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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Research Writing Rewired* by Dawn Reed and Troy Hicks. Students learn about digital citizenship and responsibilities related to posting work online in this lesson.

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Interestingly, Allison made the move to feature cultural groups. She examined not only American society at large with social media but also her school culture with a focus on academics and grades, as well as her own ethnic culture. In this way, she started brainstorming about various cultures and their influence on our lives. Another student, Amjid, shared his work with the class. It was clear he appreciated and respected his religious culture, as he joyfully shared images that reflected his Islamic culture, such as making a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Inquiry was naturally developing and being co-created through collaborations with peers.

Across the classroom, diverse backgrounds and experiences were highlighted as students appreciated hearing one another's stories. Through our shared Google folder, students visited one another's work, viewing images and representations of culture and commenting on the choices other students made for this same task. Students began to recognize that the work was both personal (i.e., each student could relate to it personally as culture is important to self, family, and community) and public (because the content that was represented often informs many of the things that happen in our society, communities, and cultures).

Extensions and Adaptations for the Preview Lesson

To introduce various thematic units, teachers can use different modes and media for engaging texts. When choosing a mentor text, it's important to think about whether or not students will find it accessible, as well as applicable and relevant. To adapt this lesson, consider using different introductory material or a different TED Talk or film. The text of focus could also be a song or image related to the topic. Several websites, including Edudemic, feature TED Talks for Classrooms.

LESSON 1. EXPLORING DIGITAL IDENTITIES

The purpose of this lesson is to help students

- Activate prior knowledge about digital citizenship
- Discuss factors impacting choices to post writing online
- Revisit and refine ideas about digital citizenship and responsibilities related to posting work online
- Introduce ideas related to questioning
- Explore the writing of a digital profile

Composing for Online Spaces

In Lesson 1, Dawn made a number of teaching moves related to prompting student reflection about publishing online and digital identity. To see the lesson, watch Video 1.1. Students in Dawn’s class had already explored the concept of digital citizenship throughout the school year, and it was also clear that they had learned about Internet safety in middle school. Earlier in the year, students had talked about the scary (though sometimes overblown) news reports of Internet predators and the importance of digital safety. They had also shared stories of ways in which people make inappropriate moves in digital spaces—moves that can have real implications for school and job opportunities. Consequently, this portion of our initial teaching happened relatively quickly, but other teachers may need to spend more time on this broad subject with their own students.

Some Considerations for Posting Work Online

When we teach from a rhetorical perspective, we focus on encouraging students to carefully consider their audience. This also means that students need to recognize that what they put online stays online and could follow them as writers, as content can stay associated with their name. This reality is an exciting one, but it also comes with certain responsibilities.

As teachers, we need to consider that if students post content online that contains errors or immature viewpoints, it could possibly jeopardize some aspects of their future college and career goals. There are times when people evaluate others without knowing the context, especially in a digital space.

To honor our students, we need to think about giving them choices—not just because the publishing medium is digital, but also to help them own their work. Specifically, we need to address the role of digital safety head on and allow students and their parents/guardians to make choices about when and what to post.

We contend that, at least in our digital class space, thoughtful learning around the role of digital citizenship can happen even if a student makes a mistake. Supporting students in these situations, as well as setting them up for success with their digital identity, is important. We also acknowledge that if we are teaching digital literacy skills, we need to do so in digital spaces and invite students to participate in real digital conversations.

In Lesson 1, we asked students to write about how they make choices in what they post online and their understanding of a digital identity. Students quickly came up with answers and jotted them on our wiki discussion forum. General responses noted the importance of keeping audience in mind and the need to think twice before posting. For instance,

watch it here



Video 1.1

<http://resources.corwin.com/writingrewired>

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

one student said, “Before you post—think about how you sound or how much information you post. Even if it is not a finished piece, you still need to think before posting.” Students described digital identity, noting, “Who you are—everything you post online—helps show who you are. How you portray yourself across the Internet (what you post, pictures, what you say)—this characterizes you for those who don’t know you.” Students further mentioned that digital identity is important for college and jobs and can be very positive.

Additionally, students mentioned that they saw publishing work online as a valuable way to get feedback on their writing, but that this opportunity required them to be open to criticism too. In this way, students embraced writing online for the purpose of sharing process work and also final published work. They understood that they had to be careful in their thinking because an audience would be present in the digital space and that, when they post online, they are leaving behind their digital footprint.

