PRIVACY AND DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS
College Bound

Essential Question: How can information you post on the Internet affect your future opportunities?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: Students learn that everything they or anyone else posts about them online becomes part of a public online presence known as a digital footprint. Using the **Admissions Packet Student Handout**, they view elements of two students' digital footprints and consider how the footprints might affect those students' admission to college. Students then discuss what kinds of information they would want included in their own digital footprints, and learn strategies for shaping a positive online presence.

objectives

Students will:

- Learn that they have a public presence online called a digital footprint

- Recognize that any information they post online can help or hurt their image and future opportunities, including their chances for college admission or employment

- Consider how to present an authentic and positive image of themselves online

Digital Ethics Focus: (Self) (Family and Friends) (Community)

Materials and Preparation

Materials

- **Admissions Packet Student Handout**
- **Admissions Packet Student Handout – Teacher Version**

Preparation

- Prepare a list of search results for a celebrity or other well-known person in a form that all students can see, perhaps on an interactive white board or overhead projector

- Copy the **Admissions Packet Student Handout**, one for every two to three students

Parent Resources

- Send home the **Protecting and Respecting Privacy Parent Tip Sheet**
- Send home the **Privacy Parent/Teacher Intro Video**

Differentiated Instruction

For students who think they will not apply to college, have them analyze Markus and Tommy's online profiles to choose who is the best one for a job in a local business that hires teens.

Key Vocabulary

- **Digital footprint:** All of the information about a person that can be found online

- **Admission:** To let in or to be given entrance

- **Candidate:** Someone seeking entrance to a school or placement in a job, usually competing with others for the position

teaching plans

Introduce

SHOW students the list of search results for a celebrity or a well-known person. Project results for all students to see. Discuss the fact that the search results reflect everything that can be found on the Internet about that person. It includes everything they have posted about themselves (websites, blogs, Facebook pages, etc.) as well as everything others have posted about them.

INVITE students to consider what their own lives might be like five years from now by creating two results from an imaginary online search. Results should contain a title, a date, and a short description of what is in the result. Project the following results as models for students:

Jonathan P. Garcia exhibit at The Art Institute of Chicago

March 4, 2016 ... A fresh new exhibit from photographer Jonathan Garcia. Garcia's work will move you, enlighten you, and educate you about the history of Chicago neighborhoods.

Jonathan P. Garcia – Web design workshop

April 15, 2016 ... Enroll in tech guru Jonathan Garcia's Web design and programming workshop for teens ages 14 to 18. Enrollees will design a virtual reality webpage.

Jonathan P. Garcia's Blog

July 30, 2016 ... I've got only two more months to go in my Peace Corps service, and it looks like we're going to finish the water-filtration project before I go home. Check out my latest pics.

When students are finished writing, they should trade and compare their search results with someone else's. Invite volunteers to share their results.

ASK *Based on what people wrote about, what types of headlines do people want associated with themselves?*
Sample responses:
- *News about achievements or talent areas (e.g., music, sports, computers)*
- *Praise about their work*
- *Personal milestones they want to share with everyone*
- *Activities that make the world a better place*

ASK *What types of headlines might reflect poorly on someone?*
Sample responses:
- *A record of someone breaking the law*
- *Rude or nasty comments about others in a public online forum*
- *Photos of the person drinking and partying*

ASK *Do you think you should judge someone solely based on what you find about them online? Why or why not?* (Students should recognize that someone's online presence might include things that were intended to be private, or inaccurate information posted by someone else. It could even include information about another person with the same name. Therefore, it may not give a complete or balanced picture of the person.)

SHARE with students that they will be exploring how information they post today could affect themselves and others in the future – for better and for worse. Point out that this online material may affect them as they apply to college or think about future jobs and opportunities. Encourage students to consider that they have the ability to shape their online profile so that it presents an image they can be proud of.

Teach 1: Review College Applications

TEACH the Key Vocabulary term **digital footprint**.

DISCUSS with students how the information in a digital footprint becomes public by being copied and passed on so that it can be searched and viewed by a large, invisible audience. Also discuss the fact that the information in a digital footprint is often permanently online, because it is archived in a variety of ways and passed on by others.

TEACH the Key Vocabulary terms **admission**, **applicant**, and **candidate**.

ARRANGE students in groups of two to three and distribute the **Admissions Packet Student Handout**, one for each group.

