Introduction/Ice Breaker

The following ice breaker is recommended for your use, but you may also develop your own or utilize the sample ice breakers available at http://www.jasd.org/main.aspx?pageID=185. Before beginning the ice breaker, introduce yourself and your organization. Tell three facts about yourself. (2 minutes)

Ethics Ice Breaker: Take a Stand (3-5 minutes)

Instruct the students to stand in the center of the classroom. Ask students the following questions, and have them indicate their responses by moving to the right side of the classroom for yes, or the left side for no.

1. Do you use YouTube™? Move to the right side of the room for yes, the left side for no. Ask 2 or 3 students to share their favorite school-appropriate video clips.

2. Do you have a Facebook© page? Move to the right side of the room for yes, the left side for no.

Questions in ethics do not always yield “yes or no” answers; responses could lie on an ethics continuum depending on the situation. Tell students they may stand in the middle of the room to indicate to what degree they think something is ethical or unethical. For example, if a student thinks something is usually unethical, but not always, s/he may move 75 percent of the way to the left side of the room. The stories in questions 4-6 are true and may be used for clarification or to help students in the middle decide. For more information on the examples, see the citations that follow.

3. Do you think it is ethical to post clips on YouTube that showcase celebrities’ embarrassing moments? If it is 100% ethical, move to the right side. If it is 100% unethical move to the left side. If it is in the middle, stand where you think it lies on the ethics continuum.
   Example: During the 2007 Miss Teen USA competition, the contestant from South Carolina got nervous and gave a rambling and off point answer during her interview. Footage of this immediately spread on the internet, making her small mistake into a worldwide joke.

4. Do you think it is ethical to forward a text message or email about a person if you don’t know it is true? If it is 100% ethical, move to the right side. If it is 100% unethical move to the left side. If it is in the middle, stand where you think it lies on the ethics continuum.
   Example: A middle-school student was the brunt of a rumor, circulated via text messaging, that the student had contracted SARS while on a trip to Toronto. Upon returning to school, no one would come near the student.
   http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1230/p11s01-legn.htm

5. Do you think it is ethical join an “I Hate…” group on Facebook? If it is 100% ethical, move to the right side. If it is 100% unethical move to the left side. If it is in the middle, stand where you think it lies on the ethics continuum.
   Example: On a Friday evening in Spring 2009, a small group of bored students from Palo Alto High school started a group on Facebook called, "I Hate J. Doe". As the weekend progressed, more and more students joined the group, the comments becoming increasingly vicious. By Monday morning, over 100 high school students at two nationally recognized schools had joined the group that was directed at another student. Only a few of the bullies personally knew the targeted teen. The comments escalated from insulting and rude to actual threats of violence.