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"Nita's First Signs demonstrates the value and fun of learning sign language for all infants, toddlers, children, and adults, regardless of whether they are deaf or hearing or hard of hearing."

—Marlee Matlin, actress, author, and activist



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UpFront



Digital Citizenship Stories

Picture books can jump-start important discussion

BY KRISTEN MATTSON

Teaching digital citizenship concepts does not have to be independent from your work as a literacy champion. Plenty of titles can help you do both. Here are some picture books that bring the focus on digital citizenship to young readers, as well as provide helpful reminders to older students. They are also tools to get families talking about tech habits and expectations.

Blackout by John Rocco. When the power goes out, a family must keep busy without their devices. They connect with one another and their neighbors in an evening of fun. When the lights come back on, the family happily switches the devices off again and plays a board game. This book is excellent for discussions about balancing screen time and other activities. Use this story during your next Screen-Free Week.

Nerdy Birdy Tweets by Aaron Reynolds, illus. by Matt Davies. Nerdy Birdy joins Tweetster and starts making friends around the globe. His best friend, Vulture, is not impressed; he's actually quite sad that Nerdy Birdy seems to be having more fun with his Tweetster buddies than with him. A great story for upper elementary and middle school students, as some peers have devices and access to social networks. The book is a reminder that technology can help us connect with people around the world, but we must also value those right in front of us.

Goodnight Selfie by Scott Menchin, illus. by Pierre Collet-Derby. This story follows an energetic little girl on her first day with her brother's hand-me-down cell phone. She discovers a love of selfies

and take dozens of pictures of herself in a variety of poses, depicting the different aspects of her personality. Use this book to start conversations about the choices we make when we portray ourselves online. What do we want to show to the world? What might we not see when we look at other people's online personas? Is it important to share a true version of ourselves, or are should some parts of our personalities and lives remain private?

Webster's Manners by Hannah Whaley. One of four great books featuring an adorable spider named Webster, who is learning the ropes as a digital citizen. In this series entry, Webster gets lectured by his dad about when and where it's acceptable to use a device. The story takes an unexpected turn when the spider starts pointing out that his dad does not often follow the same rules. An excellent choice to kick off conversations about classroom technology expectations or help facilitate dialogue around which tech rules apply to all users and why some may not.

Troll Stinks by Jeanne Willis, illus. by Tony Ross. Two billy goats get ahold of Farmer's cell phone. At first, they play games and take selfies, but then they find contact information for Troll. Their grandpa always told them that trolls were mean, so they send hateful messages to Troll. When they meet Troll, the two billy goats are in for a big surprise and an important lesson that words carry weight—even when delivered through a screen.

Kristen Mattson is a high school library media specialist and adjunct professor at the University of Illinois.