



The Power of Words

Essential Question

What should you do when someone uses mean or scary language on the Internet?

Lesson Overview

Students consider that while they are enjoying their favorite websites they may encounter messages from other kids that can make them feel angry, hurt, sad, or fearful. They explore ways to handle cyberbullying and how to respond in the face of upsetting language online.

Students discuss all the ways they use technology for communication, put themselves in the shoes of children who are cyberbullied on a kids' game website, and explore both the similarities and differences between in-person versus online communication. Students then brainstorm ways to respond to cyberbullying.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

- empathize with those who have received mean and hurtful messages.
- judge what it means to cross the line from harmless to harmful communication online.
- generate solutions for dealing with cyberbullying.

Materials and Preparation

- Copy the **Words Can Hurt Student Handout**, one for every four students.
- Copy the **Talk and Take Action Student Handout**, one for each student.
- Colored pencils
- String (cut string the length of the classroom)

Family Resources

- Send home the **Cyberbullying Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School)**.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade 3: RI.1, RI.3, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.4, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.4, SL.6, L.3a, L.6

grade 4: RL.3, RL.10, RI.1, RI.3, RI.4, RI.7, RI.10, RF.4a, W.9b, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.4, SL.5, L.3a, L.6

grade 5: RL.3, RL.10, RI.1, RI.3, RI.4, RI.7, RI.10, RF.4a, W.9b, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.4, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

NETS-S: 2b, 5a, 5d

Key Vocabulary –

frustrated: irritated at not being able to do what you want

cyberbully (verb): using technology tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset someone else

ethics: ideas about how people should act and behave

introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

INVITE students to share all the ways they enjoy going online and using digital media, such as cell phones and the Internet.

ASK:

- *What are your favorite websites, if any?*
- *What are your favorite video games, if any?*
- *Who do you stay in touch with through cell phones and the Internet?*

Responses will vary.

ENCOURAGE students to share the positive feelings and experiences they have had with cell phones, the Internet, and other types of digital media.

teach 1

What's the Problem? (15 minutes)

ORGANIZE students into groups of four, and have each group pick a person to record their ideas.

DISTRIBUTE the **Words Can Hurt Student Handout**. Have the groups of students read the scenario about Rani and Aruna receiving mean messages through a children's game website.

HAVE each group answer the questions, and then have them share their responses with the class. Look for responses that show empathy for Rani and Aruna and acknowledge that the messages are mean and hurtful and should be stopped. Ask students to read the "A Matter of Ethics" section on the **Words Can Hurt Student Handout**.

INVITE students to share their own stories.

ASK:

Have you seen mean messages sent to you or others online? Tell us about it, but do not use real names.

Answers will vary.

DIVIDE students into pairs.

INVITE one partner to write the phrase "You're weird" on a piece of paper, and then hand it to their partner. Tell them that they just received this text.

ASK:

What are the reasons the person might have texted "You're weird"?

They're continuing an inside joke; the first person did something silly at an earlier time; a group of kids is teasing the kid; the person who sent the text really does think the person is weird but is afraid to say it to their face.

How did the partner feel who was called weird?

Possibly like the other person was kidding around, but maybe that the person was teasing or being hurtful.

TELL one person from each pair to say to the other person, “You’re weird,” with a smile on his or her face.

ASK:

Why might you feel differently if you could see the person?

People give non-verbal cues through facial expressions and body language.

teach 2

Crossing the Line (10 minutes)

PLACE the piece of string across the length of the classroom. Ask students to stand on one side of the line. Then ask them to imagine that they are online and somebody has sent them a message, which you will read to them. Tell the students to stay where they are if they think the message is okay; to cross over the line if they think the message is not okay; and to stand on the line if they think the message is in between.

READ each of these messages aloud and have students move accordingly:

- *You are an idiot.*
- *I’m having a party and you’re not invited.*
- *I like your new haircut.*
- *You are really ugly.*
- *Thanks for the advice. Next time would you mind telling me in person rather than by IM?*
- *Did you finish your homework?*
- *Why is it taking you so long to finish it?*
- *You are such a freak.*

REVIEW with students that kids like to go online and use cell phones to email, chat, watch videos, send messages, play games, and do homework. But sometimes the language can get mean or scary. Messages that make people feel badly cross the line. Sometimes that meanness is unintentional, but when people use tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset someone else over and over, that’s cyberbullying.

teach 3

Talk and Take Action (10 minutes)

HAVE students return to their seats.

