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Digital Reputation:
How to protect and manage your online reputation

Resources for Educators

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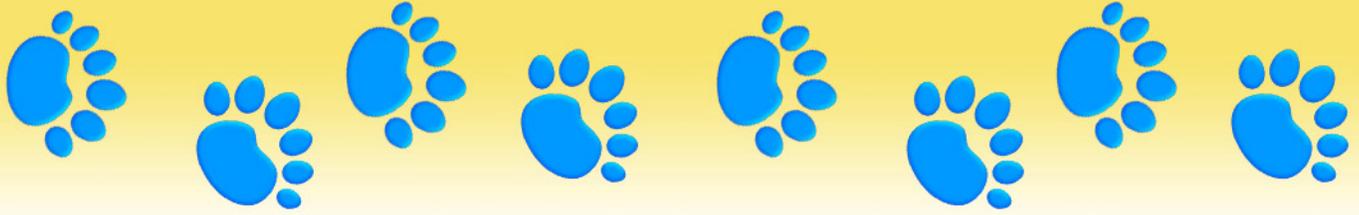
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Menu:

RESOURCE GUIDE

Digital Reputation and Online Reputation Management

This educational resource is a product of the Internet Keep Safe Coalition (IKSC) and Educational Technology Policy, Research and Outreach (ETPRO).

Questions to consider:

Are your students aware of their digital reputation?
Do they understand how to positively craft their digital image?
Do they understand how to manage their online reputation?
Do they know who is interested in their digital footprints?
Do they understand the short term/long term impacts from digital reputation messaging?
Do your students understand how their messaging affects how others view them?

Digital Reputation and *Online Identity Management* are important components of digital literacy. Today most individuals' lives are being crafted, digitized, collected, recorded, archived and made searchable. This resource guide provides information to help educators lead students to better understand the benefits of presenting a positive online image (as well as the potential consequences of a negative image) and the importance and steps to monitor one's online reputation.

What are Digital Reputation and Online Reputation Management?

- *Digital Reputation:* The online image you present about yourself through all digital media means: Blogs, SNS, websites, emails, twitter, cell phones etc.

- *Online Reputation Management:* Crafting, protecting, and maintaining/monitoring an online image about yourself that provides a positive view regarding your overall character, and gives you an advantage and competitive edge when seen or judged by other people.

Why is it important to us as educators/school counselors/teachers?

The educational system helps promote digital literacy for youth. Understanding how to craft, protect, and maintain/monitor a positive online image is a significant component of digital literacy. Sharing critical information proactively is essential—before negative events and

consequences occur. Part of what school does is prepare students for their future: whether vocational, workforce, or continuing education. Often it is difficult for youth to think through long-term implications of their actions. Positively crafted online content can help students share their interests, community involvement, and work ethics in a creative manner and can help with scholarship applications, college admissions, externships/internships and

employment opportunities. However, just as positive messages can be advantageous, negative messages can bring about dire consequences. While promoting themselves through digital media can be a social outlet, students need to know where they should draw the line. What gets posted or sent online can impact their future employment, college admissions, social, family/extended family, and peer interactions. And sexting can potentially have long-term criminal implications.

Online Reputation Management and Monitoring (ORM) have been used by industry, businesses, politicians, and celebrities for years. Indeed, lacking an online digital presence places an individual or organization at a competitive disadvantage. The importance of reputation management cannot be emphasized enough. Negative digital content have caused numerous entities to suffer disgrace and lose income overnight: sport figures have lost million-dollar endorsements, political figures have been forced to leave office, and Miss America candidates have lost their crowns.

Thompson[1] shares, "Google is not a search engine. Google is a reputation-management system. Online, your rep is quantifiable, findable, and totally unavoidable. In other words, radical transparency is a double-edged sword, but once you know the new rules, you can use it to control your image in ways you never could before." There's an old saying that states: "Perception is reality." Regardless of your occupation, from high school student to CEO, your brand is being created for you online, and is the product of social networking sites and Internet searches. It is imperative that we give students the knowledge to manage their online reputations.

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[1] Thompson, C. (2007). *The See-Through CEO*. WIRED Magazine. 15.4. March 2007.

What we know about our footprints.

% of Internet users who say the following is available about them online:	
Home address	35
Company or employer	35
Email address	32
Home phone number	30
Things you've written that have your name on it	24
Photo of you	23
Groups or organizations you belong to	23
Political party or affiliation	11
Cell phone number	6
Video of you	2

SOURCE: Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008)

Who/What do people look for most online?

