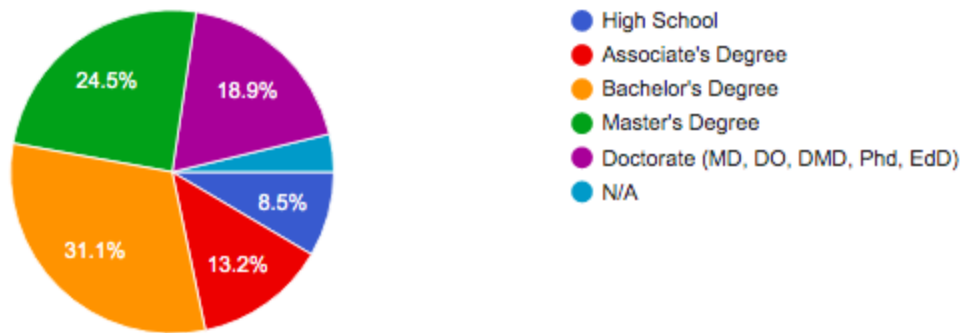
This mode of analysis is very common when reviewing the type of qualitative descriptive statistics collected in this study. A pre-assessment and post-assessment survey were given to ascertain the success of the four workshops held by the researchers with the goal to educate parents of middle school students on how to raise responsible digital citizens. The majority of the questions in both surveys consisted of Likert scale questions which will be analyzed below. There were a few descriptive open ended questions at the end of each survey, which gave participants an opportunity to voice issues/concerns not addressed by the researchers.

**Sample**

The sample used in this study were parents of middle school aged students that attend two private schools located in the Southeast region of Florida. The sample was drawn from a population of men and women who have children in grades 6-8. Parents/guardians could be working full time, part time or not currently employed. The range of education level amongst the participants was 19% Doctoral degree, 25% Master's degree, and 31% had a Bachelors degree. The remaining 25% had an associates or a high school degree. Parents participated in a pre-survey, then participated in four workshops, then took a post survey over the course of five weeks. The researchers had 105 participants take the pre-survey and 71 take the post survey. The

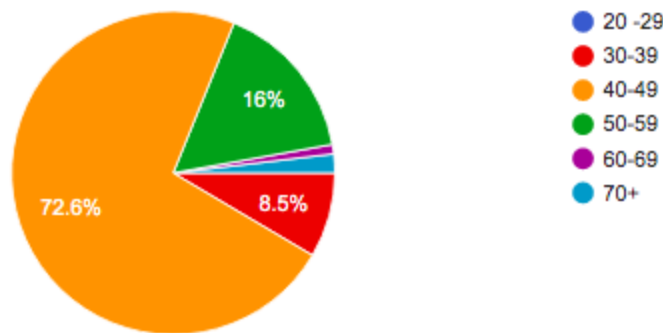
two comparison data sets were not evenly distributed therefore the researchers randomly selected 71 participant survey results from the pre-survey group. Figure 2 below depicts the highest level of education completed by the pre-survey group.

**Figure 2:** Highest level of education completed



The median age range of participants was 43 years, with the vast majority (73%) falling between the ages of 40 -49 years.

**Figure 3:** What is your age



All participants had to be fluent in the English language, but English did not have to be their native language. The majority of respondents were female with an overwhelming 89%. A total of 71 participants took part in the pre-assessment and post assessment survey.

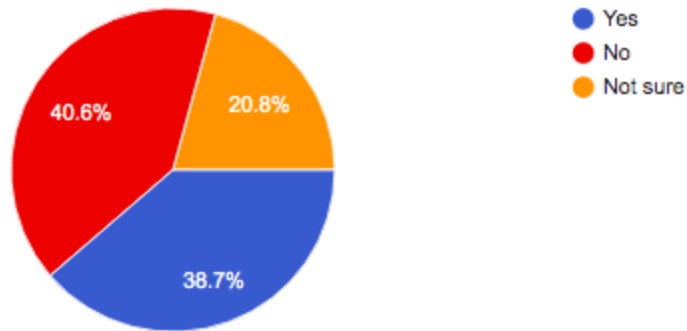
**Results for Research Question 1**

*What strategies do parents/guardians need to implement in order to guide their middle school child in becoming responsible digital citizens?*

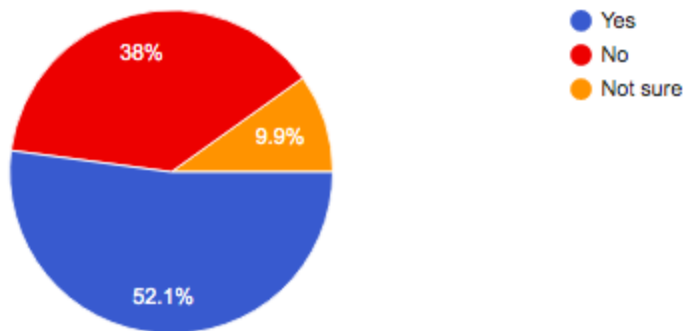
In order to ascertain which strategies proved the most helpful when instructing parents to guide their middle school aged child in becoming responsible citizens, we need to look at the results of the one proportion z test performed. The first question to be analyzed is *Do you supervise your child on the internet at home?* In our comparison of the pre and post survey responses to this question, we found that 18/71 said yes on the pre-survey, while 28/71 said yes on the post survey. Thus, with a  $p$  value of .073, we fail to reject the null hypothesis if alpha is .05, but we reject the null hypothesis if alpha is .1, meaning that the result is significant 90% of the time. In summary, this signifies that if parents supervise their middle school-age child on the internet at home, this will prove helpful in creating responsible digital citizens 90% of the time.

The next question to be discussed is “*Do you know if a child has a VPN on their device?*” In our comparison of the pre and post survey responses to this question, we found that 16/71 respondents said yes, they knew what a Virtual Private Network is on the pre-survey, as opposed to 37/71 that replied yes, they knew what a VPN is on the post survey.

**Figure 4:** Pre-survey: Do you know if your child has a VPN (Virtual Private Network) on their device?



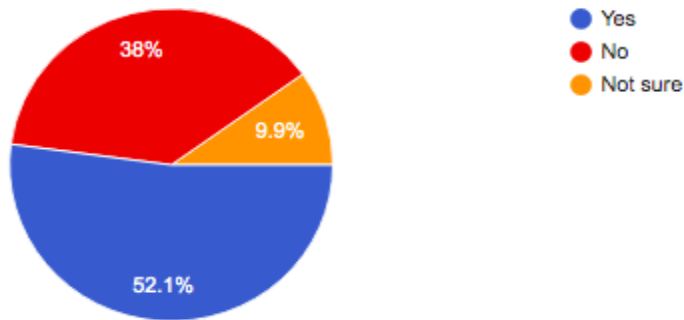
**Figure 5:** Post-survey: Do you know if your child has a VPN (Virtual Private Network on their device?



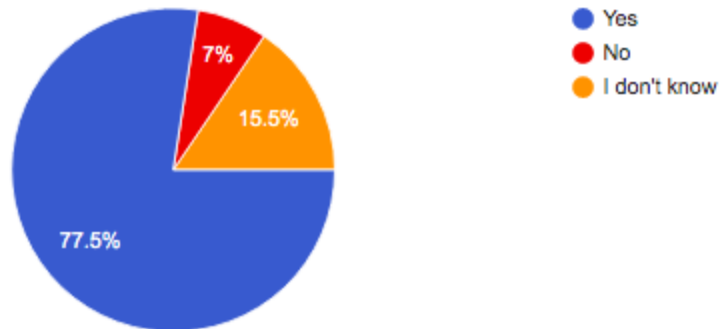
Thus, with a  $p$  value of .00003, we reject the null hypothesis if alpha is .05, as well as if the null hypothesis if alpha is .1, meaning that the results are significant 95% of the time. This infers that if parents are aware if their child has a Virtual Private Network on their device, it will help them in guiding their middle school-age child in becoming a responsible digital citizen.

The next question of value in determining whether the research study properly addressed research question number 1 is “*To your knowledge does your child use privacy settings on social media accounts or online games?*” In our comparison of the pre and post survey responses to this question, we found that 39/71 respondents said that yes, their child does use privacy settings on social media accounts and online games. On the post survey, it was found that 55/71 (77.5%) respondents said that yes, their child does use privacy settings on social media accounts and online games.

