

We like to think that we live in a country where people's rights are valued and that local governments and the federal government are making decisions that protect and look out for the best interests of the people. We know that this is not always the case as big corporations often influence choices and policies that politicians make. It is also evident that this is not always the case when we look at how everyday people interact with the internet. People's personal data are constantly being collected and a majority of people don't even recognize the risks of their online activities.

It should be an inalienable right that all people should have access to high-speed internet, regardless of their financial situation. Teaching over the years, I have noticed a huge shift from paper-and-pencil to digital and online tools; less textbooks and more sharing of information on platforms such as Google Classroom. It took a global pandemic for NYC to finally provide devices and internet access to hundreds of thousands of students that previously were on the wrong side of the digital divide. Beyond this, everyone is entitled to a proper education on how to use the internet correctly and safely. Time should be spent by educators in K-12 classes to reach our children, and TV/radio programming that addresses the topics to build online literacy should be made available to reach adults. People should not be left ignorant and the government should not allow major tech corporations to take advantage of unknowing customers.

I think that it is very important to educate K-12 students about how they should be weary of trusting that the information they store on their computers or web browsers is safe. Students need to be aware that their behavior on social networking sites is out there for everyone to see, even if or when posts or accounts get deleted. If students heard about web-scraping technologies such as Clearview that pools billions of photos posted on social media to create a database described as "a search engine for faces," they may think twice about the photos they share with the world. They should come to terms with the idea that any information they share with a "trusted" company has the potential to be hacked into or leaked and that whatever information they wouldn't want open to the public may be information they want to withhold altogether. Although students may not be able to afford measures to increase their own privacy and

anonymity, such as a VPN, perhaps with the proper education of the benefits, they could help inform their families of smart decisions to make.