VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

Bringing Privacy to the Oceans Plastics Project

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OLTD 506

Faculty of Education

Vancouver Island Education

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INTRODUCTION

In approaching this project, we wanted to apply our learning on privacy protection and online safety to the prototype online course we have been jointly developing throughout our OLTD program experience. This web-based course comprises a cross-curricular unit of study from British Columbia's Grade 3 and 4 curriculum and focuses on how plastics in our oceans impact the environment, animal habitats, ecosystems, and our community. The course can be used as a part of a blended learning experience (station-rotation model or flipped classroom) or as a fully online course.

IDENTIFYING THE PRIVACY GAPS

While much of the course is still in development, we have over the past year and a half developed activities and assignments that make use of third party applications and off-site information. Prior to this course, we had not considered specific issues of privacy and protection, beyond a general awareness of its importance and our responsibilities in this area. Our earlier focus was on meeting the program outcomes that centred on effective instructional design, game-based learning and exploring those applications that have been developed specifically for K-12 educational purposes, like Quizziz, Flipgrid and Kahoot. However, with regards to complying with BC's Freedom of Information Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), we were at the Knowledgeable-Non-Compliance stage of Hengstler's (2014) compliance continuum. This opportunity to apply our new, deeper understanding of the complex responsibilities and issues surrounding privacy protection in an online environment enabled us to critically examine our fledgling course and move towards developing an effective strategy to reach towards the Establishing Compliance and Full Compliance continuum stages.

After revisiting the site and its content, we determined that there were three major privacy issues we wanted to explore and address:

1. The lack of password protection to access the overall site;

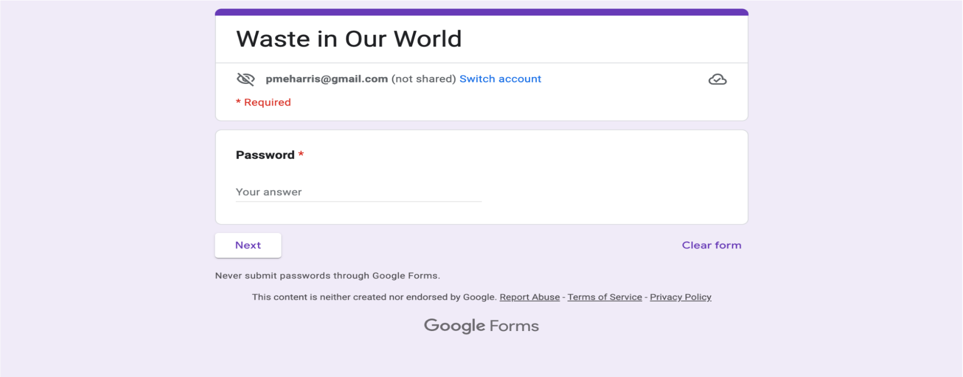
2. The lack of information on the site regarding privacy and safety protocols, including permission forms for use; and,

3. The use of 3rd party applications that save personal information, including short videos made by and showing students, specifically Flipgrid.

ADDRESSING THE GAPS

In order to address each of these issues, we embarked on an extensive and time consuming process of research, investigation, discussion, more research, application, discussion and re-application, until we started to make effective inroads to mitigating the potential e-safety gaps that resulted in the following developments:

1. The lack of password protection to access the overall site.


Waste in Our World

pmeharris@gmail.com (not shared) Switch account

* Required

Password *

Your answer

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Privacy Policy

Screen Capture by P. Harris

We realized that we needed to secure our website overall to ensure access was limited not only to protect student information and privacy, but also to protect our own intellectual property. In our technological ignorance, it seemed like it would be a quick fix. While we ultimately prevailed, it was a lengthy and somewhat challenging process, as documented below:

First, we googled how to password protect a Google Site and were given the following information:

1. Go to your Google Site and click on the "Settings" icon in the top-right corner of the page.
2. Select "Sharing and Permissions" from the drop-down menu.
3. Click on "Change" next to "Anyone with the link can view".
4. Select "Restricted" and click on "Save".
5. In the "Invite people" box, enter the email addresses of the people you want to share the site with.
6. Click on the drop-down menu next to each person's name and select "Can view when signed in".
7. Click on "Done" to save the changes.

> Now, when someone tries to access your Google Site, they will be prompted to sign in with their Google account before they can view the site. This will restrict access to only those people who have been granted permission to view the site. Which means they need to have a Google account.

While secure, we felt this would be restrictive and extremely onerous to maintain as not only would it require every user to have a Google account, but we would also then have to constantly check our emails to grant access when someone requested it. At this point, we decided to investigate whether there was a plug-in or a third party application that would allow us to easily and quickly create a password splash page with a simple password field in order to grant users access to the site.

