BULLYING IN THE WIRED WORLD

The Internet is unique. It can be a wonderful tool that allows us access to information and the world around us. Electronic communications have many positives like:

- It can help "level out the playing field" for young people.
- It can help kids develop social skills.
- Young people are very social and they thrive on being in touch with their friends 24/7.

On the negative side, there is the "power of anonymity". With no face-to-face contact and messages seemingly hard to trace, some people engage in behaviour they would normally shy away from. This lack of feedback decreases empathy on the part of the person who is bullying. They have no way of knowing how the individual is reacting. Electronic communication encourages impulsivity and, unfortunately, once something's on the Internet, it can't be erased.

This "power of anonymity" may result in kids:

- sending insults, rumours, or threats
- stealing personal info to create fake identities
- creating voting booths to put others down like "who's the ugliest person in school?"
- posting pictures taken with cell phones
- stalking others (e.g. sexual predators)

Students need to develop critical thinking skills to protect their personal privacy and safety online. They need advise on how to distinguish between fact and opinion and recognize online hate if they encounter it.

RESOURCES

These websites have complete teacher's guides and activities:

Media Awareness Network
www.media-awareness.ca/english/games/index.cfm
and **CyberSmart! Curriculum**
www.cybersmartcurriculum.org

Other websites for educators:
www.bewebaware.ca   www.cyberbullying.ca
www.cyberwise.ca   www.wiredkidz.org
www.netsmartz.org

From the Public Health Resource Centre:
(Call 519-883-2256 to book)
"Cyber Bullies" – DVD for Gr. 7 and up
"Internet Awareness for Parents" – DVD & booklet.

Websites for Youth:
www.chatdanger.com   www.cyberwise.ca
www.netsmartz.org   www.wiredkids.org

DID YOU KNOW?

- Among children who report being bullied, 74 percent were bullied at school and 27 percent over the Internet.
- Fifty-nine percent of students have assumed a different identify on the Internet. Of these, 17 percent pretended to be someone else to "act mean to people and not get into trouble."
- Twenty percent of Grade 4 students access the Internet through their own personal computer.

Stats from "*Young Canadians in a Wired World*"

Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH

For more information, contact Region of Waterloo Public Health 519-883-2003 ext. 5356

www.region.waterloo.on.ca/bullying