

Digital Literacy & Citizenship: The Teacher's Perspective



A Common Sense Media Survey Snapshot

FALL 2012

“The web is a source of unlimited information; it makes it easy for students to find what they’re looking for. The problem is that students still get confused regarding what a legitimate, trustworthy website for information looks like.”

7th grade English teacher

“Students know how to copy and paste information they get on the computer, resulting in not learning the subject matter.”

Elementary school teacher

“Cyberbullying and texting inappropriate things are much more common these days.”

Middle school teacher

“A lot of my students have learned how to find accurate information instead of just Googling and then picking the first entry.”

6th grade teacher

“They are pretty good at finding info on the web for reports etc. but still have trouble finding scientific articles or sources that go into depth.”

High school science teacher

Key Findings

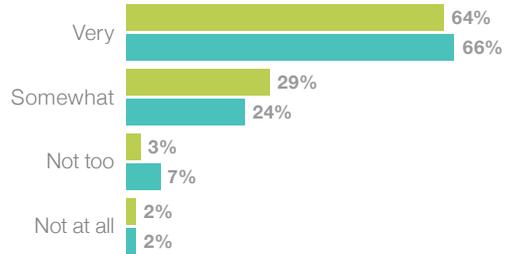
The vast majority of teachers are convinced that it is very important for their students to have strong digital literacy and citizenship skills.

More than nine in 10 teachers believe that digital literacy (93%) and citizenship (90%) are important skills for their students. In fact, two-thirds of teachers say these are “very” important skills (64% for digital literacy, and 66% for digital citizenship). Middle school teachers are the most likely to consider these skills very important for their students (72% and 74%, respectively).

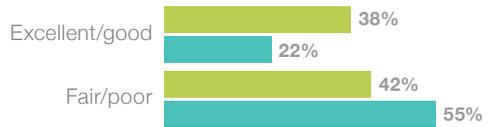
Teachers rate their students quite poorly on digital literacy and citizenship skills.

Four in 10 (42%) teachers say their students’ digital literacy skills are only fair or poor, while more than half (55%) of teachers say the same about their students’ digital citizenship skills. On the other side of the scale, 38% of teachers rate their students as having good or excellent digital literacy skills, and 22% say the same about digital citizenship. Among high school teachers, 69% say their students’ digital citizenship skills are only fair (48%) or poor (21%). Students at schools that are in the top third of their state academically are more likely than those at poorer-performing schools to have good digital literacy skills, but even they are ranked poorly when it comes to digital citizenship.

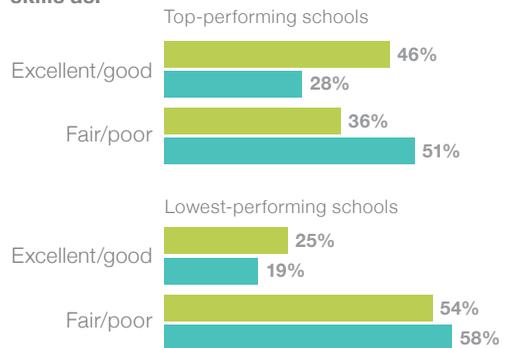
How important, if at all, do you think these skills are for students?



In general, how would you rate your students’ digital literacy and citizenship skills?



Percent of teachers who rate their students’ digital skills as:



■ Digital literacy ■ Digital citizenship

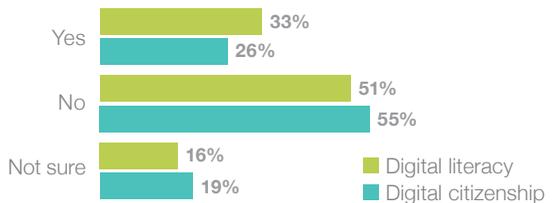
Teachers say most schools don't teach digital literacy or citizenship.

Only one in four teachers (26%) says digital citizenship is taught at their school, and a third (33%) say the same about digital literacy. Schools at the higher end of the achievement scale in their state are more likely to teach digital literacy (40%) than those in the middle (28%) or bottom (27%) of their state's schools. The same holds true for digital citizenship, with a third (33%) of top-ranked schools offering it, compared to 22% of middle-ranked and 15% of lower-ranked schools.

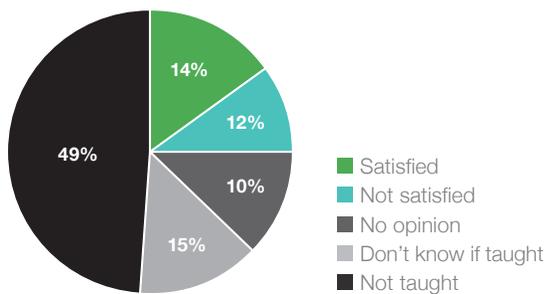
Even where digital literacy or citizenship is taught, many teachers aren't satisfied with the quality of the curricula.

Among those teachers who say digital literacy and/or citizenship are taught at their schools, 38% are satisfied with the curricula, 34% aren't, and 28% don't know. Overall, 14% of all teachers are satisfied with the digital literacy and citizenship curricula at their schools, while the rest are either not satisfied (12%), don't have an opinion about the quality of the curricula (10%), or say these subjects aren't taught at their schools (49%) or that they don't know whether or not they are taught (15%).