With this in mind, we decided to make use of the recent development in generative AIs and asked ChatGPT the following:

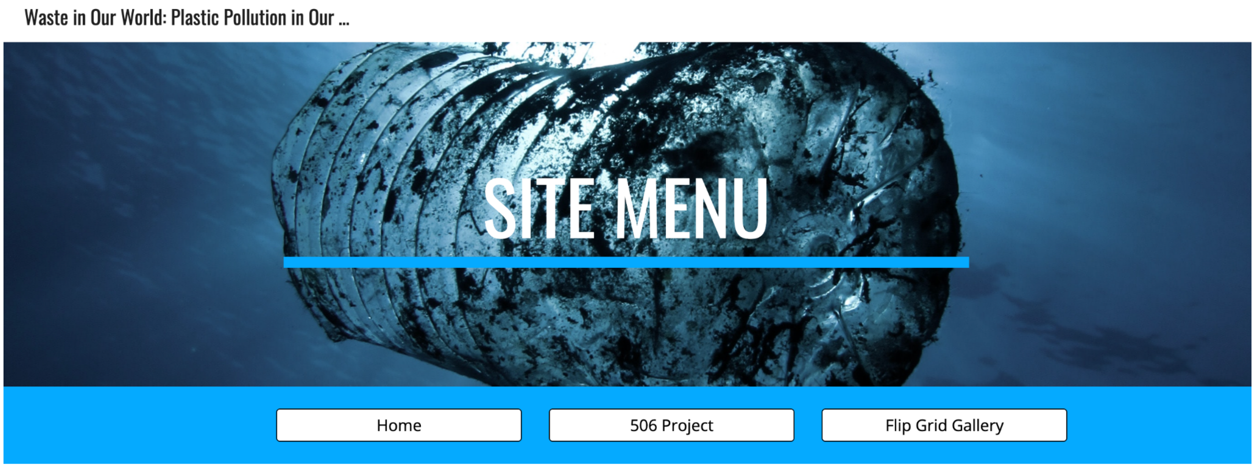
“What’s the easiest way to password protect a Google site if someone doesn’t have a Google account?”

ChatGPT responded with several seemingly good suggestions for where to go next including services like **Site Members**, **MemberSpace** and **Password Protect Google Drive**. Recalling that CHatGPT does not have a good track record for providing accurate, factual information, we quickly discovered that Site Members doesn’t exist anywhere and that Password Protect Google Drive is actually Password Protect Google *Documents*.

We did find **Member Space** and at first glance, it seemed great. We were able to google it and find it quickly and easily. The site was professional and the homepage led us to believe that it would be the easiest and most polished solution to our password problem. We noted that there was a cost and there were two pricing options: “Startup” at $0 US a month and “Professional” at $49 month, both with access to their password protect services for one website indefinitely. Problem solved.

Unfortunately, the only platform they did not support was Google Sites, which we only learned after creating an account. So much for ChatGPT.

We turned to YouTube, found our solution 15 videos in from a fellow teacher who recommended using Google Forms to create a quiz question with a specific answer that would then release the website URL. In order to make Google Forms work for our website, we had to hide all of the pages from the main navigation bar so that we could create a site page with the embedded Form to prevent users from accessing the site through those shortcuts. Once access has been granted, the user can then access the other pages through buttons embedded at the bottom of each page.

