

# Digital Citizenship and the Australian Curriculum

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As we transition from an analogue to digital world in geography perhaps we should also think about and plan more systematically for digital citizenship in Geography for teachers and students. With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum in Geography it is an ideal time to think about this for future programming and teaching of Geography.

In the Shape of the National Curriculum: Geography document – January 2011 the sixth point in the introduction refers to how “Geography shows students ways in which they can positively influence their world as active local, national and global citizens...” Though not specifically mentioned, this positive influence can be developed through student participation in digital community membership or Communities of Practice, perhaps through Facebook and LinkedIn Groups.

Moreover, there are three General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum document in which digital citizenship would be useful: ethical behaviour, personal and social competence and intercultural understanding. Ethical behaviour is important as students engage in geographical issues in the digital world which is done in a way that is “acting with regard for other”. In this era of social media and students, students need to be guided in ethical online behaviour. Personal and social competence involves students managing themselves more effectively and their interactions in the digital world are no exception. Intercultural understanding builds on the latter as students learn to understand themselves in relation to others and increasing they interact with others in the digital world. Day to day citizenship and digital citizenship also go hand in hand as we deal with cross curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders histories and culture, sustainability and Australia’s engagement with Asia.

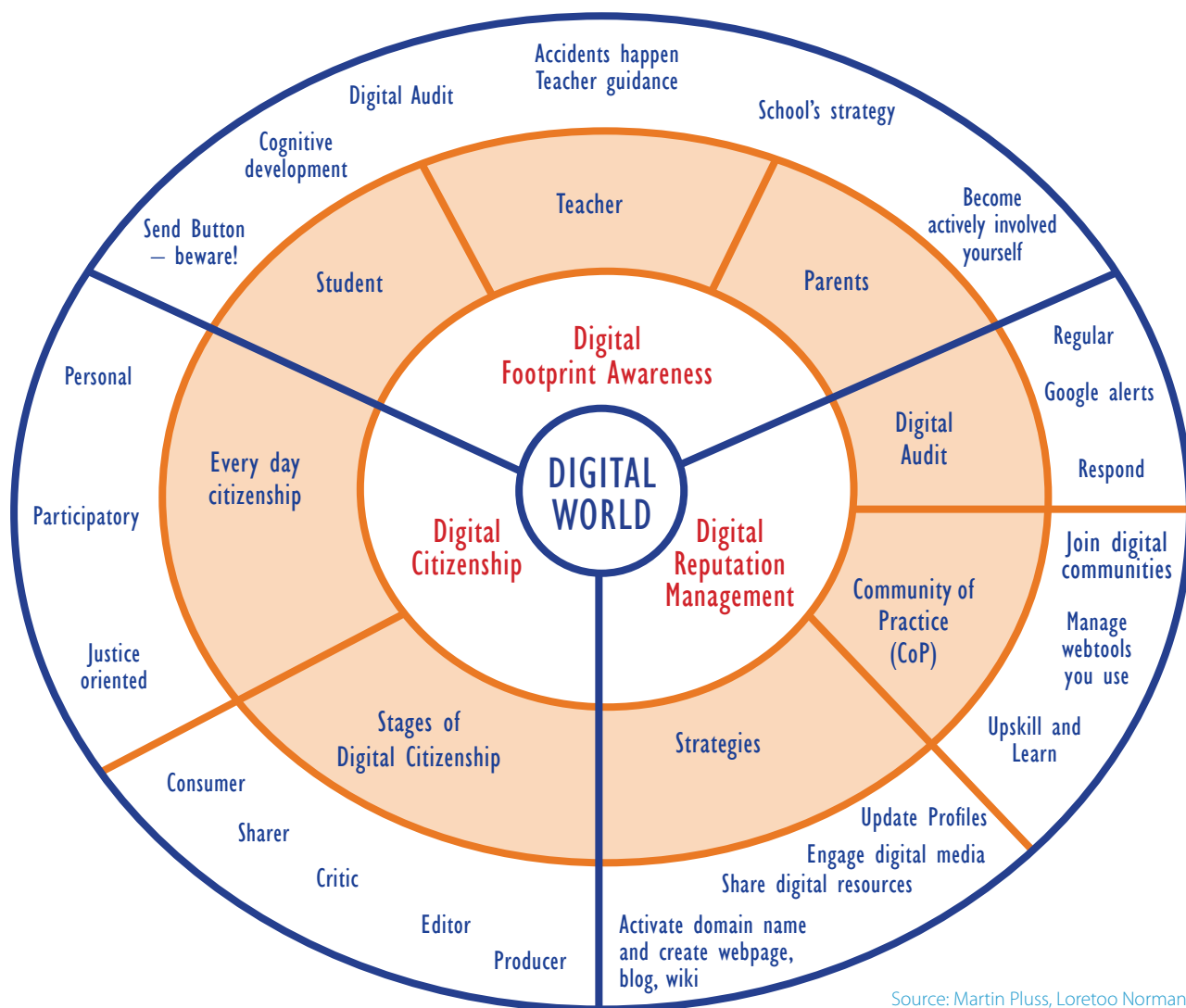
A closer examination of the Scope and Sequence of the Australian Curriculum sees the weaving of citizenship issues throughout. In Foundation

to Year 2 students examine local places, their main characteristics and change. Change often involves decision making by local citizens. In Years 3–4 students can learn about become digital citizenship through the “need to care for the environment”. In Years 5–6 students learn about the issues of sustainability, environmental consequences of urban development and the planning and management of community issues provides the opportunity to be active digital citizens. In Years 7–10 the focus is on the environmental characteristics of weather and water, biotic life, landscapes and resources and environmental sustainability and the human characteristics of people, settlement, livelihood and lifestyles and human well being - all lend themselves, in different degrees, to an important understanding of digital citizenship. Digital citizenship clearly has a place in the senior secondary years where there is a shift to “further develop students’ knowledge and ability to apply geographical inquiry...and a deeper engagement in decision making, evaluation and discussion of ethics and values.”

