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Children's digital citizenship project: Your perspectives: A report for children

Harrison See
Edith Cowan University

Kylie Stevenson
Edith Cowan University

Emma Jayakumar
Edith Cowan University

Phoebe Zeng
Edith Cowan University

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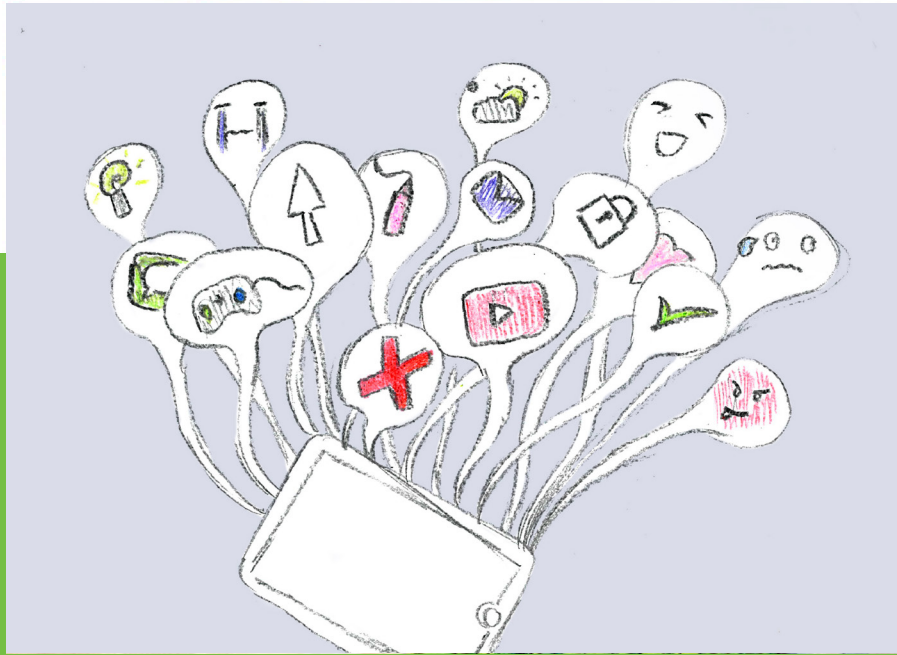
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Children's Digital Citizenship Project: Your Perspectives

A report for children



March 2023

Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child
Edith Cowan University



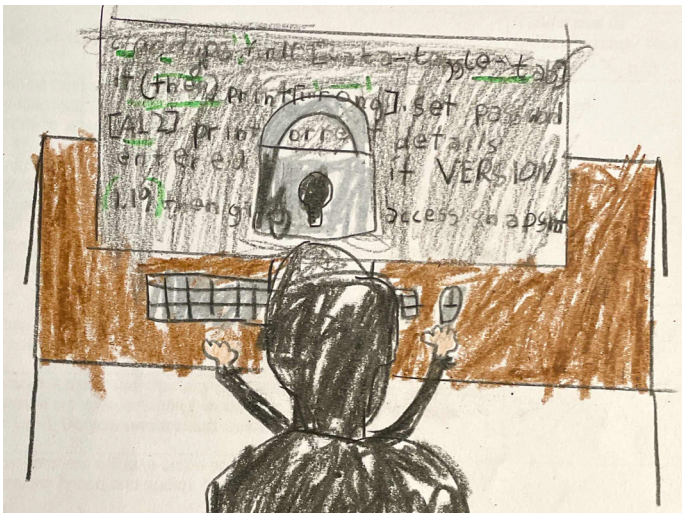
Children's perspectives



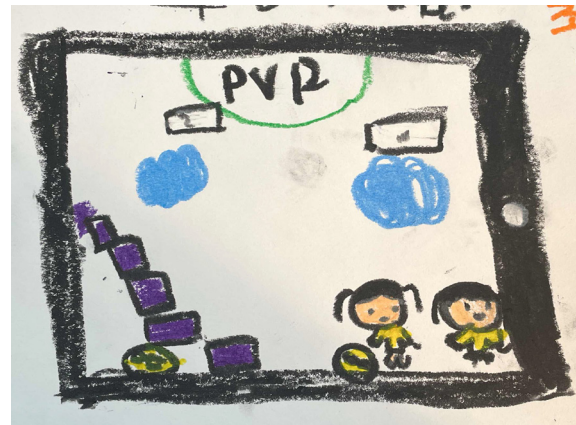
INDIA (11–13): Nirav explains how his drawing shows “a person going from one website to the next, making footprints wherever they are going”.



KOREA (6–10): Yo-Jin talks about her drawing of a girl in her bedroom “reading cartoons [online] when Mommy’s asleep”.



