

My Own Virtual Space

Compelling Question: How can I use a virtual space to show parts of my identity?

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-2	3-5	45–60 Minutes	Reading: R1, R2 Writing: W1, W4 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL2, SL5 Language: L4, L6
7-8	HS		



Web Related Connections

Lessons

[Emojis and Me](#)
[Identity and Diversity in My Generation](#)
[Masks, Identity and Bias](#)
[Student Dress Codes: What's Fair?](#)

Other Resources

[11 Ways Schools Can Help Kids Feel Safe in Challenging Times](#)
[Safe and Inclusive Schools for All](#)
[When Do Teachers Stay Neutral?](#)

Key Words

admonishment
 anti-racist policies
 baseless
 complaints
 disrupt
 harassed
 inclusion
 indoctrination
 pandemic
 personalize
 petition
 radicalizing
 reprimand
 solidarity
 unspeakable

LESSON OVERVIEW

As soon as teachers received the news that many schools would start the 2020-21 school year in virtual spaces, educators across the country began creating “bitmoji classrooms” to share with their students. These virtual classrooms, created on a Google or PowerPoint slide, enable teachers and others to design and personalize online classroom spaces that convey important information about who they are and create welcoming and inclusive classroom environments.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to reflect on important aspects of their identity and communicate who they are by creating their own virtual spaces. Students also have the opportunity to read and reflect on a recent news story about the consequences for a teacher whose bitmoji classroom elicited a negative response.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore what social identity is and the important aspects of their social identities.
- Students will create their own virtual spaces and choose the aspects of themselves they want to represent.
- Students will reflect on a situation where a teacher was put on leave because of items in her bitmoji classroom, which will prompt them to consider the importance of conveying values.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- [Virtual Classroom Examples](#) (project on board/smartboard or in virtual classroom)
- [Virtual Space Organizer](#) (one for each student)
- [7 Steps for Creating a Virtual Space](#) (project on board/smartboard or in virtual classroom)
- “A Texas teacher who posted Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ posters in her virtual classroom was placed on leave after parents complained” (*The Texas Tribune*, August 26, 2020, www.texastribune.org/2020/08/26/texas-teacher-black-lives-matter-LGBTQ/, one for each student)

PROCEDURES



Information Sharing: What are Virtual Spaces?

1. Begin the lesson by asking: *Has anyone heard of a bitmoji or virtual classroom? What is it?*
2. Explain to students that teachers across the country started creating “bitmoji classrooms” when many schools announced they would begin the school year with remote learning. These virtual classes, created on a Google or PowerPoint slide, enable teachers and others to design and personalize their classroom spaces, convey important information about who they are, and create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment.
3. If you’ve created your own virtual classroom in advance (highly recommended!), share yours with students. In addition, show students [virtual classroom examples](#) and engage students in a brief discussion by asking:
 - What do you see?
 - What do you notice?
 - What do you wonder?
 - What do you like?
 - What is missing



My Virtual Space

1. Explain to students that they will create their own virtual spaces. These virtual spaces can be: (1) spaces where they are learning/engaging in school, (2) spaces where they like to hang out, or (3) “fantasy” spaces where all things are possible.
2. Explain that as they design their virtual spaces, they will incorporate several aspects of who they are, deciding which they choose to share. The first area for them to consider is their social identity group. Ask students: *What is identity?* Elicit and explain the definition as follows:

Identity: The qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others.
3. Explain to students that “social identity groups” are part of their identity. Social identities describe the identity groups that people belong to that carry significance and, at times, shared experiences within a society.
4. Brainstorm a list of social identity groups, which could include some or all of the following
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Nationality
 - Residency Status
 - Religion
 - Gender
 - Gender Identity
 - Socioeconomic status
 - Family structure
 - Sexual orientation
 - (Dis)ability
 - Age/generation
 - Physical Appearance
 - Language(s) spoken

