

## Designing a Positive Online Community

This lesson is always a big hit with kids because it lets them try their hand at creating an app, website, or game of their own (on paper at least!). Since many young people dream of becoming an app, web, or game designer one day, they love using their imaginations for this activity. Plus, this lesson lets them apply what they've learned about "good citizenship" thus far as they consider how to foster positive behavior in the communities they create.

Key Standards—Common Core ELA, 5th: W.5, W.5.2, W.5.2.a, W.5.4, W.5.5, W.5.10, SL.5, SL.5.1, SL.5.1.a, SL.5.1.b, SL.5.1.c. 6th: W.6, W.6.2, W.6.2.a, W.6.4, W.6.5, W.6.10, SL.6, SL.6.1, SL.6.1.a, SL.6.1.b, SL.6.1.c, L.6, L.6.6. ISTE: 2b, 3d, 6a, 7c CASEL: 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f.

## Learning Objectives

Youth will...

- Understand what a "digital citizen" is.
- Consider how to build a positive online community.
- Use critical thinking skills to design an app, site, or game.



## Introducing The Lesson

Set-up this lesson by reviewing what your children have learned about citizenship so far. Watch this video together: <https://youtu.be/NOpQEa5zUZU>. It overviews citizenship today, and introduces the term: "digital citizenship."

## The Lesson

1. Explain that just as we are citizens of cities, states, and countries, whenever we go online we automatically become citizens of the digital world too. Introduce your children to the following terms:

**DIGITAL CITIZEN: A member of the digital world.**

**DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: The safe and responsible use of digital tools.**

2. Tell your children that you are going to challenge them to think of ways to encourage digital citizens to act kindly and respectfully towards one another online. This is a challenge that many social media sites, gaming platforms, and other online communities struggle with daily.