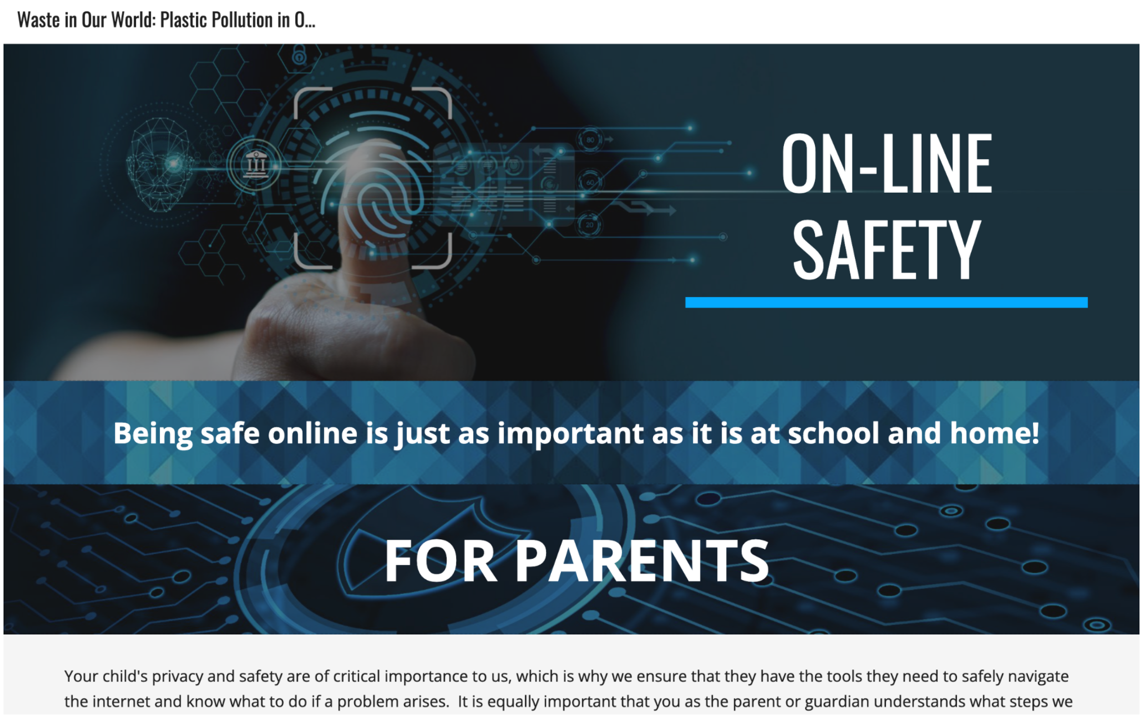


Screen Capture by P. Harris

We found it somewhat ironic that despite the access to generative AIs and the incredible power of a search engine like Google, our answer was found in a teacher who was much like ourselves, puzzling our way through this vast new world of online learning and teaching.

Link to Website Password is “happyplanet”.

2. The lack of information on the site regarding privacy and safety protocols, including permission forms for use.



Waste in Our World: Plastic Pollution in O...

ON-LINE SAFETY

Being safe online is just as important as it is at school and home!

FOR PARENTS

Your child's privacy and safety are of critical importance to us, which is why we ensure that they have the tools they need to safely navigate the internet and know what to do if a problem arises. It is equally important that you as the parent or guardian understands what steps we

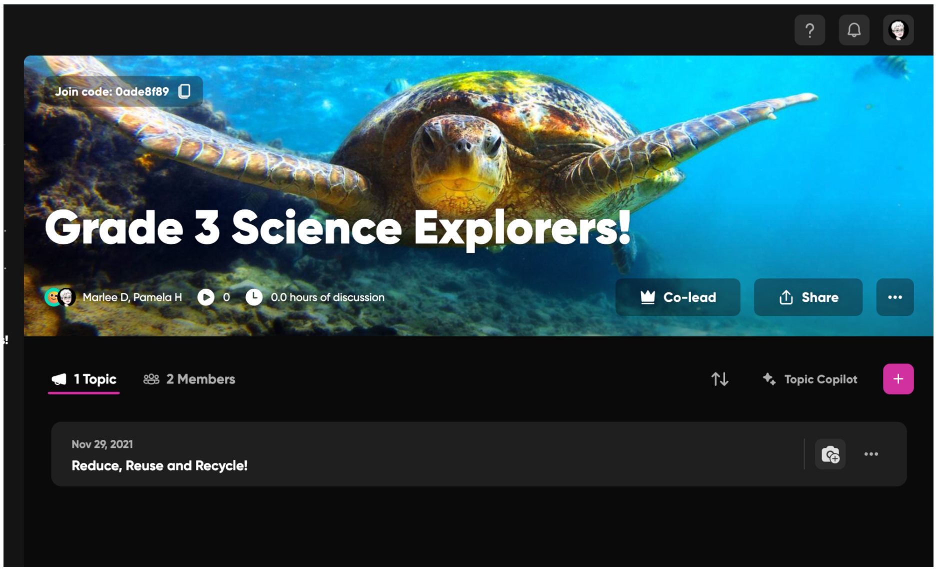
Screen Capture by P. Harris

In order to meet both our curricular as well as legal obligations with regards to protection of privacy and duty of care, we realized we could do that by creating information pages on our site tailored to both students and parents. To create these documents, we used the knowledge we had gained in the Foundations portion of this course, suggested further readings, the BC curriculum of studies, and our own knowledge and experience as educators.

