

eues wide open

Preventing
Digital
Exploitation

AN EDUCATOR STUDY GUIDE

Presented by bergenPAC's Performing Arts School
in partnership with the FBI Newark Citizens Academy Alumni Association

Created & Written by Ashley Tobias



Welcome Educators,

Thank you for bringing Eyes Wide Open: A Story Set to Song – Preventing Digital Exploitation to your students. Young people are growing up in a world where their online and offline lives are increasingly connected. While technology provides incredible opportunities for creativity, communication, and connection, it can also create situations where boundaries become blurred, trust can be manipulated, and young people may find themselves navigating experiences they never expected.

Eyes Wide Open was written with care to meet students where they are. Through live theater, original music, film, humor, and contemporary storytelling, the program presents Emma and Jax's experiences in a way that feels current, relatable, and authentic to young audiences. There are moments designed to make students laugh and recognize themselves, alongside moments that are intentionally uncomfortable or disturbing. That contrast creates space for genuine reactions and honest conversations about digital pressure, manipulation, exploitation, and the choices young people face online.

The goal is not to frighten students away from technology or lecture them about what they should and shouldn't do. Instead, Eyes Wide Open encourages students to recognize warning signs, establish healthy boundaries, support their peers, trust their instincts, and understand when and how to seek help.

This study guide is designed to continue those conversations before and after the performance through discussion, reflection, and activities. Most importantly, we hope students leave Eyes Wide Open feeling more aware, more empowered, and more confident using their voice when something doesn't feel right.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS • TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS • TALK TO SOMEONE • ASK FOR HELP • RECLAIM YOUR VOICE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize potential warning signs in online interactions.
- Reflect on personal digital boundaries and choices.
- Respond when an online interaction becomes uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Support a friend experiencing manipulation, bullying, or exploitation.
- Identify trusted adults and resources for help.

Before the Show

Use these prompts to open a thoughtful conversation without requiring students to disclose personal experiences.

What does it mean to trust someone online? Is online trust different from trusting someone you know in person?

What makes an online interaction feel safe? What behaviors might make it begin to feel uncomfortable?

Why can setting boundaries online sometimes feel difficult?

Why might someone continue communicating with a person even after something begins to feel wrong?

What does a “trusted adult” mean to you?

WHILE YOU WATCH: When does each situation begin to change? What warning signs do you notice? What makes it difficult for the characters to ask for help? What would you tell them if they were your friend?

Words to Know

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT	Information and activity connected to a person's life online, including posts, messages, photos, comments, accounts, and other digital activity.
ONLINE MANIPULATION	Using pressure, deception, attention, guilt, fear, or another tactic to influence another person's choices or behavior online.
GROOMING	A process in which someone gradually builds trust, connection, or influence with another person in order to manipulate or exploit them.
COERCION	Using pressure, threats, intimidation, guilt, or fear to try to make someone do something they do not want to do.
SEXTORTION	A form of exploitation in which someone threatens to share intimate images, videos, or information to demand money, more content, sexual activity, or other actions.
CYBERBULLYING	Bullying or harassment through phones, social media, gaming platforms, messaging apps, or other digital spaces.
BOUNDARY	A personal limit that helps define what someone is and is not comfortable with.
TRUSTED ADULT	A responsible adult a young person can approach for support, guidance, or help.
RED FLAG	A behavior or situation that may indicate something unhealthy, manipulative, inappropriate, or unsafe.
GREEN FLAG	A behavior that demonstrates respect, honesty, appropriate boundaries, safety, and healthy communication.

After the Show

Use these for classroom conversation, small groups, journaling, or written reflection.

1. When did you first notice that something wasn't right in Emma or Jax's situation?

2. Were there warning signs that seemed obvious to you as an audience member but were harder for the character to recognize?

3. Why might someone ignore a warning sign?

4. How did attention, trust, pressure, or fear affect the choices the characters made?

5. What might make asking for help feel difficult?

6. If Emma or Jax were your friend, what would you want them to know?

7. How can friends support one another without trying to handle a dangerous situation alone?

Activity: Red Flag / Green Flag

For each scenario, circle **RED FLAG**, **GREEN FLAG**, or **NOT SURE**. *Then explain why.*

1. Someone you met online asks about your hobbies. When you decline a personal question, they say, "No problem."

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

2. Someone says your conversations must stay secret because "other people wouldn't understand our relationship."

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

3. A person repeatedly asks you to send a photo after you have already said no.

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

4. A friend notices an online conversation is making you uncomfortable and encourages you to talk to an adult you trust.

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

5. Someone becomes angry when you don't answer immediately and demands to know where you were.

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

6. Someone respects when you log off, spend time with other friends, or say you don't want to discuss something.

RED FLAG • **GREEN FLAG** • NOT SURE

Activity: What Would You Do?