Creating an Online Profile

This lesson intentionally placed the development of a profile with the conversation about digital citizenship, digital identity, and digital footprints. In some educational settings, students are positioned to avoid social networks for their own safety. However, we contend that they will need to operate within these spaces for their education and careers. Networking for many jobs includes using social media resources for the purpose of gaining a job (e.g., through LinkedIn), demonstrating credibility of skills, and sharing resources and learning collaboratively. When a student told Dawn that she does not like computers, Dawn replied, “If you want to operate in this world, whether or not you *like* computers is less important than *how and when you use them.*”

The Internet is full of people trying on different personas and identities in various spaces, and students need to recognize different purposes for online spaces. As such, the development of their academic profile is an important one. To create an effective profile, students must learn how to identify their audience and consider how they might be perceived in a digital space. For this lesson, students wrote about themselves for an academic audience, and to support their work with inquiry, part of this lesson was to develop five “self” and “world” questions; selected questions developed by various students are shown in Table 1.1.

Of course, looking at these initial questions, any middle or high school teacher (or parent of a teen) can understand why students are asking these types of questions. Taken out of context, they could seem trite, or cliché.

Table 1.1 Student “Self” and “World” Questions

Examples of “Self” Questions for Student Profiles	Examples of “World” Questions for Student Profiles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What job am I going to get? • Are there some aspects of my culture that I don’t know about? • Will I ever get married/have kids? • What would be a great new hobby for me? • How do others perceive me? • Where are my strengths? • Is my life already planned out for me? • Am I “normal”? • Am I capable of making a significant mark on the world? • What most surprises others about me? • What one sentence best describes me? • What will I do when I grow up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the universe created? • Will there ever be a way to get rid of pollution? • When will our world end? • Are humans inherently flawed? • How do I know “reality” isn’t just some elaborate dream? • What happens when we die? • How large is the universe? Is there intelligent life out there? • How much about the universe do we really know? • Will all the nations on Earth ever get along? • What does the future hold? • Will humans ever leave Earth?

As we designed an inquiry-based unit, we wanted to honor and understand these pressing questions in our students’ lives while, eventually, pushing them to ask more critical, specific questions about their own identity and the broader influences of culture.

Extensions and Adaptations for Lesson 1

There are a variety of existing curricular materials available to help teachers develop conversations about digital citizenship. Resources that we trust are from Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org), the Digital ID project (<http://digital-id.wikispaces.com>), and Digital Citizenship (www.digitalcitizenship.net). Each site offers activities that can be taught in one class period or as an entire unit. We encourage you to visit these sites and adapt the lessons as needed for your own students.

HAND OUT

Lesson 1. Exploring Digital Identities

Digital identities include how we present ourselves and interact in digital spaces. Our digital footprints also speak to this identity as we leave tracks that give information about ourselves in online spaces. How will you craft your digital identity? How does what we leave behind in our footprints have implications for our futures? How will you make purposeful decisions as you craft your digital identity?

Activity 1: Writing, Reflecting, and Discussion

Writing time:

- As a critical thinker and writer, what do you need to consider when writing in an online space?
- What value is there in sharing ideas that are not “final draft” quality in an online space?
- What do you need to consider when posting ideas that are final polished pieces of writing?
- What does it mean to have a digital identity?
- What is your identity in a public online space? How will you participate in online academic communities?

Share responses: Pair share, class share

Class discussion: What do we believe about digital citizenship and safe digital identities?

Activity 2: Brainstorming Ideas for Your Profile

We will be joining a social network of students whose academic experience includes engaging in online discussion with students across the nation. Part of joining this community includes the opportunity to develop your own profile.

You may make an avatar for your profile picture. You can also add to your profile to share information about yourself. Your first task is to compose your profile information.

For your profile, you can be as simple as stating your grade in school, an interest or two, or recent books you have read. You can also develop this further if you like.

You do need to write five “self” and five “world” questions to think about inquiry questions, and you may also use them in your profile. See <http://youthvoices.net/questions> for a guide to writing your questions.

In our next lesson, we will review examples and work on revision.



Available for download at <http://resources.corwin.com/writingrewired>

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