INDIA (6–10): Umesh explains that “this is like a hacker who is trying to hack into someone’s account. But the person who’s computer is being hacked has actually put codes in place and it’s locked, so the hacker couldn’t hack it.”



KOREA (6–10): Bon-Hwa explains how children play the game “Infinite Stairs”.



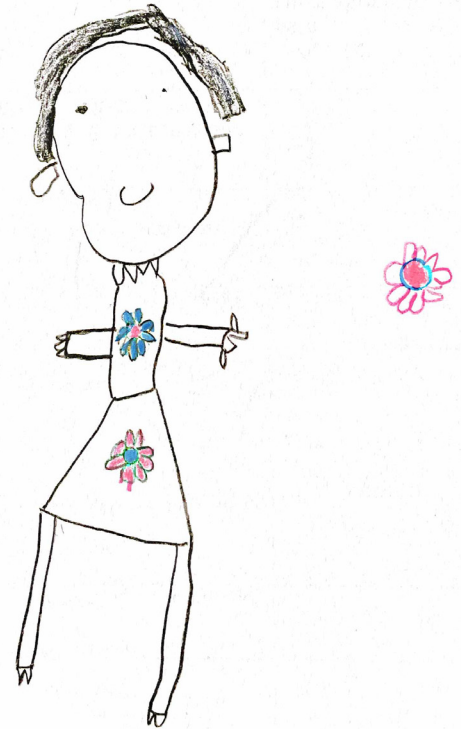
INDIA (3–5): Darksha describes his drawing, saying that “I’ve made a girl and boy with a flower”.



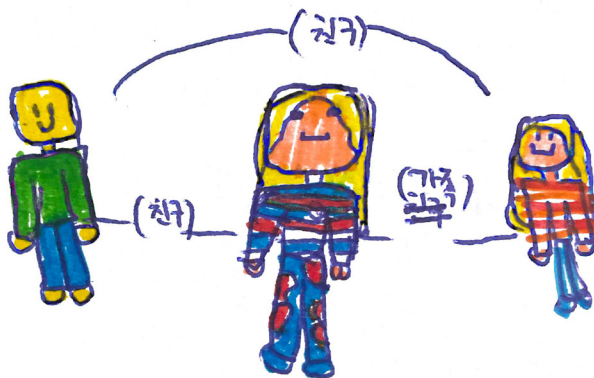
KOREA (3–5): Sun-Hee imagines “a bear fish” using a smartphone with friends.



INDIA (11–13): Gitali explains that “I drew this to show that a girl posted her pictures. People started saying you’re ugly, go away; [it’s] cyberbullying”.



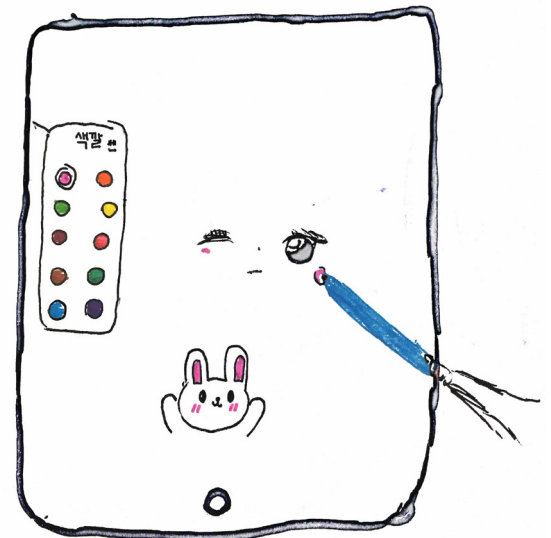
INDIA (3–5): Saarya draws an Indian “girl who’s celebrating Diwali at her home”.



KOREA (11–13): Ye-Rim draws the connections between people online.



AUSTRALIA (6–10): Lily explains that “I drew mine like a poster telling you that you should always think about what you’re doing online”.



KOREA (11–13): Su-Mi explains how she spends her screentime drawing; “I draw with a pen, then save the images, and sometimes show my friends”.

What this report is.

This report talks about a teamwork project between the LEGO Group, the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child (Digital Child) and Edith Cowan University (ECU).

In 2022, the LEGO Group, ECU and Digital Child researchers teamed up to ask children and adults in India, Korea and Australia about digital citizenship. We collected all this information together and compared our results, and then made some suggestions about how we can all do things better to help kids be safer, smarter, and happier online.

Suggested citation:

See, H., Stevenson, K., Jayakumar, E., & Zeng, H. (2022). *Children's Digital Citizenship Project: Your Perspectives* [A report for children]. ECU/Centre for the Digital Child.

Who we are and what we do.

