Developing Empathy Within Digital Responsibility
Grades 3–5

Objective:
The student will be able to recognize that cyberbullying can be as hurtful as in-person bullying.

Hook
Let your students know that throughout this lesson they will explore ways to recognize the impact of cyberbullying and understand how it compares to in-person bullying. Explain that cyberbullying is bullying that takes place through the use of the Internet. It can be done through social media, instant messaging programs, apps, or text messages.

Introduce and discuss the following vocabulary words: **cyberbullying**, **impact**, and **responsible digital citizen**.

- **Cyberbullying:** Inappropriate negative behavior used to harm another person through social media, texts, emails, or any other virtual way
- **Impact:** To have a powerful effect on someone or something
- **Responsible digital citizen:** Someone who makes appropriate decisions online that contribute positively to the community

Discuss the following questions with the whole group:

- *What types of behaviors do you think could be considered cyberbullying?*
- *What types of impact do you think that these behaviors could have on others?*
- *How does being a responsible digital citizen help with the impact of cyberbullying*

Ask student volunteers to respond, listing their answers around the question or reading answers aloud to the whole group.

(Note: If you are teaching in person, display the question via board, poster, or PowerPoint. If you are teaching virtually, read the question aloud, allow students time to discuss, and then instruct them to type their answer using the chat feature.)

Student Practice
Explain that saying hurtful things to others on social media or through text messages can have the same hurtful impact as saying them in person. Read the following sentences aloud, then call on students to share how these phrases may impact their own or others' feelings if they were said to them in person and online.

- *"That's a really cool sweater, unlike the sweater that Macy wore!"*
- *"I don't like you."*
- *"I like your new haircut because your haircut from last week didn't look nice."*
- *"Every time I look at you, you look silly."*
- *"You're so nice."*

Use guided questions to monitor student discussion. For example:

- *If any of these phrases were said online versus in person, what do you think the biggest impact would be?*
- *Why is it easier for people to say hurtful things online than in person?*
- *Do you think that social media sites should do a better job of monitoring hurtful and inappropriate language that is being used toward others? Explain.*

Tell students that being a responsible digital citizen means they can recognize how their behaviors online can affect others and themselves. It also means that they should tell a trusted adult such as a parent or teacher if they see or hear of anyone being cyberbullied.

Reflection
After discussing the impacts of cyberbullying, direct students to work in groups of 6–8 to create a chart titled "How Can I Monitor What I Say Online Toward Others?" Direct students to list at least two ways that they can monitor their words online. Once students have completed the list, have them take a pledge to become a responsible digital citizen.

Encourage students to continue to promote positive digital citizenship by reflecting on the feelings of others and how they would feel if they were the one who was experiencing cyberbullying.

(Note: If you are teaching virtually, instruct students to share their answers inside of a personal chat box to group members only.)