

Constructively engaging in digital communities



LESSON OBJECTIVE

- ▶ Identify ways they want others to speak to them
- ▶ Display inclusivity and empathy in group communication
- ▶ Evaluate group communications for bias and hate
- ▶ Develop ways to deal with negative comments, bias and hate speech
- ▶ Develop guidelines for appropriate classroom communication



<p>▶ ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Why is it important for people to practice respect, inclusivity and politeness when communicating with each other? ▶ How does online communication affect life offline? ▶ What responsibility do people have for their online communications? 	
<p>▶ AGE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 11-14 years old 	
<p>▶ MATERIALS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Four large placards labeled “do nothing,” “respond,” “report” and “something else.” On each placard, write, “Explain” below the heading. 	
<p>▶ PREPARATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Print or handwrite 4 placards as described in the materials section 	
<p>▶ ISTE DIGCITCOMMIT COMPETENCY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ INCLUSIVE: I am open to hearing and respectfully recognizing multiple viewpoints and I engage with others online with respect and empathy. 	



SUPPORT MATERIALS

Visit facebook.com/fbgetdigital to access resources for parents and young people that can complement the lesson students took on Engagement today.



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LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson will introduce students to the need for practicing inclusivity and empathy when engaged in digital communication. Students will discuss the similarities and differences between the digital and physical worlds and develop strategies for dealing with online hate speech.

PROCEDURE

1. Divide the class into small groups of students. Have each group brainstorm on a sheet of paper how they would like to be treated when their classmates speak to them. Encourage them to think about ideas like respect, eye contact, non-threatening body language, inclusivity and politeness. Ask students to use positive statements that begin with, “People respect me when they...”
2. Ask some of the groups to share their statements. Point out to students that when people are respectful of others, include everyone in the group and are polite, they are being empathetic.
3. Ask students whether they think speaking positively to or about someone has more impact when said in person or online. What about speaking negatively to or about someone? Why do they think that is the case?
4. Explain to students that hate speech is defined by Dictionary.com as “speech that attacks, threatens or insults a person or group on the basis of national origin, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.” Ask them how they feel when they witness, experience or send hate speech or negative comments or posts. How does what’s said online affect their lives offline? What actions, if any, do they take when they or their friends receive hate speech or negative comments online?
5. Write the following scenarios on the board and have a student read them aloud to the class:
 - ▶ A couple you know is going through a nasty breakup. Both are your good friends. You read a post on social media that trashes one of them.
 - ▶ A good friend of yours recently got into an argument with another student. That student sent a racially insensitive text to your friend and you and others saw a screen shot of the exchange.
 - ▶ A student you don’t know is being bullied online through social media posts. Other students and members of the community are questioning his gender. Some of your friends are the worst offenders.
 - ▶ A photograph and story of you in an embarrassing circumstance has been posted online and portrayed as a real news story.
 - ▶ Some students you don’t know are spreading a nasty story about you on social media. Your friends think it is true and begin to ignore you.
6. To start the next activity, place a placard in each corner of the classroom (see materials needed). Before you begin, remind students that they have the power to escalate or de-escalate a situation through their words and actions. Ask students to think about what they would do under the same scenarios they just examined as a class.
7. Read each scenario again and ask students to carefully listen to the descriptions. After each one is read, ask students to move to the corner that best describes how they would react to that scenario. Once they’ve made their selections, have the group in each corner explain their reasons. Have students state whether they think their action would escalate or de-escalate the situation.
8. To debrief, discuss the following:
 - ▶ Why are positive comments important to you? How do they affect your life?
 - ▶ When people are experiencing some difficulty—such as arguments, friendship breakups, false accusations or harassment—why is it better not to make negative comments?
 - ▶ What responsibility do you have for your online communication?
 - ▶ How can you help encourage all students to take this responsibility seriously?
9. To finish the lesson, place students back into small groups and have them identify the lessons they’ve learned in this activity. Have each group develop class guidelines for online and in-person communication based on what they’ve learned. When they have finished, groups should present their ideas to the class and have the class vote on the best ones. Post the final guidelines in your classroom.

VOCABULARY

inclusivity [in-clu-siv-i-ty] (noun) an intention or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized

empathy [em-puh-thee] (noun) identification or experience with the feelings, thoughts or attitudes of another person

hate speech [hey-t speech] (noun) speech that attacks, threatens or insults a person or group on the basis of national origin, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability

Source:

[dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/constructively-engaging-in-digital-communities