



my voice IS **LOUDER** 
than hate

Teacher Guide

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About This Guide

This *Teacher Guide* has been created to provide Grade 9 to 12 teachers with background information and resources to use in implementing the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* program.

Over the course of this program, students will:

- Learn how to push back when they encounter hate or prejudice online;
- Develop digital and media literacy skills to recognize and confront hate material online; and
- Prepare to take action as digital citizens by taking an active role in forming the norms and values of their offline communities and using digital and media tools for civic action online and offline.

This program consists of four elements:

1. An online multimedia platform that includes learning resources, practice scenarios and tools for media-making;
2. Two lessons that use the different features of the multimedia platform to educate and empower students to respond to hate and prejudice online;
3. A training workshop to prepare teachers to deliver these lessons and deal with any difficult conversations that may take place as a result; and
4. This guide, which provides an expanded discussion of topics such as online hate, casual prejudice, dehumanization, digital citizenship and detailed instructions on how to present the lessons in a way that will be emotionally safe for students.

Background Information

Youth don't have to encounter overt hate speech to be exposed to hate online. In fact, much more common are *cultures of hatred*: communities in which racism, misogyny and other forms of prejudice are normalized.

Not only do these communities and platforms become unfriendly and sometimes unsafe environments for members of targeted groups but hatemongers will often 'troll' mainstream sites, making hateful comments to provoke a reaction from some people and/or elicit sympathetic comments from others. Exposure to online prejudice and hate can have much more serious effects than simply making people uncomfortable or unwelcome: studies have shown that experiencing discrimination online can cause stress, anxiety and depression. Additionally, the connected, networked nature of online communities – and the potentially limitless pools of potential recruits and targets this provides – permits both formal and decentralized hate movements to make hate speech appear to be more acceptable in online spaces.

Teenagers and young adults are prime targets for hate groups because many are looking for groups or causes that will give them a sense of identity. Identity seeking is a natural part of adolescence but, taken to its extreme, this can provide a toehold for hate mongers and hate groups of all kinds

who are skilled at identifying those youth most likely to be vulnerable to their message.

Unlike other MediaSmarts resources on online hate, *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* focuses specifically on *casual prejudice* online: prejudiced acts or content that are performed or created largely by peers that are not directed towards a present target, and where either there is no clear intent to harm or where causing harm is not the primary intent.

It is important to confront casual prejudice for several reasons: firstly, because young people encounter it

more often than more severe forms; and secondly, because while other forms of online hate material aim to radicalize people who are already sympathetic to the movement to identify as members of it, or to galvanize members into taking direct action, casual prejudice works at the bottom of the "radicalization pyramid," increasing the pool of sympathizers and making it harder to push back against all forms of hate online.

MediaSmarts' research has found that while youth feel it is important to push back when they encounter hate online,





many are reluctant to do so due to lack of efficacy, fear of making a situation worse, uncertainty about whether a situation is genuinely an example of prejudice, and a sense that doing so violates social norms and risks social cohesion. *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* is designed to expose the “majority illusion” that can make prejudice seem normative online and aims to empower youth to be the “noisy ten percent” that sets a community’s values.

My Voice is Louder Than Hate is focused on the factors that inhibit youth from taking action and targeting those that make them more likely to intervene: if they knew that online hate

was genuinely hurtful, if they thought that most of their peers agreed with them, if they had seen other people do something about it, if they had seen people face consequences for posting hate content, and if they had a clear knowledge of how they could use platform tools to respond.

In any community, online or offline, the social norms – what’s seen as acceptable and unacceptable – are largely set by the most committed 10 percent of community members. This segment is often those who have the strongest opinions and beliefs, which may include prejudice to outright hate. As a result, if community members do not actively

push back against hatred and prejudice, these beliefs can come to be seen as the norm for that community, resulting in a vicious cycle that makes it harder and harder to speak out against prejudice and hatred. At the same time, there is evidence that relatively small efforts to push back against hate speech can be successful if they are seen as coming from within the community. This program focuses on the factors that make young people more and less likely to speak out against hateful speech in online settings in order to empower youth to push back against it.

Lesson Rationales

The *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* lesson series consists of two lessons: *My Voice is Louder Than Hate: The Impact of Hate* and *My Voice is Louder Than Hate: Pushing Back Against Hate*.

My Voice is Louder Than Hate: The Impact of Hate Lesson

The lesson *The Impact of Hate* is based on several key concepts of digital and media literacy. Chief among these is the concept that media have social and political implications and convey ideological messages about values, power and authority. These messages may be the result of conscious decisions, but more often they are the result of unconscious biases and unquestioned assumptions – and they can have a significant influence on what we think and believe. In this way, media can have great influence on politics, public opinion and forming social change. TV news coverage and advertising can influence the election of a national leader on the basis of image; representations of world issues, both in journalism and fiction, can affect how much attention they receive; and society’s views towards different groups can be directly influenced by how – and how often – they appear in media. For many of us, media provide a lot of what we know – or think we know – about historically disadvantaged groups.

