

My Online Code

Essential Question

What does it mean to do the right thing online?

Lesson Overview

Students discuss their understanding of ethical behavior and are introduced to the concept of online ethics. They analyze a mock social networking page based on these ethical considerations. Students then learn about digital citizenship and the different levels of online responsibility (to self, friends and family, and community).

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- understand the concept of online ethics as it applies to four key areas.
- define digital citizenship and identify their online responsibilities.
- explore online ethics by analyzing a mock social networking page.

Materials and Preparation

- Copy the **Judging Jeff’s Profile Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Review the **Judging Jeff’s Profile Student Handout – Teacher Version**.

Family Resources

- Send home the **Connected Culture Family Tip Sheet (Middle & High School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grades 9-10: RI.4, RI.10, W.6, W.7, W.8, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, L.4a, L.6

grades 11-12: RI.4, RI.10, RI.4, RI.10, W.6, W.7, W.8, W.9, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, L.4a, L.6

ISTE: 1a, 1d, 2a, 2d, 3b, 3d, 4a-c, 5a, 5b

Key Vocabulary –

ethics: a set of principles and morals governing people’s behavior, including honesty and respect toward others

online ethics: a set of principles and morals governing people’s behavior as it relates to the Internet and digital devices

digital citizenship: navigating the digital world, safely, responsibly and ethically

introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **ethics** and **online ethics**.

INVITE students to think of someone they believe is very ethical. This can be a family member, a friend, or a public figure that they do not know personally.

ASK:

In what ways is the person you identified ethical?

Encourage students to provide examples of ethical behavior that show honesty and respect toward others.

What are examples of ways that people behave unethically in their dealings with others?

Have students provide examples, and then explain why the behavior is unethical. Record student responses.

Sample responses:

- Lying to someone who trusts you. This is both dishonest and disrespectful.
- Spreading rumors about someone. This shows disrespect toward the feelings of others.
- Joining in bullying even when you know it is wrong. This is both dishonest and hurtful to others.

What are examples of ways that people behave unethically in the community?

Have students think about their school community, but also about the larger communities they belong to as part of their town, nation, or planet. You may wish to have students provide examples of ethical and unethical behavior from current news stories.

Sample responses:

- A student cheating on a test. This is dishonest and violates a community honor code.
- A politician lying to voters. This is both dishonest and disrespectful toward the community he or she represents.
- A company polluting the environment. This shows disrespect toward the community that shares the planet.

What are examples of ways that people behave unethically online?

Encourage students to think about what it means to be honest and respectful online, and how people can violate that ethical code.

Sample responses:

- Posting information about people at school that they would never want shared
- Pretending you are someone else in an online chat room
- Starting a cruel social network page about members of the community
- Copying and pasting parts of someone else’s work into your own without giving them credit

ENCOURAGE students to compare and contrast ethical and unethical behavior in the offline and online worlds. Students should recognize that the same kinds of principles apply in both places, but they play out in different ways.

teach 1

Analyze Jeff’s Profile (20 minutes)

INTRODUCE students to four topics that are key to online ethics. Explain that they will be further exploring these areas in the remainder of the lesson.

1. Privacy: Respecting the privacy of others online
2. Self-Expression and Identity: Presenting yourself in an honest and genuine way in the online world
3. Connected Culture: Treating others in a kind and respectful manner, and avoiding cyberbullying
4. Respecting Creative Work: Giving credit to others and/or asking their permission when you use their work as part of your own

ARRANGE students into four groups and give each group a copy of the **Judging Jeff’s Profile Student Handout**.

ASSIGN each group one of the four topics you just introduced, which correspond to different parts of the handout.

EXPLAIN to students that they will be analyzing a fictional profile. They will be asked to think about the online ethics involved in some of the postings in the profile. Make sure students understand the instructions, and allow 10 to 15 minutes for groups to complete their work.

INVITE the groups to report to one another on their topic. They should both summarize the content of their part of Jeff’s profile and share their responses to the questions. Refer to the **Judging Jeff’s Profile Student Handout – Teacher Version** for guidance on leading the discussion.

teach 2

Introduce Digital Citizenship (10 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **digital citizenship**.