- Geography: part of country (e.g., Southwest, Northeast) or type of community (e.g., urban, suburban, rural)
5. Next, brainstorm other important aspects of who they are that could be included in their virtual spaces. This includes:
 - Hobbies, interests and talents
 - Likes and dislikes
 - Color, style and art preferences
 - Whether they want to be inside, outside or somewhere else
 - Whether anyone else is with them in the space and who that is.
 - How to use their virtual space to communicate values and promote respect, inclusion and equity
 6. Engage students in a brief discussion about these components and tell them they will have more time to explore what to include with a partner.
 7. Using the [Virtual Space Organizer](#), and considering the components of virtual spaces they've seen, give students 10–15 minutes to complete the organizer. After completing their organizer, have them share with a partner who is sitting near them. Partners should engage in some discussion about their spaces to refine their ideas.
 8. Reconvene the class. Project and review the [7 Steps for Creating a Virtual Space](#).
 9. Using the video or written instructions below, help students create their virtual spaces. If time permits, watch some of the video together and as you are watching, demonstrate how do various steps in the process.
 - Video Instructions: [Bitmoji Classroom Tutorial](#) (by Katherine Panczner)
 - Written Instructions: [How to Create a Virtual Bitmoji Classroom in Google Slides or PowerPoint](#) (Hello Teacher Lady)

Note: These instructions are based on teachers creating bitmoji classrooms. Therefore, when you are providing additional instruction to your students, explain how they can use the general instructions and ideas to create a space appropriate for young people.
 10. Have students use a combination of class time and homework time to complete their virtual spaces.
 11. When their virtual classrooms are complete, ask for volunteers to share their virtual spaces with the class.
 12. After students have shared, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What was it like to create your own virtual space?
 - What decisions did you make and how did you make them?
 - Were there aspects of your identity you wanted to share and others you didn't want to share? Please explain.
 - What was fun about doing this?
 - What was frustrating about doing this?
 - What is the benefit of us sharing our virtual spaces with each other?



Reading Activity

1. Distribute a copy of the article [“A Texas teacher who posted Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ posters in her virtual classroom was placed on leave after parents complained”](#) to each student and give them 10–15 minutes to read it silently or read aloud as a class.
2. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What happened?

- What thoughts and feelings did you have while reading?
 - What quote resonates with you and why?
 - What did you learn?
 - What is your perspective or opinion about what happened?
 - Why do you think the teacher decided not to go back to school until the school district commits to “anti-racist policies and tolerance in our classrooms?”
3. *(Optional activity or homework assignment)* Have students write a response to the essay with the following prompt: *What is your opinion about what happened with Taylor Lifka (the teacher)? If you could, what would you say to the teacher, her Assistant Principal who asked her to take it down or the school official who put her on leave?*

Closing

Have students share a new insight they had today about identity and virtual spaces.

