



Connected Communities FAQs

How is this different from a digital citizenship curriculum like Common Sense?

While traditional curricula like the ones Common Sense offers are important, this program goes several steps further. We bring in-person training to your school to offer real-world examples in a controlled, safe setting. It's not just about theory, it's about practice. For kids, this is key to getting them engaged and actively learning.

Plus, our impact doesn't stop at the school doors. We work across all environments where kids live and learn, helping them navigate digital life more confidently. Most importantly, this program sparks essential conversations between students, parents, and educators, ensuring that lessons stay current with the ever-changing digital landscape and threats from emerging online dangers.

What does success look like with this program?

For us, success is gauged by an increase in open, honest conversations around online safety between students and the trusted adults in their lives. When students feel safe to ask questions and explore tough topics, meaningful learning happens.

We also measure success by skill-building, particularly around helping students develop digital resilience, emotional regulation, and critical thinking around tech — all in a supportive environment. These are the building blocks of safer, healthier online behavior.

I already have a digital safety plan. Do I need this?

It's great if your school is already taking steps to address digital safety with things like norm-setting, policy work, and teacher professional development. But most online issues happen outside of school hours and then land in your classrooms the next day. A school-only plan won't catch everything. Our program enables you to include families in your digital safety strategy without adding major work for your team. When parents are part of the conversation, everyone benefits.

Why does it include phones?

Like it or not, kids are getting phones earlier and earlier. Phones can be a powerful safety tool with features like location tracking and emergency contacts. Studies even show that kids with phones may report better well-being.

But here's the catch: They need guidance. And unfortunately, neither parents nor schools have implemented safety instruction in the same way previous generations adopted driver safety programs.

The Connected Communities program uses a safer smartphone to teach healthy habits, model good choices, and give kids hands-on experience in a monitored environment. It's not just about teaching what to do, it's about giving them a place to practice doing it.

How long is the program?

The core of the program kicks off with an immersive three-day experience. This includes:

- Two (2) in-school student sessions
- Two (2) parent sessions (designed to fit busy schedules)
- One (1) lunch-and-learn session for educators and administrators

Throughout these three days, students and families participate in connected lessons at home and at school using the Bark Phone. We offer ongoing support with digital resources, follow-up trainings, and virtual check-ins throughout the school year so your community stays informed as digital threats evolve.

Why limit to 4th and 5th graders?

This age is a turning point where most kids are starting to get phones, or at least are surrounded by peers who have them. They're beginning to explore social media, texting, gaming, and more. That's why this moment is so important. Teaching digital responsibility before risky behavior becomes habitual can make all the difference. It's early enough to be proactive, and just in time to be relevant.

What would the cost be to my school or district?

Connected Communities is an annual program with a one-time cost at the beginning of the initiative, dependent on the number of students participating in the district. There is a fixed cost up to 300 students, and a discount for current Bark for Schools+ customers.