INVITE students to complete this sentence: *A good citizen of the digital world _____.*

Students should consider their responsibilities – as digital citizens – to themselves, their family and friends, and their community. Encourage them to recall the four topics they explored in Teach 1 and address these topics as they complete the sentence.

Sample responses:

- *Respects other people's privacy online*
- *Represents himself/herself honestly online*
- *Posts things that won't harm himself/herself or others*
- *Properly cites the work of others for assignments*

RECORD the student responses and have volunteers create a list to display in the classroom. As a high-tech option, capture students' responses in a word cloud, using Wordle (www.wordle.net) or Tagxedo (www.tagxedo.com).

ENCOURAGE students to think about guidelines that could be put into place in schools to help students become better digital citizens. Students may suggest the following ideas:

- Form a peer advising group to help students having problems online.
- Institute anonymous reporting of harmful incidents.
- Include anti-cyberbullying language in school policy.
- Have a clear school policy on plagiarism, including guidelines for students to follow.

closing

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

ASK:

What are some ways to behave ethically when you are online?

Look for responses that span the four online ethics topics: privacy, self-expression and identity, connected culture, and respecting creative work. Sample responses:

- Protecting your privacy and respecting that of others
- Presenting yourself sensibly and appropriately
- Treating others with respect and kindness
- Getting credit for your work and citing that of others

What are examples of unethical online behavior?

Again, encourage students to cover the four online ethics topics. You may also wish to have them supply a concrete example of each type of behavior, either from their own experiences or from current events. Sample responses:

- Sharing embarrassing information about someone in an online forum
- Creating a profile with false information and tricking people with it
- Posting a cruel remark about someone on a social network
- Using the work of someone else in a mash-up without citing it

What are some of your responsibilities to yourself, your friends and family, and your community when you are online? What happens when you don't fulfill your responsibilities as a digital citizen?

Responses should be based on the day's activity as well as on personal experience.

My Online Code

Directions

Imagine there's a kid in one of your classes named Jeff. You know him, but not very well. You notice that he is friends with one of your friends on the social networking site MyBook. His profile is public, so you decide to check it out.

Some information posted in Jeff's profile is below. Your group will be assigned to analyze **one** topic on this profile and answer the corresponding questions.

Topic 1 of Jeff's profile: Privacy



Al Anderson says...

Seems Matt's parents are fighting again — he's been on my couch all week. Any chance you could house him for a night or two?

1. Was it appropriate for Al to post personal information about Matt on Jeff's profile? Is there any potential benefit or harm in having Matt's story shared online?
2. When you see Matt at school tomorrow, will you treat him any differently? What effect might seeing his personal information online have on how you think about or treat him offline (i.e., face-to-face)?
3. Are there any other ways that Al could have used digital technology in trying to help his friend Matt?
4. What would you have done if you were in Al's place? What would you do if you were Jeff? How would you react if you were Matt?

Topic 2 of Jeff's profile: Self-Expression and Identity



Rosy Ramirez says...

Have you seen Lisa's new profile pic?? Lol, she's trying to be all Goth for her online "friends" or whatever.



Tori Torres says...

OMG, Lisa's such a freak

1. Why do you think Lisa may have chosen a new "Goth" profile picture? Is there any harm in her presenting a different identity online?
2. Imagine that Lisa's online friends had never met her face-to-face, and that once they did, they discovered she doesn't actually dress Goth. How do you think they would react?
3. Why might Rosy and Tori be reacting negatively to their friend's new picture? Is it right for them to respond the way they did?
4. What would you have done if you had seen a profile picture like Lisa's, that didn't seem real? How would you react to Rosy and Tori's postings if you were Lisa?

Topic 3 of Jeff's profile: Connected Culture



Pat says...

Can you believe the dumb assignment Garrett gave us? You should totally join our I Hate Mr. Garrett page: <http://honkifyouhategarrett/fh>.

1. What do you think of Pat and his friends' creating such a page?
2. Do you think Jeff has a responsibility to address or comment on Pat's post? What are some things he might do?
3. How would you react if you really liked Mr. Garrett, and you saw this post from Pat? Would you do anything about it? If so, what would you do?
4. How would you react if you saw a page like this created about you? What would you do if you saw a page like this about a friend or a teacher?