**Figure 6: Pre-survey:** To your knowledge, does your child use the privacy setting on social media accounts or online games?



**Figure 7: Post-survey:** To your knowledge, does your child use the privacy setting on social media accounts.



Thus with a  $p$  value of .124, if  $\alpha = .05$  or  $.1$  we fail to reject the null hypothesis proving the results insignificant. This infers that if middle school aged children use privacy settings on their devices, in at least 90% of cases, this may not help parents in fostering responsible digital citizenship in their middle school aged child. However, if we changed  $\alpha$  to be  $.15$ , the results would prove significant. Meaning that if middle school aged children use privacy settings on their devices in 85% of the cases, it would help to foster responsible digital citizenship.

### **Results for Research Question 2**

*How does educating parents/guardians via workshops about the impact of technology on the social emotional well-being of their middle school aged child help parents/guardians to empower their child to become a responsible digital citizen?*

The theory behind the workshops created by the researchers was that educating parents and guardians about the impact of technology on the social and emotional well-being of the middle school-age children, will provide parents the tools to raise responsible digital citizens. To

ascertain the success of the workshops on this research question, the responses to the open ended question *Did you implement any of the strategies learned after the workshop? Explain?* were analyzed. Some of the responses are as follows:

- Setting time limits/restrictions & creating a contract
- Yes! We're still going over all of them, I've entered the websites recommended and have been keeping up with all info
- Yes, taking advantage of common sense media. Remembering to talk about technology/social media like you do on drugs/alcohol. I plan on implementing the family media agreement discussed.
- Yes, we utilized screen time and a family media agreement
- Talk more with my child about the addictive nature of apps and their impacts on personal time. Also about the dangers of sharing private information online.
- I learned about all the terminology and shared my concerns with my child.
- Discussed with the child the importance of not interacting with people they do not know.

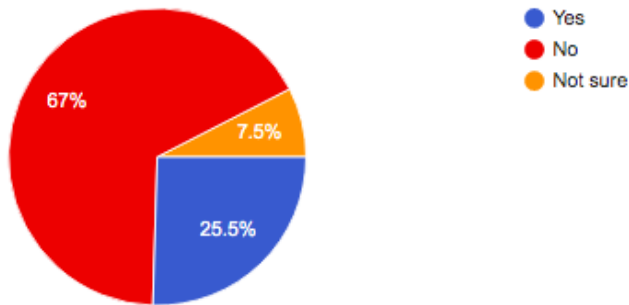
We can see that a common theme that arises is that prior to attending the workshops, parents had limited knowledge of modern technology and the potential dangers posed to their middle school aged child. Thus, one can see that providing parents with the tools they need will not only empower themselves, but also their child in becoming a more responsible digital citizen.

### **Results for Research Question 3**

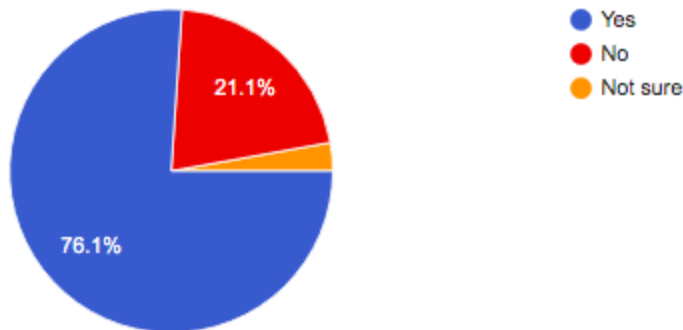
*How effective was educating the parents/guardians of children in middle school about responsible digital citizenship in alleviating parental concerns regarding their child's technology use?*

As seen in the above analysis, several of the responses have been analyzed and shown to be statistically significant, thus proving the success of the four workshops conducted by the researchers. Two more questions appeared on the pre and post assessment and will be analyzed for success with regards to research question 3. The first question to be discussed is *Do you know what a finsta is?*, and the second question to be discussed and analyzed is *Do you know what a VPN or virtual private network is?*

**Figure 8: Pre-survey: Do you know what a Finsta is?**



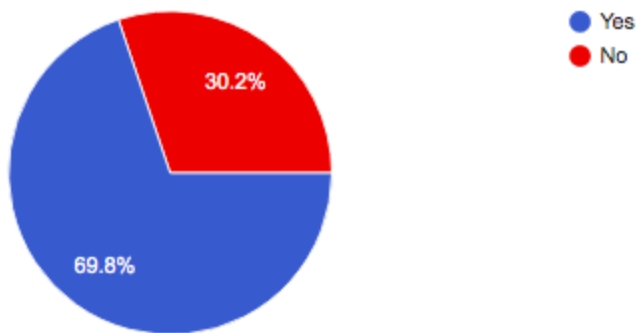
**Figure 9: Post Survey: Do you know what a Finsta is?**



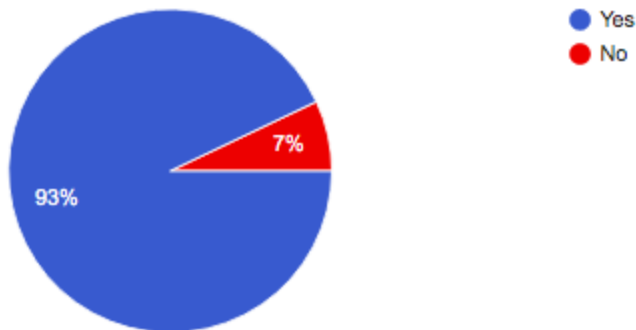


With regards to the first question, “Do you know what a Finsta is” it was found that 18/71 respondents knew what a Finsta was on the pre survey, while 54/71 knew what a finsta was after attending the workshops. Thus with a *p* value of almost zero (.000000000151), we were able to reject the null hypothesis if alpha is .05 and .1. The meaning behind this once again is that the results are significant at least 95% of the time (likely more). This proves that understanding what a finsta is is just some of the knowledge the parents gained while attending the four workshops.

**Figure 10: Pre survey:** Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is?



**Figure 11: Post survey:** Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is?



With regards to the second question, “Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is?” 50/71 respondents replied yes on the pre-survey, as opposed to 66/71 respondents

replying yes on the post survey following the implementation of the workshops. Thus, with a  $p$  value of .00052, we are able to reject the null hypothesis if alpha is .05 and if alpha is .1. The meaning behind this is that this result is significant at least 95% of the time. To interpret these results it can be concluded that if parents are educated as to what a virtual private network is, they will better be able to foster digital citizenship in their middle school-aged child.

### **Open Ended Questions**

One can see by the quantitative results that the workshops proved successful in promoting responsible digital citizenship in middle school children. Further evidence of this success is found in the open ended questions. For example, one of the responses was “Yes! My child is more aware of the expectations and ownership of social media behavior.” Another response stated that “Yes. I learned about so much that I didn't know. It was very helpful.” A third stated, “Yes, made me more aware of what I was doing.” All of these responses prove that the workshops provided useful insight guiding parents in creating responsible digital citizens in their middle school aged child.

### **Missing Data**

At the culmination of the research, the researchers realized that there were 105 respondents for the pre-survey and 71 responses for the post survey. In order to equalize the playing field, the researchers randomly removed 34 responses from the pre-survey so that the pre and post assessment surveys would have the same number of respondents.

### **Summary of Results**

To summarize, the majority of the results were found to be statistically significant, whereas there were a few questions that did not have a discernible difference between the pre

and post assessment surveys. For the question, “*Are devices allowed to remain in your child's bedroom when they go to sleep*”, the researchers believed that if the devices were allowed to remain in the bedroom, the middle school-age child may engage in more risky and less responsible behavior during the night hours. According to the one proportion z test, there was not a significant difference between the results on the pre and post survey. Thus it can be interpreted that the workshops held by the researchers did not stress the importance of this concept, or having devices in the bedroom at night does not increase the risk for a responsible digital citizenship. The other question that fails to reject the null hypothesis is “*Do you feel your child is addicted to technology?*” According to the one proportion Z test, there was not a significant difference between the pre and post survey for this question. Since this was more of an opinion question rather than one definitely based on information obtained from the workshops, this question does not negate the validity of the research completed. The majority of the other questions on the pre and post assessment surveys used to prove or disprove the research questions were shown to have a significant difference between the pre and post surveys as discussed earlier.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

An important part of a child's academic growth and digital integrity in grades 6-8 is imperative. Having parental/guardian involvement is key to help the child develop those skills. Parents/guardians and families, along with the school, are partners in helping their children develop digital citizenship skills (Lohmann, 2018). This project presented a review of literature to illustrate the need for parent workshops for parents of middle school students in grades 6-8. In chapter two, the review of literature examined middle school student development, family involvement in education, internet safety programs, and digital citizenship programs. Chapter three provided a description of the creation of the project, the intended participants, the description of personal qualifications, the suggested environment, and the outline of the project. Four workshops on digital citizenship were developed for middle school parents and presented. Based on the data collected, the researchers were able to identify growth in parental knowledge of digital citizenship.

