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WEST ELIZABETH - JEFFERSON HILLS - PLEASANT HILLS

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September 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Your child is taking part in classroom lessons from the Common Sense Media Digital Literacy and Citizenship curriculum. The overall goal of this curriculum is to educate children about the basics of going online, and to help them become safe, responsible, and respectful digital citizens.

What is digital citizenship?
Club Penguin, Webkinz, YouTube, PBS Kids. Digital media and technology are evolving at a dizzying pace, bringing with them extraordinary opportunities as well as real risks for our children. On the positive side, children are using the immense power of the Internet and mobile technology to explore, learn, connect, and create in ways never before imagined. On the negative side, harmful behaviors aided by digital technology, from cyberbullying to copying online materials without citations, are surfacing in schools and in homes across the country. Many of us – parents and teachers alike – are struggling with how to help kids thrive in this brave, new world. That is why we have embarked on this digital citizenship program. Our partner in offering this curriculum is Common Sense Media, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information they need to thrive in a world of media and technology.

What we teach:
Common Sense Media's K-5 Digital Citizenship curriculum is divided into three units based on the digital ethics research of Dr. Howard Gardner and The GoodPlay Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Students learn about their connections to others through the Internet, and to think critically about how they treat others given this great responsibility. The topics your child will be introduced to are:

- Digital Life: Students learn that the Internet is like a neighborhood. They reflect on their responsibilities to this community and to the community members, both online and offline.
- Connected Culture: Students explore what happens when children gang up on one another online, what to do if they experience cyberbullying, and how to communicate effectively using online tools.
- Respecting Creative Work: Students learn about basic concepts of copyright, and in the late elementary grades they learn to create online citations. In this context, the issue of plagiarism is framed as a matter of respect.

The curriculum emphasizes a balanced approach and celebrates the positive aspects of digital life while teaching students to avoid its potential perils. The Digital Citizenship curriculum is rooted in a model of ethical thinking that starts with the self and moves outward, to encompass the entire community. Through hands-on activities, role-playing, and classroom discussion, your children will be asked to reflect on how their digital and online behaviors affect themselves, their friends and family, and the communities of which they are a part.

What families can do:
As we engage in these lessons in class, we will be sending home parent tip sheets, videos, and an occasional homework activity for you to do with your child. We encourage you to read and view the parent materials and to use the material together with your children. If you have access to the Internet at home or at work, you can visit the Common Sense Media website at **commonsensemedia.org** and take a look at the wealth of parent resources it provides on kids and media. Raising and educating young people in today's 24/7 digital media environment is one of the most exciting and daunting challenges that parents and schools face today. Working together, we can raise a generation of kids who become smart, responsible, and respectful digital citizens.

Fall 2017 Lessons

Grade Level(s)	Topic	Essential Question
5	Rings of Responsibility	What kind of responsibilities does a good digital citizen have?
5	Private and Personal Information	How can you protect yourself from online identity theft?
5	The Power of Words	What should you do when someone uses mean or scary language on the Internet?
6-8	Cyberbullying: Crossing the Line	When does inappropriate online behavior cross the line into cyberbullying, and what can you do about it?
6-8	Trillion Dollar Footprint	What is a digital footprint, and what does yours convey?
6-8	Scams and Schemes	What is identity theft, and how can you protect yourself from it?
9-12	Turn Down the Dial on Cyberbullying	Which factors intensify cyberbullying and online cruelty, and what can you do to lessen them?
9-12	College Bound	How can information you post on the Internet affect your future opportunities?
9-12	My Online Code	What does it mean to do the right thing online?

For additional information, please contact:

School	Counselor	Contact Information
Jefferson Elementary School	Megan McKinley	412-655-4163
Gill Hall and McClellan Elementary School	Julie Taylor	GH: 412-655-4732 Mc: 412-655-2700
Pleasant Hills Middle School	Jessica Lee	412-655-8680 x7225
Thomas Jefferson High School	A-G: Erin Yeager H-O: Karen Maple P-Z: Michael Kilcoyne	412-655-8610 x6222 412-655-8610 x6223 412-655-8610 x6224

Sincerely,

Matthew Patterson
Assistant Superintendent
Elementary Education

Scott Milburn
Assistant Superintendent
Secondary Education

MP/SM/pjz

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