DISCUSS with students how easy it is to feel angry or upset when somebody sends you a mean or scary message online. Explain that cyberbullies deliberately try to make you feel that way, just like real-life bullies deliberately try to make people feel bad. Discuss the following ideas about what they can do when faced with cyberbullying:

- *Cooling down can be a good first step when you receive a mean message online. Taking a deep breath, counting backwards from 10, or pausing to think about what you will do next can give you time to think of the BEST way to handle the situation.*

- *Finding help or telling a trusted adult or a friend can be a good way to take action. You shouldn't deal with the cyberbullying situation alone. The person you tell should be someone who wants to hear what you have to say, and will help you work on a solution. Adults can be especially good because they often have the power to influence the situation, or can give you advice about what to do.*
- *Ignoring the bully can be very effective. Bullies often like attention. When you deprive them of attention, they may lose interest.*
- *Whatever you do, remember to keep a copy of your communication with the bully. If you delete the communication, there is no proof of how the bully treated you if you need to show it to a trusted adult.*

DISTRIBUTE the **Talk and Take Action Student Handout** to each student. Encourage them to depict a cyberbullying scenario and a possible solution. They can use pencils and paper or go online and use the free tool Make Beliefs Comix (www.makebeliefscomix.com) to complete a comic strip.

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:

Why is it a bad idea to send mean or scary messages online?

Because they can make the person who gets them upset, angry, or scared.

Why might there be more misunderstandings between people when they send online messages as opposed to face-to-face discussion?

Online messages can be more confusing or scarier than face-to-face messages because there are no face-to-face cues to help you understand people's intentions.

What can kids do when they get cyberbullying messages?

They can (1) calm down and take a deep breath, (2) tell a friend or a trusted adult who can help develop a plan to handle the situation, (3) ignore the bully, (4) keep a copy of the communication with the bully.

Extension Activity

In small groups, have students make a cyberbully protection kit. The kit should contain a shield that they decorate with an anti-cyberbullying symbol and a scroll that lists things they could say to a cyberbully. The kit can be created with cardboard or paper and markers, or online with Kerpoof (www.kerpoof.com).

At-Home Activity

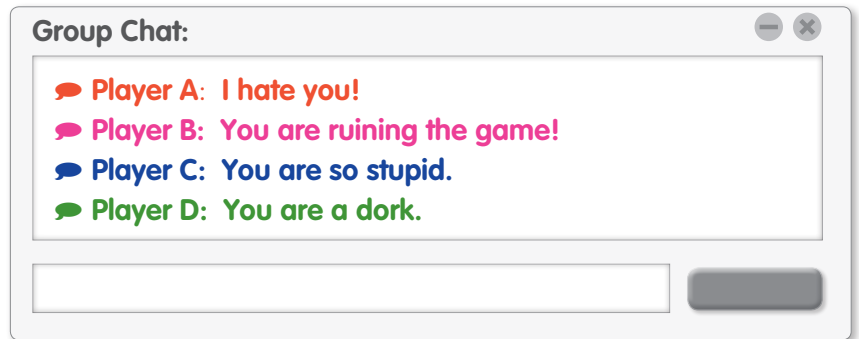
Encourage students to use the **Talk and Take Action Student Handout** as a model to create comic strips with family members about other cyberbullying situations. Students can use Make Beliefs Comix (www.makebeliefscomix.com), a free online tool. Students should create one frame that shows the cyberbullying scenario. The next frame should show what they might do when faced with this situation or message. The last frame should show a positive outcome of the situation, which might involve confiding in a trusted adult.

The Power of Words

Directions

Read the story below and then answer the questions that follow.

Rani and Aruna love a website that has games and chatting for kids. Their parents let them play on the site. Lately, though, Rani and Aruna have been receiving mean messages on the site, including:



1. How do you think Rani and Aruna feel when they read those messages?

Rani and Aruna feel _____

2. How would you feel if you received messages like these?

I would feel _____

3. Why do you think people send these kinds of message to people they don't know?

People send these kinds of messages because _____

A Matter of Ethics

There's an old saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

I think that this saying is TRUE/NOT TRUE (circle one) because

The Power of Words

Directions

Create a cartoon about a cyberbullying situation. Each frame should show a different part of the situation:

FRAME 1: Make a cartoon about something that a cyberbully might do or write online. Remember to use language appropriate for school.