The networked and interactive nature of digital media means that it is real in a way that traditional media is not: our interactions with people and the communities we take part in can have an impact that is as powerful as those that exist offline. Youth need to learn to overcome the “empathy traps” of digital communication – in particular, the absence of cues such as facial expression and tone of voice, and the perception that we’re not “really there” when interacting online – that can lead us to unconsciously dehumanize the people we’re interacting with.

This lesson allows students to explore how interacting through digital media can make it easier to hurt someone’s feelings and can make hurtful or prejudiced behaviour seem normal in online spaces. They learn how Canadian youth feel about and respond to casual prejudice online and then use the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* multimedia tool to create a digital story that will help people understand that online hate hurts everyone who witnesses it.

My Voice is Louder Than Hate: Pushing Back Against Hate Lesson

The same networked qualities of digital spaces that enable the spread and normalization of hate material can also be used to push back against it. In order to act as fully engaged citizens online, young people need to develop *digital literacy* skills.

Competencies for digital literacy can be classified according to four main principles: *Access*, *Use*, *Understand* and *Engage*.

ACCESS

Access involves safely and ethically finding and navigating media. It includes the technical know-how needed to access online content; to being able to navigate networked media using hyperlinks, search engines and databases; to knowing about copyright-free content and being able to exercise user rights under Fair Dealing; and to specialized access skills such as finding free or low-cost internet serve or using screen readers.

USE

Use represents the technical fluency that is needed to safely and effectively use media, computers and the Internet. Skills and competencies that fall under *use* include using tools and platforms such as cameras, word processors, web browsers, social networks and media-making apps; using media tools in ways that promote positive physical and mental health and mitigate risks to health and safety; and balancing the challenges and advantages of digital media tools.

UNDERSTAND

Understand is that critical piece – it’s the set of skills that help us comprehend, contextualize and critically evaluate digital media so that we can make informed decisions about what we do and encounter online. These are the essential skills that we need to start teaching our kids as soon as they go online. *Understand* includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. *Understand* also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop – individually and collectively – information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.

