

## Tying Empathy to Digital Responsibility

### Grades 5–8

#### Objectives:

1. Students will be able to avoid spreading gossip or negative images online.
2. Students will be able to tie empathy to digital responsibility.

#### Introduction

- Ask students to think about a time when they saw gossip or negative images online and to silently reflect on the people that were impacted by those posts.
- Let students know that they will explore ways to understand and recognize the impact of words and images they share online.
- Facilitate a whole-group discussion with one or more of following questions:
  - *How are people impacted by sharing gossip or negative images online?*
  - *Describe how being the target of gossip or negative images could impact your emotions.*
  - *What's the difference between your intention and your impact? Which one seems more important?*
- Reinforce with students that when they share gossip or negative images of others online, those individuals are impacted in a negative way.

#### Teach/Model

- Introduce the vocabulary words **impact** and **digital citizenship**.
  - **Impact:** An effect on someone or something.
  - **Digital citizenship:** The responsible and ethical use of technology to engage with others.
- Explain to students that sharing gossip and negative images online can negatively impact the target of those posts. Explain that in order to demonstrate digital citizenship, students need to avoid spreading hurtful information online.
- Tell students that good digital citizens show empathy for others by taking responsibility for their words and actions online.

## Student Practice

Let students know that they will be participating in an activity called Taking Sides to practice deciding whether or not they should share information online.

- Direct the class to form two lines. Explain that you will read examples of online posts and that they will need to make a choice about whether or not they should share it.
- After reading each example below, instruct the students to step to the right if they decide it is OK to share the post or to step to the left if it is not OK to share it.
  - Video of a friend falling asleep at a sleepover
  - Video of a cat playing the piano
  - Picture of a friend that you took when he spilled mustard on his shirt
  - Invitation to your birthday party
  - Meme with your teacher's picture on it
  - Instant message with a joke about your friend who is going through a difficult time
  - Screenshot of a text with a friend that contains personal information
  - Message describing what you heard about a former classmate

## Reflection

- Distribute index cards to students and ask students to write the emotions or feelings they would have if negative images or gossip were shared about them.
- Direct students to Turn and Talk with a partner to discuss what they wrote on their index cards.
- Divide students into small groups and facilitate a Table Talk, asking one or more of the following questions:
  - *How can your small action of posting impact someone else in a big way?*
  - *What are some ways to avoid spreading rumors, gossip, and hurtful images?*
  - *How does not participating in the spreading of negative images and gossip contribute to being a positive digital citizen?*
- Invite students to share their ideas from their small-group discussions with the whole group.
- Reinforce with students that sharing gossip and negative images online has a negative impact on those concerned.