Imagine Newsletter

A School Climate Approach to Bullying Prevention

Information for School Staff

Cyber Bullying

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is the use of e-mails, cell phones, text messages, instant messaging, or web sites to upset or purposely harm someone.

This may include gossiping, starting rumours, or sending threats. These messages are repeated over time by a person or a group.

Can I tell if it's going on?

➢ Not always, as electronic devices being used may not be at school or may be used away from adult supervision.

➢ Cyber bullying is hidden from adults more than any other type of bullying.

➢ Young people may hide that they are being cyber bullied for fear of losing their internet or cell phone privileges. They may not know who the cyber bully is.

How can cyber bullying affect students at your school?

Even if cyber bullying is occurring outside the school or classroom, it can create the same issues as other types of bullying.

The student being targeted might not be able to concentrate, be upset, withdrawn and fearful or complain of nondescript "illnesses".

Cyber bullying can occur on school computers and even home may not be a safe place for the child being bullied.

Some strategies cyber bullies may use include (but are not limited to):

➢ Sending out embarrassing pictures

➢ Sending threats

➢ Messaging a group of friends to gang up on an individual

➢ Building trust by sending messages pretending to be someone else and then embarrass the target. They may also blame someone else to avoid getting caught.

DID YOU KNOW?

➢ 50 percent of kids say they are online most of the time

➢ 25 percent say they have received messages saying hateful things

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How can you help your students?

Talk to your students about their "cyber-space" experiences and cyber safety. This includes letting them know:

- Not everything said online is true
- Messages shouldn't be sent when they are angry
- Not reply to a person who bullies online – this takes away their power and control
- Not to open messages from a stranger
- Avoid posting personal information or their picture on the internet
- Not agreeing to meet someone they have met online
- Trust their "gut". Turn off the computer if they feel uncomfortable and tell an adult

You should also consider:

- Encouraging students to enjoy a variety of other activities
- Developing school rules about internet access and cell phones/camera phones on school property
- Having a class lesson/discussion on safety and communication or inviting the Police Department to speak to students about cyber safety

If you suspect cyber bullying is going on, tell your students to:

- not reply to worrisome messages
- save the messages as this is your evidence – police can track messages and find where they came from

You should then:

- inform the student's parent/guardian
- advise the parent/guardian to inform the internet, instant messaging or cell phone provider
- recommend that they contact the police. There are Canadian laws that protect against harassment and discrimination.

Resources Available

Teaching Kit

Cyber Bullies (for Gr. 7 and up) in DVD format – call the Public Health Resource Centre at 519-883-2256 to book

Websites for Educators

www.cyberbullying.ca
www.bewebaware.ca
www.netsmartz.org
www.wiredkids.org
www.cyberwise.ca

Websites for Youth:

www.chatdanger.com
www.cyberwise.ca
www.netsmartz.org
www.wiredkids.org

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

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www.region.waterloo.on.ca/bullying