A friend tells you: “I sent something to someone online that I wish I hadn’t. Now they’re threatening me and telling me not to tell anyone. I’m scared I’m going to get in trouble.”

What could you say to your friend?

Who could you contact for help?

What shouldn’t you do?

REMEMBER: Being a good friend does not mean handling a dangerous situation alone. Listen. Stay with your friend. Help preserve important information. Most importantly, help them tell a trusted adult and get support.

Music & Meaning

Eyes Wide Open tells its story through more than dialogue. Music can reveal what a character is thinking or feeling even when they are not ready to say it out loud.

Choose one musical moment that stayed with you. What was the character feeling?

What did the music communicate that dialogue alone might not have?

Did your understanding of the character change during the song? Why?

Why can music be a powerful way to talk about difficult subjects?

My Digital Safety Plan

One online behavior that would make me uncomfortable:

One boundary I can set:

Three people I could consider talking to if I needed help:

STOP	I don't have to keep responding.
SAVE	Preserve messages or other information that may be important.
BLOCK	Use platform safety tools when appropriate.
TELL	Talk to a trusted adult.
REPORT	Get help reporting threatening, exploitative, or dangerous behavior.

ASKING FOR HELP IS NOT GIVING AWAY YOUR POWER. IT IS ONE WAY OF TAKING YOUR POWER BACK.

Reclaim Your Voice

One of the central messages of **Eyes Wide Open** is that a difficult decision, uncomfortable interaction, or moment of vulnerability does not define someone's future. Manipulation often depends on silence. Fear, embarrassment, and the feeling that "I'm already in too deep" can create silence. But silence does not have to be the end of the story.

Young people deserve to know they can ask questions, change their minds, establish boundaries, leave uncomfortable situations, and reach out for help.

FINAL REFLECTION

Something I want to remember from Eyes Wide Open is...

One red flag I will recognize differently now is...

If a friend came to me for help, I would...

One way I can protect my voice online is...

For Educators

Because **Eyes Wide Open** addresses cyberbullying, sextortion, manipulation, exploitation, and emotional distress, students may connect elements of the story to experiences in their own lives. Whenever possible, schools are encouraged to make students aware of counselors, administrators, mental health professionals, and other trusted adults available to them before and after the program.

Students should never be required to disclose personal experiences during classroom discussions or activities. If a student shares information suggesting that they or another young person may be experiencing exploitation, abuse, threats, or immediate danger, educators should follow their school's safeguarding procedures and all applicable reporting requirements.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Eyes Wide Open: A Story Set to Song – Preventing Digital Exploitation is presented by bergenPAC's Performing Arts School in partnership with the FBI Newark Citizens Academy Alumni Association. Created and written by **Ashley Tobias**, the program combines live theater, original music, film, and interactive discussion to help young people recognize online risks, establish healthy digital boundaries, seek help, and reclaim their voices.

School-Time Audience: Grades 6–12

Program Length: Approximately 45 minutes, including interactive discussion

Ashley Tobias

Creator • Writer • Lyricist • Director • Co-Music Producer

KEEP YOUR EYES WIDE OPEN.

Know your boundaries. Recognize when something doesn't feel right. Look out for one another. Know who you can trust. Understand that no matter how complicated a situation may feel, you can always ask for help.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS. USE IT.

NEED HELP?

If you or someone you know is experiencing online exploitation, threats, or sextortion, you are not alone and help is available.

FBI

Call 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324) or report online through FBI Tips.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) or make a report through the [CyberTipline](#). NCMEC can also help minors remove or limit the online sharing of explicit images through [Take It Down](#).

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 for free, confidential emotional support, 24/7.

If there is immediate danger, call 911 or local law enforcement.

A woman with long, wavy red hair is shown in profile, looking down. She is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a vibrant red with a textured, almost splattered appearance. Overlaid on the left side are several text bubbles: "old.", "u ❤️", "tell anyone...", and "re different".

How did you want Emma's story to end?
What did you hope would happen for her?
What support did you want her to receive?
What do you wish she had said, done, or realized?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

How Did You Want *JAX'S STORY* to End?

How did you want Jax's story to end?
What did you hope would happen for him?
What support did you want him to receive?
What do you wish he had said, done, or realized?

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