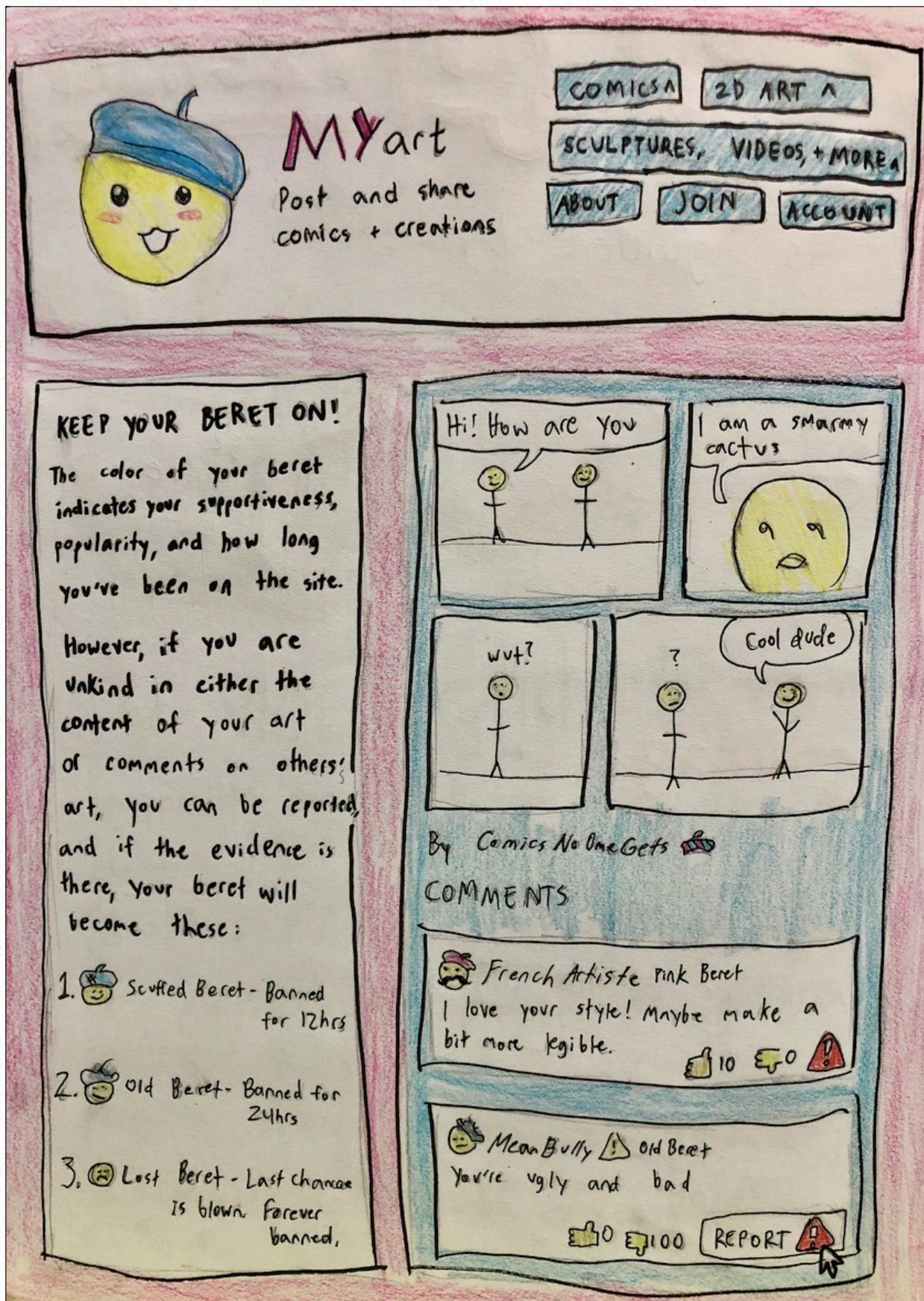
## The Lesson, continued

3. **Brainstorm.** Spend a few minutes brainstorming with your children. Ask: *If you could create any kind of new online community what would you create? Would it be an app? A website? A game? What would users do on your platform? What guidelines would you establish to ensure that users acted kindly and respectfully towards one another?* Lead your children to think about all the possible ways there are to promote positive behavior online. Inspire them by sharing these real-world examples of online communities that foster good citizenship:

- Natalie Hampton, 16, wanted to create a more welcoming community in her high school cafeteria, so she created the [Sit With Us](#) app. This app helps students find someone to sit with in their own school lunchrooms so they never have to eat alone. By letting students communicate privately to set up safe tables where they can eat in the company of others, Natalie’s app helps students avoid the humiliation of eating alone. She created the app because she was the target of bullying and often had to eat by herself.
  - The popular multi-player game League of Legends has an “Honor System” that allows players to give others props for great teamwork, friendliness, leadership, or being a principled opponent. Players get rewarded for the honors they receive.
  - Another video game, Overwatch, has a system that warns players when they are acting abusively towards their teammates in chat. They are told they need to improve their behavior or suffer the consequences. Overwatch also allows players to endorse others for sportsmanship, being a good teammate, and a good leader. Receiving these endorsements helps a player level up.
4. **Activity.** Tell your children it’s their turn to create a positive online community (on paper), after all even Facebook was designed in a college dorm room! Ask them to come up with an idea for **an app, website, or game where users socialize with one another and form a community that fosters good citizenship. Their goal will be to make every member feel welcome, safe and be encouraged to treat others kindly.** Challenge them to think of possible ways to report bad behavior, or to imagine mechanisms that encourage kind and respectful interactions (you would be surprised at the good ideas some of our students have come up with!). The first step is for them to complete the checklist (attached).
5. When they are finished completing the checklist, ask your children to draw a home or landing page for their imaginary site, game or app. Make sure they stay focused on **how** they will keep their communities “positive” for all citizens, rather than on **what** the platform is. This page should display the following information (have them refer to their checklists for guidance):
- Name, logo, and slogan.
  - A description of the site or app and activities available.
  - Guidelines to keep their community “positive.”
  - Consequences if members do not treat one another respectfully.

## Goal

To help students understand what digital citizenship is and to **envision and create the kinds of communities they want to be citizens of, online and off.**



Sample Student Work

## YOUR POSITIVE ONLINE COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

- Describe your app, website, or game.** Remember, it must be a place where users socialize with one another in a way that creates a positive community. What is its purpose? What will users do together? Will they chat, play a game, post pictures, shop, order food?

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- Name.** Think of a name that describes the **positive** mission and values of your community:

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- Create a logo & think of a slogan.** A “logo” is a visual emblem of your product and a “slogan” communicates your vision. For example, Google’s logo is a simple “G” and its slogan is “*Don’t Be Evil.*” Nike’s logo is the “swoosh” symbol and its slogan is “*Just Do It.*” Your logo and slogan should reflect your positive mission (think of the principles of good citizenship you learned!):

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- Keep things positive!** How will you promote positivity and kindness on your site?

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- What if users treat one another disrespectfully?** How will you keep users from being bullied, treated disrespectfully, or from using foul language? What will you do if this happens?

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**Please take all of the above into consideration when you design your home or landing page.**

**DIGITAL CITIZEN:**

**A member of the digital world.**

**DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP:**

**Safe and responsible use of digital tools.**