### Summary of Results

The pre and post assessment surveys included Likert scale and open ended questions. The information gathered from the pre assessment survey was used to understand what knowledge of digital citizenship the research participants had. The post assessment survey showed the knowledge gained by the research participants. Additionally, the study included discussions on the effectiveness of the workshops based on results of the post assessment survey.

### Discussion for Research Question 1

*What strategies do parents/guardians need to implement in order to guide their middle school child in becoming responsible digital citizens?*

Understanding what a VPN (virtual private network) is an integral part of digital safety. Parental discussion during the workshop helped parents understand what a VPN is and how it allows for an added layer of security in some cases. When a middle school student uses a VPN at school, the child is accessing sites that would normally be blocked by the school's firewall. Parents/guardians now have a better understanding of what a VPN is and in turn can have the discussion with their child on good and bad use of a VPN.

A digital citizen is a person who develops the skills and knowledge to effectively use the Internet and other digital technology, especially in order to participate responsibly in social and civic activities (Mossberger et al, 2008). Our data showed that informing parents/guardians of the use of privacy settings on their child's devices when using applications or playing video games will help parents in guiding their middle school aged child in becoming a responsible digital citizen.

### **Discussion for Research Question 2**

*How does educating parents/guardians via workshops about the impact of technology on the social emotional well-being of their middle school aged child help parents/guardians to empower their child to become a responsible digital citizen?*

Based on the open ended question, *Did you implement any of the strategies learned after the workshop? Explain?* In our post assessment survey, the responses indicated an increase in knowledge and better understanding of digital citizenship for children in grades 6-8. The positive responses from parents/guardians shows they are empowered with the knowledge to aid their middle school age children through the effects of the digital world with the intent to guide them in the use of technology responsibly.

**Discussion for Research Question 3**

*How effective was educating the parents/guardians of children in middle school about responsible digital citizenship in alleviating parental concerns regarding their child's technology use?*

As technology advances, a knowledge gap is widening between parents/guardians and children (Koutrodimos, 2013). Parents were engaged and felt that the information provided gave them the tools to help their child navigate the digital world better. The use of a family media agreement was discussed with the parents to help further assist with digital citizenship reinforcement at home. The responses to our open ended questions showed positive feedback and gained knowledge.

**Limitations**

Most participants did not attend all four workshops. Each workshop gave new information and some may have not received all of the information presented. All presentations were shared with all participants but we cannot ascertain whether or not the participants viewed the presentations. Another limitation is our participants came from two private schools in the southeastern United States. Results may have varied if the participants came from another private institution or public school in the same region or different regions of the United States. A final limitation is that the researchers originally had 105 responses from the pre-survey and 71 responses for the post survey. To address the inequity, the researchers randomly removed 34 responses from the pre-survey so the numbers of responses were equal on the pre and post survey. This may have caused a change in the  $p$  value and thus may have altered the results slightly.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research could include adapting the parent workshops to be facilitated at the upper elementary level. The researchers believe the effectiveness of the development of digital citizenship among middle school students would be improved if their families were introduced to the topic in elementary school. Another recommendation would be yearly workshops to continue growth and understanding of digital citizenship. The researchers can assess if the implementation of workshops in elementary school gives the parents an increased knowledge thus able to better guide their middle school aged child. This could help the researchers explore the effectiveness of parental workshops in teaching digital citizenship.

### **Summary**

Digital citizenship encompasses all technology and online opportunities that leave users safe, ethical, responsible, and informed of specific skills within the digital community (Ribble, 2019). Digital citizenship is such a key topic more than ever to teach today's middle school students. As has been observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole world became more dependent on the Internet for day-to-day activities. Educating parents is a key component to helping these children become successful. The parent/guardian student educator triangle is the foundation of student success and all adults in the child's life must work together (Smith & Mader, 2016). The data collected from our post survey indicates that overall parents/guardians become empowered and knowledgeable in digital citizenship and are able to better guide their middle school aged child. If parents of middle school aged children show digital citizenship prowess, this will enable them to have a better understanding of the 21st century middle school

child. These children will have invaluable information from the home that will help them be successful digital citizens.



## Chapter 6: Product

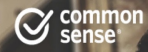
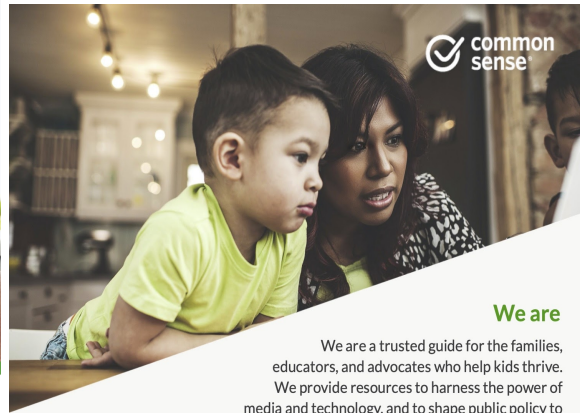
### Presentation #1: Plugged in Parents



#### Plugged-in Parents: Grades 6-8

Keeping kids safe, happy, and healthy in the digital age.

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#### We are

We are a trusted guide for the families, educators, and advocates who help kids thrive. We provide resources to harness the power of media and technology, and to shape public policy to improve the well-being of every child.

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This brave new world isn't easy for parents.



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What are your **biggest concerns** about digital media?

What are some of digital media's **strengths**?

How do we use media in balance as a family, find quality content, set expectations around healthy use to prevent conflict, and raise media savvy consumers and creators?

### All About That Balance

Ask yourself – is my child:

- ✓ Physically healthy and sleeping enough?
- ✓ Pursuing interests and hobbies (in any form)?
- ✓ Connecting socially with family and friends (in any form)?
- ✓ Having fun and learning in their use of digital media?
- ✓ Engaged with and achieving in school?

Source: "New screen time rules from the American Academy of Pediatrics," Sonia Livingstone



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### Set Yourself Up For Success

What are best practices around digital media and devices?

- Use media with your kid.
- Know your own rules.
- Set expectations and rehearse.
- Connect media to real life.
- Talk about commercials and other advertising.
- Encourage creation as well as consumption.
- Talk about digital citizenship.
- Model the media behavior you want to see in your kids.

### Since they're using it...

What do you want them to get out of digital media?

- A. Fun
- B. Learning
- C. Connection
- D. I just don't want it to mess them up!

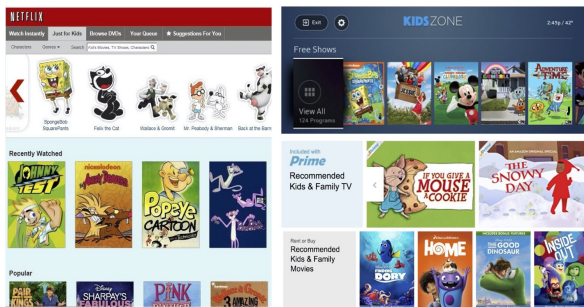


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### Be Choosy



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What was most important to you as a tween?

- A. Friends
- B. Family
- C. Fitting in
- D. Self-expression
- E. All of the above?



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Same child development, more powerful tools.



Adults don't get it. They think I'm addicted to technology – but I'm not.

I'm addicted to my friends.

Common Sense Media Focus Groups, 2014.



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Be the training wheels



A phone: To buy or not to buy?

**Responsible**

Do they show basic responsibility with time, valuables, and behavior toward others?

**Social**

Is there a social benefit to having a phone? A social cost to not having one?

**Safe**

Are there reasons you need to be in touch for your kid to stay safe?

**Respectful**

Do they generally follow rules? Will they agree to the limits you set?



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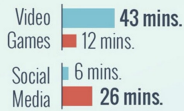


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BOYS ARE FROM XBOX, GIRLS ARE FROM INSTAGRAM

Average daily time used for social media and gaming is strikingly different.