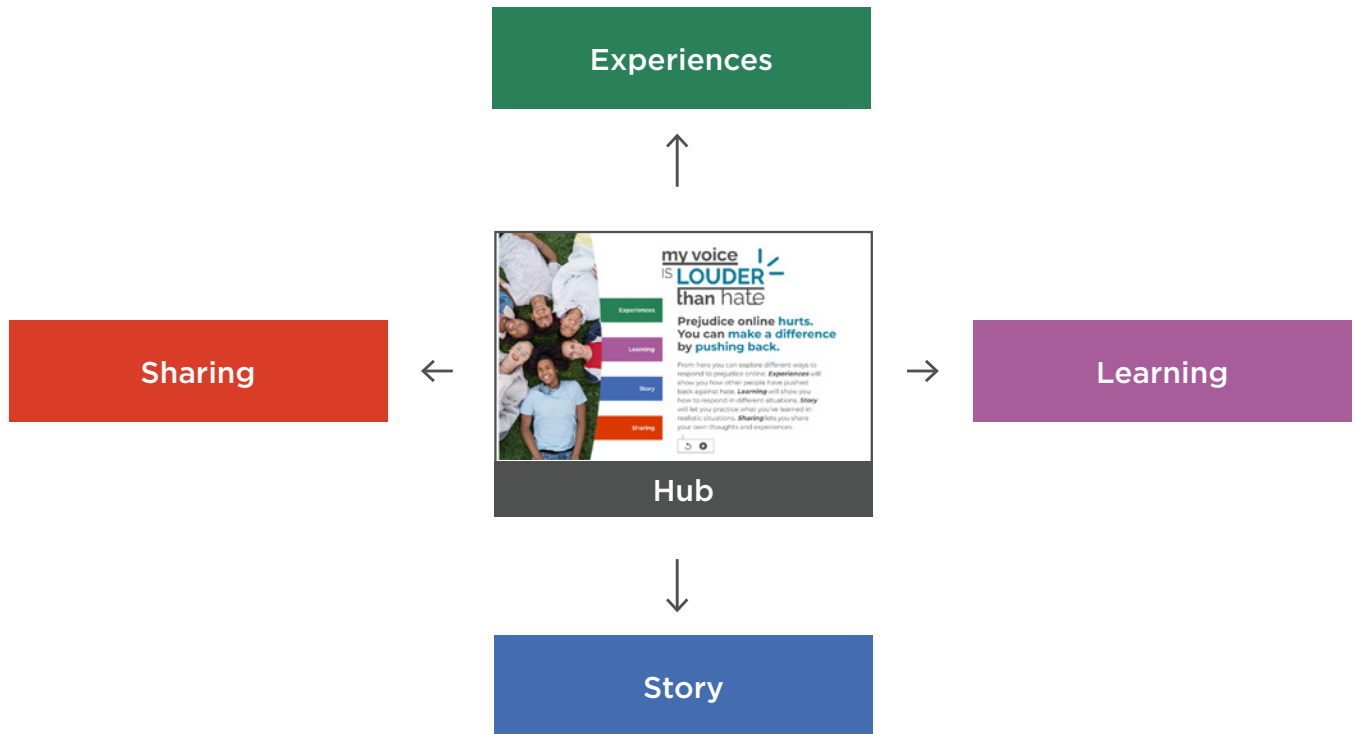
ENGAGE

Engage is the ability to make and use media tools to express yourself and participate in online and offline communities. Engaging with digital media is more than knowing how to use a word processor or write an email: it includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; reflect on the social and political implications of media and use media tools for community engagement; and effectively and responsibly engage with Web 2.0 user-generated content. The ability to engage using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.

This lesson addresses all three competencies as students explore the benefits and drawbacks of being “full citizens” online. They learn reasons why Canadian youth sometimes do not push back when they witness casual prejudice online and then use the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* interactive tool to practice different ways of responding. Finally, students analyze memes as a medium and a way of responding to hate or other hurtful behaviour online and then use the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* interactive tool to create a meme that they can use to push back against casual prejudice.

The *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* multimedia tool

The *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* multimedia tool consists of five elements. These are designed to be used in delivering the two associated lessons but may also be used independently. The elements are:



Hub

The *hub* introduces the tool and provides links to the other four areas.

Experiences

The *experiences* section lets students watch videos about experiencing and pushing back against online prejudice. These are tagged by topic and can be sorted accordingly.

Learning

The *learning* spoke provides students with interactive multimedia tipsheets that provide key information on different aspects of dealing with online prejudice:

- How to Push Back When Someone You know Says Something Prejudiced
- How to Push Back When You Don't Feel Safe Speaking Out
- How to Push Back When You're Not Sure People Will Listen to You
- How to Push Back Without Making Things Worse
- How to Recognize Hate and Prejudice Online

Each of these tipsheets includes interactive and multimedia aspects such as polls and graphics and allows students to annotate them and save them for printing.

Story

The *story* spoke lets students play through a series of short scenarios where they witness casual prejudice and hate speech in a variety of contexts (different platforms, different relationships with the speaker, etc.). Users are offered four possible responses and are then given feedback and shown the results of their choices.

The scenarios are:

- *It's All Geek to Me*, which confronts the idea that prejudiced jokes are harmless;
- *Portable Phones*, which helps students address prejudice when it seems like others agree with it;
- *Just Add Prejudice*, which shows students how to confront prejudice without the risk of making things worse;
- *Seeing Colour*, which addresses students' concerns that they often don't know if a situation is really an example of prejudice; and
- *Emote Control*, which shows students how to respond when they don't think other people in a community will listen to them.

Sharing

The *sharing* spoke gives students the chance to respond to prejudice and share their own experiences with two media-making tools:

A *digital storytelling* tool that lets students combine images, text, music and narration to make digital stories, which they can download or share with other in the *Experiences* spoke. To make a digital story, students will:

- Log into the My Voice is Louder Than Hate tool. Go to the Sharing section and then choose Video Maker.
- For each segment of your video, student can either record your narration using the tool or upload narration recorded ahead of time, and either select an image from the image gallery or upload an image (the lesson includes information on how to find Public Domain and Creative Commons images and how to ethically use copyrighted images)
- When they have finished all of the segments, students choose a music track from one of the options provided. This track will play through your whole video, so they should choose one that fits the mood of your video.

A *meme maker* that lets students make image macro memes (placing text upon an existing “meme” image) that they can use to respond to prejudice in a light-hearted way.

To make a meme, students will:

- Log into the My Voice is Louder Than Hate tool. Go to the Sharing section and then choose Meme Maker.
- Choose a meme template.
- Give the meme a title.
- Add either text to the top half of the meme, the bottom half, or both.
- Click Save to finalize the meme, then download it as a PNG file and submit it along with the assignment sheet. They may also submit it to the Sharing Gallery if they want.

These steps are covered in more detail in the training workshop.

As well as navigating through the Hub, students can also follow connections between the different sections. For instance, the tip sheets in the Learning spoke are used as help texts in the Story spoke, while videos in the Experiences spoke can be opened from the tip sheets.

Preparing for complicated conversations

While every effort has been made to make these lessons a safe and emotionally secure experience, talking about hate and prejudice can nevertheless be a sensitive experience – for both students and teachers.