[The ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child](#) is a group of researchers across six Australian universities who are studying how children play, search, learn, and make friends online. These researchers are experts from different backgrounds like health, education, media, and child development. This is so they cover lots of different points of view about children's digital lives. The Centre is paid for by the Australian Government with help and cooperation from partners and organisations like the LEGO Group. All of these people are working together to keep kids safe and happy online now, and in the future. (Parts of this research were supported by the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child through project number CE200100022).

[Edith Cowan University](#) is a university in Western Australia with a passion for research and teaching, especially research that helps improve people's lives. It's one of the six universities belonging to the Centre for the Digital Child.

[The LEGO Group](#) is from Denmark and has been around since 1932. The LEGO Group love to see children grow and develop through play and create lots of wonderful things to help children do this. The LEGO Group are also very interested in how children play online and want to support children and their families to stay safe and have fun on the internet. This research project is supported by the LEGO Group's team from the Government and Public Affairs function in Singapore.



What digital citizenship is.

Digital is a word used to describe things that use electronic and especially computerised technology.

When a person is born, they become a **citizen** of the country they are born in, and they have the rights and protection of that country. For example, if you are born in Seoul, you are a citizen of the Republic of Korea; if you are born in Delhi, you are a citizen of India; if you are born in Sydney, you are a citizen of Australia.

Generally, **citizens** of any country are expected to obey the laws of that country and behave toward each other in respectful and kind ways.

A **digital citizen** is anyone who uses the internet and, just like real-world citizens, digital citizens should be able to use digital technology and media in safe, responsible and kind ways. Digital citizenship is about building skills in using technology, and also about behaving well when you are online.

Project details—child roundtables

Where we went.

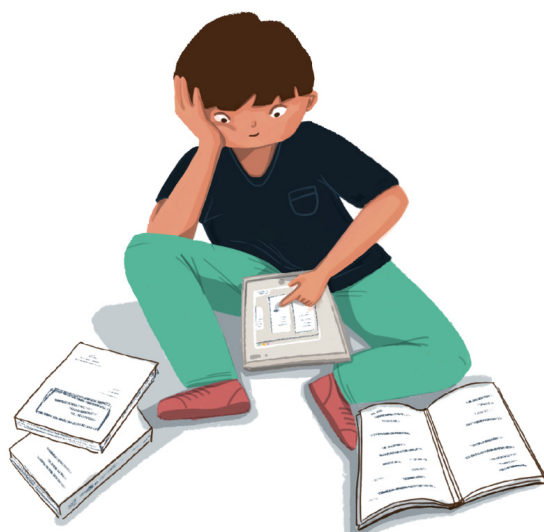
In June 2022, our head researcher Dr Kylie held a group discussion with children in Australia (Perth) and then went to India (Delhi), and Korea (Incheon) to do the same with children from those countries.

Who we spoke to.

We had three groups in each country of different ages. Each group had about five kids in it, but some had a few more.

- The first group were aged 3–5 years old.
- The second were 6–10 years old.
- The third group were aged 11–13.

In Australia these groups were held in English language by Dr Kylie, in India they were held in Hindi language by Miss Shruti (with Dr Kylie helping) and in Korea they were held in Korean language by Dr Yeonghwi (with Dr Kylie helping).



What we did.

We did three things with the kids we talked to:

- First, we asked kids to look at some pictures of things to do with being online, then draw us a picture about it and tell us about the picture.
- Then we talked to kids about what they do online, and if they knew what digital citizenship meant. We asked them to tell us their stories, good or bad, about being online and how they use digital devices, things like phones or tablets or computers.
- Then we took out some LEGO bricks and asked kids to think about all we had talked about, and to make something out of LEGO to show us something about their digital lives.

We also asked their mums, dads, or guardians to write down what kind of devices they have at home, along with rules they have about using them. This included things like time limits on devices and games, or what shows or videos their kids could watch, and where.



What children told us.

- Most kids didn't know what digital citizenship meant, and kids in India and Korea didn't really have a word with the same meaning as citizenship in English. Australian kids who speak English also had difficulty explaining what a citizen was.
- Indian kids thought it had to do with the card you receive when you go to vote as an adult.
- Kids in Korea thought it had to do with how we live together in society.
- Australian kids didn't think digital citizenship was the best way to describe being online. Some older kids described it as digital responsibility or digital respect.
- All kids had a parent or guardian to help them with the internet or devices.
- No kids in the 3–5 age group were allowed on the internet without an adult helping or watching them.
- Most kids knew about cyberbullies, some kids told us of other kids being mean to them, or fights when they were playing games or just messaging.
- Some kids had experiences with strangers online, but most kids knew basic ways to stay safe.
- Girls we spoke to like to use social media, and boys preferred gaming.

- None of the kids we spoke to showed us they understood that sites and apps collect information about what kids look at.
- None of the kids we spoke to showed us they understood that choices they make now when they spend time online (posting and sharing) are hard to remove and might not make them look good now, or in the future.
- Half of the parents told us they had rules around time limits when kids go online in their house.
- The two games kids talked about the most were Roblox and Minecraft.
- Older kids played with smartphones and on computers, younger kids played with tablets.