At the time of writing the detail of the final curriculum is still being finalised, though this review does support the notion that there are areas of the Australian Curriculum in Geography which has relevance to digital citizenship. The second section of this article will look at a model for integration digital citizenship into the teaching and learning of Geography which can be implemented in more detail once the specifics of the new curriculum are completed.

Figure 1 is a model highlighting some of the key features of the Digital World in which our students live. The model can be adapted for all year groups; however the focus here will be for the Year 7–12 year groups. Naturally the focus of the curriculum should be on the teaching and learning of Geography but this does not prevent Geography teachers helping students becoming digital citizens with a geographical consciousness. The model is

Figure 1: Key features of the digital world



Source: Martin Pluss, Loretoo Normanhurst

staged and sequenced.. The majority of Year 7–8 students are at the stage of cognitive development to be aware of their digital footprint. Key messages like “Beware of the send button” guide students to think about the consequences of how they interact with people online.

Once students undertake an audit of their digital footprint and learn from the mistakes they make online we can encourage them to explore the digital world from a geographical perspective. These sorts of lessons are best suited to Year 9–10 students. Students can build their geographical digital reputation by joining, in a supported and structured way in class, digital communities with a geographical focus. Students can join TakingITGlobal, who’s mission is “to empower

youth to understand and act on the world’s greatest challenges. We can’t wait for you to get involved!” There are numerous environment and local community organisations which require students to become involved in any way they can and one way is active digital involvement through awareness and education.

Initially these Year 9–10 students become more informed digital citizens by becoming consumers of digital information. Some become passionate about causes about which they have become aware and share this information on Facebook or Twitter. In the transition to senior Geography students can be exposed to more critical thinking about the issues they are engaging within the digital world, looking at material more closely by

editing and reshaping the information they are processing. Ultimately, a select few may become producers of digital content by hosting blogs, providing resources on wikis about geographical issues they feel passionate about and which they believe need support and attention from the wider community.

Naturally everyday citizenship and digital citizenship go hand in hand. The ideas presented in this article are only suggestions for teachers to consider as they re-program and think about what they will be teaching with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum. Students as well as teachers and parents are involved in the digital world and they will be better informed everyday as digital

citizens if they are taken through the steps of understanding how their digital footprint shapes their digital reputation. This growing awareness and education provides a framework for them to consider more carefully their role as citizens in a digital world.

## References

Kearney. M, Schuck. S, Burden.K, and Aubusson. P, (2012) "Viewing mobile learning from a pedagogical perspective" *Research in Learning Technology* V.20.

URL: <http://www.researchinlearningtechnology.net/index.php/rlt/article/view/14406/html>

This article has a figure which inspired the Digital World diagram in this article.



## Active Global Citizenship...

*a NSW Board of Studies Stage 5 Board Endorsed Course of Study*

The Stage 5 BOS NSW Board Endorsed **Active Global Citizenship Course** is designed to enable students to demonstrate global competence through awareness and curiosity about 'how' the world works. The course provides students with the information, knowledge and skills to be able to:

- Investigate the world of their immediate environment and the world beyond their immediate environment; identifying, investigating and researching problems of significance.
- Recognise perspectives: others and own in a thoughtful and respectful way.
- Communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences: bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological and cultural barriers.
- Take action to improve conditions: viewing themselves as active participants in the world.

### Why do teachers and students need this course?

**Specific needs:** The Board of Studies NSW has recognised that to live and work successfully in the diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century world students need to be equipped with a set of knowledge and understanding, skills, behaviours, values and attitudes and have an awareness of key contemporary issues. In order to achieve this, the BOS NSW has identified specific content that is to be integrated into all Key Learning Areas. They termed these

important learning areas **Learning Across the Curriculum** and embedded them in all Key Learning Areas. They complement the work of Global Education in teaching and learning. Together, they work toward the goal of active and informed citizenship for all students<sup>1</sup>.

*The implementation of global education enables students to discover how to become involved in community activities and discussions which support global justice, human rights, and sustainable futures both within and beyond the classroom.*

**This is a unique course** because it provides an overarching conceptual framework of knowledge, understanding, skills, processes, values and attitudes, to explicitly address the Australian Curriculum and NSW BOS requirements across KLA's in Stage 5. The **Active Global Citizenship Course**:

- provides a framework for genuine and meaningful cross-curriculum links;
- provides a meaningful way of adapting existing subject skills and knowledge into experiential enquiry learning for all students;
- provides a framework for developing student-initiated real-world community projects at local, regional, national or international level; and
- contributes to the Board of Studies NSW formal Record of Student Achievement (RoSA) credential.

<sup>1</sup> The BOS NSW *Learning Across the Curriculum* areas address the mandatory *Cross-curriculum Priorities* and study as required by ACARA.