Teachers are often reluctant to address these issues for a variety of reasons: because they are worried about being seen as preaching to students, because they see the topic as overly controversial or polarizing, or because they are concerned about what students might say in classroom discussions.

It's important to remember, though, that we also take a position when we *don't* discuss hate and prejudice, and that these topics are only “optional” for people who don't experience them.

“School is the ideal place to start because if we don't support young people ... and give them spaces to talk about these events, they're going to seek answers where we don't want them to.”

—Ghayda Hassan, researcher and practitioner,
Université du Québec à Montréal

The following section provides teachers and other school staff with guidelines about creating a respectful classroom; fostering and managing complicated conversations; and how to manage problematic student responses over the course of these lessons.



Fostering classroom discussion

MediaSmarts' research has found that adults have a key role to play in helping young people recognize and respond to prejudice and hate online. They often turn to trusted adults when they need help or advice in dealing with online hate, and look to adults as a model of healthy debate and ethical digital citizenship - while also being aware that adults often do not set a good example in those areas.

“I wish we learned more about casual prejudice in school... I don't think most teenagers know they are being prejudiced with the things they say online.”

—Respondent, Young Canadians Pushing Back Against Hate Online

Here are some guidelines for fostering a safe and positive classroom discussion.



Don't rush it

It's important to make sure that you have enough time to properly explore the issues that come up in these lessons. Make sure that you're familiar with the lesson plans so that you can keep discussions on track. As well, research shows that interventions to reduce prejudice and discrimination work best when they are spread out over time rather than done in a single session. Consult MediaSmarts' [Diversity and Media ToolBox](#) for other lessons and activities that you can do over the semester to extend and reinforce the learning from these lessons.



Encourage open discussion

Remember that difficult discussions are needed for deep learning. Be prepared for students to say things you weren't expecting or share things you didn't know about, and remember that you don't necessarily know what experiences or aspects of their identities they're bringing to the discussion.

Help students understand that no position is “neutral.” Different people and groups are advantaged and disadvantaged by the way things are, and taking the “neutral” position just means supporting the status quo.

Draw the line between *classroom discussion* and *political discourse*. Just like you don't want to be seen as pressuring students to share your opinions, students shouldn't just be repeating political arguments they've heard at home or seen in social media either. Make sure that they're listening to other students and are open to other people's perspectives.

Encourage students to ask questions as well as offering opinions. Remind them that the point of discussion is not to convince other

people but to learn from them. Focusing on questions can lead us to examine assumptions we didn't even know we had.

Make sure students know that you struggle with these questions as well. Be honest about what you do and don't know and position yourself as a co-learner.

While you do want to give up some of your *authority* as an expert, you still have a *responsibility* to make sure the discussion stays on track and that everyone is treated with respect.



Set clear and consistent rules

Key to having an open conversation is to have the class agree on ground rules before you start. Knowing that everyone has agreed on what is “off limits” will make students feel freer to speak because they won't worry about crossing a line without meaning to.

Getting the class involved in developing rules for discussion is a good way to signal how important it is that each person in the class takes their responsibility seriously to create and maintain an open and respectful classroom.

Here are some suggested rules to set for your discussion:

Treat others with respect.

Slurs, stereotypes and personal attacks should all be off-limits.

“It's OK if participants challenge each others' ideas, but it's not OK to insult one another's identities.”

—Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students

Avoid generalizations by using “I” statements.

Encourage students to talk in terms of their own experiences: “I think that...”, “When I go into a store...”, “When I post a picture...”, etc. Make sure students respect the truth of each others' experiences.

No interrupting when someone is talking.

If a student says something that violates the previous rules, “pause” them to point that out and then ask them if they can make their point in a way that will contribute positively to the conversation.

Everyone who wants to speak will get a chance to, but not everyone has to speak.

Neither you nor other students should put anyone “on the spot” because of some aspect of their identity.



Identify which issues you consider “settled” before the discussion

While you want to encourage an open conversation, spending class time on topics that are not open to debate, or that marginalize or dehumanize people, has the potential to close down the discussion and leave students hurt or more entrenched in their positions. Hate movements and extremist figures often try to conceal their positions as “debating” or “just asking questions” about issues such as whether women deserve equal rights or whether the Holocaust happened, and students who have been influenced by these may bring these arguments into the classroom.

“A much more likely, and more pernicious risk to young people from hate speech online than either mobilizing or recruiting them into extremist white supremacist groups, is... its ability to change how we know what we say we know about issues that have been politically hard won.”

—Jesse Daniels, *Race, Civil Rights and Hate Speech in the Digital Era*

A key to avoiding this—and to avoiding the impression that you’re telling your students what to think—is to distinguish between *fact* and *opinion* questions and between *active* and *settled* questions.