Topic 4 of Jeff's profile: Respecting Creative Work

Subject: Irritated...AGAIN

posted by Jeff at 7:30pm | comments (3)

So, it has happened again. For Garrett's art class we had to do these stupid online group comic projects. Not only did my horrible partners stick me with all of the work, but I just found out that one of them emailed my comic to her friend in the other class who ripped it off! NOT cool.

Check it out – here's a piece of mine on the left, theirs on the right.



1. What do you think of the student work on the right? Do you think Jeff's work inspired the other artist, or that the other artist plagiarized his work?
2. What if the comic artist on the right had included a credit line that said "Based on a concept by Jeff," and asked Jeff's permission to use it? Would that still be plagiarism? Would it be ethical?
3. Clearly, Jeff is bothered that someone "ripped off" his comic. What if, in a written entry about music, he provides a link for downloading a new album for free? Do you think the two things are similar or different? Why?
4. What would you do if you were in Jeff's situation and someone else had plagiarized your work? What if you knew about an instance in which someone else's work had been plagiarized?

My Online Code

Directions

Imagine there's a kid in one of your classes named Jeff. You know him, but not very well. You notice that he is friends with one of your friends on the social networking site MyBook. His profile is public, so you decide to check it out.

Some information posted in Jeff's profile is below. Your group will be assigned to analyze **one** topic on this profile and answer the corresponding questions.

Topic 1 of Jeff's profile: Privacy



Al Anderson says...

Seems Matt's parents are fighting again — he's been on my couch all week. Any chance you could house him for a night or two?

1. *Was it appropriate for Al to post personal information about Matt on Jeff's profile? Is there any potential benefit or harm in having Matt's story shared online?*

Students should recognize that Al may be violating Matt's privacy by posting private information about his situation at home. It might benefit Matt by getting him a place to stay, but it could also embarrass or upset him.

2. *When you see Matt at school tomorrow, will you treat him any differently? What effect might seeing his personal information online have on how you think about or treat him offline (i.e., face-to-face)?*

Students should realize that even if they don't treat Matt differently, the way they think about him will probably be affected by having this private information.

3. *Are there any other ways that Al could have used digital technology in trying to help his friend Matt?*

Al could have contacted Jeff about Matt by email or a text, which would have been a more private communication.

4. *What would you have done if you were in Al's place? What would you do if you were Jeff? How would you react if you were Matt?*

Encourage students to discuss the options they would have in each situation, and then choose what they believe is the most ethical choice.

Topic 2 of Jeff's profile: Self-Expression and Identity



Rosy Ramirez says...

Have you seen Lisa's new profile pic?? Lol, she's trying to be all Goth for her online "friends" or whatever.



Tori Torres says...

OMG, Lisa's such a freak.

1. *Why do you think Lisa may have chosen a new "Goth" profile picture? Is there any harm in her presenting a different identity online?*

Students should understand that Lisa may want to "try on" a different identity online. While this is unlikely to cause serious harm, it could be helpful for her to reflect on why she selected this photo.

2. *Imagine that Lisa's online friends had never met her face-to-face, and that once they did, they discovered she doesn't actually dress Goth. How do you think they would react?*

Lisa's online friends might feel that she had tricked them or lied to them by being dishonest about her usual appearance.

3. *Why might Rosy and Tori be reacting negatively to their friend's new picture? Is it right for them to respond the way they did?*

It is understandable that Lisa's friends might be upset to see her misrepresenting herself online, but it is not right for them to write mean things about her online. Instead, they should talk with her in person about how they feel.

4. *What would you have done if you had seen a profile picture like Lisa's, that didn't seem real? How would you react to Rosy and Tori's postings if you were Lisa?*

Encourage students to discuss the options they would have in each situation, and then choose what they believe is the most ethical choice.

Topic 3 of Jeff's profile: Connected Culture



Pat says...

Can you believe the dumb assignment Garrett gave us? You should totally join our I Hate Mr. Garrett page: <http://honkifyouhategarrett/fh>.

