



NEWS RELEASE

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Two Gwinnett schools earn recognition as Common Sense Schools based on commitment to digital citizenship lessons

Two Gwinnett County schools—**Paul Duke STEM High School** and **Bay Creek Middle School**— are the first in Gwinnett to earn recognition from Common Sense for their implementation of digital citizenship lessons. The designation as a Common Sense School speaks to the schools’ commitment to helping students think critically and use technology responsibly to learn, create, and participate. As part of the recognition, the schools earned a badge that publicly affirms their school culture is invested in helping students thrive as digital learners and citizens.

According to **Bay Creek Middle School Principal Jeremy Reily**, their school’s journey to this point began last summer when staff members **Danise Edgecombe**, **Lynn Cook**, and **Mona Pop** came to him asking if they could work the Common Sense Digital Citizenship lessons in as part of the school’s advisement program. They had several sample lessons, which they explained had been created in partnership with Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and made use of Nearpod technology, and they gave him a 50-plus-page study on the importance of Digital Citizenship. Liking the idea, Mr. Reily reached out to a few members of the PTSA, School Council, and teacher leadership team to get their opinion. The parents, in particular, were very excited about the idea because of the issues they saw at home revolving around social media and staying safe on the internet.

With the backing of parents and the school community, the school moved forward. Edgecombe, as the school’s Local School Technology Coordinator, and Cook, who is a counselor at the school, reviewed the Nearpod presentations, previewed all of the content and vocabulary from the lessons. Pop, in her role as media specialist, inserted aspects of this work into the morning announcement newscast. This provided students with a preview and familiarized them with the content and vocabulary. Then, all homeroom teachers received a short training on the use of the Digital Citizenship lessons (there are six lessons per grade level), and the teachers then delivered the instruction during weekly advisement lessons. To conclude each lesson, there was a follow-up activity assessing student knowledge of the digital citizenship lesson, where students took a quiz on eCLASS to answer questions and win prizes.

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Reily says a key to the success of the lessons were the resources from Common Sense Media that were shared with Bay Creek families. “We posted information in our newsletter, the *Bay Creek Beat*, posted links on our eCLASS page and website, and shared copies of the lessons that students received during advisement.” He is quick to give credit to the staff members who were instrumental in bringing the digital citizenship lessons to life. “Ms. Edgecombe, Ms. Cook, and Ms. Pop took this idea and ran with it. They exemplify the caring and dedicated educators found at our school... educators who do all they can to help students explore the digital world, confident in their ability to make good decisions and to take responsibility for their actions.”

At **Paul Duke STEM HS**, **Principal Jonathon Wetherington** says his school’s designation as a Common Sense School also can be traced back to his staff and their focus on doing the right things for students. “Our LSTC, **Lee Conger**, went through a number of the Common Sense webinars out of curiosity. As we sought to equip our students to be great digital citizens, we leveraged some of the Common Sense resources, along with other GCPS-provided resources, to conduct digital citizenship training for all of our students.”

As part of the school’s efforts to build a culture of digital citizenship, students were assigned lessons twice month. In addition, the school highlighted its focus on digital citizenship in its newsletter to parents and the community. They covered a wide range of topics, including, cyberbullying, digital footprints, and avoiding scammers. The school also presented the Be Internet Awesome curriculum to parents at its PTSA parent night in the spring. This program highlighted five different components: share with care; don't fall for fake; secure your secrets; be internet kind; and when in doubt, talk it out.

Director of Media Services and Technology Training Mary Barbee and her team provides resources to the schools on digital citizenship. She says, “We want students to go out in the world equipped to be good citizens. But what does that mean in a digital world? Our school efforts and district resources are designed to promote the ability to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in the online world. This work spans all grade levels, using age-appropriate resources within a school plan that best meets the needs of their students. Bay Creek Middle School and Paul Duke STEM High School are to be commended for the work they have done to help their students become better citizens in the digital world.”