

What is Digital Literacy?

Digital Literacy has been identified by the West Vancouver Board of Education as a key district objective and part of our overall focus on improving literacy skills from K to Grade 12. Graduating students that are digitally literate is essential if we are to prepare our students to be successful in their adult lives. Although technology is changing at a rapid rate, digital literacy can be learned and skills, attitudes and abilities can be nurtured to use technology to “enhance the human experience.”

What are schools doing to promote Digital Literacy?

Starting last fall, elementary schools have been working from a K-7 Digital Literacy “Scope and Sequence” framework. This framework was created to provide guidance on what to teach and when.

The four strands of the scope and sequence are:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Research and Information Fluency
- Digital Citizenship
- Technology Operations and Concepts (Basic Skills)

As students’ progress through their elementary grades, it is our goal that students will develop effective and ethical use of technology both at school and at home.

What can parents do to help?

Technology is playing an increasingly important and pervasive role in the lives of many of our students. Children and youth today have access to digital games, digital music, digital books, and multiple digital tools (iPods, computers, video games, etc.).

Helping your child set parameters at home and providing students with constructive challenges using digital tools are two examples of encouraging digital literacy.

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“Digital literacy is the ability to ethically and efficiently participate in a digital environment.”



Digital Literacy Resources – Global Perspectives

BC Premier Technology Council’s recent publication [“A Vision for 21st Century Education”](#)

[Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#) - a website (US) that outlines tools, resources and information related to digital literacy.

[“Innovation in Education”](#) - UK research on Digital Participation



Social Media

Pre-teens and elementary school-aged students are being exposed to social media; if your child is in Grades 4 – 7, chances are he/she is interested in or already has access to a Facebook page. They want to join the online community of over 600 million people that have already signed up for a Facebook account.

As parents, you should be aware that the legal age for creating a Facebook account, according to the Terms and Conditions found during the sign up process, is 13 years. Thus, it is our district's recommendation that students under the age of 13 do not have a Facebook account.

There are a number of steps and resources that you can take to make sure your child is prepared to participate in a social media environment. In fact, many elementary-aged students have already experienced modified social media sites in the form of "Webkinz" or other multi-player, collaborative online environments.

To prepare your child to participate in social media consider:

1. Setting up your own account or a family account to participate together in Facebook
2. Familiarize yourself with privacy issues related to social media sites [here](#)
3. Consider creating a social media "contract" with your child. You can find information [here](#)
4. Identify positive uses of social media such as the ideas found within "Creativity and Innovation" in the digital literacy overview in this newsletter



What can parents do to help? (cont'd)

Some examples:

Creativity and Innovation – Ask your child to make a movie of your recent holiday. The younger your child, the more guidance they will require but you will be surprised with what they can create by discovering how to use Movie Maker or PowerPoint.

Research and Information Fluency – The next time your child is asked to do a research project, try using one of our school district's online databases that help filter searches to primary and secondary sources as well as to age appropriate results. To use one of our online data bases, try <http://www.sd45.bc.ca/resources/libraries.html> (use "westvan" as the username and "westvan" as the password.)

Digital Citizenship – This area of digital literacy has received the most press; often negative. However, your child and family can benefit significantly from using digital tools in a socially/digital responsible manner. One idea that you can try with your child is to figure out how to bridge distances using digital tools. Chances are you have family that lives in another community, city, or even country. Discuss what you can do to help bridge the gap – Skype, photo sharing, even email can be a way to model how we behave when we are communicating and collaborating in an online environment.

Technology Operations and Concepts (Basic Skills) – The number one question we are asked by parents is "how can we teach our students to be better keyboarders." Although some would argue that students magically learn to keyboard (usually they are quite motivated in their pre-teen years) others prefer to provide guided instruction with typing. Most teachers do not specifically teach typing during class time, but parents can help students learn the proper skills by going to sites such as <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/typing/>