SEXTING: Empowering Students to Engage in Positive Communication

Secondary
Lesson 13

Lesson Title: The Internet and the World

Description: This lesson will explore the student's civic responsibility to make the Internet a safe space.

Objectives: The students will be able to:
- Understand the civic responsibilities of being safe
- Learn the importance of respecting others while maintaining a safe cyber space

Standards-Based Student Development Program Benchmark(s):

Benchmark PS 1.0
Student accepts responsibility for personal behavior

Benchmark PS 1.4
Identifying situations in which peer pressure might affect adherence to or violation of acceptable norms

Springboard Activity:

1. A day before the lesson, have students fill out the survey on **Handout 3.1: What Do We Think?** Explain that they should answer each question twice, once based on what they believe and once based on what they think the majority of their peers believe. Emphasize that the survey is anonymous.
2. Collect the surveys and tally student responses by calculating both the average numerical response for each item and the number of students who chose 4 (agree) or 5 (strongly agree) for each item. Teachers should be prepared to review these totals with the students during the instructional time.

FCAT Benchmarks:

LA.A.2.4.7   Analyzes the validity and reliability of primary source information
LA.C.1.4.3   Uses effective strategies for informal and formal discussions.

Accommodations: Teachers of students with disabilities are mandated by state and federal law to provide accommodations as stated on the students' IEP. General accommodations and best practices are listed in the introduction.

Instructional Time: One class period

Instructional Materials
  ➢ Dry erase board and markers
  ➢ **Handout 13.1: What Do We Think?**
  ➢ **Handout 13.2: Social Implications**

Instructional Lesson:

1. Share with the students that the survey they filled out on **Handout 13.1: What Do We Think?,** is meant to demonstrate how social norms work.

2. Redistribute randomly the surveys filled out earlier, one to each student.

3. Ask students to stand if the survey they received indicates that the individual (who filled it out) agrees (4) or strongly agrees (5) with the first statement.

4. Have everyone look around before sitting down. Next ask people to stand if the survey in their hand indicates that the typical peer agrees (4) or strongly agrees (5) with the statement.

5. Have everyone look around again before sitting down.

6. Repeat this process for the remaining statements.

7. Summarize the results of this survey by posting or verbally sharing the tally you compiled (refer to step #2 of the Springboard Activity), then discuss the following questions:
   a. What did you observe during this exercise? (Most often, individuals believe that their own online behavior and attitudes are different from their peer's behavior and attitudes.)
   b. How do you think that this misperception affects people's behavior? (Students are more likely to take part in negative online behavior and less likely to stand up to it.)
   c. Now that you have more accurate information about your peers' attitudes, how might this affect your behavior? (Students will feel more comfortable resisting cyber bullying and other forms of online social cruelty, and acting as an ally to those who have been targeted.)

8. Ask students for concrete examples of how the six social norms listed on the survey play out in their day-to-day lives.

9. Elicit stories that demonstrate, for example, how assumptions about the meaning of free speech have led students to say cruel things online; or how the unwritten code, "what happens online stays online," has prevented students from reporting cyber bullying that they witnessed even though they knew it was wrong.

10. Direct students to read **Handout 13.2: Social Implications.**

11. Ask students if they think that it is possible to change the social norms in a community.

12. Tell students that they are going to engage in an experiment to see if they can reshape the norms in their community around negative online behavior.

13. Divide students into six groups and assign each group one of the following online social norms from the survey:
    a. I have a free speech right to say whatever I want online.
    b. On the Internet it is okay to reveal personal secrets for others to see.
    c. What happens online should stay online.
    d. What happens online is mostly a game, so no one can really get hurt.
    e. I have the right to post my pictures regardless if I am appropriately dressed or not.
    f. On the internet, I can post my girlfriend's/boyfriend's picture without his approval.

Assessment: Teacher observation, class participation and completion of activity.

Follow-up Activities/Home Learning/Parent: Ask students to share the results of **Handout 13.1: What Do We Think?** with their parents.

Handout 13.1: What do we Think?

For each of the statements below, circle the numbers that most closely correspond with both your own belief and the belief you feel is typically held by members of your peer group.

1=strongly disagree; **2**=disagree; **3**=unsure; **4**=agree; **5**=strongly agree

1. I have a free speech right to say whatever I want online.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

2. On the Internet it is okay to reveal personal secrets for others to see.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

3. What happens online should stay online.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

4. What happens online is mostly a game, so no one can really get hurt.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

5. I have the right to post my pictures regardless if I am appropriately dressed or not.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

6. On the internet I can post my girlfriend's/boyfriend's picture without his approval.
a. Your response 1 2 3 4 5
b. Your peers' typical response 1 2 3 4 5

Handout 13.2: Social Implications

Directed Reading

Social norms are people's beliefs about the attitudes and behaviors that are normal, acceptable, or even expected in a particular social context. In many situations, people's perceptions of these norms will greatly influence their behavior. When people misperceive the norms of their peer group—that is when they inaccurately think an attitude or behavior is more (or less) common than is actually the case—they may choose to engage in behaviors that are in sync with those false norms.[1] Pluralistic Ignorance is the term that is used in academia to discuss social norms theory and refers to the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others.

Social norms theory has been most commonly applied to the problem of excessive alcohol consumption on college campuses. Many studies have shown that college students overestimate how much their peers drink. Prevention experts have argued that this misperception of the norm drives greater alcohol consumption. A growing body of evidence suggests that providing information to students about accurate drinking norms is associated with decreased drinking on campus.

With regard to cyber bullying, many youth may falsely believe that online rumors, teasing and cruelty are approved of by their peers and that it would invite ostracism to refuse to participate in or to take a stand against such behavior. This misperception may cause young people to avoid acting as an ally to the targets of cyber bullying and to even engage in negative behaviors with which they privately feel uncomfortable. Over time, online social aggression may become normalized for youth, and they may become desensitized to its damaging effects on others. However, interventions that correct students' misperceptions by demonstrating that most young people don't find online cruelty to be "cool" could provide students with the awareness and confidence needed to avoid cyber bullying behavior and to speak out against it.

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