% of Internet users who say they have searched for information about the following groups:	
Someone from your past or someone you have lost touch with	36
Friends	26
Family members	23
Co-workers, professional colleagues, or business competitors	19
Neighbors or people in your community	17
Someone you just met or someone you were about to meet	12
Someone you are thinking about hiring or working with	11
Someone you are dating or in a relationship with	9
Yes to at least one of the above	53

SOURCE: Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008)

Other Key Findings from the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008):

- Just 3% of self-searchers say they routinely check their "online reputation" and 74% have checked up on their digital footprints only once or twice, and

- One in ten Internet users have a job that requires them to self-promote or market their name online.

With which online technologies does this happen?

- Cell phones — increasing in leaps and bounds,

- SNS-Facebook, MySpace, etc.,

- Websites,

- Blogs,

- Instant messaging/chat rooms,

- YouTube,

- Twitter, or

- Flicker.

How can students create positive online images?

- Network — use online communication and tools to take advantage of people you know, including teachers, coaches, and employers.

- E-portfolios — to share your creativity and interest for college admissions and scholarships.

- Engage in community action groups.

- Understand requirements of colleges and jobs.

- Share your expertise and passions.

- Share your skills, knowledge, and creativity for employment and internships.

What negative consequences can occur?

Identity Management, Sexting, and Social Websites in the News

- A 14 year-old girl from New Jersey was charged with child pornography after police found 30 pictures of her on MySpace.

- In Cincinnati, an 18 year-old high school student sent nude photographs of herself to her boyfriend. When she and her boyfriend broke up, he forwarded the photographs to other high school girls. After being repeatedly harassed and called a variety of degrading names, she hanged herself.

- Across the country, teenagers as young as 13 are being charged with child pornography for sexting. Sexting, sending sexual messages or photos through the use of cell phones, emails, or instant messages, is considered a crime. Juveniles should be aware that they can be criminally prosecuted and that, if convicted, they could be listed as a registered sex offender for sexting.

- One student was changing her clothing in a bathroom when several boys at the party threw the door open and took pictures of her. The boys sent the photograph to other students on campus.

- In Massachusetts, a 13 year-old boy taped himself having sex with a 14 year-old girl and then sent the video to other students.

- An 18 year-old Florida student sent a naked photo of his 16 year-old girlfriend, a photo she had taken and sent him, to dozens of her friends and family after an argument. The couple had dated for almost 2½ years. The student was arrested and charged with sending child pornography. He was sentenced to five years probation and required by law to register as a sex offender.

- An Ohio teaching aide was arrested and jailed after pictures of her holding a Smirnoff bottle alongside three cheerleaders surfaced on Facebook.

Survey Statistics: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (1300 teens)

- 71 percent of teen girls and 67 percent of teen boys who have sent/posted sexually suggestive content say they have sent it to a boyfriend/girlfriend.

- 21 percent of teen girls and 39 percent of teen boys say they have sent such content to someone they wanted to hook up with or to date.

- 51 percent of teen girls say pressure from a guy is a reason they send sexy messages or images. Only 18 percent of teen boys cite pressure from female counterparts as a reason.

- 1 in 5 teens say they've sexted even though the majority know it could be a crime.

Jobs, Admissions, Scholarship Examples

- Teens need to be mindful that guidance counselors, potential employers, and scholarship and college admission boards may check for positive or derogatory information available on social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace. Recently, a teen was fired by her employer for writing a comment that described her job as being boring—even though the employer's name was not mentioned.[2]

- As high school students flock to social networking sites, campus police are scanning their Facebook and MySpace pages for tips to help break up fights, monitor gangs, and thwart crime in what amounts to a new cyberbeat.[3]

- A 25 year-old student was fired from a student teaching program because of a photograph that was found on a social networking site that portrayed her as a "drunken pirate." The university she was attending denied her a degree in education.

- Student athletes at Loyola University of Chicago have been banned from using Facebook and threatened with the loss of their scholarships if they do.

- A University of Massachusetts study found that of the 453 college admissions departments they surveyed, 26% research search engines and 21% check out social networking Websites for information about potential students.

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[2] Charles, V. (2008). *Social networking sites: The cost of careless self-expression*. Portland Motherhood Examiner.

[3] Birnbaum, M. (2008). *The Profile Police: Campus officers cruise Facebook, MySpace for clues to school-related crimes, to some students' chagrin*. The Washington Post. April 6, 2009; Page A01.

