

Digital Citizenship Conference

About the project ...

The Digital Citizenship conference provided an opportunity to integrate and align the Waterloo Region District School Board character attributes with the increasing use of digital technology by staff and students for learning. This included integrating character development with the use of information technology and protocols such as the Acceptable Use Policy. The conference was designed to help prepare students to be responsible, contributing citizens in a society that is increasingly driven by technology. It provided an opportunity for participants to apply the board's character attributes by promoting appropriate and positive uses of digital technology in student learning. This included examining the negative and positive outcomes of the use of technology and how the application of character attributes within a technological setting can provide opportunities for individual growth, student engagement and community cohesion and engagement. Over 1,000 students, staff, parents and community members participated in the conference. The conference goals were to: develop awareness (knowledge of technology, the role of character development with technology and how it affects others and me); increase understanding (for the uses of technology that are considered appropriate or inappropriate and how character attributes can and should be reflected in the use of technology); act appropriately (think and plan for using technology in the most appropriate way); and reflect and evaluate (critically reflect on how character attributes can contribute to appropriate technological use and evaluate how actions can be changed to align more directly with behaviours that represent mature character development).

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- The conference resulted in a higher level of awareness and appreciation for the importance of applying character attributes in digital interactions.
- Specific areas of focus that were highlighted and addressed included approaches for minimizing and addressing cyberbullying.
- Participants learned about indiscriminate or inappropriate use of technology such as cell phones and how these can be disruptive to the learning environment and can create interpersonal conflict within schools and the community.
- Participants developed increased awareness, understanding and skills about being good digital citizens including an understanding of digital etiquette and appropriate use of the internet to promote safety online.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The conference highlighted the extent to which students and community members are engaged in a wide variety of social networks that utilize digital technology on a daily basis.
- A key lesson from the conference is that the board will need to be increasingly proactive in engaging students in learning processes that involve digital technologies. This will need to occur with an ongoing focus on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes to be good digital citizens as well as effective users of technology.