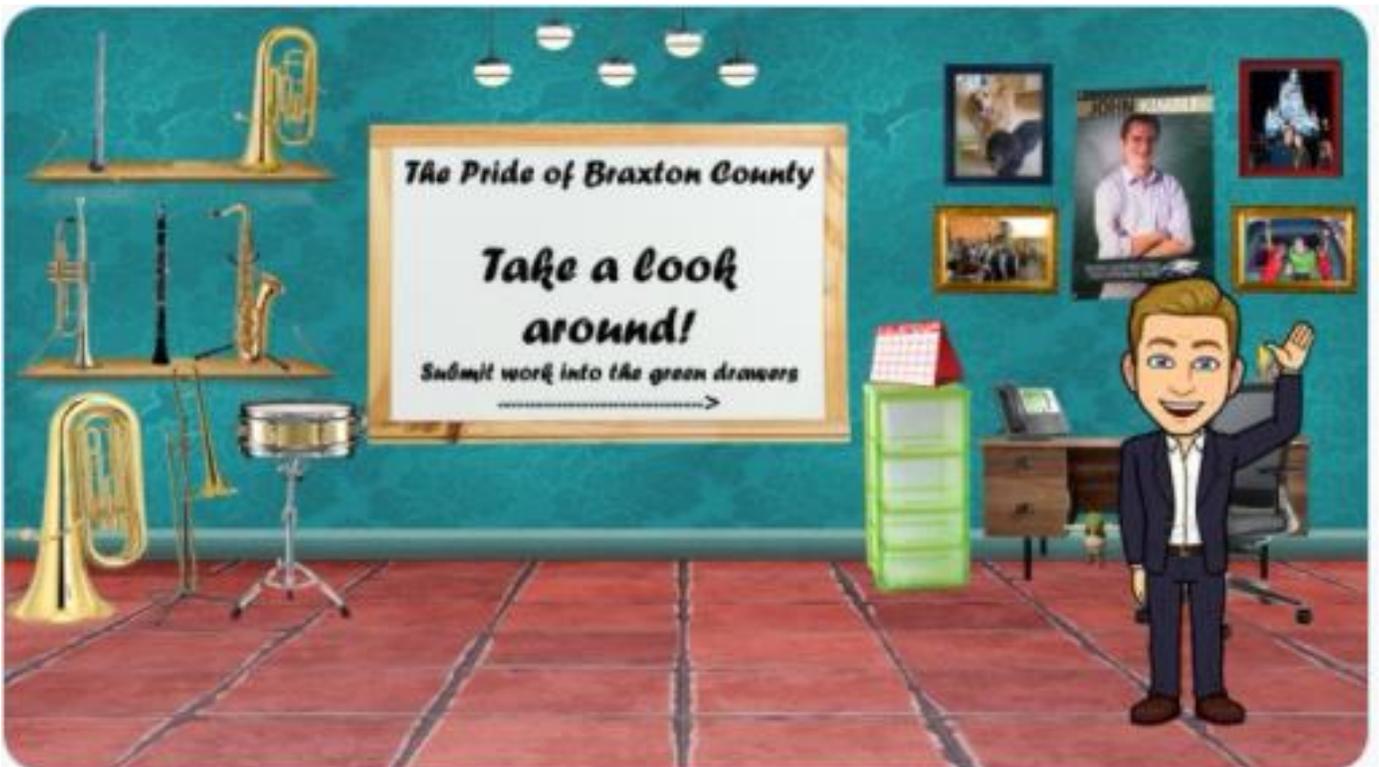
ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [15 Awesome Virtual Bitmoji Classroom Ideas](#) (Glitter Meets Glue)
- [“Bitmoji Classrooms: Why Teachers Are Buzzing About Them”](#) (Education Week, July 30, 2020)
- [Bitmoji Craze for Educators](#) (Facebook)
- [Bitmoji FUNdamentals!](#) (YouTube)
- [“Educators Turn to Bitmoji to Build Community and Engagement”](#) (Edutopia, August 14, 2020)
- [“Teachers Are Creating Virtual Bitmoji Classrooms—Cute and Helpful Too!”](#) (We Are Teachers, July 23, 2020)

Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: 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.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Writing
W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: 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.
SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Virtual Classroom Examples









Virtual Space Organizer

Name: _____

Some words I want people to use to describe my virtual space.

Color and design elements I want to use.

My space will be (*check one*): Indoors Outdoors Somewhere else (if so, indicate where below)

Social identity groups

- a. What social identity groups do I belong to?
- b. What social identity groups do I want to show in my virtual space?
- c. How will I show them?

How can I use my virtual space to communicate my values and foster respect, inclusion and equity?

What interests, hobbies, likes and dislikes do I want to show in my virtual space?

Do I want to be alone in the virtual space or do I want to include other people, characters, animals, etc.?

What furniture, objects, decorations, food or other items do I want to include?

7 Steps for Creating a Virtual Space

1. Open a Google slide or a PowerPoint slide.
2. Create your background environment (floor and wall, outdoor space, or something else).
3. Choose objects, furniture and other items to include in your space (use “search the web” to find "transparent" items).
4. Resize as needed and position items in the space.
5. Insert your bitmoji extension and decide which bitmoji to use. If you don't have a bitmoji, find the app on your phone (available for iPhone and Android) to create it.
6. Include other people, characters and animals as you desire.
7. Readjust and resize items, furniture, objects so they all fit and look organized in your space.