- Fact questions are those that can be conclusively answered, proven or disproven: What nutrients does a bag of potato chips contain? Does fluoride reduce cavities?
- Opinion questions are ones that cannot be conclusively answered but can be *supported* by argument or evidence: Should food companies be allowed to advertise potato chips to children? Should fluoride be added to the water supply to reduce cavities?

- Settled questions are those that either have been conclusively proven or are accepted by society as settled. A settled fact question would be “Why are objects drawn towards the Earth?” A settled opinion question would be “Should all people receive equal rights under the law?”
- Active questions are those that are still being discussed. An active fact question would be “Does gravity act through particles in the way other forces do?” An active opinion question would be “How should we resolve the conflicts between the rights of different groups and people?”

Complicated conversations focus on *active opinion* questions, and they work best when you are clear beforehand that class time won't be used to discuss questions that have already been settled.

“When I have talked to other schools [they say], “You let them talk about what?! You let them write a bill about what?! You let them express what opinion?!” Well, if you don't do it in a safe, structured environment here, they are still doing it at the lunch table.”

—‘Ms. Heller,’ high school teacher quoted in Classroom Deliberation in an Era of Political Polarization

Dealing with issues that arise

As noted above, during complicated conversations students will often say surprising and unexpected things. If you've established clear rules for discussion this usually will not be a problem, but there will be times when you have to pause the conversation and deal with something a student has said.



Respond right away to problematic comments.

If students use a slur, express a stereotype, or want to debate a question you've identified as being settled, it's important to respond right away. However, it's not helpful to punish or criticize students unless they are clearly being intentionally disruptive or disrespectful towards you or others. Instead, use this as a learning opportunity.



Press pause.

Don't let a problematic word or statement derail the conversation. Tell the student who said it to pause, address it as quickly as possible, and then either use it as a springboard to more discussion or return to the previous conversation. This helps you model for students the idea that it's important to always address prejudiced speech or actions, but we don't have to let people use them to hijack a discussion.

Try saying:

- I know a lot of people think that, but it isn't true.
- I hear that word a lot in song lyrics, but it's not okay to use it in class.
- It's not fair to talk about a whole group of people like that.

If a student's responses make you think they may be falling under the influence of an extremist ideology such as racism, homophobia or radical misogyny, meet with the student's counselor afterward to discuss it. You should also make your principal or vice-principal aware and direct them to extremist sources that the student has cited or referred to (see the MediaSmarts article [Deconstructing Online Hate](#) to help you recognize the different forms that online hate can take.)



Ask for clarification.

Sometimes young people may not realize that their language is inappropriate. It is important to give them a chance to explain what they meant. Avoid calling out specific students – nobody should get ‘in trouble,’ but rather everyone should be educated.

Try saying:

- I don’t understand. What do you mean?
- What ‘people’ are you talking about?
- What point are you trying to make?
- Can you give me an example?



Don’t shame or label.

Focus on what the student said, rather than what the student may think or believe. Keep in mind that students may be repeating things they have heard at home, from peers, or online, or may be consciously playing “devil’s advocate”.

It’s also useful to distinguish between *intent* and *impact*: while hurting someone’s feelings on purpose is undoubtedly worse than doing it accidentally, the person’s feelings are hurt either way. Make sure your students know that prejudiced comments against *anyone* hurt your feelings – and that almost three-quarters of Canadian youth feel the same way.

Try saying:

- I find it offensive to hear anyone being put down like that.
- You’ve probably seen that word in old books or movies, but people prefer [correct name].
- I know you didn’t mean that to be offensive, but it was over the line.
- I’m not sure you realize how that sounded. I’m sure you didn’t mean to insult anybody.
- I don’t want to put you on the spot, but words like that can really hurt people’s feelings.



Challenge mistaken attitudes.

A few ideas and attitudes are common enough that you should be ready to address them specifically:

“Prejudice is bad, but it can’t be helped.”

While human beings will undoubtedly never be perfect, it’s a mistake to believe that we can’t change things for the better. As noted elsewhere, the social norms of a group or community are actually very sensitive to what its most vocal members say. You should also help students understand that concepts like race are arbitrary and change over time: the idea of “White” and “Black” as races only appeared in the last few hundred years, and have changed significantly; for example, people from Ireland and from southern and eastern Europe were once not considered White. Prejudices, too, can appear and disappear: most of the violence in Canada in the 19th Century was between Catholics and Protestants, a distinction which is barely seen as being significant in Canada today.

“Only racists are racist.”

It’s tempting to let ourselves off the hook by placing the blame for prejudice only on people who can be identified as “racists” or “bigots.” But prejudice is something you *do*, not something you *are*, and all of us are capable of acts of prejudice – and capable of pushing back against it. In the same way, we may try to distinguish between “real” and “harmless” acts of prejudice, which is why these lessons focus on casual prejudice.

