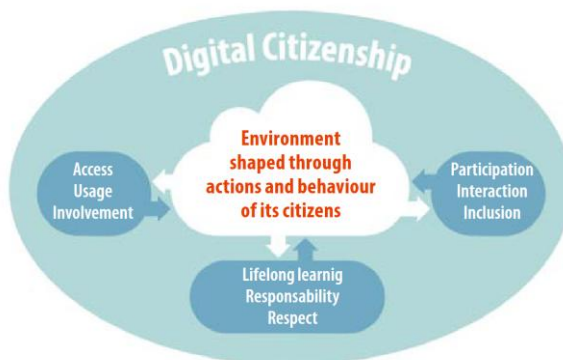


Digital Citizenship Education – from a Christian perspective

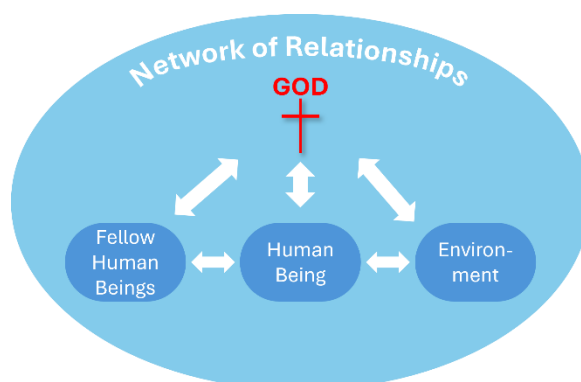
by Paul Madsen (ACSI) and Christian Baldauf (VEBS), October 2025

The document “*Easy steps to help learners become Digital Citizens*”, published by the Council of Europe in 2023, presents three domains in which digital activities take place: “Being Online,” “Well-Being Online,” and “Rights Online.”¹

Digital citizenship is viewed as the shaping of an environment through respective actions and behaviours on the part of citizens²:



The diagram refers to actions on an interpersonal and intrapersonal level – the vertical relationship with God is not considered in this secular document. For Christians, however, being in connection with God is not merely an additional strand of thought, but rather represents the starting point in the entire network of relationships. When we shape our environment through actions and behaviours, we want to do so based on God's nature, His actions and His will, revealed in the Bible:



This means that we also derive our understanding of citizenship from this broader perspective.

The “Checklist for professionals in education”³ is a useful tool for determining the current state of competence development in the area of digital citizenship. However, the terminology used in this instrument must be clarified in light of this *expanded* view for Christian schools. To be specific about what God himself reveals in his Word regarding his will and his actions in relation to humankind and the world, the following four levels provide guidance:

Creation, Fall, Plan of Salvation, Eternity.



¹ <https://rm.coe.int/prems-119723-dce-leaflet-easy-steps-for-educators-eng/1680ace5c0>

² at the specified location, p. 4

³ see at the specified location, p. 6

I. Creation

The whole of creation including the human mind, body and emotions are good gifts from God. We are created in the image of God, male and female (Genesis 1:26-28). Our roles and relationships are an inherent part of this good gift and take shape first in the God-ordained structure of the family with husband, wife, parent and child. God intended people for intimate community, free from shame, with Himself and others (Genesis 2:25). These relationships are extended and practiced through the church and the rest of society including schools, businesses, and government.

II. Fall

When man and woman sinned, they suffered a devastating loss of intimacy with God, of relationship with themselves and with one another (Genesis 3:7). Each one of us, being children of Adam and Eve, is born in sin (Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12), and we all bear the consequences of the brokenness that exists in human relationships. There is no exhaustive list of the expressions of sin and brokenness, but it includes both human behaviour and the human condition, body, mind and spirit.

III. Plan of Salvation

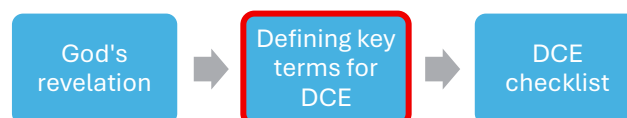
God is restoring His creation, including His purposes for relationships and community, through Jesus Christ and the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 8:19-23). There is no hope for our relational sin and brokenness apart from Jesus. Through the completed work of Jesus, God lovingly calls us to repent of our sins, restoring intimate relationships with Himself and each other. For those who are in Jesus, even their bodies belong to Him, and every believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is to be presented to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service (1 Cor. 6:19-20, Romans 12:1). We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to make choices that reflect submission to God's good design for our relationships. It is our privilege to choose in community to "walk by the Spirit" and by so doing "not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Every person who struggles with sin and broken relationships is to be treated with compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31, 1. Corinthians 6:11).

IV. Eternity

Redeemed human relationships point to a greater intimacy promised to us in the coming kingdom. Until that day, we have been given earthly images of this future reality. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to live as family with one another (Matthew 19:29) in a community of faith as a representation of God's truth, love, and healing (Matthew 19:29; John 13:35; 1. Timothy 3:15). The love and sacrifice, especially shown in marriage, serve as a picture of the love and sacrifice Jesus makes for His church (Ephesians 5:26-28). One day, all children of God will enjoy perfected intimacy as the church is fully united to Jesus as His bride (Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 19:7).