TWEENS



TEENS



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Myth or Truth?

Social media alienates kids.

**Myth!**

57 percent of all teens have made new friends online

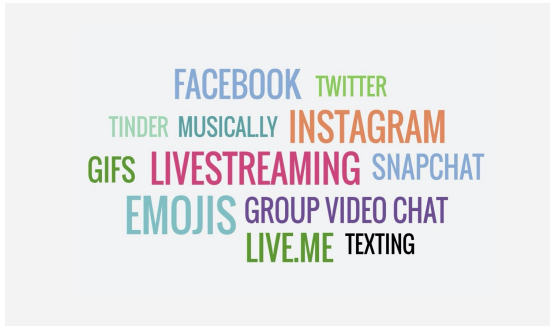
84 percent of boys who play networked games with friends feel more connected when they play online

68 percent of teen social media users have had online friends support them through tough or challenging times



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### Social Media Mashup



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### Social Media Red Flags

- ▶ Age-inappropriate content
- ▶ Public default settings
- ▶ Location tracking and sharing
- ▶ Real-time video streaming
- ▶ Ads and in-app purchases
- ▶ "Temporary" pics and videos
- ▶ Subpar reporting tools
- ▶ Anonymity
- ▶ Cyberbullying/negative culture

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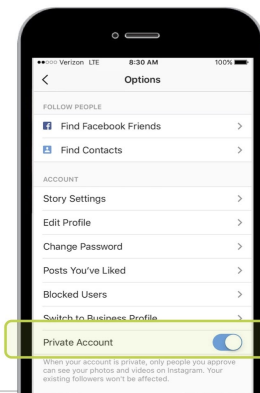
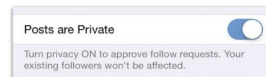
### Self-reflect Before You Self-reveal!



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### Privacy Settings



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### Keyboards Can Make Us Careless and Cruel



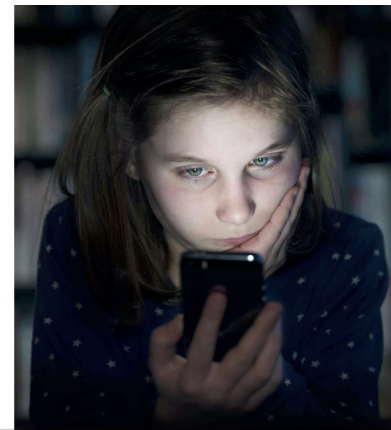
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### Best Approach to Bullying

- Report abuse
- Encourage "upstanding"
- Collect proof
- Involve others
- Limit online access

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### Keeping Our Kids Safe

Worst-case scenarios exist, but they are not the norm!

**20-54%**

of teens have sent or posted sexy pictures of themselves. Most sexy pictures are sent to a significant other.

**51%**

of girls say they felt pressure from a guy to send sexy pictures.

**30-40%**

of teens say nude photos are shared beyond intended receiver.

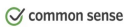
**9%**

of kids receive unwanted online sexual solicitations (as of 2010).

**4%**

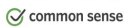
of kids have online interactions where a predator attempts to make contact offline

GuardChild citing Pew Internet and American Life Project, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Cox Communications Teen Online and Wireless Safety Survey, YISS study



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### There's some iffy stuff out there.



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**Choose**  
Help kids make good choices.

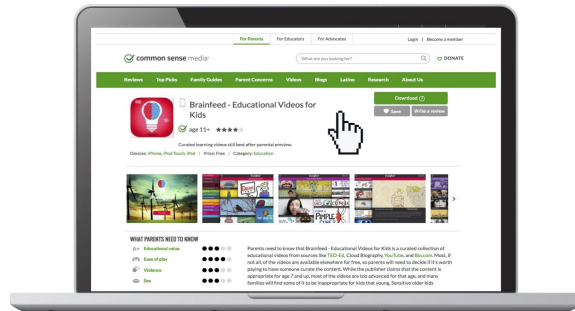
**Check**  
Check what they're doing.

**Chat**  
Follow up with a chat.



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### We Can Help!



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### Use Media: Don't Let It Use You

**50%**

of teens feel addicted to technology.

**59%**

of parents feel teens are addicted.

**Over 1/2**

of teens multitask while doing homework, and most believe it doesn't hurt the quality of their work.

**Over 80%**

of parents and teens feel technology makes no difference or helps their relationships.

**Fear of missing out (FOMO) and social media anxiety are very real for teens.**



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### Myth or Truth ?

Parents spend less time on devices than kids/teens

**Myth!**

Parents spend 9:22 with screen media daily, including for personal and work use. 7:43 of that time is devoted to personal screen time. Tweens spend an average of 6 hours/day and Teens an average of about 9 hours/day on screens.

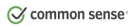


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**Model**  
Be a media mentor and set the standard.

**Monitor**  
Use limits, not lectures, and be up front about checking their media use.

**Mediate**  
Be ready to step in if necessary, but let teens make some choices on their own.



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### Family Media Agreement: 6-8



I, \_\_\_\_\_, will:

**... stay safe.**

- I will not create accounts or give out any private information — such as my full name, date of birth, address, phone number, or photos — without my family's permission.
- I will not share my passwords with anyone other than my family. I will ask my family to help me with privacy settings, if I want to set up devices, accounts, or profiles.
- If anyone makes me feel pressured or uncomfortable or acts inappropriately toward me online, I will stop talking to that person and tell a friend or family member I trust about it.

**... think first.**

- I know that whatever I share online or with a phone can spread fast and far. I will not post anything online that could harm my reputation.
- I will not bully, humiliate, or intentionally upset anyone online or with a phone — whether through sharing photos, videos, or screenshots, spreading rumors or gossip, or setting up fake profiles — and I will try to stand up to those who do.
- If I use, reference, or share someone else's creative work online, I will give proper credit to the author or artist.

**... stay balanced.**

- I will pay attention to how much time I spend in front of screens, and I will continue to enjoy the other activities — and people — in my life.



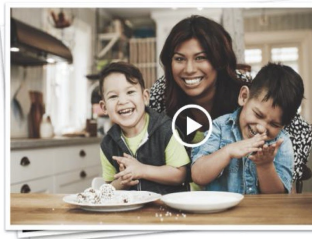
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#### Device-Free Zones and Times

**#DeviceFreeDinner**  
A movement for happier, healthier kids  
Get your whole family on board with tips for a balanced digital life.

[Get tips](#) [Watch video](#)

Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics



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#### When all else fails, tracking software might, too.

"Technology is going to help you," he says, "but it's not going to get away from the fact that you should be having more conversations about this with your kids."

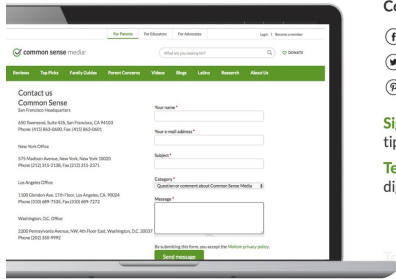
Nick Shaw of Norton Security



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## Resources for Support

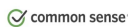
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#### Connect with us

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Sign up today for our tips and updates.  
Tell your school about our digital citizenship curriculum.



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## YOU GOT THIS!



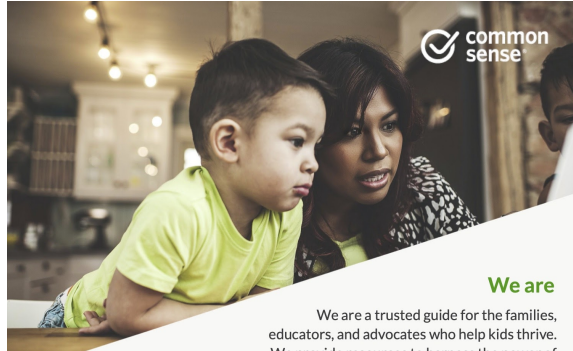
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**Presentation #2: Social Media, Gaming, & Mental Health Presentation**



**Social Media, Gaming & Mental Health**

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**We are**

We are a trusted guide for the families, educators, and advocates who help kids thrive. We provide resources to harness the power of media and technology, and to shape public policy to improve the well-being of every child.

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**Child Mind Institute**

The **only independent nonprofit** organization exclusively dedicated to transforming mental health care for children everywhere.