FRAME 2: Show what you might do if you saw what the cyberbully has done or written.

FRAME 3: What might be a positive outcome, or result, of the situation?

<p>What might a cyberbully say or do?</p>	<p>What would you do in response?</p>
<p>What would a positive outcome be?</p>	

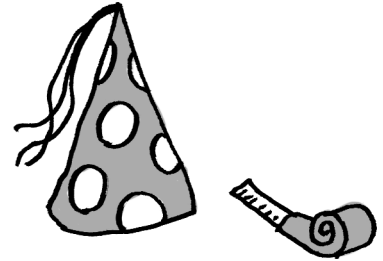
Use Common Sense!

- If someone is mean to you online, take a breather and ignore them. Save a copy of your conversation between you and the bully.
- If you, or someone you know, is cyberbullied, talk to a trusted adult – like a parent, family member, or teacher. Together, you can think of a plan for how to respond.

The Power of Words

1. Alicia receives a text message from her friend Ronald. The message says, "I am having a party. You are not invited." Circle the word that shows how Alicia might feel after she receives the message.

- a) hurt
- b) excited
- c) popular



2. Theo is having fun playing Dragons and Knights online. Then he sees a message from another player. It says, "You're ruining the game, stupid!" What should Theo do about the message? What shouldn't he do? Use the chart below to fill in the letters that go with each answer.

- a) Ignore the player who sent the mean message
- b) Write a message back that says, "You're so stupid, you're the one ruining the game"
- c) Pretend that he doesn't feel hurt by the message
- d) Save the message in case the other player sends Theo another mean message
- e) Tell an adult about the message
- f) Never play Dragons and Knights online again

THINGS THEO SHOULD DO	THINGS THEO SHOULD <u>NOT</u> DO

The Power of Words

3. Sometimes it's hard to know what a message online means when you read it. You may not know if a message is okay or hurtful because you can't hear how the person says it. Circle the category that shows how you think the message was meant. Do you think the message was meant to be okay, hurtful, or something in between?

Message: Good job, nerd!



Okay



In Between

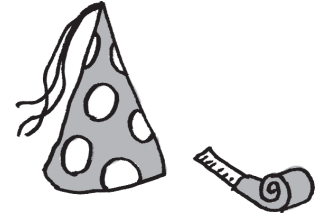


Hurtful

The Power of Words

1. Alicia receives a text message from her friend Ronald. The message says, "I am having a party. You are not invited." Circle the word that shows how Alicia might feel after she receives the message.

- a) hurt
- b) excited
- c) popular



Answer feedback

The correct answer is **a**. Alicia probably feels **hurt** by Ronald's message. Telling someone they aren't invited can hurt their feelings. Things that are hurtful in person are also hurtful online

2. Theo is having fun playing Dragons and Knights online. Then he sees a message from another player. It says, "You're ruining the game, stupid!" What should Theo do about the message? What shouldn't he do? Use the chart below to fill in the letters that go with each answer.

Answer feedback

THINGS THEO SHOULD DO	THINGS THEO SHOULD <u>NOT</u> DO
a) Ignore the player who sent the mean message	b) Write a message back that says, "You're so stupid, you're the one ruining the game"
d) Save the message in case the other player sends Theo another mean message	c) Pretend that he doesn't feel hurt by the message
e) Tell an adult about the message	f) Never play Dragons and Knights online again

The Power of Words

3. Sometimes it's hard to know what a message online means when you read it. You may not know if a message is okay or hurtful because you can't hear how the person says it. Circle the category that shows how you think the message was meant. Do you think the message was meant to be okay, hurtful, or something in between?

Message: Good job, nerd!



Okay



In Between



Hurtful

Answer feedback

Answers will vary. Sometimes it is hard to tell if a message online is meant to be hurtful or not when you can't see or hear how the message is said. Little clues like a smile, a frown, or a laugh that tell you about the meaning of the message are lost when all you see are the words on a screen.