Lesson Time: 25–30 minutes

Keep It Private!

Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn what identity theft is and that it can happen to children as well as adults. They will also find how to avoid an identity crisis.

Lesson Outcomes: *Students will be able to...*
- define the term *identity theft*.
- explain why it is important to protect and never share private information.

Subject Area Connection: Language Arts, Information Technology

Getting Ready

Teacher Preparation: To prepare for this lesson, research identity theft and how information is stolen/used to compromise someone's identity. Is children's identity theft different? Find an image of a Social Security card online to download, enlarge, and copy to show to students.

Materials Required:
- sample Social Security card image
- paper
- pencil with eraser
- blank index cards
- large paper 'key' shaped cutout (optional)

Key Vocabulary

Social Security number: a nine-digit number assigned to each U.S. citizen (mandatory by age 1) for identification purposes and income tracking purposes.

identity: who someone is.

Background

Identity theft, or stealing and using someone else's private information for personal gain or to cause harm, isn't just an adult problem. For example, according to the Federal Trade Commission website, a child's Social Security number can be used by identity thieves to apply for government benefits, open bank and credit card accounts, apply for a loan or utility service, or rent a place to live.

Therefore, it is very important for students to be aware that things like this can actually happen if they are not careful. Once an identity has been stolen, it can take a very long time to sort everything out. Teaching children how to protect private information, recognize scams, and what steps to take to avoid an identity crisis is much easier than trying to repair the damage after it happens.

> "It is easier to take **steps to avoid an identity crisis** than it is to **repair the damage afterwards.**"

Introduction and Modeling

Ask students if they, a family member, or friend has ever had anything stolen. What was taken and were the items ever recovered? Was the thief caught and how did the victim feel afterwards?

What does *identity* mean? Have they ever heard of a person's identity being stolen? Ask them to explain what they think this means. How can someone steal someone else's identity? Discuss.

Hold up the large sample of a Social Security card and point out the nine-digit number. Have students read the card. Do they know what it is or how the number is used? Explain that all U.S. citizens have a Social Security card/number and that parents usually keep these cards in a secure place. Why is this important?

Digital Citizenship
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Procedure

1. Reinforce the concept of private information and ask for examples. Why is it important never to share private information online?

2. Ask students if they think a Social Security number is private information. Discuss.

3. Explain that identity thieves often target children's private information because parents are less likely to find out that someone is assuming their child's identity unless their information is specifically being monitored. Social Security numbers are the biggest target of children's information. Sometimes thieves will even use the numbers to apply for credit cards, loans, or rent a house! Often, no one even realizes that a child's identity was ever stolen until years later.

4. What are some ways to protect private information so that identity thieves are less likely to access it? If the student does know his/her Social Security number, they should never share it online or with someone they don't know. That would be like handing a house key or credit card to a stranger. The same goes for birthdates, full names, etc. Protecting private information is also a way to protect ourselves so no one can identify who we are, where we live, who our parents are, where we go to school, our financial data, etc. Be safe and smart—don't share private information.

5. Reinforce the importance of strong passwords and the fact that they should never be shared. Sometimes children know their parents' passwords and every precaution should be taken to keep those safe as well. Remind students to keep all family data secure, and think before posting anything that might reveal clues or hints to private information.

6. Have students practice creating passwords on index cards. A strong password should be one that a hacker can't figure out with an educated guess or automated attack. Experts recommend using a combination of numbers, letters, symbols, capitals, etc. Optional: To allow students to test the strength of their passwords, go to the "Safety and Security Center" page at microsoft.com. There is a right-hand tab that links to a password guidance page where students can actually type in their passwords and receive feedback on its strength. Discuss.

Discussion Questions

- Why is it important never to share private information?

- Why do identity thieves target children's private information?

- In your family, who has permission to give out private information?

- In what circumstances might your parents provide your private information to someone? When is this okay?

- What are Social Security numbers used for and why should they be kept secure?

Evaluation

Give each student a large paper key cutout or model how to draw a big key outline on a sheet of paper. Inside the key shape, have them write down the definition of identity theft and ask them to list at least three types of information that should always be kept private. This attention to online security is "key" to helping protect their identities.

Tips for Tailoring this Lesson

For Higher Grade Levels

- Pass out index cards and ask students to list places where private information might be kept on file (e.g., schools, doctor's office, daycare provider, after-school program, etc.). Why is it okay for some places to have the information? How is private data protected at these locations? Ask students to research different privacy measures/policies.

For Lower Grade Levels

- On blank index cards, have each student come up with a motto about never sharing private information or ways to prevent identity theft, such as:
  - "Be Safe—Don't Share!"
  - "Keep It To Yourself!"
  - "Safety First Online!"
  - "No Private Info Allowed!"

- Ask students to share mottos and vote on one to adopt as a class.

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Alignment to Standards and Frameworks

Common Core State Standards:
College & Career Readiness

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Anchor Standards for Reading

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.6 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Anchor Standards for Language

CCRA.L.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.L.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Partnership for 21st Century Framework

Partnership for 21st Century Framework: the framework comprises the skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century. Partnership for 21st Century Skills www.p21.org

Initiative
Manage Goals and Time

- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria
- Balance tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) goals
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently

Work Independently

- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight

Self-Direction
Be Self-directed Learners

- Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise
- Demonstrate initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level
- Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process
- Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress