



Private Today, Public Tomorrow

Essential Question

How can you respect the privacy of others online?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- consider the possible benefits and risks of sharing information online.
- recognize the importance of context in posting or viewing online images.
- understand what choices they need to make to protect the privacy of others online.

Materials and Preparation

- Copy the **The Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**, one for each student.

Key Vocabulary –

reputation: the general impression of a person held by others and the public

persist: to continue and endure

context: different factors that surround a piece of information that help determine its meaning

tag: to add a descriptive word, label, or phrase to a photo or video



introduction

Warm-up (10 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **persist** and **reputation**.

ASK:

Why do you think things posted online tend to persist, even when you prefer they didn't?

Students should understand that even if they “unpost” something, it can persist online because information can easily be reposted, copied, and passed around by others.

What kinds of things might be good for your reputation in the future if they are posted online now? What kinds of things might be harmful?

Sample responses:

Good for reputation

- Photos and videos of you doing activities for school and community
- Positive comments about you from others
- Cool things you created for school or for fun

Harmful to reputation

- Embarrassing or humiliating comments or photos
- Hints of drug or alcohol use
- References to illegal or bad behavior
- Personal information that you shared in confidence with someone
- Photos that were taken without your consent

TELL students that they will explore a situation in which information posted online had unintended consequences and damaged someone’s reputation.

teach 1

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words (15 minutes)

INVITE students to reflect on the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

ASK:

What do you think this saying means?

Students should consider that a complex idea can often be illustrated with a single image, and that context plays a role in how an image is interpreted.

ARRANGE students in groups of four or five, and distribute the **Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**, one for each student.

INSTRUCT students to read the “Drunken Pirate” article, either silently or aloud. The purpose of the article – about a young teacher in train-ing

whose career is affected by a photograph on a social networking site – is to encourage students to understand how oversharing information online might affect their privacy, and to grasp the importance of context around sharing things online.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **context** and **tag**. Explain that tagging can be done on many social networking sites without the permission of the person who is being tagged.

INSTRUCT students to discuss the following questions in their groups, with one group member writing down their responses.

ASK:

Do you think Millersville University was justified in disqualifying Stacy from earning her teaching degree because of her profile page? Why, or why not?

Encourage students to think about the question from different perspectives, such as that of Stacy, her friends, school officials, community members, or parents of Stacy’s students. Remind students that Stacy is an adult, and that for the purpose of this exercise, they should be less concerned about judging her behavior than about considering issues of online privacy.

How would the situation be different if the context of the photo were taken into account? For instance: What if the caption of the photo was not “Drunken Pirate,” but “Happy Halloween” or “My friend forced me to wear this pirate hat”? What if a post accompanying the photo said that it had been taken at a child’s birthday party and Stacy was drinking punch?

Students should consider that the context – including where a photo is placed and how it is labeled – affects how others perceive it.

What if Stacy’s friend Joe had posted the picture of Stacy without her knowing it, and tagged her with the “Drunken Pirate” caption? Does the fact that Joe posted the picture change the situation? Why or why not?

Students should realize that in this case, even though Joe would be responsible for posting the picture without Stacy’s permission, Stacy might still have to face negative consequences.

Does Joe have a responsibility to ask Stacy before he posts (and tags) a picture of her? Do other people, including strangers who come across the photo online, have the responsibility to check with Stacy before they tag or repost the photo? Why, or why not?

Students may say that it depends on the picture, but they should clearly recognize that pictures or tags that have any chance of being harmful should never be posted without the consent of the person in the photo. If they aren’t sure, they should always ask.

teach 2

Think Before You Post (10 minutes)

KEEP students in groups. Discuss the following questions;

ASK:

Do you ever post things online about your friends? Do you comment on or tag their posts or photos? How do you decide what is okay?

Students might say that they try not to post mean, embarrassing, or private things about their friends.

What if your own judgment about a post is different from a friend's? For example, imagine you've posted a photo of a group of friends. One friend immediately comments that she loves it, but another complains that he doesn't like the way he looks, and asks that you to take it down. You think everyone in the photo looks great. What do you do?

Students may suggest talking to the friend who doesn't like the photo, or choosing another photo of the group to post in its place.

INVITE students to brainstorm a list of questions that someone should ask him- or herself before posting anything about another person. Have them write these questions on paper or on the backs of their student handouts.

Sample responses:

- What am I posting, and where am I posting it?
- Who might see what I post?
- Might it be harmful, harmless, or something in between to the person?
- Do I have permission to tag people?
- Even if I don't think something is harmful, is it possible that my friend will?
- Do I know my friend's feelings about what he (or she) would want posted?

- Would I feel comfortable if someone posted this about me?
- What are the possible consequences of sharing this information about that person?
- How might the information affect the person's reputation?
- Could the information be offensive to some members of the online community?

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:

How can people's reputations be affected by what is posted about them online? What impact could this have on their future?

Anything we post online could persist for years to come. This might affect important parts of their future lives, such as attending schools or getting jobs. Remind students that they can help build each other's online reputations in a positive way, creating reputations that they like and are proud of.

What should you ask yourself before you post a photo, video, or other information about another person online?

Students should be able to identify questions from their decision tree.

How can you take responsibility for protecting the privacy and reputation of others?

Never post anything that might be harmful to someone else, and ask the person's permission before you post anything that might be private. Only post things that contribute to building a positive online reputation for someone – help them be proud of the things that are online about them.

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Directions

Read the following story and be prepared to discuss it in class. Please note that although the article references an old social platform, the behavior is still relevant on current social platforms.

College Sued Over “Drunken Pirate” Sanctions

Woman claims teaching degree denied because of single Instagram photo

(<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/crime/college-sued-over-drunken-pirate-sanctions>)

APRIL 26, 2014 — A Pennsylvania woman claims that her teaching career has been derailed by college administrators who unfairly disciplined her over a Instagram photo that shows her wearing a pirate hat and drinking from a plastic cup. In a federal lawsuit, Stacy Snyder charges that Millersville University brass accused her of promoting underage drinking after they discovered her Instagram photo, which was captioned “Drunken Pirate.” The picture from Snyder’s Instagram page (which she says was snapped at a costume party outside school hours) can be seen below.



In her complaint, Snyder, a 25-year-old single mother of two, says that Millersville officials discovered the image last May, while she was a senior working as a student-teacher at Conestoga Valley High School. A university official told her that the photo was “unprofessional” and could have offended her students if they accessed her Instagram page. At the time the “Drunken Pirate” photo was taken, Snyder was of legal age to drink, though her lawsuit notes that the photo “does not show the cup’s contents.”...

Despite good grades and solid performance evaluations, Snyder claims that school officials improperly denied her a bachelor of science in education degree and a teaching certificate. The university, Snyder added, instead granted her a bachelor of arts degree last May 13. Because the school refuses to confirm that she satisfactorily completed her student teaching requirements, Snyder claims that she has been unable to secure certification from Pennsylvania’s Department of Education. Snyder’s lawyer, Mark Voigt, told TSG (TheSmokingGun.com) that his client now works as a nanny. He added that school officials should actually be “celebrating” Snyder, a mother of two young children who returned to school to get a teaching degree.

