



Technology: Another form of bullying emerges!

The Social Catalyst Extended

Social engagements are the necessary foundation for antagonistic behavior. The present state of technology creates unlimited opportunities which may serve as a catalyst for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying may be described as a student who “is tormented, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child...using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones (Wired Safety Group, 2008). Cyberbullying involves actions between minors. When adults are involved, the same action(s) are referred to as “cyberharassment” or “cyberstalking.” Unless the cyber bully makes a threat, cyberbullying is

usually thought of as “repetitive occurrences” – multiple rude or embarrassing posts, occurring repeatedly.

The Health Resources and Services Administration defines cyberbullying as “online social cruelty or electronic bullying” which may involve “sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images” (HRSA, 2008). Cyberbullying may also include posting sensitive or private information or posing as someone else (HRSA, 2008). The HRSA states that children and youth cyberbully through emails, instant messages, cell phone interaction, web pages (Facebook, MySpace, blogs), and chat rooms (HRSA,2008).



In the past, bullying was based on encounters with specific places and times. Our technological freedom has given cyberbullying the opportunity of limitless access, quick and wide distribution, and anonymity (HRSA, 2008). “When a bully beats you up on the playground, home is a safe haven. In the digital world, communication is always possible” (cyberbulling.org, 2008).

Inside this issue:

The Power of Technology	2
The Reasons for Cyberbullying	2
The School’s Role (continued)	2
Allied Concerns	3
Create an Advertising Campaign	3
A False Sense of Security	3
October Q&A	4

Special points of interest:

- ♦ *The opportunity technology presents to students.*
- ♦ *How far should a school go when disciplining cyberbullying?*
- ♦ *Why do students cyberbully others?*
- ♦ *Building Internet awareness and responsibility.*
- ♦ *The Internet - not as private as one thinks.*

The School’s Role in Cyberbullying

In 2006, a telephone survey questioned preteens (6-11 year olds) and teens (12-17 year olds) regarding where cyberbullying messages were received:

*45% of preteens and 30% of teens received messages at school;

*44% of preteens and 70% of teens received messages at home;

*34% of preteens and 25% of teens received messages while visiting a friend (HRSA, 2008).

Although less than 50% of cyberbullying takes place at school, the percentages are noteworthy. Despite the efforts of school districts to reel in bullying behavior, students are still finding

ways to reach others. When cyberbullying actions such as those at home or at a friend’s house take place, the school’s involvement should be limited. Aside from giving the parent an avenue for resources and support, when the school disciplines a student for something outside of

(continued on page 2)

The Power of Technology

As advanced technologies first arrived in classrooms, efforts were made to ensure cyber safety. Email correspondence, internet surfing and chat rooms were blocked. Educators were mindful of internet access but as students became more sophisticated, many found ways to circumvent monitoring procedures and programs. With omnipresent avenues



**“You can be a target
24/7.”**

(cyberbulling.org, 2008)

for students to communicate, the educator’s ability to monitor student interaction have become extremely challenging.

According to the HRSA, a 2006 study found that instant messaging was the primary culprit (HRSA, 2008). Rules and policies are in place on many campuses regarding the use of cellular phones during the school day but like software glitches, opportunity for cellular use often goes undetected by educators during the

school day.

School administrators are doing more and more to educate staff members on what to do if cyberbullying is brought to the attention of the school. “If cyberbullying occurs through the school district’s Internet system, you are obligated to take action but if the cyberbullying occurs off campus, actions you take will be different” (HRSA, 2008).

The Reasons for Cyberbullying

Like bullying at school, motivations for becoming antagonistic toward another are numerous. A student may desire popularity, seek revenge, be frustrated, enjoy the attention, feel they are defending him or herself, righting a wrong, or taking up for another. “Sometimes they do it for entertainment or because they are bored and have too much time on their hands and too many tech toys available to them” (Wired

Safety Group, 2008).

Solutions to cyberbullying and responses to those who cyberbully differ as do their motivations. “Because their motives differ, the solutions and responses to each type of cyberbullying incident has to differ too” (Wired Safety Group, 2008). The methods for preventing cyberbullying are much like those used to address traditional bullying

**“Who knows why kids do
anything?”
(Wired Safety Group, 2008)**

behaviors. It begins by educating students about consequences, respect, self-confidence and all that exhibits the “golden rule” of treating others how you would want to be treated.

The School’s Role in Cyberbullying (continued...)

school time, “they are often sued for exceeding their authority and violating the student’s free speech right... they also, often lose” (Wired Safety Group, 2008). It is recommended that provisions be added to school policies for “reserving the right to discipline the student for actions taken off-campus if they are intended to have an effect on a student or they adversely affect the

safety and well-being of the student while in school” (Wired Safety Group, 2008). Issues involving bullying should be “contractual” and not “constitutional” (Wired Safety Group, 2008). When policy provisions are in place, claims of exceeding authority can be dismissed.