To help children reach their full potential we must:

- Develop more effective treatments for childhood psychiatric and learning disorders.
- Empower children, families and teachers with the scientifically sound information they need.
- Build the science of healthy brain development.

*The Child Mind Institute does not accept funding from the pharmaceutical industry.*



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**What We'll Cover**

- 1 Big Picture: What's happening with teens' mental health?
- 2 Brain Development: What are they thinking?
- 3 Potential Pitfalls & Practical Tips: Comparison, pressure, drama, and isolation
- 4 Worst-Case Warning Signs: What to look for and what to do
- 5 Potential Positives: What's the good news?

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**Big Picture:  
What's Happening With  
Teens' Mental Health?**

**Causes vs. Correlations: Lack of Clarity**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1 Overall statistics</b><br/>Between 13 and 20% of children in the U.S. experience a mental disorder in a given year.</p>   | <p><b>4 Some Research Links to Social Media</b><br/>Teens who spent 5+ hours on devices were 66% more likely to have at least one suicide-related outcome.</p>               |
| <p><b>2 Increase in depression</b><br/>There was a 33% increase in the number of eighth- to 12th-graders who had high levels of depressive symptoms from 2010-2015.</p> | <p><b>5 On the other hand ...</b><br/>Other researchers say that data actually shows that social media only explains .36% of depressive symptoms.</p>                        |
| <p><b>3 Suicide Rate</b><br/>Suicide is the second leading cause of death of people age 15-24.</p>  | <p><b>6 So many variables</b><br/>Because there are so many variables and the connections between causes and outcomes are unclear, we don't have a lot of clear answers.</p> |

Twenge, et al., 2017; Kessler, et al., 2005; CDC, 2017

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What We Know for Sure



**How much they use matters**  
Teens who use the most digital media are the most unhappy.



**What they're using it for matters.**  
Teens who use social media passively or only to get likes and follows have the most negative outcomes.



**Other factors might matter more.**  
Overall media balance, sleep, general health, and other factors play a huge role in mental health.

**Brain Development:  
What Are They Thinking?**

**The Teenage Brain**

- ✓ Prefrontal cortex helps us think ahead, see consequences, and make decisions.
- ✓ Teens' prefrontal cortex isn't finished developing.
- ✓ They see situations as absolute truths that will last forever.
- ✓ Tweens develop meta-cognitive abilities and awareness of others' opinions of them.



**Bottom Line:**  
*A teen's brain is evolving, so risk-taking, poor decision-making, awareness of peer approval, and absolute thinking increase.*

**Potential Pitfalls & Practical Tips:  
Comparison, Pressure,  
Drama, Isolation**

**Comparison**

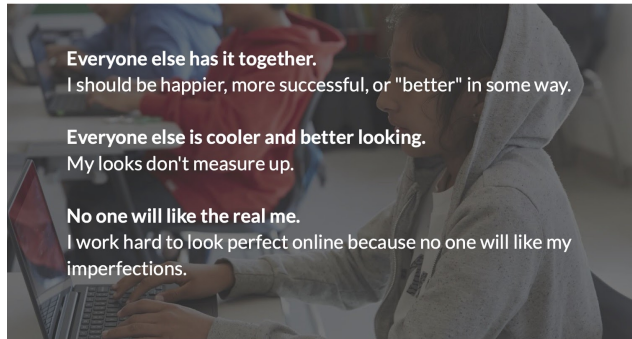
*What teens see on social media can become a personal ruler, and trying to measure up can bring them down.*



- ✓ Altered images
- ✓ Presentation of perfection
- ✓ Focus on the superficial
- ✓ Highly visible sexual images
- ✓ Insta-judgement
- ✓ Social media metrics available 24/7



### Effects of The Social Media Measuring Tape



Everyone else has it together.  
I should be happier, more successful, or "better" in some way.

Everyone else is cooler and better looking.  
My looks don't measure up.

No one will like the real me.  
I work hard to look perfect online because no one will like my imperfections.

### How To Help

**Take the effects of social media seriously.**  
"It's really hard to feel like you have to measure up to someone else, huh?"

**Combat "duck syndrome."**  
"Boy, these pictures sure make everything seem perfect, but nobody's life is perfect."

**Pull back the curtain on perfection.**  
"Hmm, how many selfies do you think she took to get this one? Which filter did she use?"

**Foster failure, and emphasize effort.**  
"I really messed up at work, but listen to how I tried hard to fix it..."

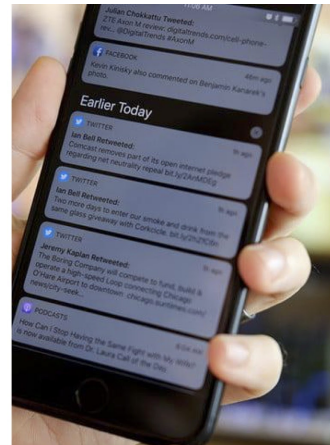


**Be kind:**  
*Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.*  
-Ian Maclaren

### Pressure

*Falling prey to tech tricks, keeping up with connections, and staying in the know can make social media more compulsive than fun.*

- ✓ Constant communication
- ✓ FOMO
- ✓ Sneaky tech tricks
- ✓ Superficial social contracts
- ✓ Information overload



### The Multitasking Myth and Mental Health

- Switching between two tasks rapidly is known to decrease performance.
- Teens are usually better at switching between two tasks but it still tires the brain and performance drops.
- Hippocampus impacted (learning and memory) when brain of rats stimulated by multiple screens. Took mice 3x as long to learn a maze, and brain changes remained.
- Balancing screen use for school and home can be hard to manage and can lead to more multitasking.
- If performance decreases, it can cause depression.

Christakis and Ramirez, et al., 2012

### More Pressure = Less Sleep

- 60% of adolescents view phones within the hour before bedtime.
- According to a 2015 CDC study, 73% of teens (across 30 states) and 58% of middle schoolers (across nine states) don't get enough sleep.
- Devices (like phones) with blue light can reduce quality of kids' sleep even more than for adults.
- Lack of sleep can significantly impact mental health.

CDC, 2015; Hysing, et al., 2015

### Effects of On-call Communication and Never-ending Notifications

I have to know what's going on or I'll have FOMO. If I don't keep tabs on what's happening on social media, I'll be left out so sometimes I stay up really late.

If I don't keep up, I'll miss out or be replaced. If I don't respond to a text or keep up a Snapstreak, I'm letting my friends down so I multitask while doing homework.

I have to keep checking for better or worse. My notifications might make me feel good or bad, but I have to know either way.

### How To Help

Know that the pressure feels real, so lead with empathy. "I bet sometimes it feels hard to keep up with all of this."

Encourage your teen to limit notifications. "Let's take a look in your settings and see if we can adjust how urgent it seems."

Take a break. Even a short break can give some relief.

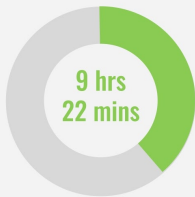
Set limits to help your kid contain demands for communication. "As a family, we're not using phones at the table or in bed."

Be a strong role model for healthy behavior. "It's hard for me, too. Maybe we can help each other."



### Myth or Truth?

Parents spend less time on devices than kids/teen.



#### Myth!

Parents spend 9 hrs., 22 mins with screen media daily, including for personal and work use; 7:43 of that time is devoted to personal screen time.

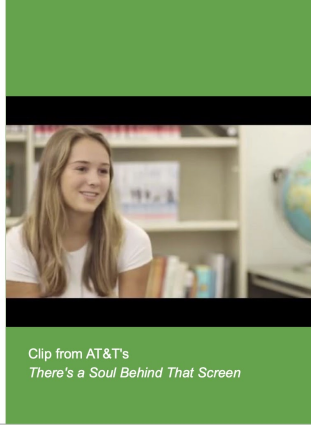
**6 Hrs** Tweens spend an average of six hours/day on screens.

