LA NACION

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About	La Nación (The Nation) is Argentina's leading, daily conservative newspaper. La Nación's has an average daily paper circulation of 200,000; the paper is also distributed nationwide and around the world. According to comScore, the La Nación website is worldwide the 4th most visited news website in Spanish, attracting more than 7 million unique visitors (in 2016) per edition.
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The article is about Sandra Cortesi's trip to Argentina to present Conectados al Sur as part of "Digitally Connected": a global online network borne from a collaboration between the Berkman Klein Center and UNICEF. The interviewee asks Sandra to comment on how governments are teaching concepts of digital citizenship in schools, how to design campaigns and programs that youth are able to relate to, and on parenting in the digital age.

How to improve the relationship that parents and children have around technology

We interviewed Sandra Cortesi, Director of Youth and Media at the Berkman and Klein Center of Harvard University, for Connected to the South, an initiative to promote digital citizenship of young people and improve relationships between adolescents and adults

Martina Rua

All the time, at all times, in all places. That's how young people want to be connected to the internet today. In fact, according to results collected in the PISA tests, the OECD found that in many cases young people associate their happiness and well-being by being online. In this context of permanent connection, it is becoming increasingly necessary to think of a mode of digital citizenship that contemplates the rights, obligations, dangers and opportunities that young people face in the connected world.

For this reason, Digitally Connected was born: a global online network resulting from a collaboration between the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and UNICEF. The network's mission is to analyze the growth of the use of digital media by children and young people among a diverse community of academics, professionals, youth, activists, philanthropists, government officials

and representatives of technology companies. Sandra Cortesi, Director of Youth and Media of the Berkman Klein Center, visited our country to present Conectados al Sur, the online platform and regional branch of Digitally Connected.

ConectadosalSur.org focuses on a complex age group, from 12 to 18 years old, in which adult authority is tested. How does this play out when thinking about programs for children?

I see it as an opportunity: they [children] want to be seen as adults and they are just waiting to be taken seriously. The complex thing is to create spaces where they feel welcome and empowered. Where they are really heard and where nothing is imposed upon them.

What physical spaces do you think work best?

Whenever possible, physical spaces, where children can spend time and contribute to and comment on the issues that interest them. We provide such as space at our Center. Over the summer, young people spend significant time there. But this is local space and not everyone can provide such an opportunity. Here in Argentina we work with the NGO Faro Digital and UNICEF, which in turn work with the public sector in the creation of spaces where people can meet. At Conectados al Sur, we also provide people with spaces for discussion around the rights of young people, the issues that concern them, and in a way that they are treated as protagonists because otherwise it does not work.

Do you think there are not enough spaces for young people to think about their digital life?

Many campaigns and programs for children and young people are created without the voice of the protagonists and this means that they are not effective and the children do not find their voice in the proposals. We see it in educational materials, in talks, not even those are using a language that young people can feel is their own. We often raise issues and talk about things using words that do not mean anything to young people, such as privacy and cyberbullying, words they do not use.

How do you open a conversation about digital citizenship without naming it that way, or about online cyberbullying, if you feel they are alien terms?

It is a big challenge. Do not open the topic with the question, "what do you think of cyberbullying?" Instead, try fun activities or role plays, where they are the ones who add their feelings and perspectives on those issues. For that the young people must be in the center, and we, the educators and teachers, accompanying [from the sidelines].

What happens with younger children, in early childhood, who already begin to have contact with the digital world?

It is a fundamental age. We see children from 2 years old entering the digital world.

For parents it is often a dilemma. Do I ask the child what they do with their cell phone or am I invading their privacy? Do I forbid certain things?

Many parents ask me how to approach [the issue] so as not to face rejection and in such a way where their children do not feel their privacy has been invaded. What works best is, after asking the question what you are doing online, showing a genuine interest in the answer, getting involved and being interested in the contents that they talk about, so that the child does not feel judged, but accompanied. And the questions you ask will inform you about the viral trends of the moment, the famous youtuber, the latest application.

Really getting into their digital universe ...

Exactly; and that means that you can also show and share with your children what you were interested in on Twitter, a meme, or news. For those who wonder about controlling the use [of technology] or time spent online, putting together a family contract is what currently works best – a contract that states how we, as children

and as parents, are going to use technology. You should make it a bidirectional contract, a fair deal, an agreement that is mindful of the children's age, and something that gets discussed throughout the year.

How do you see the inclusion of digital citizenship issues in the school?

Governments are trying to respond, making proposals about how schools should include issues of digital citizenship, but the implementation is complex. For teachers it is very difficult to address all of the topics that range from empowerment, security, privacy, participation, participatory economy. It must be something transversal, it can not just be an individual course. And it also requires a change of mentality among those who teach, so that we see our role not only as the authority, but to know how to accompany students and engage in bi-directional learning.