Keys to Shaping a Positive Online Image

- **Be selective about what you put online** - You should post only information that you are comfortable with others seeing and knowing. Don't post anything to your site that would be morally or ethically questionable. The digital footprints you leave should lead to a positive image that you create and control.

- **Posting is permanent -** Once you post to the Internet it can be copied, saved, and used by others. You should think before you post anything online.

- **Private is never private** - There are ways to get around the privacy settings on your social networking site. Post only items you wouldn't mind your family, friends, employers, colleges, or the police seeing.

- **Monitor regularly -** Even if you control what you post online, others can post information about you. Perform regular online searches of your name to view any new information that has been posted about you. Ask that any photos of you that could be seen as unflattering be removed, and watch how your friends use your name when they add you to their sites.

- **Get help -** If you find negative words, photographs, audio, or video about yourself, get help to try to have the content removed. Tell a trusted adult, the Web service provider, or a company that specializes in online reputation management.

Areas of Caution

- Talk of violence, crime, or intent to harm others

- Links to inappropriate sites

- References to drugs and alcohol consumption

- Pornographic, suggestive, or risqué images or videos

- Inappropriate language

- Derogatory or racist comments

Know Your Story Line

In addition, to creating a positive message and image, students need to manage or monitor their online reputation.

- Search well and often:
    - Google your name and nickname,
    - Go deeper than the top layer, and
    - Use additional search engines.
- Use free online tools to alert you:
    - *Google Alerts*,
    - *Technorati (blogs),*
    - *Board Tracker (forums),*
    - *Comments*, and
    - *MonitorThis*

LESSON PLAN

Digital Reputation and Online Reputation Management (Grades 5-12)

Activity
- Students think critically about the information they post online about themselves. They evaluate the text, images, audio, and video of a hypothetical student to critique the online image the student has created. Students will then re-craft the hypothetical student's online image using a checklist to ensure the information is legal, non-offensive, reflects a positive image, and protects the student's privacy.

Objectives
- Define digital footprints, online reputation, and online reputation management.
- Evaluate Web content (i.e., text, images, audio, and video) linked to an individual online to determine the potential effect on that individual's reputation.
- Create a positive online reputation.

International Society for Technology in Education:
2007 National Technology Standards for Students.
1. **Creativity and Innovation**
    b. Students create original works as a means of personal or group expression.
2. **Communication and Collaboration**
    b. Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.
    d. Contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems.
4. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making**
    c. Collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.
    d. Use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions.
5. **Digital Citizenship**
    a. Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.
    d. Exhibit leadership for digital citizenship.

Materials
- Checklist
- Student Profile of Hypothetical Students

Introduction
- Ask students to describe what they have seen online posted by students. Ask the students not to name names. List these items on the chalk or white board.
- Discuss the list and the reputations that are being created.
- Define online reputations, digital footprints, and online reputation management.
  - **Digital Footprints:** Text, images, audio, or video on the Internet that is posted by you or by anyone else about you.
  - **Online Reputation:** Any text, image, audio, or video posted to the Internet that helps people make judgments about you. This content could be posted by you or by anyone else.
  - **Online Reputation Management:** Thoughtful posting and monitoring of information on the Internet about yourself to create a positive image.
- Ask students why this might be important to:
  - College admissions,
  - Employment,
  - Safety,
  - Privacy,
  - Friendships, or
  - Police.

Teacher Activity
- Students will be assigned to groups of four and assigned one of four roles:
  - Teacher,
  - Friend,
  - Employer, or
  - Police.
- Review Checklist. Students will be given a hypothetical student's profile to evaluate for content that is:
  - Offensive,
  - Negative,
  - Illegal, or
  - Too revealing of privacy information.

Activity 1
- Distribute the profiles of hypothetical students and the checklist.

- Students will work in their groups and evaluate the content of the profile sheets for information that they feel should be removed or changed.
- After the students have evaluated the content, conduct a full group discussion about the types of content and reputation that was created.

Activity 2
- Ask the students to use the revised profile content of the student to craft a new positive profile.
- Conduct a full group discussion to discuss the new profiles. Discuss the types of sites that the student could use to extend their new positive profile.

Concluding the discussion
- Lead a discussion about the type of information posted to the Internet that creates a positive and safe online reputation.
- Challenge your students to evaluate their own online reputation on a regular basis.

