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# DIGITAL LITERACY AND ITS INCREASING IMPORTANCE

The value of preparing students to use digital technologies



Digital literacy has become increasingly imperative in today's society. With the growing use of technology in almost every aspect of life, digital literacy is required to take full advantage of the opportunities that technology offers. Therefore, digital literacy skills are essential when preparing students for the future.

## Defining Digital Literacy

Digital literacy refers to the skills and knowledge required to effectively and responsibly use digital technologies. Such skills and knowledge include creating, locating, analysing and managing data and information, problem-solving and working collaboratively using digital technologies such as the internet, online platforms, computers and mobile devices.

Digital literacy is not the same as IT proficiency. Instead, it is a specific understanding of technology that combines digital tool knowledge with critical thinking and social engagement. By building digital literacy skills, teachers lay the foundations for students to live, learn and work in an increasingly digitalised world.

## Fundamental Digital Literacy Skills for Students

Here are two essential digital literacy skills teachers can foster in the classroom:

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### Information Literacy



Advancements in technology have brought about instant access to an exponentially growing volume of data and information. Consequently, the current period is often referred to as the Information Age, during which the internet has become the primary source of information for almost everyone, from children to adults.

With access to vast amounts of information, students must learn to evaluate the information they encounter and recognise fabricated content, fake news and other forms of misinformation. In addition to locating and evaluating information, students must also be able to analyse and apply the information in the real world.

Moreover, teachers must emphasise the ethical and legal use of online resources. Students must understand the issues surrounding the use of intellectual property, such as copyright, plagiarism and fair use. Furthermore, students must learn to respect others' content and give credit when appropriate.



## Online Safety

The rising occurrence of cyber-attacks highlights the significance of students learning to use the internet safely whilst protecting their data and devices. As a result, it is crucial that students learn to:

- Safely browse the internet
- Recognise common cyber threats, including scams and frauds
- Keep their devices, programs and apps up to date
- Use multifactor authentication and strong passwords
- Backup their devices
- Be cautious with downloads
- Be prudent with what and where personal information is shared.

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