Are either of these subjects taught at your school?



Percent of teachers who are satisfied with the quality of digital literacy or citizenship curricula at their schools:



Methodology

This report is based on a survey of 685 K-12 teachers in the United States, conducted for Common Sense Media by Knowledge Networks (now part of the GfK Group) from May 5-17, 2012. Knowledge Networks has recruited the first online research panel (the KnowledgePanel) that is representative of the entire U.S. population. Unlike Internet "convenience" or "opt-in" panels that include only individuals with Internet access who volunteer through word-of-mouth or other means to be part of research, KnowledgePanel members are randomly recruited through probability-based sampling (address-based sampling and random-digit dial telephone surveys). Households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed. For this study, all respondents were classroom teachers in grades K-12 during the 2012 school year, at both public (86% of the sample) and private (14%) schools. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of error attributable to sampling is +/- 5 percentage points.

Toplines

Survey of teachers conducted by GfK Group/Knowledge Networks for Common Sense Media, May 5-17, 2012

Margin of sampling error = +/-5 percentage points

N=685

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding, refused/don't know responses, or because multiple responses were allowed. An asterisk () indicates a value of less than 0.5%.*

1. This past school year, were you employed as a classroom teacher?

2. Is the school in which you currently work a public or private school?

a. Public – not including charter schools	83%
b. Public charter school	3%
c. Private, nonsectarian – not religiously affiliated	5%
d. Private, religious – affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church	4%
e. Private, religious – affiliated with some religious organization other than the Roman Catholic Church	4%

3. What grade or grades do you teach?

a. Kindergarten – 5th grade	53%
b. 6th – 8th grade	33%
c. 9th – 12th grade	33%

4. What subject or subjects do you teach?

a. Social sciences	53%
b. Science, Technology, Math	56%
c. Humanities	14%
d. Other	42%

5. How many years have you taught, either full-time or part-time, at the elementary or secondary level? Do not include time spent as a student teacher.

a. 1-2 years	6%
b. 3-9 years	30%
c. 10-14 years	20%
d. 15-19 years	14%
e. 20-24 years	10%
f. 25 years or more	20%

6. How many students in grades K-12 were enrolled in this school?

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| a. Fewer than 100 | 5% |
| b. 100-199 | 9% |
| c. 200-499 | 20% |
| d. 500-749 | 26% |
| e. 750-999 | 15% |
| f. 1,000 or more | 25% |

7. How would you describe the area in which this school is located?

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| a. Central city | 19% |
| b. Urban fringe/large town | 50% |
| c. Rural/small town | 31% |

8. Do you own a smartphone – in other words, a cell phone you can use to send and receive email, download apps, or connect to the Internet?

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|--------|-----|
| a. Yes | 56% |
| b. No | 44% |

9. Which of the following statements best describes you:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a. I'm tech savvy and I love new gadgets | 18% |
| b. I'm comfortable with computers and smartphones, but I'm not usually the first to try new technology or tools | 66% |
| c. I'm not very comfortable using many of the newer technologies and applications | 16% |

10. Approximately what percent of students at your school receive free or reduced-price meals?

- | | |
|------------------|-----|
| a. Less than 10% | 17% |
| b. 10-25% | 19% |
| c. 26-50% | 20% |
| d. 51-75% | 18% |
| e. More than 75% | 26% |

11. In terms of academic achievement, where does your school rank among all the schools in your state?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| a. In the top third of schools in my state | 42% |
| b. In the middle third of schools in my state | 41% |
| c. In the bottom third of schools in my state | 16% |

Questions 12-27 will be released separately.

This next set of questions concerns “digital literacy and citizenship.” Digital literacy is defined as “the cognitive, technical, and social skills required to use information and communication technologies such as computers, social media and the Internet to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information.” Digital citizenship is defined as using these technologies to “communicate respectfully and safely, for interacting socially, sharing knowledge and collaborating with others.”

28. How important, if at all, do you think these skills are for students?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
a. Digital literacy	64%	29%	3%	2%
b. Digital citizenship	66%	24%	7%	2%

29. This question also concerns “digital literacy and digital citizenship.” Are either of these subjects taught at your school?

	Yes	No	Not sure
a. Digital literacy	33%	51%	16%
b. Digital citizenship	26%	55%	19%

30. Are you satisfied with the quality of the digital literacy and digital citizenship curriculum at your school?

	Yes	No	Don't know enough about it	Not taught	Don't know if taught
Among those at schools where digital literacy and/or citizenship are taught (N=252)	38%	34%	28%	—	—
Among all	14%	12%	10%	49%	15%

31. In general, how would you rate your students’ digital literacy and digital citizenship skills?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
a. Digital literacy	7%	31%	33%	10%
b. Digital citizenship	3%	19%	38%	17%

Common Sense Media's *Program for the Study of Children and Media*

The mission of Common Sense Media's *Program for the Study of Children and Media* is to provide parents, educators, health organizations, and policymakers with reliable, independent data on children's use of media and technology and the impact it has on their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. For more information about the program and to read reports on these studies, visit www.commonsense.org/research.

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