Digital Footprint Checklist

Words to Know:
- ☺ **Digital Footprints**
  Text, images, audio, or video on the Internet that is posted by you – or by anyone else about you.

- ☺ **Online Reputation**
  Any text, image, audio, or video posted to the Internet that helps people make judgments about you. This content could be posted by you or by anyone else.

- ☺ **Online Reputation Management**
  Thoughtful posting and monitoring of information on the Internet about yourself to create a positive image.

What you can do:
Evaluate your Digital Footprints for content that is:
- ☺ **Offensive,**
- ☺ **Negative,**
- ☺ **Illegal, or**
- ☺ **Too revealing of private information.**

Questions to think about when looking at your digital footprints:
- ☺ **Would you want a trusted adult, employer, sports recruiter, or college admissions officer to see your digital footprints?**
- ☺ **Have you posted anything that could hurt another person's feelings or reputation?**
- ☺ **Do you have music files or movies on your site? Were they legally obtained? Do they portray you in a positive light?**
- ☺ **Have you posted information that could help someone find you in real life?**

Checklist for a creating a great online reputation:
- ☺ **I have pictures that show I would be a good employee/student/team member/citizen.**
- ☺ **I have posted only nice comments.**
- ☺ **I have music and video that is not copyrighted on my site.**
- ☺ **I have included only my name and email address on my site.**
- ☺ **I participate in online discussions and Interest sites in a positive manner.**

Here are some details about Amanda that were not found online.

How does this compare to her *www.facespace.edu* page?

Sports: Soccer (indoor and outdoor), softball

Grade Point Average: 3.53

Current Job: Server in the restaurant at the retirement home

Hobbies: Soccer, jewelry making

Extra Curricular: Band (clarinet), drama club, soccer, softball

Travel: None

Future Plans: To get a soccer scholarship to Outland University. Amanda wants to become a physical therapist to work with the elderly.

www.FaceSpace.edu: *A Place to Connect*

Amanda Smith
Girl
15 years old
1111 Real Street
Outland, NH 33333
(555) 555-5555
shortshorts@email.ccc

Amanda's Stats

Status: Boyfriend!!!!!!
Birthday: September 12, 1995
Kids: hahahaha
Schools: Outland High School

Amanda's Favorites

Food: fries
Movie: anything with chad!!!
Music: anything that rox
and is free

Amanda's Random Thoughts:

BEST DAY EVER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! no school, drinking beer, and kissing!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I HATE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! homework, guys who don't buy me stuff, diet soda, and Tamara Jones – you know what you did!

BFF: Kara – don't forget! if my mom calls, I am at your house! lol
i want to have 1000 friends by 2010!!!!!

Amanda's Friends

Kara Springfield

Amber Lee

Chantal Bloom

Talk to me!

when are we going shopping again [Posted 1-15-09 by Kara Springfield]
yeah. b4 the weekend? maybe 2morrow? [Posted 1-15-09 by Amber Lee]
gotta geta ride [Posted 1-15-09 by Amber Smith]
yeah [Posted 1-15-09 by Kara Springfield]
yeah [Posted 1-15-09 by Amber Lee]
carlee!!!! if u c this u are 2 fat! [Posted 12-03-08 by Amber Smith]

Brandee Arbor

Here are some details about Brandee that were not found online.

How does this compare to her *www.facespace.edu* page?

Sports: Basketball, volleyball, soccer, lacrosse

Grade Point Average: 2.53

Current Job: Unemployed but wants to work for parks and recreation in the girl's sports program.

Hobbies: sports, video games, music

Extra Curricular: Basketball, volleyball, soccer, lacrosse, local beach clean up effort

Travel: Local states for tournaments

Future Plans: Eventually, college

www.FaceSpace.edu: *A Place to Connect*

Brandee Arbor
Girl
15 years old
1111 Real Street
Outland, NH 33333
(555) 555-5555
shortshorts@email.ccc

Brandee's Stats

**Status: testing out as many
          guys as I can!**
Birthday: May 1, 1995
Kids:
Schools: Outland High School

Brandee's Random Thoughts:

DO ANYTHING TO WIN! just make sure the refs aren't watching…lol

girl thunder rules!!! cheerleaders are losers!

