With Power Comes Responsibility

Essential Question
What characteristics make for a good digital citizen?

Lesson Overview
Students explore what it means to be responsible and respectful to their offline and online communities as a step towards learning about the characteristics of good digital citizens.

Students list the offline communities they feel responsible to through a whole-class brainstorming session. They then explore the online communities they feel responsible to by filling out, as a group, the Rings of Responsibility Student Handout. Finally, they make a word web to describe the characteristics of a good digital citizen.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to ...  
• consider their responsibilities to their offline communities.  
• reflect upon their responsibilities to their online communities.  
• assess how good digital citizens navigate the digital world responsibly and respectfully.

Materials and Preparation
• Copy the Rings of Responsibility Student Handout, one per group, three to six groups.
• Review suggested online tools: Spider Scribe (www.spiderscribe.net), Make Beliefs Comix (www.makebeliefscomix.com), Comic Life (purchase for Macs).

Family Resources
• Send home the Digital Life Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School).
introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

ASK:

What communities are you part of in your school, neighborhood, or city?

Sample responses:
• Band
• Soccer team
• School

What qualities let you know that such groups are communities?

Sample Responses:
• Many people take part in this group.
• We have a common goal.
• We are all supposed to follow the same rules and/or live up to similar expectations.

 teaches 1

Learn about Citizenship (10 minutes)

ENCOURAGE students to think about the kinds of rights and responsibilities that come with being a member or citizen of the communities they are a part of. Then ask them to reflect on the rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of our nation.

ASK:

What rights do you have as a citizen of the United States?

Sample responses:
• Voting
• Being elected to office
• Freedom of speech and other legal rights

EXPLAIN that some of the responsibilities of people who want to become U.S. citizens are that they must pledge and show loyalty to the United States, they must demonstrate basic English skills, and they must show knowledge of the U.S. government and Constitution, among other things.

DISCUSS how one can be a citizen of all kinds of communities, not just of our country.

ASK:

What do you think it means to be a good citizen or member of any of the following communities?

Sample responses:
• School – go to class, follow my class schedule, be respectful when my teacher and classmates are talking, follow my school's code of conduct
• City – keep parks clean, observe traffic rules, volunteer to help others in the community
• Nation – vote, pay taxes, treat others with respect regardless of their background


**teach 2**

**Introduce the Rings of Responsibility** * (10 minutes)

**EXPLAIN** that there are stated responsibilities about how to become a U.S. citizen, but that there are all kinds of responsibilities in life that are not stated. Tell students you are going to explore some of the everyday responsibilities that they have to themselves, to their friends and family, and to the community at large.

**CREATE** a large version of the “Rings of Responsibility” graphic (below) on the board. Explain that each ring represents a different person or group to which they have responsibilities. Introduce the rings:

- **SELF**: The center ring has to do with responsibilities they have to themselves, such as keeping themselves safe and healthy, and protecting their reputations.

- **FRIENDS AND FAMILY**: The middle ring stands for responsibilities they have to their friends and family, such as helping them move, attending their events, or just listening when they are having problems.

- **COMMUNITY**: The outer ring stands for responsibilities to the community, from following rules at school to picking up garbage in their neighborhoods.

**ASK:**

*What responsibilities do you have to the following person/people and what are they?*

- **Self**
- **Friends and family**
- **Community**

Sample responses:

**Self:**

- I protect myself if someone says mean things about me; I stay safe by walking on well-lit streets after dark.

**Friends and family:**

- I watch their track meets because they like the support; I help my mom with chores and taking care of my little sister.

**Community:**

- Band – Learn the music, listen to others (there would be no bass line if I weren’t there)
- Soccer team – Show good sportsmanship (avoid red cards), get to practice and games on time, improve my skills (the team counts on me to defend the goal).
Identity Online Responsibilities (15 minutes)

REVIEW with students that they have discussed the responsibilities they have to themselves, their friends and family, and their community in the offline world. Now they will discuss responsibilities in the online world.

DIVIDE students into three to six groups. (You want about five or six kids in each group.)

EXPLAIN that each group will be assigned to identify the responsibilities that they have online to: (1) self, (2) friends and family, or (3) online communities.

ASSIGN groups to identify responsibilities in one of these three “Rings of Responsibility.”

DISTRIBUTE one copy of the Rings of Responsibility Student Handout to each group, and then ask them to fill it out as a group. After students have filled out the chart, have them regroup for whole-class discussion.

RECORD some of the key responsibilities that they have discussed within the appropriate rings of the “Rings of Responsibility” graphic you have drawn on the board.

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 the three rings you should feel responsible to when participating in offline or online communities?**

Sample responses:
- Self
- Friends and family
- Community

**Envision the kind of communities you want to create. What are some qualities of these communities?**

Sample Responses:
- Community members are respectful to others.
- The community works towards a common goal.
- Community members are supposed to live up to similar expectations.

REVIEW with students the three “Rings of Responsibility”: self, friends and family, and community. Encourage students to think about what it means to follow rules that others have set for them when considering responsibility. Remind students that they are charged with being responsible for their own behavior. Encourage them to be respectful to others online, and that this respect is crucial to being a good digital citizen.
Extension Activity

Have students create short, three-frame comic strips about how good digital citizens can harness the power of
digital media to make the world a better place. Have students create comic strips freehand, with Make Beliefs
Comix (www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix, free online), or with Comic Life (Mac, must purchase) for any
of the following scenarios that stem from the lesson. Remind students of the Rings of Responsibility and the
goal of illustrating responsible behavior and positive outcomes within the comic strips. Suggest that they are a
digital superhero who has witnessed an act of poor digital citizenship. The cartoon should show the problem
and how the superhero helps resolve it. Possible scenarios: (1) a rumor gets out of hand online, (2) someone’s
embarrassing information goes public on the Internet, (3) someone cheats another person out of points in an
online game, (4) someone takes information for a paper that another student has posted on a class wiki.

At-Home Activity

Using students’ responses from the lesson, have them create a word web for the term “digital citizenship.”
They should write the term “digital citizenship” in the center of their word web. Next, they should surround the
term with the actions and responsibilities that they associate with it. Students can create their word web on
paper, or with a free tool such as Spider Scribe (www.spiderscribe.net).