In further support of these documents, we researched the policies and protocols our boards had in place with regards to online privacy and safety, including digital content storage, consent forms, and vetting practices. While we were able to find a reasonable amount of information from searching their websites, especially concerning students' privacy and digital citizenship mandates (Sooke SD 62, 2023) we both had difficulty connecting with people in the IT departments of our school boards to answer more specific questions. We noted that the people we spoke to seemed uncomfortable discussing the subject of protection of personal information, secure servers and vetting practices.

The student document focuses on digital literacy skills surrounding best practices for online safety while the parent document gives greater weight to the specifics of how their child's information is protected, along with the importance of informed consent. Hengstler (2013) stresses the critical importance of informed consent from both students and their parents prior to using these technologies in an educational setting as risks of not doing so could put educators at risk of violating FIPPA.

3. The use of 3rd party applications that save personal information, including short videos made by and showing students, specifically Flipgrid.


Join code: 0ade8f89

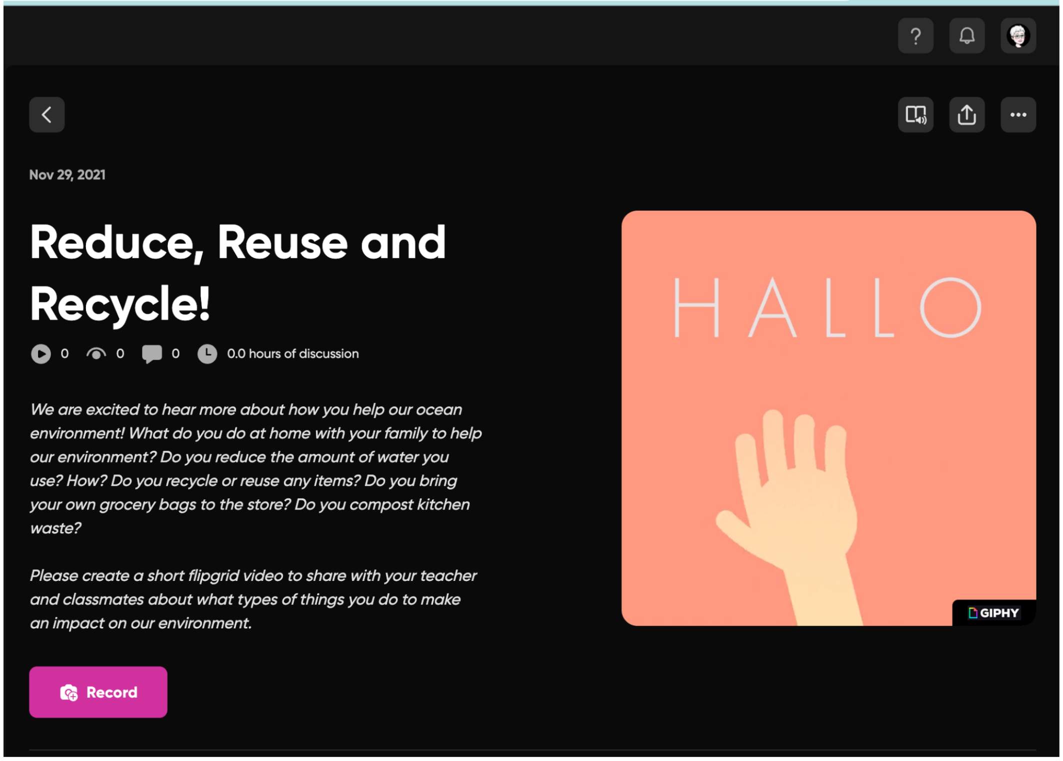
Grade 3 Science Explorers!

Marlee D, Pamela H 0 0.0 hours of discussion

Nov 29, 2021
Reduce, Reuse and Recycle!

Screen Capture by P. Harris

We initially started on this project because we were concerned about the privacy standards of the educational application **Flipgrid.** We had used it as part of a culminating activity in Unit 4 of our prototype course that we developed as our major project for OLTD 512: Instructional Design. The activity asked students to record a short video showcasing what kinds of recycling they were doing at home with their families. Once completed, the video was to be posted to the Flipgrid activity gallery so that other students could see their videos and respond.



Nov 29, 2021

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle!

