Dr. Matt Fuller, Assistant Superintendent for Technology and Innovation

The Age of Digital Citizenship

BARRINGTON 220 CULTIVATES A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY WITH STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BARRINGTON 220 LAUNCHED its One to World program during the 2014–15 school year. The initiative provides laptops to all Barrington High School students and iPad devices to elementary and middle school students. The integration of technology allows students to have real-world learning experiences while stimulating creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. However, with that technology also comes great responsibility. *Quintessential Barrington* talked with Dr. Matt Fuller, Assistant Superintendent for Technology and Innovation, about digital citizenship.

QB: *What is digital citizenship?*

MF: Digital citizenship is a term to describe the social skills a person needs to live, work, and play online. Many people likely equate digital citizenship with issues such as Internet safety and appropriate online communication; however, the topic also includes online privacy, security issues, "digital footprints," social media participation, and information literacy including copyright, and the citation of online sources. One important distinction is to not confuse digital proficiency with digital citizenship—just because someone is adept at using technology devices, apps, and services does not mean they are also practicing appropriate digital citizenship. School-aged children still need help from knowledgeable adults in navigating online behavior. In Barrington 220, we offer our students developmentally appropriate guidance and instruction within the context of real-world teaching and learning experiences.

QB: *How does digital citizenship tie in to social awareness?*

MF: The combination of social awareness, cultural diversity, and digital citizenship forms a solid foundation for Barrington 220's overall goal that includes helping students collaborate effectively throughout a global society. In terms of social-emotional learning, digital citizenship specifies the need to learn and practice online relationships, collaboration, and create a positive digital footprint. A digital footprint is another name for the collection of online activities, communications, and actions that can be traced back to a specific person. The understanding of cultural diversity and social awareness contributes to an individual's digital footprint.

QB: *How is Barrington 220 building a culture of good digital citizenship among students and staff?*

MF: Even before our One to World program began, we had been working with and providing resources to our staff and students about digital citizenship. Previously, our digital citizenship curriculum was provided primarily through our library program, but now with all students having access to a device, all teachers have the opportunity to teach digital citizenship as a part of day-to-day classroom activities. One recent example of a program provided to all staff was our keynote speaker on February 16, 2018. Barrington 220 teachers heard from Dr. Devorah Heitner, author of "Screenwise: Helping Kids Thrive (and Survive) in Their Digital World". Dr. Heitner offered many practical tips for both teachers and parents on the topic of cultivating a culture of responsible digital citizenship among all our students.

QB: *Why is it also critical for parents to understand digital citizenship?*

MF: The Internet has been available in homes and workplaces since the late 1990s. Over the past 20 years, the significant changes that have occurred

have included the increase of available platforms for communicating, namely social media, and the ability to access these and other resources from a device in your pocket or backpack. Parenting has changed in that children need guidance and mentorship regarding how to deal with relationships and manage time when given the potential of limitless access. Since the availability of technology is a fact of contemporary life, parents and schools need to partner to prepare our students to live in our ever-changing world.

In addition, much has been written on the topic of screen time. The term itself is misleading because it implies that the primary issue of device use is time spent in front of a screen and ignores the fact that the quality of different types of screen activities is not equal. For example, a child actively engaged in a pursuit such as writing, organizing, recording, editing, and sharing a video is having a very different experience than a child passively binge-watching Netflix.

QB: *How can practicing good digital citizenship in grades pre K–12 lead to greater student success beyond high school?*

MF: Just as Barrington 220 has always focused upon face-to-face social-emotional learning, digital citizenship represents the digital side of social-emotional learning. To be college- and career-ready, students need to have successfully demonstrated their ability as digital citizens before beginning college or landing their first job. Like any complex learning opportunity, these skills are best practiced in real-world situations. Parents, teachers, and community members interested in learning more about how to help children practice better digital citizenship have many resources available to them. Two excellent places to begin include Dr. Devorah Heitner's book, "Screenwise", and the Common Sense Media website, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology at www.commonsensemedia.org.