When cyberbullying actions, such as those at home or at a friend’s house take place, the school’s involvement should be limited.

Allied Concerns

Unrestrained access to cyber communications also creates the serious concern of whom the student may be communicating with. In 2006, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children & Cox Communications studied online behavior of 13-17 year olds. "The study was designed to determine students' existing Internet behaviors and their conceptions of safe Internet behavior"



"Young people need to be educated about the seriousness of the issue [cyberbullying] and think about its repercussions."

(cyberbullying.org, 2008)

(netsmartz.org, 2008).

*71% reported they had received messages online from an unknown individual.

*40% respond to someone they do not know.

*18% will tell an adult when they receive messages from someone unknown.

*45% had been asked to give personal information to someone unknown.

*30% said they considered meeting an unknown person whom they had met online.

*14% said they had met someone unknown whom they had met online.

After offering online safety information, the post results determined that student awareness had increased (netsmartz.org, 2008). This brings hope to educators across the country as we create effective monitoring programs for student communications in the cyber communication age.

Create an Advertising Campaign

The National Crime Prevention Council has aired several creative advertisements with campaign slogans aimed at cyberbullying. The first of many to follow was "Don't Write It. Don't Forward It." A recommended slogan from Thibodaux, LA was "Illuminate Cyberbullying." A contributor from Lyndon B. Johnson Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas submitted "Words Really Hurt."

Ask students to analyze these campaign slogans (for more slogans, log onto www.ncpc.org) by asking the following questions:

- 1) Were the slogans effective? Did the slogan make me think about cyberbullying?
- 2) What other words would create a powerful cyberbullying message? Why?

**"Cyberbullying is a problem that affects almost half of all American teens."
(NCPC, 2008)**

Challenge students to create their own campaign slogans and advertisements. Ask the school to vote on the most effective slogan and build a campus-wide awareness for internet safety.

A False Sense of Security

The internet often creates a false sense of safety because computer usage frequently begins from the privacy and comfort of our home. In 2006, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children & Cox Communications found that 20% of the teens they studied felt "safe to share personal information on a public blog or networking site (netsmartz.org, 2008). 37% said

they are not concerned with "someone using information they've posted online in ways they don't want" (netsmartz.org, 2008). As educators build technology awareness, it's also vital to raise the false perception of internet safety.



Ohio University Researcher, Christine Suniti Bhat, states that for adults, the computer is much more work-oriented. "But for young people, a computer is their social hub"

(cyberbullying.org, 2008)

The Trevor Romain Company

4412 Spicewood Springs Rd.
Suite 705
Austin, Texas 78759

Phone: 512-480-8818

Fax: 512-480-8815

E-mail:

daphne@trevorromain.com



Promoting social & emotional fitness for kids.

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

Resources:

Bill Belsey. "Beyond the Schoolyard: Bullies take their intimidation to digital media." http://www.cyberbullying.org/pdf/Beyond_the_Schoolyard_Nov_26_2007.pdf (accessed October, 2008).

Health Resources and Services Administration. "Cyberbullying." <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adult/indexAdult.asp?Area=cyberbullying> (accessed October, 2008).

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later (2006)." <http://www.netsmartz.org/safety/statistics.htm> (accessed October, 2008).

National Crime Prevention Council. "Delete Cyberbullying." <http://www.ncpc.org/newsroom/current-campaigns/cyberbullying> (accessed October, 2008).

National Education Association. "What Educators Can Do About Cyberbullying." http://www.nea.org/nea_today/0605/stopcyberbullying.html (accessed October, 2008).

Wired Safety Group. "STOP Cyberbullying." <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/prevention/index.html> (accessed October, 2008).

October Q&A

I am responsible for overseeing the steps taken when a discipline referral concerns bullying, including cyberbullying. What are some general guidelines for addressing a cyberbullying incident?

Bullying and cyberbullying require more examination where discipline is concerned. First and foremost, make sure you follow district policy if one is in place.

The National Education Association has given several recommendations when



"Cyberbullying is potentially more emotionally damaging to young people because online communications can be vicious..."

(NEA, 2008)

responding to cyberbullying which include the following:

*If cyberbullying has occurred while at school, or on campus, follow formal discipline procedures.

*Contact the parents of both parties involved and provide assistance with Internet resources, such as managing Internet usage and parental controls.

*If the cyberbullying has taken place off campus, please advise the parents of both parties and pro-

vide further steps that can take place (filing a complaint, contacting an attorney, etc.).

*Include cyber responsibility when teaching lessons regarding Internet usage.

*Take the opportunity to address cyberbullying in parent meetings, student education, and newsletters.

For more information, see the resource section (NEA, 2008).

If you have a question concerning cyberbullying or any other topic our company covers, please email daphne@trevorromain.com. Your name and email address will remain confidential.