

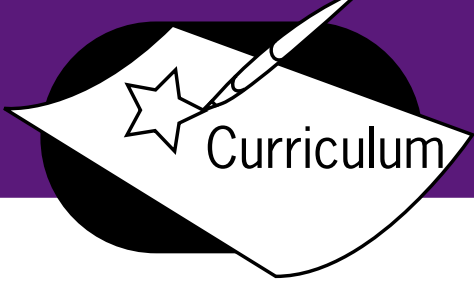
## Lesson Introduction

- Review with students what the cyber community is.
  - > Why is the Internet considered a community?
  - > How is it similar to the physical community?  
How is it different?
  - > What are the benefits and dangers of this online community?
- Ask students how online communities can be used in negative ways (examples: online gangs, cyber bullying, predation, etc.).
- Explain to students that today they will be looking at one way negative networking by using an the example of the use of the Internet by gangs.



## Activity

- Hand out the reference page to students and read “Negative Networking” as a class.
- Use “Food for Thought” to discuss the following:
  - > What types of things would some people do if they believed they could not be found out online?
  - > What types of things do people do to gain friends and a sense of identity?
  - > What possible uses would gangs have for the online environment?
  - > How does online gang interaction actually help authorities?
  - > If you see online gang action or symbols, to whom should you report it in your school or community?
  - > How can reporting online gang activity and other types of online activity that are threatening or dangerous help create a safer community and school environment?



# Negative Networking in the Cyber Community

## Negative Networking

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### Proactive Awareness

You can serve as the first line of defense in preventing negative networking occurrences online! As a class, brainstorm a list of resources you can use if you witness negative networking, including gang behavior, online.

Predators are not the only ones to make use of the Internet's social-networking capabilities for illegal or unethical purposes. Many other groups have also started making use of these networking communities for reasons that are darker and inappropriate.

### The Anonymous Factor

Many people have written about how the Internet and its perceived anonymity lead to a lack of inhibition in people. Feeling that their real-world identity is hidden, people feel freer to do and say things they may not in real life. Notice that this is a perceived anonymity. No one is truly anonymous when online—a fact that is important to remember.

However, it is also important to remember that no one person wants to be completely anonymous. That would be like being invisible. Instead, a person uses the Internet to pick and choose the facets of their personality that they want to express. In addition, some people join communities, otherwise known as gangs, to help represent and express their identities and to keep them from being anonymous.

### Gangs Online – Digital Graffiti

Gang members want and need attention and publicity. Street gangs have taken their fight online, creating Web sites to display their colors and gang symbols, and to warn their enemies. According to gang experts, these sites serve a similar purpose to the graffiti tagging that gangs have done for years. These sites serve to bolster egos.

It is important to know that true street gangs may not necessarily run online gang sites. Many are created by past members, bored teens, etc. Those that are run by true gangs DO NOT necessarily recruit members since membership is about loyalty, trust, and friendship—things they feel cannot be proven online. Instead, what these sites do is promote the “cool” factor of gangs.

For example: One gang site features pictures of bulldogs, women, and expensive cars in an effort to try to glamorize the lifestyle. Additionally, some sites have forums for gang members to give props (respect) or disses (disrespect) to other members.

Meanwhile, law enforcement actually appreciates Web sites by gang members because it helps to confirm information and allows them to keep an eye on the gang. Information like pictures and postings found on gang Web sites has led to longer jail sentences for gang members convicted of crimes.

## Some Internet Gang Terminology

Use of the Internet and online sites for gang activity is known as “netbanging.”

“Snitch” is a term used to identify those who tell on gang activity. However, gang use of the Internet has resulted in a type of self-snitching as cops monitor Web sites.

The important thing to remember is that not all of this online activity is simply kids looking for thrills. Some of the active gang members use Web sites to communicate with each other, pick fights with rival gangs, schedule hits, and more. These sites should be avoided for several important reasons. 1) You do not want to get caught up in illegal activity. 2) These sites can get dangerous. 3) Police do monitor these sites and use them as evidence in court. So stay safe online, and stay away from negative social-networking sites!

## Bully Boards

Gangs aren't the only contributors to online negative networking. Whole boards are popping up dedicated to allowing users to mock, bully, hurt, and degrade others. These sites promote gossip and negativity in their users. Why would anyone feel they need to attack others online? The common answer is to make themselves feel better. Just remember—don't sink to that level.

It takes a team effort, involving school, community, and police partnerships, to meet gang-related challenges. You are an important part of that team!

- Police MUST be called in to prevent victimization related gang activity, either online or offline.
- Today, spend time identifying where to call to report in your area.

## Food for Thought

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### Promoting Positive Networking

#### Discuss the following:

- What types of things do people do to gain friends and a sense of identity?
- What possible uses would gangs have for the online environment?
- How does online gang interaction actually help authorities?
- If you see online gang action, symbols, etc., to whom should you report it in your school or community?
- How can reporting online gang activity and other types of online activity representing threats, plans, etc., help create a safer community and school environment?

Some people have seen a need for those youth who may be struggling with identity problems and/or have had negative gang experiences. They have developed organizations that use Internet Web sites to provide guidance, resources, and help services to youth in need. One such site reported that active gang members made almost half of its 345,000 “hits” in a six-month period.

**Discuss how this type of online activity contributes positively to the cyber and physical communities.**

### **How Can You Help?**

Use the results of your discussions to brainstorm ways to inform others about promoting positive online networking. Use the information you have learned about reporting gang incidents or online activity. Include information your school endorses about how to report information found online that indicates a threat to local students.