“Prejudice isn’t a problem here.”

This attitude may be particularly common in Canada, where we often see ourselves as being more tolerant and pluralist than other countries. While this may be true in a relative sense, it does not mean that prejudice and discrimination aren’t an issue here, and it is never a reason to dismiss students’ own experiences. As well, since these lessons focus on online spaces, students often interact with people from around the world and are influenced by mass and social media from other countries.

“Aren’t we supposed to be colour-blind?”

Many people believe that the goal of anti-prejudice efforts is to have students not “see” colour (or other differences, such as gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.) While in an ideal world these things would be irrelevant to government and the law, however, in our world they remain very relevant, and refusing to see their importance means denying the impact they have on other people’s lives.

“I have never heard a teacher of color say ‘I don’t see color.’ ... The core of ‘I don’t see color,’ is ‘I don’t see my own color, I don’t see difference because my race and culture is the center of the universe.’”

—Randy Ross, senior equity specialist at the New England Equity Assistance Center

A similar attitude is the idea that talking about race is itself racist. As noted above, it’s certainly important to prepare for conversations about race and other complicated topics, but avoiding these subjects means dismissing the experiences of marginalized and disadvantaged people.

“People are too sensitive.”

They see prejudice everywhere.” This is a very common attitude (40% of young Canadians agree that people are sometimes looking for an excuse to be offended.) But we can’t tell other people how they should respond to what we’ve said or done: if you’ve hurt someone’s feelings by mistake the right thing to do is to apologize, not tell them they were wrong to be hurt. As well, students need to know that what is clearly a joke in one context might not be so clear somewhere else, something that’s especially true when students are moving between online and offline spaces. Even within a close group, you should never assume that everyone thinks something is funny or acceptable: many people who are marginalized in one way or another say they feel pressure not to speak out when they hear prejudiced comments in order to be accepted or to not become targets.



“Everyone gets picked on equally online.”

One in four young Canadians agree that all people are victims of prejudice online. While it’s true that it is not just marginalized groups who suffer from prejudice or harassment online, there is a lot of evidence that women, visible minorities, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups suffer more and more severe harassment.

Students also need to understand that there is a key difference between *individual* and *structural* discrimination. Of course, it is possible for anyone to be a target of individual prejudice for any reason, including being White or male, these prejudices do not happen in the context of the historical, social and systemic prejudice that disadvantage other groups. While you should not dismiss the effect that prejudice can have on anyone, it’s also important for students to understand the difference between experiencing it briefly and experiencing it in the context of structural discrimination.

The same is true for accusations of “reverse racism” or complaints that advantaged groups are being silenced or censored: while we can discuss what steps should be taken to help disadvantaged groups, the question of *whether* certain groups are disadvantaged is a closed one. The mini-lesson [Unpacking Privilege](#) can be a useful tool for addressing this issue with students if you feel you need to explore it further.



Challenge misleading sources.

Many students encounter misinformation and disinformation online, either from social media, from video sites such as YouTube, or from “cloaked” hate sites that masquerade as legitimate sources of information and debate.

The tip sheet “How to Recognize Hate and Prejudice Online” included in the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* multimedia tool includes basic information on recognizing hate material and verifying sources. If you would like to take a deeper dive into this material, you can use these MediaSmarts resources:

Break the Fake: Verifying Information Online

In this lesson, students participate in a workshop that teaches them four quick, easy steps to verify online information. After practicing these four steps they create a public service announcement aimed at teaching one of these steps and spreading the message that it is necessary for everyone to fact-check information we see online every time we are going to share it or act on it.

Deconstructing Web Pages

In this lesson, students apply three techniques to verify sources of information they find online. Assuming the role of a student researching a science project, students must authenticate the information in an online article about the artificial sweetener, aspartame.

Hate 2.0

This lesson starts with an interactive quiz that teaches students about the ways in which hate may be encountered online. After completing the quiz, students discuss the issues raised and the strategies modeled for confronting online hate.

Hoax? Scholarly Research? Personal Opinion? You Decide!

This lesson is designed to help students determine the validity of information that is presented to them on the Internet. After reviewing a series of evaluation techniques for online resources, students form groups to assess selected websites.

Reality Check: Authentication and Citizenship

In this lesson, students consider the ways in which misinformation can have an impact on history and politics. After discussing a number of historical examples of misinformation, they examine the ways in which news sources may be biased and use an interactive online game to practice skills in getting more context on a story.

Scapegoating and Othering

In this lesson students develop a deeper understanding of scapegoating and othering and how these factors may contribute to the promotion of hatred and intolerance.



Redirect to an active question and keep it on topic.

A lot of the time, when students say something that sounds like it's addressing a settled question they're actually trying to articulate an active question. For instance, a student who says "There's no racism online, everyone is equal" may actually be saying "I am uncomfortable with the ways that people are trying to address racism online." You can affirm the settled question while redirecting them to something more useful by saying something like "There is definitely still racism online, but not everyone agrees about the best ways to address it. What might help us decide that?"