Amanda's Favorites

Food: Diet Soda
Movie: High School Hot Guys
**Music: anything that rox
          and is free**

Amanda's Friends

Kara
Springfield

Amber
Lee

Chantal
Bloom

Talk to me!

chantal… u drink 2 much lol [Posted 1-15-09 by Kara Springfield]

at least i don't hurl [Posted 1-15-09 by Chantal Bloom]

lets do it again… b4 the weekend? maybe 2morrow? [Posted 1-15-09 by Amber Lee]

carlee!!!! if u c this u are 2 fat! [Posted 12-03-08 by Amber Smith]

George Kenright

Here are some details about George that were not found online.

How does this compare to his *www.facespace.edu* page?

Sports: None

Grade Point Average: 2.89

Current Job: Sales Floor Staff in Department Store Camera Department

Hobbies: Photography

Extra Curricular: Audio/Video Staff, Yearbook

Travel: Boston, Baltimore, New York

Future Plans: To go to Outland Photographic Journalism College and work for a large publication like Time magazine or National Geographic.

www.FaceSpace.edu: *A Place to Connect*

George Kenright
Guy
16 years old
1111 Real Street
Outland, NH 33333
(555) 555-5555
greatkisser@email.ccc

George's Stats

Status: gotta girlfriend
Birthday: July 18, 1995
Kids: none
Schools: Outland High School

George's Random Thoughts

Goals…..Outland Photographic Journalism College 2015!!

Time Magazine or National Geographic 2020!!!

Bye Bye Boring Retail and Jeff --- you loser manager!

first one with a fake ID buys the beer!

Sarah –thanks for doing my homework for me!

George's Favorites

Food: Diet Soda
Movie: High School Hot Guys
Music: anything that rox
**   and is free**

George's Friends

Frank
Ariana

David
Clipper

James
Hoops

Talk to me!

dude! when you gonna get me a copy of that CD? [Posted 1-15-09 by Frank Ariana]

yeah!!! I want that too. b4 the weekend? maybe 2morrow? [Posted 1-15-09 by David Clipper]

get it off the internet, like i did…rofl [Posted 1-15-09 by George Kenright]

yeah! you rox! [Posted 1-15-09 by David Clipper]

O.o [Posted 1-15-09 by James Hoops]

PARENT RESOURCES

Digital Reputation and Online Reputation Management

- *Digital Reputation:* The online image you present about yourself through all digital media means: Blogs, SNS, websites, emails, twitter, cell phones etc.

- *Online Reputation Management:* Crafting, protecting and maintaining/monitoring an online image about yourself that gives you a "competitive" edge regarding your overall character as seen or judged by other people.

Create Positive Online Images

- Network –use online communication and tools to take advantage of people you know (including teachers, coaches, employers)

- E-portfolios-to share your creatively and interest for college admissions, scholarships

- Engage in community action groups

- Understand requirements of colleges and jobs

- Share your expertise and passions

- Share your skills, knowledge and creativity for employment and internships

Keys to Shaping a Positive Online Image

- **Be selective about what you put online -** You should post only information that you are comfortable with others seeing and knowing. Don't post anything to your site that would be morally or ethically questionable. The digital footprints you leave should lead to a positive image that you create and control.

- **Posting is Permanent -** Once you post to the Internet it can be copied, saved, and used by others. You should think before you post anything online.

- **Private is never private -** There are ways to get around the privacy settings on your social networking site. Post only items you wouldn't mind your family, friends, employers, colleges, or the police seeing.

- **Monitor Regularly -** Even if you control what you post online, others can post information about you. Perform regular online searches of your name to view any new information that been posted about you. Ask that any photos of you that could be seen as unflattering be removed, and watch how your friends use your name when they add you to their site.

- **Get Help -** If you find negative words, photographs, audio, or video about yourself, get help to try to have it removed. Tell a trusted adult, the web service provider, or a company that specializes in online reputation management.

Tools to Help you Monitor and Manage Your Online Reputation

In addition, to creating a positive message and image, students need to manage or monitor their online reputation

- **Search well and often**
    - Google your name, nickname
    - Go more than the top layer deep
    - Use additional search engines

- **Use free online tools to alert you**
    - *Google Alerts*
    - *Technorati (blogs)*
    - *Board Tracker (forums)*
    - *Comments*
    - *MonitorThis*

STUDENT RESOURCES

Tips to Protect and Manage Your Online Reputation

What is a digital footprint?

Words, photographs, audio, or video that can be tracked back to you by an Internet search.

Who is interested in your digital footprint?

- Family and Friends
- Employers
- Colleges
- Police

Watch your step!

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