Project details—adult roundtables

Where we went.

In November 2022, our research assistant Dr Emma travelled to Korea (Seoul), India (Delhi) and then Australia (Melbourne) to lead group discussions with adults.

Who we spoke to.

Dr Emma spoke with adults who work with and are leaders in digital technology in the government, universities, industry and non-government organisations. These are people who help with things like children's digital safety, online learning, and cyberbullying.

What we did.

Dr Emma showed the adults some of the information we had collected so far, like what the children told us in roundtables. Then she asked them what they thought we were all doing well in our countries, and ways we might be able to do better. She also asked the adults to write down some information about themselves and what they thought about children and technology in their own country.



What adults told us.

- Adults we spoke to wanted big companies to do more to help kids stay safe and educated.
- Adults we spoke to wanted big companies to be more honest about how they do things, like collecting information about people who use their platforms or apps.
- Adults thought that there wasn't enough help for kids to learn how to spot things that weren't true like fake news, or how to control the time you spend online without an adult as you get older.
- Adults we spoke to thought there were lots of good online tools written by experts to help children, parents and teachers, but they are either too hard to find, or people don't know they exist or where to look.
- Adults we spoke to were worried about things like cyberbullying and kids not understanding how to talk to each other appropriately.
- Adults we spoke to thought that a lot of information for kids about online spaces was too much about protecting kids from harm and the danger of the internet. Because of this, sometimes the really good things about being online like the fun of gaming, making friends, learning, and giving kids a sense of their identity as they grow up get forgotten about.
- Adults we spoke to wanted words used to describe digital citizenship to be the same everywhere they are used so everyone is talking about the same thing.
- Adults we spoke to also wanted parents to have better support to help kids at home rather than expecting teachers to do all the work helping kids stay safe and learn when online.

The 4As

After the project was all finished and we had read all the information we collected from both children and adults, we looked for patterns in the information.

We organised all the information into 4 main groups or ideas:



ATTITUDE:

How adults think about children's online activities and abilities.



ABILITY:

Skills digital citizens have, including behaving well and thinking critically.



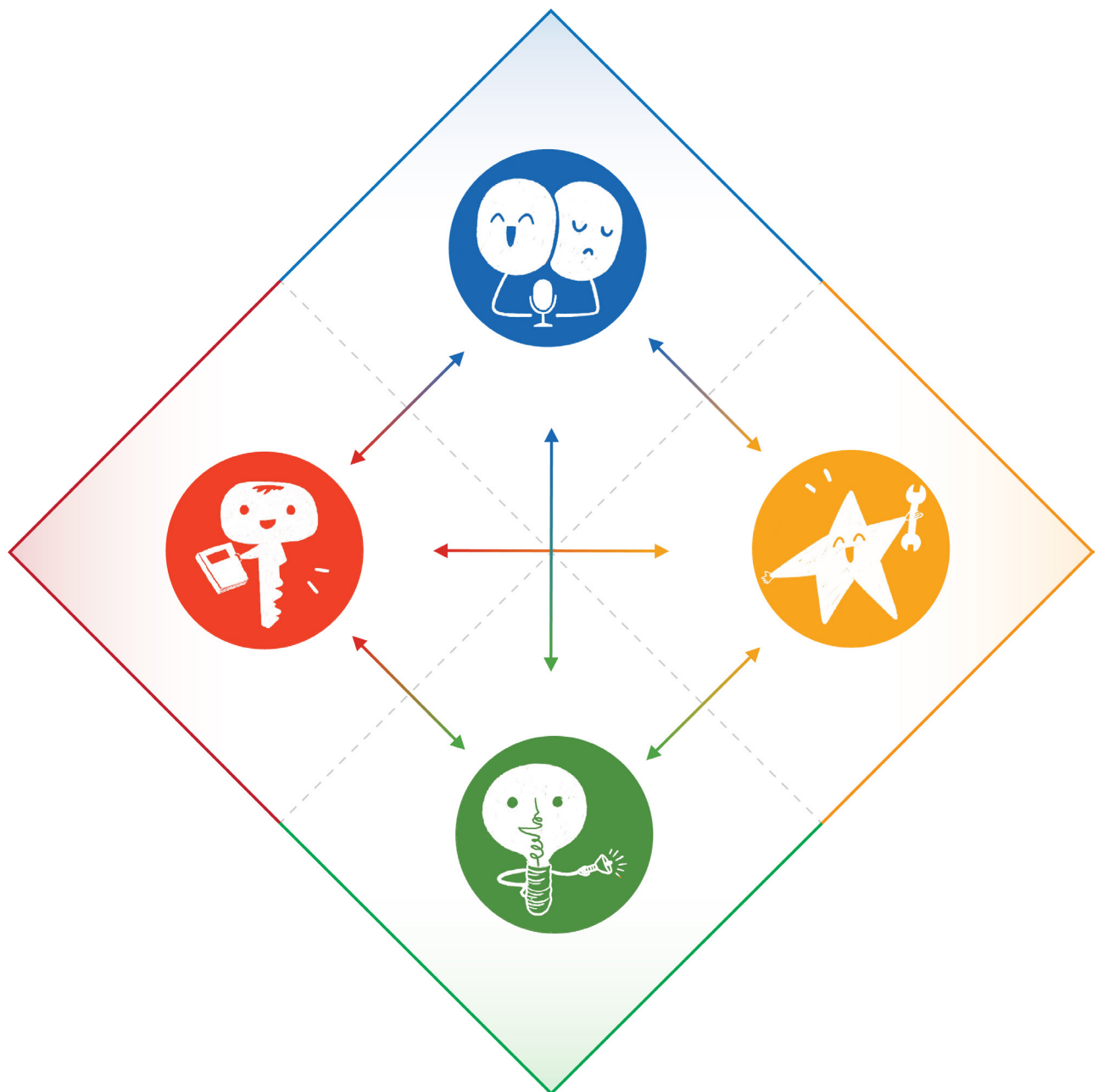
AWARENESS:

Knowing about information available that can help a person develop digital skills.



ACCESS:

Things that affect children and adults' online use or how they learn about being online, such as hard to understand written material, and children not having a say.



This diagram shows how these areas had effects on each other, and sometimes overlapped.



ATTITUDE:

How adults think about children's online activities and abilities.

What we learned about **ATTITUDE**



Most adults told us they felt that parents and teachers looked too much at how much time kids were on devices, rather than what they were actually doing on them. Some of the adults we spoke to felt that gaming was a good way to teach skills and get messages across to kids, but that it wasn't really taken seriously enough as a good thing.



Our adult roundtable groups told us that they felt large platforms and apps needed to be more open about how they collect information about the people using their products.



Adults we spoke to told us the main approach to children in online spaces was too much about protecting kids from danger, and not enough about trusting kids to make their own choices. They all told us they agreed that kids had a right to be online and needed more help to make the right choices and understand the risks, instead of just stopping them from being online at all.



Many adults today remember a time when there were no smartphones, or computers, but kids today have grown up with digital technology always in their lives. This sometimes means adults think too much about two separate worlds—one online and one offline—but kids think of everything as one world. Adults sometimes let this shape how they think about the world by thinking that everything offline is good, and everything online is bad. The adults we spoke to all said that we need to stop this old-fashioned thinking and help kids in this one world we now all live in, where technology is always around us at home, in school and later when kids grow up and get jobs. Kids need help to belong in this world and be ready for the future too.





Recommendation for **ATTITUDE**

Digital play spaces where families can play and learn together.

When adults see and understand what kids are interested in and how kids play and behave online, they can understand better the positive parts of the internet, instead of always focusing on danger, safety, and amount of screentime.

In a place like a library, community centre or at home, adults can get together with kids to play and learn about what kids like to do, play, and create online. This might be:

- Playing fun and interactive games together like Minecraft, The Legend of Zelda, or Mario Kart.
- Learning about social media profiles and how to create videos, vlogs, and content.
- Learning about emojis, GIFs and messaging apps.
- Learning how to code.
- Learning how and where to find help for all ages.



ABILITY:

Skills digital citizens have, including behaving well and thinking critically

What we learned about **ABILITY**



Digital skills are really important for kids to have for everyday life. Adults we spoke to all agreed they need to work together to make sure all kids build basic abilities to use digital technology, as they need it every day and in the future.



Not all kids in countries we visited have the same kind of access to learning digital skills, sometimes because their families can't afford devices or internet plans, and sometimes because adults control use of the internet more for girls than they do for boys.



Along with the ability to use digital technology, kids also need to be able to be responsible online. This includes being thoughtful or kind to others when using the internet, not posting inappropriate things like photos or mean memes, or sharing things about others with other people without permission. Being part of online communities is an important part of modern life for kids, and kids need to be able to work together to make it safe and welcoming to everyone.



As well as digital skills and responsible behaviour, kids also need to be able to protect themselves from risks online, and also be able to think critically. Thinking critically means the ability to question things and where they may have come from. This could be the ability to see when a news article might be false, or when someone else's behaviour (even humour) might be hurting someone else. Kids protecting themselves might include the ability to turn things on or off on devices, or knowing where to go for help if they need it.





Recommendation for **ABILITY**

A digital officer in each school to help with all things digital in students' lives, and to help teachers and parents too.

Teachers are already very busy, and schools already have very full programs of schoolwork. Extra things like digital critical thinking skills and help with non-schoolwork related digital activity often gets missed. A digital officer in school who just focuses on how to build these abilities in students, and also helps teachers and parents, is our recommendation for the area of Ability. A digital officer is not a teacher, but a separate person at school who:

- Looks at how to build abilities in all areas of digital citizenship, not just schoolwork and computer skills.
- Helps students with problems and gives them advice and support.
- Creates helpful documents and tip sheets.
- Hosts workshops for students and adults.
- Talks with and gives advice to parents and teachers.
- Works with the student council to help them be student leaders in digital citizenship.



AWARENESS:

Knowing about information available that can help a person develop digital skills.

What we learned about **AWARENESS**



Adults we spoke to all agreed there were lots of really well written and researched documents and websites to help kids, parents/guardians and teachers, but that people didn't really know that they existed, or where to find them.



Education programs didn't all use the same things or the same language, and so this was confusing and wasn't working very well to support kids.



Teachers and schools needed more support and training to help kids with digital things they experience when they are not at school even if these aren't about schoolwork, because these still affect kids at school. This includes things like messaging amongst friends, appropriate sharing of photos and content, social media chat, and cyberbullying.



A point made in all countries was the need for all people to work together to produce helpful tools and programs for kids. Adults we spoke to wanted big companies to do more, and also pointed to the good things gaming culture could teach.





Recommendation for **AWARENESS**

A funny series of videos that talk and show the help you can find with all kinds of digital problems.

There are so many excellent places to find help and advice online. The problem is, not many people really know they exist, or where to find them. We suggest a TV or online ad campaign that brings awareness to these places.

By a funny person or actor, these videos would roleplay a problem someone is having, and then present the place where people can find help. Some problems might be:

- A kid being bullied online.
- A teen sharing an inappropriate picture of themselves or someone they know.
- A senior wanting to learn how to use Facetime or WhatsApp.
- A parent needing help to talk with their child about adult images and videos their child has found online.
- A teacher wanting a fun lesson plan.



ACCESS:

Things that affect children's and adults' online use or their education about their online use, such as hard to understand written material, and children not having a say.

What we learned about **ACCESS**



Adults we spoke to agreed that the language used about digital citizenship needs to be easier for kids to understand, as well as keeping up with new things happening all the time in digital spaces. Big companies also need to use easier language so that they can be more honest and open about how they collect kids' information.



People said that adults need to put children first and ask them what they think about lots of things, so that adults and children don't misunderstand each other, and so that they give kids what they need to do their best online.



Different kids from different backgrounds all had different things affecting their access. Sometimes there are differences in fairness of access between boys and girls, some kids come from poorer families who can't afford devices or internet plans, and some adults are afraid to give kids too much time online. Adults we spoke to agreed that fair access to the internet is a child's human right, and kids need to be exposed to the good and also maybe some of the risks so that they can learn and grow to be responsible in online spaces.



Children should be included in decision making that affects their digital citizenship. Adults we spoke to agreed kids want to talk about their experiences and need adults' help to be part of decision-making, rather than adults always controlling what happens.





Recommendation for **ACCESS**

A group of kids who represent kids' voices to adults on important digital issues.

Listening to kids about their experiences is important, and creating a group of kids who speak up on issues affecting other kids is a good way to help adults pay attention. This group of kids would represent other kids on a big group panel of adults. They'd also create really fun videos and content about being a responsible digital citizen. This would be made stronger by:

- Inviting a YouTuber (child or adult) with a big following to help create fun content and help.
- Creating funny news shows and videos about things happening in the world that affect kids, presented by a duo or group.
- Question and answer videos where kids ask other kids for advice about important topics or fun things like gaming, and all things to do with digital citizenship.



A control tower for digital citizenship:

A body of people who make decisions about things to do with digital citizenship, creating a way to apply the 4As.



Our last recommendation

A digital citizenship control tower where children and adults can make decisions together.

The control tower would be a group of adults and kids representing each country, all coming together to form a group (or several groups in one country representing different regions). These people would help make decisions about things to do with digital citizenship. This might include:

- Working together to come up with the best words to describe digital things and skills.
- Working together on problems and finding the best solutions for everyone.
- Making access to devices and the internet as fair as possible for all children.
- Providing leadership on important issues like laws around safety, privacy and protecting kids from harm.
- Celebrating good things about digital citizenship, like achievements, inventions and participation.

Summing up our suggestions to improve your digital world

By using our 4A model, we've decided that kids' digital citizenship would really be helped by these five things:

- 1** Digital play spaces where families can play and learn together.
- 2** A digital officer in each school to help with all things digital in students' lives, and to help teachers and parents too.
- 3** A funny series of videos that talk about and show the help you can find to solve all kinds of digital problems.
- 4** A group of children who represent kids' voices to adults on important digital issues.
- 5** A control tower, or group of people from all areas of life (including kids) who represent their countries in global or regional decisions about digital citizenship.