**9 Hrs** Teens spend an average of nine hours/day on screens.

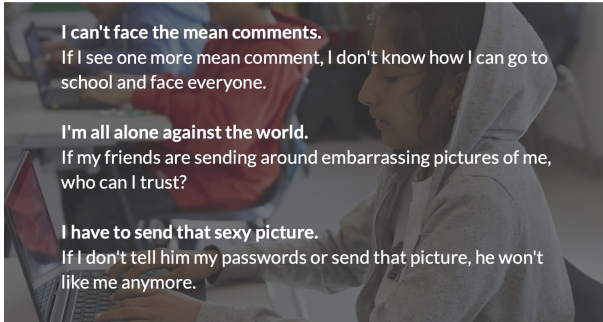
## Drama

*Between being left out, cyberbullying, and significant others, social media can be stressful.*

- ✓ Mean girls and misunderstandings
- ✓ Cyberbullying and cruelty can be crushing
- ✓ Significant others and sexting



### Effects of Meanness, Embarrassment, and Fear of Rejection



### How To Help

Stay engaged, empathic, and encouraging.  
"I'm right here with you, and I know this is hard."

Help teens think through potential consequences of posting and sharing.  
"How do you think she'll feel if that picture gets around school?"

Collect evidence, block, report, and involve institutions when necessary.

Encourage teens to be upstanders and create a positive online culture.  
"I know it might feel scary, but I'll bet she'd like someone to have her back."



### Treading Carefully With Teens



Judge



Jump to Conclusions



Jump into Action

## Isolation

*Sometimes being in the digital world feels easier than being face-to-face and strangers feel safer than friends.*

- ✓ Online world becomes more important than offline world
- ✓ Digital device demands all time -- no desire to do anything else
- ✓ Dramatic changes in mood, grades, and social circle
- ✓ Secrecy and lack of in-person relationships can mean contact with strangers



### Effects of Being Online to Exclusion of Everything Else

**It's easier to have relationships online.**  
Real-life relationships are too hard, so I'd rather chat with online friends.

**Online gaming is my escape from everything.**  
I feel accomplished and cool in-game, and I don't have to think about how I'm feeling.

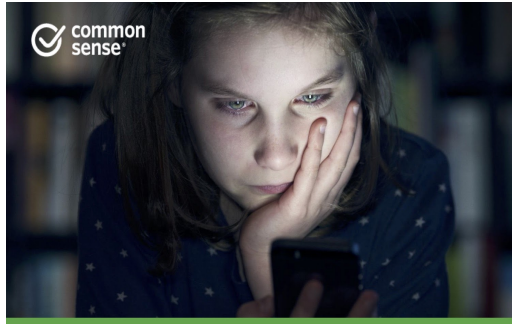
**There's no way back, so I give up.**  
I've already screwed up my grades, and my parents are mad at me, so I might as well just stay online alone.

### How To Help

- Address underlying causes before taking away devices completely.**  
"I notice that you prefer to just stay in your room lately, and I'm curious about why that is. What's going on?"
- Keep devices out of private spaces.**  
"We're all going to charge our phones in the living room at night so we can get better sleep."
- Remind teens that online friends are different from face-to-face friends.**  
"I believe your online friends are real friends, and also to really know a person, you need to see them face-to-face."
- Bring time online back into overall balance.**  
"As a family we're going to set some limits around when and where we use devices."



Presentation #3: Cyberbullying & Digital Drama



**Plugged-In Parents: Cyberbullying and Digital Drama**  
Keeping kids safe, happy, and healthy in the digital age.

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**We are**

We are a trusted guide for the families, educators, and advocates who help kids thrive. We provide resources to harness the power of media and technology, and to shape public policy to improve the well-being of every child.

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**Cy-ber-bul-ly-ing**

\ 'sɪ-ber-, bŭ-lē-ɪŋ , -be-ɪ

Ongoing, targeted harassment via digital communication tools that's meant to make the victim feel bad.

Define It Understand It Detect It Prevent It Handle It

**Teens Talk About It**



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**Digital Drama**



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Define It

EXPENSE....Here's the best part...THERE'S NOT A SINGLE GOD DAMNED THING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT, BECAUSE I HAVE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU BY THE NUTS...If that upsets you, you can go fuck yourselves. But i still want you all to have a great i wanna kill u bitch

I blame u for this times I'll cut y faster than a l Glad you finally see it my way. You've been publicly ve on...Oh and seriously give suicide some thought. Ah you think you paid me. portion of my cost to edit. 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌

SOFIA I HOPE YOU DIE

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Define It

Define It

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### Scope of Cyberbullying

Low Prevalence, High Impact

**15%** of students have been electronically bullied

**18-31%** of kids experience in-person bullying

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015

Define It Understand It Detect It Prevent It Handle It

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### From Fleeting to Far-Reaching Consequences of Cyberbullying

Understand It

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### A Tale as Old as Time

Why Do People Cyberbully Each Other?

- To gain attention and social standing.
  - To feel powerful.
  - Because they're angry at a friend.
  - Because they meant to tease but it got serious.
  - Because they were bullied.
- Understand It
- common sense®
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### Being Mean Behind a Screen

The screen adds a shield for the bully and provides more viral reach.

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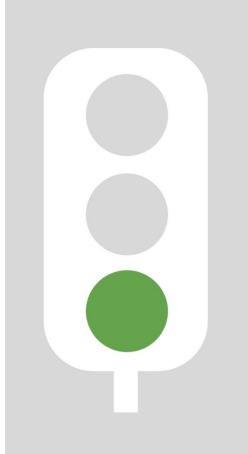
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### Typical Targets

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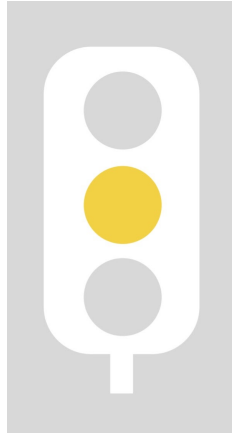


### Time to Watch

**Typical Tween/Teen Development:**

- Popularity and pecking order.
- Growing independence and distancing from family.
- Concern about appearance especially in the eyes of peers.
- Strong and swinging emotions.
- Exploration of sexuality.
- Trying on different identities.
- Lack of consideration for consequences.

Define It Understand It Detect It Prevent It Handle It

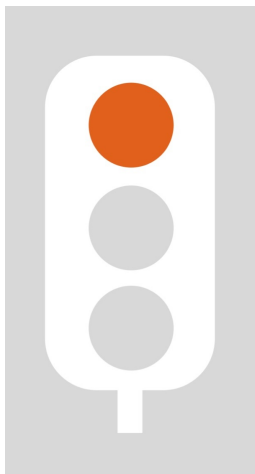


### Time to Ask

**Changes in behavior, achievement, contact with friends:**

- Anxious and on edge after being online.
- More alerts and notifications on your kid's device.
- More irritable and prone to emotional outbursts.
- Secretive in general and about time online, hiding the screen, glued to phone.

Detect It



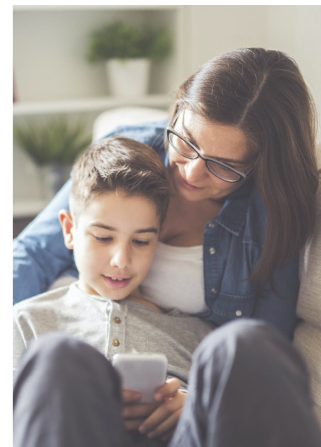
### Time to Get Help

- Self-harm.
- Suicidal thoughts/ideation.
- Total withdrawal.

Detect It

### Stop the Cycle of Cyberbullying

- ▶ Start early.
- ▶ Talk through scenarios and strategies.
- ▶ Stay involved.
- ▶ Set limits.
- ▶ Be a role model.
- ▶ Can use curriculum.



Define It Understand It Detect It Prevent It Handle It



### Worst-case scenarios exist, but they are not the norm!

**Stay ...**

- Engaged
- Empathic
- Encouraging

Define It Understand It Detect It Prevent It Handle It

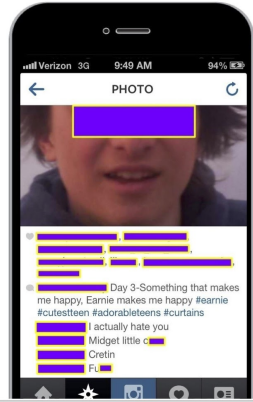
### Discuss, Don't Dismiss



Handle It

### Evidence and Involvement

- Block and report.
- Take screenshots.
- Save threads.
- Contact appropriate parties to find resolution.



Handle It

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### Upstanding Above All



Handle It

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### You Got This!



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## Presentation #4: Social Media Applications

**YOUTUBE** (account holders must be 18, or 13 w/parent permission)  
This video sharing service is the most popular social media app among the 13-18 set in the U.S. Users create profiles, upload, watch, like and comment on videos.