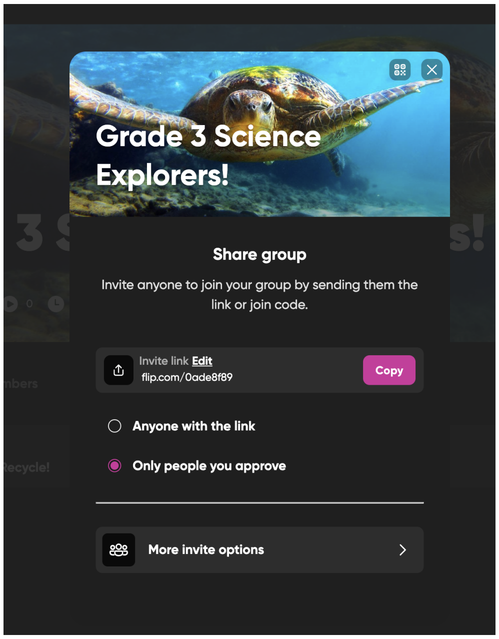
0 0 0 0.0 hours of discussion

We are excited to hear more about how you help our ocean environment! What do you do at home with your family to help our environment? Do you reduce the amount of water you use? How? Do you recycle or reuse any items? Do you bring your own grocery bags to the store? Do you compost kitchen waste?

Please create a short flipgrid video to share with your teacher and classmates about what types of things you do to make an impact on our environment.

Screen Capture by P. Harris

We chose this application initially because it was one we had been introduced to in OLTD 501 and was easy and fun to use. It capitalizes on students' interest in social media activities and technology while allowing them to easily share their understanding of course materials and engage with their classmates. Since creating our site in the fall of 2021, we had not revisited this part of it and when we did, we became concerned that we did not know the location of Flipgrid's servers or what kind of privacy policies Flip had in place or whether the gallery site was easily accessible through general Google searches.



Grade 3 Science Explorers!

Share group

Invite anyone to join your group by sending them the link or join code.

Invite link Edit
flip.com/0ade8f89

○ Anyone with the link

● Only people you approve

A visit to the Flip website quickly put our minds at ease. A subsidiary of Microsoft, Flip is an online social learning platform specifically designed for use by students from kindergarten to graduate school. Students can log into Flipgrid using a pre-existing Microsoft, Google, or Apple ID or via a Google Classroom invitation. Each “class site” that is created is secured with a passcode and the teacher (School Lead) who creates them can determine the privacy and access settings. Without the passcode, users cannot access the gallery board or see any of the posted videos.

While the servers Flip uses are not exclusive to Canada, they have a comprehensive privacy policy that clearly outlines what data is collected and how it is used, including a section that is specific to privacy protections for children aged 13 and under. In fact, the Terms of Use require informed parental consent for children in this age range and Flip has a specific consent form that can be used for this purpose (Flip.com, Dec 2022). Rumberger (2022) provided additional information and tips for teachers when using Flipgrid that informed our approach when writing up information on Flipgrid for our course safety pages.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE WORK

While the work for this project is finished, it is also the start of a larger process to ensure that privacy and safety measures are embedded throughout the course as per Anne Cavoukian’s (2011) *Privacy By Design* guidelines. We would like to develop a unit on digital citizenship and safety that would support our current prototype course and those we design in the future. Additionally, we plan on licensing our work under Creative Commons guidelines to protect our intellectual property and make it accessible to other educators. We would also like to share what we have learned through possible professional development workshops with our respective boards.

The experience of applying the knowledge gained from this course of study has been invaluable. It brings home how challenging it is to balance professional standards and obligations, most especially duty of care, with the rapidly changing world of online learning. Most educators are learning how to navigate Web 2.0 developments at the same time as their students and we are all playing a never-ending game of “catch-up”.

When governments are struggling to keep up with the implications for privacy protection with every new leap forward information technology takes, it is understandable that educators are confused or unaware of their responsibilities in this regard. While Wilson and Johnston's (2012) comprehensive work on how to approach and use social media in K-12 schools is as relevant today as it was 11 years ago, it clearly demonstrates what a broad and difficult issue this is. It is daunting, yet by engaging in this process, we were able to focus on a small piece that was relevant to us and develop our understanding and skills. In looking at the choices we made for instructional design through an informed privacy and safety lens, we have deepened our understanding of both our professional responsibilities with regards to privacy and safety, and created a richer and safer learning environment for our students.

Resources

Cavoukian, A. (2011, January). *Privacy by Design: the Seven Foundational Principles*. Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. Retrieved April 13, 2023, from https://www.ipc.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resources/7foundationalprinciples.pdf

Flip.com. (2022, December). *Flipgrid Privacy Policy*. Updated June, 2022 Privacy Policy Flipgrid. Retrieved April 3, 2023, from https://info.flip.com/about/trust-and-safety/privacy-policy.html

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Hengstler, J. (2012). *What parents should know part 1: Basic understanding of social media & digital communication* [Blog post]. http://jhengstler.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/what-parents-should-know-part-1-basic-understanding-of-social-media-digital-communications/

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