If it's clear that a student is trying to debate a settled question, or is arguing in bad faith, simply tell them that the issue is not open for discussion and move on.

Keeping the focus specifically on *online* prejudice can also help keep the conversation from getting personal or getting off-topic. MediaSmarts' research has found that almost all young Canadians have witnessed prejudice online and 80% agree that it's important to do something about it.



Respond to emotional reactions.

Sometimes complicated conversations will lead students to feel emotions like shame or guilt or to feel as though they are being blamed for prejudice or hatred. It's important to keep the conversation from being personal and to help students understand that the purpose of the lessons isn't to lay blame on anyone or to make them feel guilty, but to help them to improve their online spaces by taking action when they witness prejudice.

Student Disclosure

Teachers are important allies in the development of positive well-being for their students and they can play an important role as trusted adults who they can turn to in times of need.

In some cases, youth who have encountered online hate — especially harassment or slurs — will need counselling. Being exposed to bigotry and hate anywhere can have much more serious effects than just making people feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Experiencing discrimination online can cause stress, anxiety and depression.

If a student comes to you with concerns about a personal experience with hate or prejudice, consider the following:

DO



Select an appropriate location

Before meeting with the student, try to arrange to speak with the student in a place where they can discuss confidential information.

Consult

If possible, and before meeting with the student, it is a good idea to advise your principal or guidance counsellor of your plan. You may want to share with the administrator when and where you are meeting; the administrator can provide you with information regarding any additional/relevant school policies or resources. Every school district may have different policies regarding 'duty to report' concerns and your principal will know what needs to be reported and what doesn't.

Promote help-seeking

Due to the fact that it can be difficult to disclose personal information, it is supportive to praise someone for seeking help. You may ask the student if they have spoken to anyone else, such as their parents or another trusted adult, and promote help-seeking behaviour by encouraging them to think about the support network in their lives. Make sure students are aware of services like Kids Help Phone (<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>) that provide free, anonymous counseling services for youth.

Emphasize that their safety is the priority

Students may begin any disclosure with a plea for you to keep the conversation a secret. In a gentle but firm tone, let them know that their safety is the most important thing and that if at the end of the conversation you believe that it is in their best interests to engage someone with specific skills or knowledge to help, you will do so.

DON'T



Discuss in a public place

Sometimes it may seem out of your control where a student decides to talk to you. If the student begins telling you something in a public space, express a genuine interest in what they are saying and suggest talking in a more private location. Remember to respect the student's privacy; if the student decides not to talk it is important to respect this wish.

Minimize what the student is experiencing

What may seem not so important or concerning to another, may feel very 'big and real' for a student. Taking the time to listen and connect, and letting the student know that what they are telling you is important, will help them develop a sense of capacity in terms of self-expression and coping skills.

Handle it alone

Remember you are not alone. It is important to seek support from school administrators and other support staff in order to ensure you are aware of all pertinent policies and have both professional and personal support.

Avoid the discussion

Teachers are important allies in the development of positive well-being for their students and they can play an important role as trusted adults who can be turned to in times of need.

Try to counsel

While you do want students to see you as a source of help, you should never feel like you are a counsellor. Instead, encourage students to contact Kids Help Phone (<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>).

Young Canadians Pushing Back Against Hate Online: Key Findings

YOUNG CANADIANS PUSHING BACK AGAINST HATE ONLINE



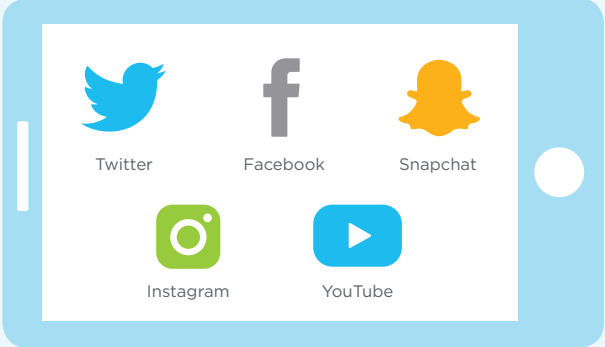
METHODOLOGY

1000

Canadian youth ages 12 to 16 years old completed an online survey in fall 2018

SPACES AND PLATFORMS

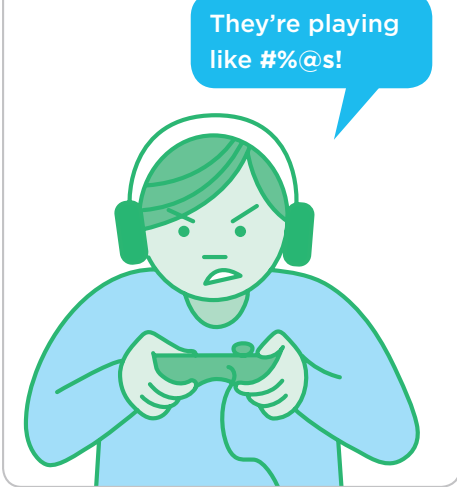
The top 5 reported platforms were:



- Twitter
- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- YouTube

HATE ONLINE

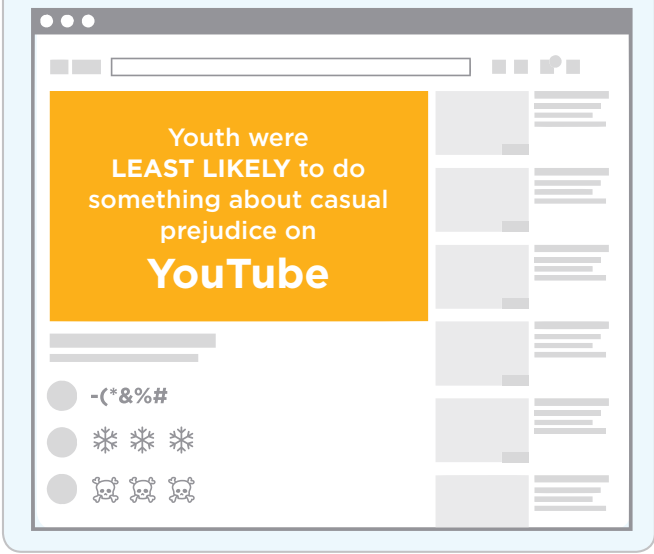
Hate online, or casual prejudice, is when people use words or say things that are **negative towards a particular group** but are not aimed at a specific person.



Youth are most likely to witness and engage in casual prejudice on **social media platforms**

100%

of youth who use Facebook have seen hate on their feed



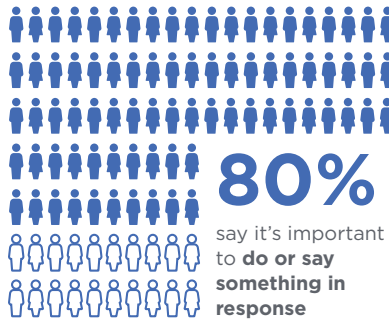
YOUNG CANADIANS PUSHING BACK AGAINST HATE ONLINE



ATTITUDES

80%

think people are more likely to say prejudiced things **online** than **offline**



80%

say it's important to **do or say something in response**

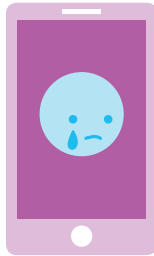
60%

say it's easier to talk about it in **private** rather than in **public**



70%

say it hurts their feelings



"You can start to believe those [hateful] comments. They are not easy to ignore."



80% say casual prejudice **against someone they know** hurts their feelings...



while **70%** say casual prejudice **against anyone** hurts their feelings.

Only 20%

think casual prejudice doesn't matter

ENABLING FACTORS

Top two preferred responses:

stopping communication or blocking the person



talking to their parents

Reasons youth are most likely to push back



Empathy

if they knew what happened hurt someone

Platforms

if there are clear rules and reporting tools



Consensus

if they thought most people agreed with them



Audience

if they were interacting with people they knew offline



YOUNG CANADIANS PUSHING BACK AGAINST HATE ONLINE



BARRIERS

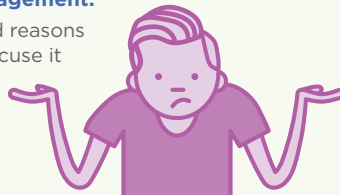
Top factors for not pushing back:

Efficacy: not knowing what to say or do

Context: not knowing if the person meant to be prejudicial

Moral Disengagement:

if they can find reasons to justify or excuse it



50%

say they are afraid it will make things worse, and that they don't know what to say or do to make a difference

50%

say they've seen other people encourage it

40%

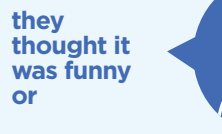
agree that people are looking for an excuse to be offended

"It's just people having fun. Stop being offended or turn off the computer."

WHY YOUTH ENGAGED



they did it without thinking



they thought it was funny or



they saw their friends doing it

WITNESSING & ENGAGING



The more often youth see casual prejudice...

10%

admit to engaging in hate online often ... And boys were most likely to engage

The more likely they are to engage in it



And the less likely they are to do something about it

50%

say they have never engaged in casual prejudice

MediaSmarts believes that...

Youth who feel prepared to recognize and respond to casual prejudice are more likely to engage in healthy debate and contribute positively to the platforms they use, empowering them to push back.