These biblical truths again form the basis for defining key terms in the context of Digital Citizenship Education:

1. citizenship
2. reliability
3. creativity
4. diversity
5. health
6. responsibility
7. ethics



1. Citizenship

Citizenship is the exercise of belonging, responsibility, and participation within a God-ordained community, first to God's kingdom and then to earthly communities. It reflects our identity as stewards of creation and agents of justice, peace, and righteousness. True citizenship flows from acknowledging Christ as King and living in covenantal accountability to both God and neighbour.

2. Reliability

Reliability is faithfulness over time in word and action, rooted in the character of a trustworthy God. It reflects integrity, dependability, and the fulfilment of commitments made to others. As image-bearers of a covenant-keeping God, we are called to be consistent and truthful in our relationships and responsibilities.

3. Creativity

Creativity is the human capacity to reflect God's nature through the imaginative and purposeful shaping of ideas, environments, and culture. It is not self-expressive autonomy but a faithful participation in God's ongoing work to bring order, beauty, and blessing to creation. Creativity is best exercised under His design and for His glory.

4. Diversity

Diversity is the God-designed variety within creation as seen in cultures, languages, personalities, and gifts that reflects His glory and enriches our communities. It is not an end in itself, but a means of mutual flourishing when ordered toward love, truth, and unity in Christ. Biblical diversity is not fragmentation but integration under God's purposes.

5. Health

Health is the wholeness of body, mind, soul, and relationship as God intended in creation. This holistic view of health also means that the necessary change of heart is given by God alone through grace by faith in Jesus Christ. Health encompasses physical vitality, spiritual maturity, emotional resilience, and social harmony. It is a good gift to be stewarded in gratitude and service to others, under the Lordship of Christ.

6. Responsibility

Responsibility is the God-given charge to act faithfully in the roles and relationships He has established. It includes our accountability to God, to one another, and to the created world. Responsibility means embracing stewardship, responding to truth, and carrying out our calling with diligence and humility.

7. Ethics

Ethics is the application of God's objective moral law to all areas of life. It is rooted in the character of God, revealed through Scripture, and oriented toward love, justice, and holiness. Biblical ethics is not situational but covenantal, reflecting our responsibility to live righteously in community with others and before God.

With the help of these definitions based on the broad outlines in God's Word (cf. the four levels mentioned above), the following revised checklist⁴ can be used to assess the current status of "Digital Citizenship Education" at Christian Schools:



⁴ compare <https://rm.coe.int/prems-119723-dce-leaflet-easy-steps-for-educators-eng/1680ace5c0>, p. 6.

BEING ONLINE

	Forming ⁵	Developing ⁶	Maturing ⁷	Flourishing ⁸
Our students use digital technology with peers in class to do projects and explore God's creation.				
They know how to use search engines effectively and compare the results they get.				
They know how to discern between reliable and unreliable information and check the validity of the information sources they use. The fact that God's Word is the truth is considered when assessing the reliability of information. Being aware that God's Word does not contain statements on all truths of everyday human life, everyday topics still are repeatedly examined to see whether they correspond to biblical content and/or principles.				
They use digital technology creatively, understand the concept of copyright, and are able to share the content they create for the glory of God.				
They are good listeners and observers, able to participate in open debates, and respect the point of view of their peers as people also being created in the image of God.				

WELL-BEING ONLINE

	Forming	Developing	Maturing	Flourishing
Our students are conscious of the amount of time they spend online, and the need to take regular breaks from online activity (in class and elsewhere).				
As creatures designed for relationships, they are aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between face-to-face, physical and online activities.				
Being aware that we live in a fallen world, we have set up a system in our school for all students to have someone to turn to whenever they are bothered by anything they come across online.				
In class, we talk about digital footprints and profile settings.				
We openly discuss the importance of responsible online behaviour and how to interact loving God and our neighbours.				

⁵ The trait either doesn't exist or is rarely ever observed.

⁶ The trait is sometimes observed but not consistently, or by only some teachers / staff.

⁷ The trait is observed fairly consistently in its implementation.

⁸ The trait is very consistent across levels and faculty.

RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS ONLINE

	Forming	Developing	Maturing	Flourishing
Our students are aware of their online rights and responsibilities and know what it means to use technology for the glory of God.				
They are aware of the sort of information that should be kept private about themselves and the people they interact with, and why. Reliability and dependability are derived from the nature of God.				
We have open discussions about the downsides and pitfalls of the digital world and talk about ways we could help make things better according to God's will.				
All digital technology in our establishment is equipped with security software and protected by firewalls.				
Aware of the fact that Jesus sustains this world according to his will, we reflect on our responsibility as consumers in the space God has given us to shape.				

Moving forward

This document can be used to

- become aware of the importance of clarified terminology for work at local Christian schools,
- be prepared for guidelines from ministries of education that are issued without clarifying terms and that are based on a secular view of the world and humanity,
- use a common vocabulary for exchange as Christian schools at the European level with the aim of learning from each other.

May this document help Christian schools across Europe to be prepared for the DCE-field within pedagogy. It is important to not simply react to guidelines within educational policy, but to shape learning processes based on God's revelation through His word. Christian educators should be able to communicate in the following way, when officially challenged to promote DCE: "We are already using an analysis of the current situation from a Christian perspective and can derive development steps from it!"