**SNAPCHAT** (min. age: 13)  
Wildly popular private messaging app that lets users send photos and videos that are automatically deleted after viewed. Allows for private chat too.

**INSTAGRAM** (min. age: 13)  
Online photo-sharing app & social network acquired by Facebook in 2012. With so many adults using Instagram, look for kids to move elsewhere.

**TIKTOK (FORMERLY MUSICAL.LY)** (min. age: 13)  
Currently considered the hottest new app, this Beijing-based network lets users create and share music videos in which they lip synch and/or dance.

**WHATSAPP** (min. age: 13)  
Instant messaging app that allows smartphone users to exchange unlimited text, image, video, and audio messages for free.

**DISCORD** (min. age: 13)  
This voice and text chatting app for gamers boasts over 100 million users. Gamers use Discord to discuss games and send direct messages to each other .

**HOUSEPARTY** (min. age: 13)  
A group video-chat app that lets users connect with others to get a party started and chat with up to 8 people at a time.

### Family Media Agreement: 6-8

**I will ...**

**stay safe.**

- I will not create accounts or give out any private information – such as my full name, date of birth, address, phone number, or photos – without my family’s permission.
- I will not share my passwords with anyone other than my family. I will ask my family to help me with privacy settings if I want to set up devices, accounts, or profiles.
- If anyone makes me feel pressured or uncomfortable, or acts inappropriately toward me online, I’ll stop talking to that person and will tell a friend or family member I trust about it.

---

**think first.**

- I will not bully, humiliate, or upset anyone online or with my phone – whether through sharing photos, videos, or screenshots, spreading rumors or gossip, or setting up fake profiles – and I will stand up to those who do.
- I know that whatever I share online or with my cell phone can spread fast and far. I will not post anything online that could harm my reputation.
- Whenever I use, reference, or share someone else’s creative work online, I will give proper credit to the author or artist.

---

**stay balanced.**

- I know that not everything I read, hear, or see online is true. I will consider whether a source or author is credible.
- I will help my family set media time limits that make sense, and then I will follow them.
- I will be mindful of how much time I spend in front of screens, and I will continue to enjoy the other activities – and people – in my life.

---

**In exchange, my family agrees to ...**

- recognize that media is a big part of my life, even if they don’t always understand why.
- talk with me about what worries them and why, before saying “no.”
- talk to me about my interests and embrace my world, including helping me find media that’s appropriate and fun.

X \_\_\_\_\_

signed by me

X \_\_\_\_\_

signed by my parent or caregiver



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## Appendix A

Permission to conduct study with parents/guardians of two SE Florida private schools

Permission to use materials from Common Sense Media and Cyber Civics

**From:** Leslie Wood <leslie.wood@ahschool.com>  
**Date:** February 7, 2020 at 7:04:49 AM EST  
**To:** Maria Cavallo Benkirane <mcavallobenkirane@email.lynn.edu>  
**Cc:** Iris Thompson <ithompson2@email.lynn.edu>, Jennifer Lesh <JLesh@lynn.edu>, Doug Laurie <doug.laurie@ahschool.com>  
**Subject: Re: Iris and Maria Dissertation**

Dear Maria Cavallo and Iris Thompson,  
We are excited to be a part of your thesis. We know our parents and consequently our students will benefit from your endeavors.  
Regards,  
Leslie Wood  
Vice President  
American Heritage Schools

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 6, 2020, at 4:43 PM, Maria Cavallo Benkirane <mcavallobenkirane@email.lynn.edu> wrote:

Good afternoon,

Thank you Dr. Laurie and Ms. Wood for meeting with us today regarding implementing our workshops at American Heritage School. We are excited to implement our research at both campuses. Please reply all acknowledging that we are allowed to proceed with the planning of the digital citizenship workshops. Our dissertation chair, Dr. Lesh is included in this email as well.

---

**Common Sense Support** answers@commonsense.org via 0rjam5qbol... Fri, Aug 9, 2019, 2:43 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮  
to me ▾

Hi Maria,

Thanks for getting in touch!

We have approved the use of our resources as described in your email! Your dissertation sounds great, and we would love an update when you've implemented our materials.

For more info on our terms of use and requirements, check out: <https://www.common sense media.org/about-us/our-mission/educator-programs/curriculum-terms-use#>.

Best,  
Carina

ref:\_00D36ZaY3.\_5001RnsGyG:ref

**Maria Benkirane** <maria@livesouthfl.com> Tue, May 5, 12:39 PM ☆ ↩

to Diana, Iris ▾

Hi Diana,

We would like to use your free materials/information you offer on your site in our research and if needed to help us when we create our workshops. Our doctoral program at Lynn University is action research-based. We are creating parent workshops to educate parents about digital citizenship as part of our dissertation. Let me know if you need more information. Thanks, Maria

On May 5, 2020, at 10:41 AM, Diana Graber <support@cybercivics.com> wrote:

Hi Maria,

\*\*\*

**Diana Graber** <support@cybercivics.com> Tue, May 5, 3:38 PM ☆ ↩

to me, Iris ▾

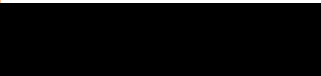
Absolutely, no problem!

You might also like to check out this free course for parents: <https://www.cybercivics.com/educator-digital-citizenship-course>

Please let me know if you need anything else! Diana



**Diana Graber** Author, "Raising Humans in a Digital World"  
Founder, Cyber Civics/Cyberwise



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## Appendix B

### Email to Parents/Guardians Study Participants Needed For Online Survey

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We, Maria Cavallo Benkirane and Iris K. Thompspon, are employed at American Heritage School in Boca Delray and we are current doctoral candidates at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. We are conducting research and our dissertation is titled "*Parental Strategies to Promote Mental Health in Digital Citizens of Grades 6-8.*" We are requesting your participation in an anonymous online pre-assessment survey. [CLICK HERE](#) for the survey. The first page of the study is our consent form and if you say YES, you may continue and participate in the survey and study. Please complete this by August 21, 2020. The goal of this is that you as the parent will gain a better understanding of the digital world that your middle school aged child is navigating, as well as provide you the knowledge to promote responsible technology use. Please complete one survey per middle school child living in your home.

**Who:** Parents/Guardians of children in Middle School grades 6-8 at both American Heritage campuses

**What:** Responding to a 15-minute online pre assessment survey regarding their knowledge of digital citizenship, four online workshops (must attend at least two workshops), and a post assessment survey following completion of the workshops.

**Benefits and Risks:** Participation is voluntary and this survey is completely anonymous. There are minimal risks. At any time, participants can exit the survey and choose not to participate. As a potential benefit, participants may acquire knowledge and expertise in assisting their middle school aged children in becoming a more responsible digital citizen.

Researcher's contact information:

Maria Cavallo Benkirane and Iris K. Thompson  
Lynn University, Ross College of Education.  
Email address: [mcavallobenkirane@email.lynn.edu](mailto:mcavallobenkirane@email.lynn.edu) or [ithompson2@email.lynn.edu](mailto:ithompson2@email.lynn.edu)

Thank you for your consideration in advance,  
Maria Cavallo Benkirane and Iris K. Thompson

**Appendix C**

**Digital Citizenship Informed Consent Form**

**Digital Citizenship Consent Form**

**Instructions to the Researcher(s):** This form is used to provide information to the research participant and to document written informed consent, minor assent, and/or parental permission.

<p><b>Purpose of the project:</b> To provide parents of middle aged students the tools to raise responsible digital citizens.</p>
<p><b>If you participate, you will be asked to:</b> Complete an online pre-assessment survey on your knowledge of your child's level of digital citizenship. You will then be asked to attend a series of four virtual workshops teaching parents how to raise better digital citizens. Finally, you will be asked to complete an online post-assessment survey rating the effectiveness of the workshops. Participants must attend at least two of the four workshops to complete the post assessment survey.</p>
<p><b>Total time required for participation:</b> 5-6 hours</p>
<p><b>Potential Risks of Study:</b> The risks to human subjects associated with this study will be minimal. This means that the probability of harm to the participants of the research study are not greater than any other routine performance or activity in everyday life Participants may drop out of study at any time for any reason.</p>
<p><b>Benefits:</b> Parents will gain invaluable knowledge on how to guide their middle school child in becoming responsible digital citizens.</p>
<p><b>How confidentiality will be maintained:</b> Pre and post assessment surveys will be analyzed and stored on a secure drive that only the researchers have access to. Once analysis is complete, all documents will be destroyed following a period of 5 years.</p>
<p><b>If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact:</b> Maria Cavallo Benkirane or Iris K. Thompson</p>
<p><b>Phone:</b> [REDACTED]      <b>Email:</b> mcavallobenkirane@email.lynn.edu or ithompson2@email.lynn.edu</p>

**Appendix D**

**Pre - Assessment Survey**

# Pre-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

Maria Cavallo Benkirane & Iris Thompson Lynn University Doctoral Students

Complete one survey per middle school child living in your home.