1. *What do you think of Pat and his friends' creating such a page?*

Students should understand that it is not okay to create a public space online in which you say negative things about others.

2. *Do you think Jeff has a responsibility to address or comment on Pat's post? What are some things he might do?*

Since it is on his profile, Jeff really should do something about it. He might post something positive about Mr. Garrett, or go on record saying he isn't interested.

3. *How would you react if you really liked Mr. Garrett, and you saw this post from Pat? Would you do anything about it? If so, what would you do?*

Students should recognize that they have the option to stick up for Mr. Garrett by posting something on the site or by saying something privately to Pat. The most important thing is that they not participate in something that is meant to harm Mr. Garrett.

4. *How would you react if you saw a page like this created about you? What would you do if you saw a page like this about a friend or a teacher?*

Encourage students to discuss the options they would have in each situation, and then choose what they believe is the most ethical choice.

Topic 4 of Jeff's profile: Respecting Creative Work

Subject: Irritated...AGAIN

posted by Jeff at 7:30pm | comments (3)

So, it has happened again. For Garrett's art class we had to do these stupid online group comic projects. Not only did my horrible partners stick me with all of the work, but I just found out that one of them emailed my comic to her friend in the other class who ripped it off! NOT cool.

Check it out – here's a piece of mine on the left, theirs on the right.



1. *What do you think of the student work on the right? Do you think Jeff's work inspired the other artist, or that the other artist plagiarized his work?*

Although the artwork is different, the idea is not original. Students should realize that the other artist did plagiarize Jeff's work, because they copied his idea very closely.

2. *What if the comic artist on the right had included a credit line that said "Based on a concept by Jeff," and asked Jeff's permission to use it? Would that still be plagiarism? Would it be ethical?*

Students should recognize that giving appropriate credit and asking permission are required when you use someone else's work. As long as it was all right with the teacher, this would be ethical.

3. *Clearly Jeff is bothered that someone "ripped off" his comic. What if, in a written entry about music, he provides a link for downloading a new album for free? Do you think the two things are similar or different? Why?*

While there are differences between the two things, students should recognize that there are some similarities as well: In both cases, someone's creative work is being taken without their permission or compensation.

4. *What would you do if you were in Jeff's situation and someone else had plagiarized your work? What if you knew about an instance in which someone else's work had been plagiarized?*

Encourage students to discuss the options they would have in each situation and then choose what they believe is the most ethical choice.

My Online Code

1. You learned that online ethics is a set of rules or ideas that guide your behavior. Choose the answer below that is an example of online ethics.

- a) Making sure your seatbelt is on
- b) Working on a class project
- c) Being in the first row of a concert
- d) Asking your brother before posting a funny photo of him online

2. Which of the following behaviors is not ethical?

- a) Searching for information online
- b) Giving a friend credit for using his song in a video that you created
- c) Posting a mean message online about a classmate
- d) Asking your friend before you post a picture of her

3. Tommy has not been in school for the past few days, and his classmate Sam thinks this is unfair. Sam posts the following message on his social networking page: “Tommy S. thinks he’s special and doesn’t have to go to class.”

True or false: Sam’s post is irresponsible.

- a) True
- b) False

My Online Code

1. You learned that online ethics is a set of rules or ideas that guide your behavior. Choose the answer below that is an example of online ethics.

- a) Making sure your seatbelt is on
- b) Working on a class project
- c) Being in the first row of a concert
- d) Asking your brother before posting a funny photo of him online**

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **d**. This is an example of online ethics because it demonstrates acting responsibly to another person while online.

2. Which of the following behaviors is not ethical?

- a) Searching for information online
- b) Giving a friend credit for using his song in a video that you created
- c) Posting a mean message online about a classmate**
- d) Asking your friend before you post a picture of her

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **c**. It is hurtful and unethical to post mean messages.

3. Tommy has not been in school for the past few days, and his classmate Sam thinks this is unfair. Sam posts the following message on his social networking page: "Tommy S. thinks he's special and doesn't have to go to class."

True or false: Sam's post is irresponsible.

- a) True**
- b) False

Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**, True. Sam should not have posted the message publicly because other people may make untrue assumptions about where Tommy is and about his character.