EXPLAIN to students they will be role-playing college admissions officers, the people who decide which candidates should be admitted to a college. Tell them that two high school seniors, Markus and Tommy, have applied for admission to college. Their applications include their grades, test scores, and a personal essay. The problem is that the college only has room for one of them. The admissions officers decide to gather information from each candidate's digital footprint to help make their decision.

(Note: Your students will likely have a variety of paths in their futures. You may wish to emphasize that many of the same factors that affect their college admissions would also apply to getting a job or getting into a training program.)

INSTRUCT students to work as a group to read and fill out their handouts.

Teach 2: Select a Candidate

INVITE a volunteer from each group to explain which applicant they chose to admit, and why. Refer to the **Admissions Packet Student Handout – Teacher Version** for guidance on leading the discussion.

ENCOURAGE students to further probe their choices by using these follow-up questions.

ASK *Why did you not choose the other candidate? Is there additional information about this candidate that could have made you want to choose him?*

Sample responses:

- *Markus did not get in because he did not seem that interesting. He also seemed a little unmotivated.* (Maybe it would make a difference if Markus had a stronger online presence that showed he was interested in things other than sports.)
- *We did not select Tommy because we thought he was fake or insincere.* (Maybe it would make a difference if you knew that the exchange between Tommy and his friend Maggie was a private joke. Maybe Maggie is also trying to get in to the same college as Tommy, and writes joke messages to make him seem insincere.)

ASK *Do you think the comments by JJ and Maggie had a positive or negative effect on their friends' chances for college? Do you think this is what they intended when they wrote the comments?* (Students should recognize that these comments revealed private information about Markus and Tommy, and also emphasized negative rather than positive qualities. You might ask students to comment on JJ and Maggie's motivations.)

ASK *Do you think this is a good way for a real admissions officer to make a final choice? Why or why not?* (Students should understand that while admissions officers, prospective employers, and the like sometimes do look at online profiles, this may not be the best or fairest way to assess someone. The material that appears online may not present a full or accurate picture of a person and of his or her personality and achievements.)

ASK *Do you think teens share too much information about themselves or about others online? Why or why not?* (Students will have differing opinions, but they should recognize the importance of carefully considering what they contribute to their digital footprints, and to the digital footprints of others.)

Wrap Up and Assess

Use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK *How would you describe the main reasons for your choice of Markus or Tommy? How do your reasons connect to what we learned about digital footprints?* (Students should be able to explain their choice and should recognize that their candidates' digital footprints provided the reasons for that choice.)

ASK H*ow is a digital footprint created? Why does the information in a digital footprint often become public, and why is it permanent?* (Students should know that a digital footprint is all the information online about a person either posted by that person or others. The information in it can become public because it can be searched, copied, and passed on so that it plays to a large invisible audience. It can be difficult or impossible to remove, and it therefore becomes a permanent part of their online image.)

ASK *What types of online information would help present the most positive image of you?* (Students should realize that their reputation may be enhanced by information on interests and activities, opinions, and material giving a consistent picture of oneself.)

ASK *What are some of the larger ethical implications of sharing information online about others?* (Guide students to reflect on how people can influene the digital footprints of others — for better or for worse — and how it is therefore the responsibility of a good digital citizen to be mindful of what they post about others.)

Extension Activity

Have students write a paragraph from a college counselor writing to the student about how the counselor views them after conducting a Web search on their name. The paragraph can discuss what information the counselor found about the student on the Web and how this information might reflect on that student as he or she begins to apply for college.

Homework

Have students analyze their own online presence. They can do this by searching on their own names and reviewing their profiles on the school website or social media sites. Revisit the lesson introduction, in which they imagined their future digital footprint, and ask them what they can do now to create a footprint they will be proud of. Encourage students to invite a parent or other family member to help them strategize about creating a positive online presence. Ask them to report back to the class on at least one change they made or decided to make.

Create a webpage about your future using free online software, such as Wix (http://www.wix.com).

Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students© 2007
(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

1. **Creativity and Innovation**
    d. identify trends and forecast possibilities

2. **Communication and Collaboration**
    a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
    d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

3. **Research and Information Literacy**
    b. locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media
    d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

4. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making**
    a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
    b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
    c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions

5. **Digital Citizenship**
    a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
    b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity
    c. demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning

---