What is your age?

\*

- 20 -29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

Highest level of education completed.

\*

- High School
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate (MD, DO, DMD, Phd, EdD)
- N/A

Gender of parent. \*

Male

Female

Gender of the child. \*

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Age of child. \*

10

11

12

13

14

15

**Grade of the child.** \*

Grade 6

Grade 7

Grade 8

---

**At what age did your child get a cell phone with internet access?** \*

Write N/A if not applicable

Short answer text  
.....

---

**At what age did your child get a tablet with internet access?** \*

Write N/A if not applicable

Short answer text  
.....

---

**At what age did your child get a laptop with internet access?** \*

Write N/A if not applicable

Short answer text  
.....

---

**At what age did your child get a desktop with internet access?** \*

Write N/A if not applicable

Short answer text  
.....

---



Do you supervise your child while they are on the internet at home? \*

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you use a program that monitors your child's online use? \*

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you know if your child is using a secret app to hide photos? \*

- Yes
- No

Do you have time restrictions in place on your child's device to limit their use? \*

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

If you answered yes above or sometimes, what is the limit? \*

- 0 - 1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 8 +
- Varies

Are devices allowed to remain in your child's bedroom when they go to sleep? \*

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

<p>Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
<p>Do you know if your child has a VPN (Virtual Private Network) on their device? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Not sure</p>
<p>Does your child have a personal email address? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Don't know</p>
<p>Do you have access to your child's personal email account? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>

How many hours per day does your middle school-aged child spend on the internet for entertainment purposes? \*

This includes: social media, gaming, you tube, etc



<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Vb0FD0H1WEEgW3eW3t07imjDMDIgrYncQVeyAaQ5Ug/edit>

8/15

2/7/2021

Digital Citizenship - pre survey - Google Forms

1 - 3 hours

3 - 5 hours

5 - 7 hours

7 + hours

Not sure

How many hours per day does your middle school-aged child spend on the internet for educational purposes? This does not include time spent in school. \*

0 - 1 hour

1 - 3 hours

3 - 5 hours

5 - 7 hours

7 + hours

Not sure

Does your child have an account on social networking sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc...)? \*

Yes

No

Not sure

Do you follow or are friends with your child on their social networking sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc...).

1- never true 2-sometimes true 3- don't know/NA 4- often true 5-always true

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never True	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always True

The frequency of child's Snapchat use.

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

How often does your child use Instagram?

- 0-1 hours
- 1-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-7 hours
- 7+ hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

Do you know what a Finsta is?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

The frequency of child's TikTok use. \*

0 -1 hours

1 - 3 hours

3 - 5 hours

---

2/7/2021 Digital Citizenship - pre survey - Google Forms

7 + hours

Daily

Don't know

Not sure

N/A

The frequency of child's online video game use. \*

0 -1 hours

1 - 3 hours

3 - 5 hours

5 - 7 hours

7 + hours

Daily

Don't know

Not sure

The frequency of child's You Tube use. \*

0 -1 hours

1 - 3 hours

---

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Vb0FOO1W8KqW3GzW1k37imjDMDgqYarQVeyAaQ5Xg/edit> 12/15

2/7/2021 Digital Citizenship - pre survey - Google Forms

---

5 - 7 hours

7 + hours

Daily

Don't know

Not sure

N/A



Which topics have you had conversations about at home? \*

Check all that apply

- Having a balance of online/offline activities
- Behaving appropriately online
- Setting privacy settings
- Sharing information online (private vs personal)
- Talking with strangers online
- Understanding your digital footprint
- Dealing with cyber bullying
- Managing tech distractions
- None of the above
- Other...

To your knowledge, does your child use the privacy setting on social media accounts or online games? \*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- N/A

## Appendix E

### Post - Assessment Survey

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

## Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

Maria Cavallo Benkirane & Iris Thompson Lynn University Doctoral Students

Complete one survey per middle school child living in your home.

\* Required

1. Did you complete the pre-assessment survey?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

2. Which workshop did you attend/view? (Please attend/view) at least two workshops to complete this survey). \*

Check all that apply.

*Check all that apply.*

Workshop #1

Workshop #2

Workshop #3

Workshop #4

3. Gender of the parent. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Male

Female

Prefer not say

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

## 4. Highest level of education. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- High School
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate (MD, DO, DMD, Phd, EdD)
- N/A

## 5. Age of child. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15

## 6. Gender of the child. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

7. Grade of the child. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Grade 6

Grade 7

Grade 8

8. Do you feel your child is addicted to technology? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Sometimes

9. Do you supervise your child while they are on the internet at home? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Sometimes

10. Do you use a program that monitors your child's online use? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Sometimes

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

11. Do you know if your child is using a secret app to hide photos? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

12. Does your child participate in group chats? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Sometimes

13. Do you have daily time restrictions in place on your child's device to limit their use? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Sometimes

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

14. If you answered yes or sometimes, what is the limit? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 - 1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 8 +
- Varies
- N/A

15. Are devices allowed to remain in your child's bedroom when they go to sleep? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

16. Do you know what a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

17. Do you know if your child has a VPN (Virtual Private Network) on their device? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Not sure

18. Does your child have a personal email address? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

19. Do you have access to your child's personal email account? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

20. How many hours per day does your middle school-aged child spend on the internet for entertainment purposes? \*

This includes: social media, gaming, you tube, etc

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 - 1 hour
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Not sure
- N/A

21. How many hours per day does your middle school-aged child spend on the internet for educational purposes? This does not include time spent in school. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 - 1 hour
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Not sure
- N/A



2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

22. Does your child have an account on social networking sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc...)\*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

23. Do you know your child's passwords to their social networking sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc...)\*

1- never true 2-sometimes true 3 - don't know/NA 4- often true 5-always true

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never True	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always True

24. Do you follow or are friends with your child on their social networking sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc...)\*

1- never true 2-sometimes true 3 - don't know/NA 4- often true 5-always true

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never True	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always True

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

25. The frequency of child's Snapchat use: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

26. The frequency of child's Instagram use \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

27. Do you know what a Finsta is? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

28. The frequency of child's TikTok use \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

29. The frequency of child's online video game use \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

30. The frequency of child's You Tube use \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- 0 -1 hours
- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- 5 - 7 hours
- 7 + hours
- Daily
- Don't know
- Not sure
- N/A

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

## 31. Which topics have you had conversations about at home? \*

Check all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- Having a balance of online/offline activities
- Behaving appropriately online
- Setting privacy settings
- Sharing information online (private vs personal)
- Talking with strangers online
- Understanding your digital footprint
- Dealing with cyber bullying
- Managing tech distractions
- None of the above

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

## 32. To your knowledge, has your child ever: \*

Check all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- Shared a personal password with a friend
- IM'd (Instant Messaged) or chatted online with someone they did not know in real life
- Seen something online that you think was inappropriate
- Seen someone being cyberbullied online
- Teased or made fun of a stranger online
- Teased or made fun of someone they know in real life online
- Had email communication with a stranger
- None of the above

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

33. To your knowledge, does your child use the privacy setting on social media accounts or online games? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

34. What concerns you most about today's digital world? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Too much time spent on screens
- Amount of digital drama/cyberbullying
- Permanence of online presence, aka Digital Footprint
- Social and emotional well being
- Safety
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

35. Did you implement any strategies learned from the workshop? Explain. \*

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2/7/2021

Post-assessment survey - Digital Citizenship

36. Did you implement the parent/guardian/child contract? \*

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

37. Were your concerns regarding digital citizenship addressed in the workshops? Explain. \*

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38. Did you find the workshops helpful in guiding your middle school child in becoming a responsible digital citizen? Explain. \*

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39. Did the parent/guardian/child contract help provide an open line of communication with your child with regards to digital citizenship? Explain. \*

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