

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 a one time 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. It's a perfect fit to use Bark as an application opportunity for those schools that use Common Sense or Digital Citizenship Curriculum. 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. Our at home Bark Phone Quiz's help families connect on the learning that happened while the students were in sessions. These help families build the blocks to safer, healthier online behavior.

Here's what schools are saying:

"The in-person, expert-led sessions will reinforce our digital wellness and citizenship curriculum while engaging our students and the community to advocate for safer digital practices. This type of constructive, hands-on training will leave a lasting impression on our students that we hope will translate into a lifetime of responsible and effective internet and device use."

— *Jacque Fewin, Executive Director of Technology, Lubbock-Cooper ISD*

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 their own home. It's not just about teaching what to do, it's about giving them a place to practice doing it. The Bark Phone at Home Quiz is offered to 5th grade students and above, unless parents of younger students would like to opt in.

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
- One (1) parent sessions (designed to fit busy schedules)
- One (1) lunch-and-learn or professional development session for educators and administrators

Throughout these three days, students and families participate in connected lessons at school and then practice what they learned at home 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
2nd through 5th
graders?**

This age is a turning point where most kids are starting to get access to devices, 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.

**Why should we
work with Bark?**

Bark has been a leader in keeping kids safer online for over 11 years and now serves over 7 million families across the country. Everything Bark has learned over the years about the trends, struggles, and issues children face online made it clear that this program needed to reach schools nationwide. Educational settings are having to answer increasingly difficult questions about the consistent use of technology and its impact, but they don't have to do it alone. We are all better when we work together.

**What would
the cost be
to my school
or district?**

Connected Communities is an annual program that is currently being offered at no cost to school districts with limited availability.