Things to find out in the future

We have loved talking to kids and adults in India, Korea and Australia about their experiences of digital citizenship.

These three countries are very different, but all had things in common when it came to problems people face and ways we can work together to make things better for children and adults participating online.

Researchers working on this project think we have more to explore, and we might do this by:

- Speaking to larger groups of people, including parents and teachers in the mix.
- Speaking to more people from different backgrounds.
- Working more closely with researchers from the country that participants come from.
- Making the study longer, so that we can collect more detailed information.
- Looking more closely at ways kids think about things critically online.
- Looking more closely at ways kids construct their digital identity by creating content and participating in activities online.

We look forward to further research with children and adults about their digital citizenship futures.

Children's perspectives



AUSTRALIA (11–13): Will explains that “[it’s] this person [who] tried to stalk me and I just decided to leave the game and then they somehow managed to find me all over again”.



INDIA (3–5): Nabha explains that “Here are two cameras, and I’ve added flowers for decoration. Here is my window, and you can enter from here ... there’s a bird which can fly ... My castle!”.



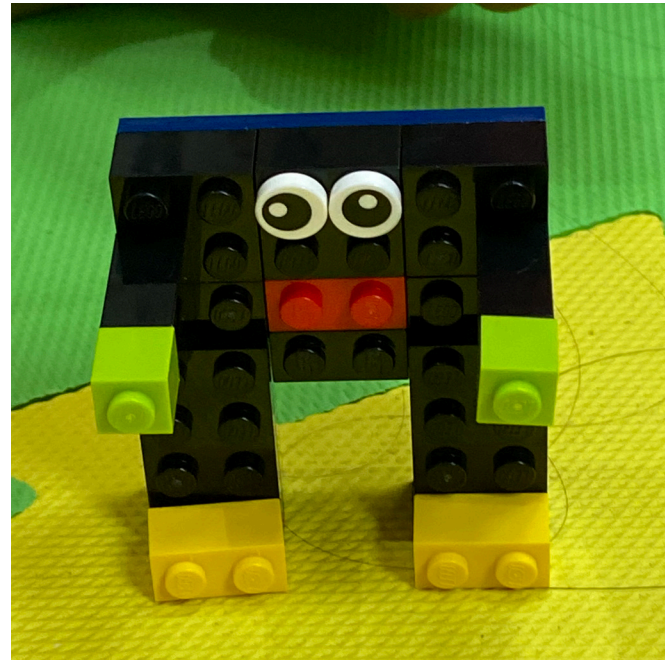
AUSTRALIA (6–10): Mia explains that “I’ve made a device that means there’s like a lock on it”.



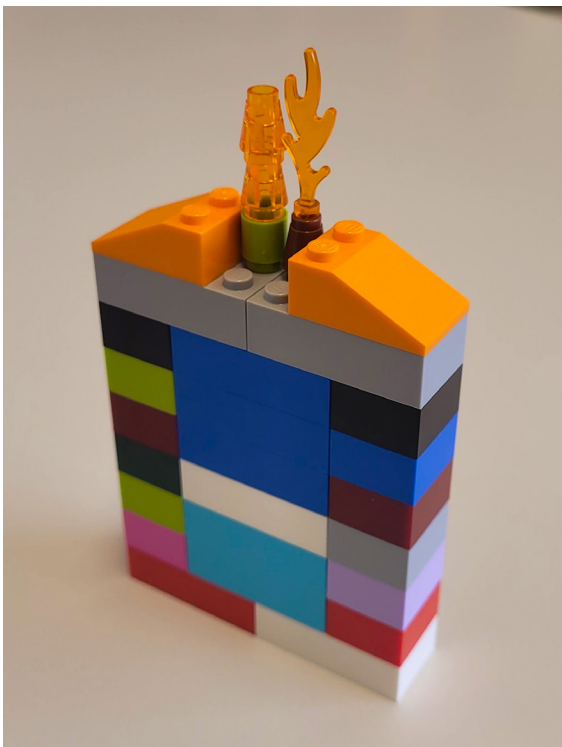
INDIA (11–13): Nirav explains that “this is a PS5. This is a gaming setup—mouse, mouse pad, two speakers, computer, keyboard and CPU.”



AUSTRALIA (3–5): Ivy uses LEGO to make a slide, “an amazing slide which looks like it’s a slide you’d find in a playground with a beautiful flower and flag on the top” [RA].



INDIA (11–13): Gitali explains that “I know it’s cute and not even scary. This monster has been inspired by the game Roblox.”

