



Lesson plan – elementary and middle schools

Be the change: Unite for a better internet

Introduction

This lesson is intended for use in elementary and middle schools and can be adapted for students ages 7 – 12.

Overview

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to think about the internet, what it is, how they use it and how they can make it better. Students will be able to share their thoughts on the positive and negative aspects of the internet and will discuss how they would like to improve it while also thinking about the role that they have in making it better.

Requirements

- Post-it notes
- Sheets of paper – labeled "Parents," "Teachers," "Children," "Industry" (for example, Facebook, Twitter, Club Penguin), "Others"

Activity

*Discussion and brainstorming of the positive aspects of the internet
(5 to 10 minutes to discuss)*

Ask the students to work in small groups of two or three to write down on a sheet of paper all the different things they use the internet for. Encourage them to think about *all* the things they do when they go online: entertainment, education, communication, and so on.

Share the results of this activity – there will probably be a tremendous range of uses – acknowledging that the internet brings some huge benefits for all of us. It may be interesting to pose the question, "*Can we live without the internet?*" – see what the students have to say about that and why they answered yes or no.



*Discussion and brainstorming of the challenges of the internet
[5 to 20 minutes to discuss (7-9) or work on solutions to the challenges (9-12)]*

Now ask the students to carry out a similar activity, but this time considering some of the challenges that the internet brings.

Once they have completed this second task consider the questions: *Does the internet need to be improved? Does it need to get better? If so, who should be responsible for this?*

The answer of course is that we all need to take responsibility and do more.

7 to 9 year olds

Ask the students to devise their own set of rules for use of the internet – these would be rules that everyone should follow and that should lead to a better internet for everyone. It would also be useful to share the school's own acceptable use policy here, if there is one.

9 to 12 year olds

Organize the students into larger groups of around six students. Ask each group to consider a different challenge that has been identified and then come up with a possible solution to solve the challenge. Clearly this is not an easy task, but it will be interesting to see what the students think can be done. They can be prompted and supported as necessary, and it may be useful for them to consider the roles of different actors in this (see the accompanying sample Online Challenges sheet for some prompts you could give them).

Plenary (10 minutes)

Finish the lesson by provoking the students a little to see whether they are indeed doing their part and making the Internet better. Depending on what they think, it may be necessary to provide some possible options. For example, depending on their answers to the challenges, ask how many of them have seen disturbing content online. Discuss what they should do if this happens (i.e. report the content, initially to parents, teachers or another trusted adult, but also to the service provider). There is, of course, an opportunity here to discuss the types of behaviors we should all be using when we go online and to reinforce the school's acceptable use policy if appropriate.

Extension activity

Ask the students to create a poster/flyer/tip sheet to show how to report in a particular service or site. Students would need to be able to access sites that they use outside of school in order to be able to do this. They would need to explore the reporting mechanisms and it may be easier for them to do some of this at home (given restrictions and filtering that may be in place within school).



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Online challenges – what can be done?

What is the challenge?

Who is responsible?

What can be done about it?

Do you know of any good websites or resources that could be used to help solve this challenge?



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Online challenges – what can be done? (Completed example)

What is the challenge?

People can say rude or unkind things online to others. Sometimes it's referred to as cyberbullying.

Who is responsible?

1. The people who post these things.
2. The parents/caregivers of the young people who think it's ok to do this sort of thing.
3. The schools if they haven't done enough to teach people about how to behave in the first place.

What can be done about it?

1. We need to educate students about online harassment and bullying and how hurtful it can be.
2. The site owners should have Terms of Service and be as good as possible about responding to reports of content that violates their Terms (an opportunity to find and talk about sites' Terms).
3. The websites should also make sure that it is easy to report a problem if there is something wrong.
4. Other users of the site should be better at reporting any problems.
5. There should be sessions/lessons for parents to show them how to do things online. Schools could do this sort of thing, and schools should get students to help with the teaching.
6. Schools and parents/caregivers should teach young people how to behave online, they do this for offline things and so they should do it for online as well.
7. Parents/caregivers and teachers shouldn't overreact if we tell them that there is a problem – if they do, we won't tell them again.

Do you know of any good websites or resources that could be used to help solve this challenge?

www.connectsafely.org
www.aplatformforgood.org
www.stopbullying.gov