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Punctuation Day? It's here!

BY MICHAEL J. RUDOLF

Today is National Punctuation Day, an occasion established by a California man five years ago to remind professional people of the importance of those little marks.

Philip Steier, chairman of the English Department at Tunkhannock Area High School, said proper punctuation is taught in elementary schools, and most students know how to use it. But the advent of technology such as text messaging is affecting that.

"With text messaging, they tend to get a little lazy," Steier said.

Steier said as long as students understand that in more formal contexts punctuation is necessary, there isn't a problem. He said most kids realize that, but he tries to remind them whenever possible.

"When kids need to do it, they know the rules," Steier said. "We teach them the proper way."

He said he has a poster in his classroom with a sample paragraph that starts out improperly punctuated. Without commas or periods, for example, he said it is extremely difficult to read. But on continuing, as the marks are added, the message becomes clearer.

According to the website www.NationalPunctuationDay.com, the day was created five years ago by Jeff Rubin, a former reporter turned newsletter publisher and public speaker. Rubin said his goal is to remind people of the importance of proper punctuation for communicating clearly at school or at work.

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