The Leader in e-Safety Education

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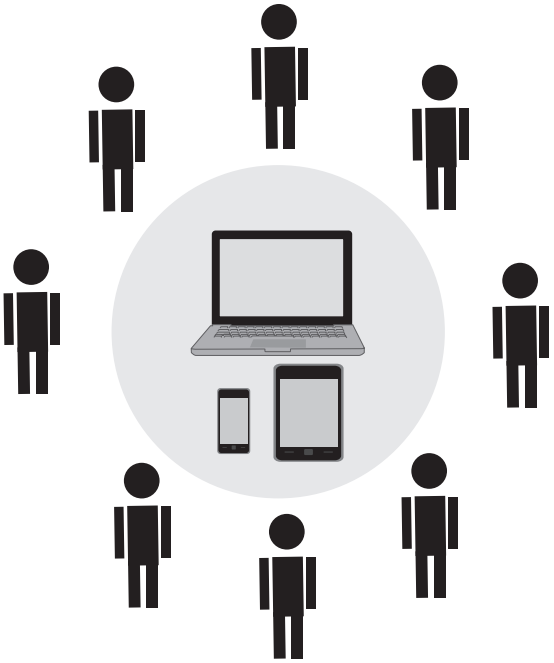
Citizenship in Digital Communication

Recommended grade levels: 3-4



Overview

Students explore the concept of digital citizenship as it relates to the positive and negative consequences their actions can have when communicating with digital or online technologies.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- recognize their actions when communicating online can have positive or negative consequences
- identify examples of how to act responsibly in digital communication

Materials

- Access to a board or interactive board
- Copies of the activity page for each student

Procedures

Discussion

Ask students to give examples of how a good citizen communicates (chats, e-mails, IMs, makes postings, etc.) online. *(Example answers: a good citizen: uses netiquette and/or emoticons, doesn't bully others, doesn't use bad language, etc.)*

Write the following, or have it read aloud, and ask students what it means to them:

Part of becoming a good digital citizen is learning to recognize the positive and negative (good and bad) consequences their actions can have when communicating with digital or online technologies. In other words, it's not as simple as learning some rules that say "do not do this" and "do not do that."

After a short discussion, lead into the following activity that will explore the concept.

Activity

Objective: Illustrate the concept that good citizenship in digital communication includes being responsible for what you say, how you say it, who you say it to, and what you do with information you read or receive.

Activity Part 1 – Group (may be done as a whole class or in smaller groups)

Pass out the activity page and have students read the information in the box: It's more than just sending a good message!

Good citizenship in digital communication includes being responsible for what you say, how you say it, who you say it to, and what you do with information you read or receive from others.

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Write the actions on the board or interactive board:

- What you say
- How you say it
- Who you say it to
- What you do with information you read or receive from others

Have the students come up with examples of how to act responsibly in digital communication for each action listed.

Activity Part 2

Either individually or in small groups, have students complete the scenario activity found on the activity page.

Option: Have half the class follow the directions on the page and have the other half of the class provide irresponsible actions. Compare the positive and negative consequences.

Have students share their responses to the activity. Use the example answers in the key below to enhance the discussion.

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Teacher's Key – Scenario Activity

1. (Provided on activity page) Kyle permanently deletes the e-mail without clicking on the link and without forwarding it to anyone. Thinking that the e-mail might have been caused by a virus, he calls Casey to ask him if he knows about the forwarded e-mail and to give him a heads up that his e-mail program might be infected.

   Reinforce: It is risky to share or forward any e-mails, texts, IMs, or postings that invite someone to click on unknown links. Legitimate prizes are never offered in these ways. An e-mail forwarded to a user's entire contact list is an indication that the user's computer has been infected with a virus. The user should run an anti-virus scan.

2. Ava tells Natalie that it is not a good idea to meet her online friend at the mall, but Natalie insists that it's OK. Ava convinces Natalie to ask her mom to go along with her. Ava also tells her own mother about the situation.

   Reinforce: It is never safe to make plans to meet up with a friend known only online. If you feel there is nothing wrong with an online friendship, tell a parent about it and include them in your online conversations. If it's a safe friendship, the online friend will not mind.

3. Gavin talks to Lucas and asks him if he has been bothered by the messages in the game. He tells Lucas that the guy is lame and that they both need to block messages from him. Gavin also tells his dad about the messages. Gavin and Lucas eventually find a new game to play.

   Reinforce: Any time you receive mean messages or see that someone else is receiving them, you need to take action. Tell a trusted adult right away. Do not forward the messages to anyone and do not respond to the bully. If it's happening to someone you know, let them know that you want to help them out of the situation. Help them report it to an adult. Help them find an alternative (like finding a new game). Follow up and make sure your friend does not continue to be harassed.

4. Emily IMs all of the friends she originally messaged about Sophia and tells them she is sorry for what she said. She lets everyone know that she made a bad decision and that, of course, Sophia is still her best friend. Emily plans a get-together with everyone, including Sophia, for the following weekend.

   Reinforce: Everyone makes mistakes when communicating online at some point. If you realize you have not used good netiquette, especially if it's at the expense of someone else, the best policy is to be upfront about it, apologize and do better in the future.

5. Trevor messages Mia and tells her that he really would like to post the photo because it is hysterical! Mia thanks him for telling her, but tells him that she doesn't feel comfortable with him posting it. She asks that Trevor delete the photo. Trevor says OK to his friend and deletes the photo.

   Reinforce: Even if a friend says it's OK to post (or send) photos or any information about them, think very carefully before you do. People who see or receive it may not understand it or your intentions. Also, anything you send or post leaves your control and can be used by anyone, including strangers.

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Citizenship in Digital Communication

It's more than just sending a good message!

Good citizenship in digital communication includes **being responsible** for what you say, how you say it, who you say it to, and what you do with information you read or receive from others.

Scenario Activity

For each scenario, (1) write a brief answer showing how the user would act using responsible digital citizenship. The first one is completed for you.

Scenarios

1. Kyle receives a forwarded e-mail from Casey that says to click on a link to get a cool prize and then forward the e-mail to all of his friends. What does Kyle do?

   Kyle permanently deletes the e-mail without clicking on the link and without forwarding it to anyone. Thinking that the e-mail might have been caused by a virus, he calls Casey to ask him if he knows about the forwarded e-mail and to give him a heads up that his e-mail program might be infected.

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   _____

2. Natalie has an online friend, Jordy, who is from another school. In a text, Natalie asks Ava to go with her to the mall to meet Jordy for the first time. What should Ava do?

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   _____

3. Gavin and Lucas are school friends and play the same online game. Gavin has noticed that for more than a week some guy has posted mean messages about Lucas on the game every day. What should Gavin do?

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4. At school, Emily and her best friend, Sophia, get into an argument. Emily is still so mad after school that she IMs all of their friends and tells them not to be Sophia's friend. Several of Emily's friends then send mean messages to Sophia. Later in the evening Sophia goes over to Emily's house and they talk the whole thing over. By the time Sophia goes home, they are best friends again. Should Emily do anything?

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5. Trevor and Mia are good friends. Trevor has an embarrassing photo of Mia that he is thinking of posting online because he thinks it's so funny. He knows all of his friends will get a good laugh and Mia is a friend so he thinks she won't mind. What should Trevor do?

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