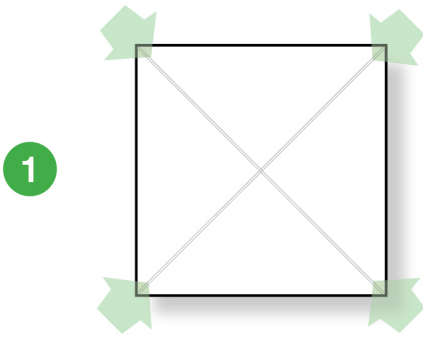


AUSTRALIA (11–13): Inesh makes a LEGO representation of “a firewall to keep you safe online”.

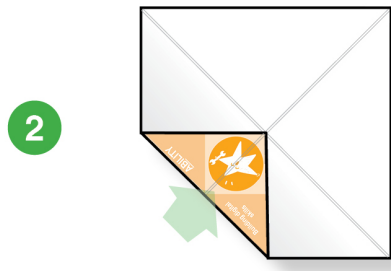


KOREA (11–13): Han-Na explains that “I mostly play Minecraft, and this is the character, and there’s a diamond underground ... here ... It’s difficult to find a diamond in the wild, but I found it.”

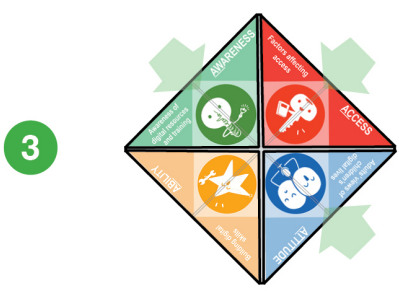
4A Chatterbox Origami Model (Make at home)



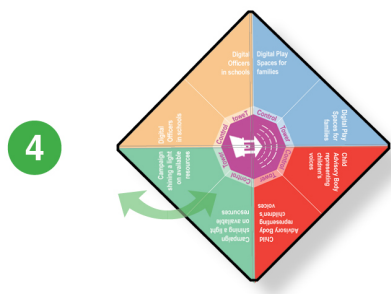
1 Starting with the white side face-up, fold each corner to the opposite corner and then back again...



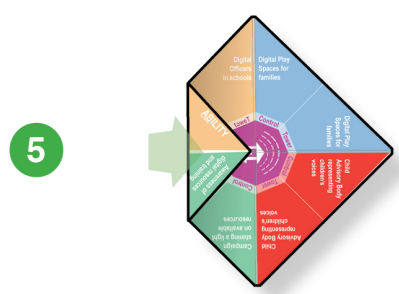
2 Then fold all four corners into the centre...



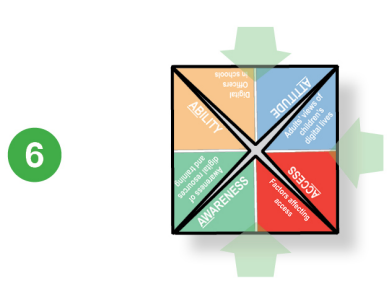
3 This is what your chatterbox should look like now...



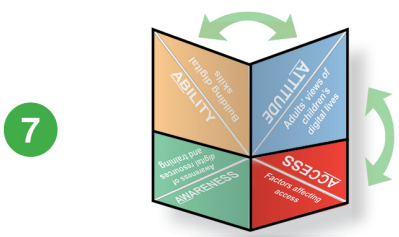
4 Turn your chatterbox over so it looks like this...



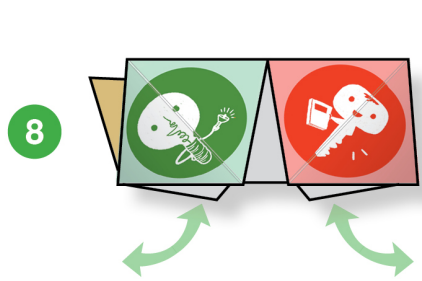
5 Then fold each of the four corners into the centre...



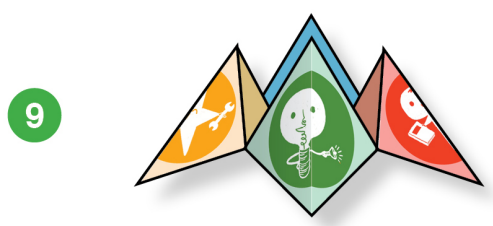
6 Your chatterbox should now look like this...



7 Fold your chatterbox in half vertically and horizontally, and then back again...



8 Fold your chatterbox in half so it looks like this...



9 Put your thumbs and index fingers into the gaps behind each of the icons and your chatterbox is ready to use.

How to play with your chatterbox once it is made:

- 1** Look for the name of one of the 4 As...
- 2** Then move your fingers until you find that A's definition...
- 3** Then unfold your chatterbox to reveal the recommendation for that A...

