

Next-Gen Bullying

K12 Education White Paper



Defining Bullying

Bullying is a significant problem affecting millions of students. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 28% of students in grades 6-12 have experienced bullying, 20% in grades 9-12. It has also been found that 30% of students have admitted to bullying others. Three-quarters of all kids say they have been bullied or teased.

Being bullied has an emotional and physical impact on students. The stress of dealing with bullies can make kids feel hurt, scared, sick, lonely, embarrassed and sad. It is hard to keep their mind on schoolwork when they are worried about how to deal with the bully near their locker. They can become withdrawn, not wanting to play outside or go to school. Bullying bothers everyone — and not just the kids who are getting picked on. Bullying can make school a place of fear and can lead to more violence and more stress.

Bullying is defined as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.” The behavior is generally repeated, or has the potential to be. Bullying is a big problem that comes in many forms. There are four types of bullying; *verbal* and *physical bullying*, as well as *social bullying* and *cyberbullying*. Threats from bullies usually start out as verbal, and evolve into physical actions. Bullies often use a perceived sense of superiority, such as their strength, knowledge of embarrassing information, or popularity to threaten someone they believe to be weak. Also, bullying may be done as a projection — where the bully takes out their own frustrations on someone else.

The Rise of Cyberbullying

While bullying has been around since the beginning of time, cyberbullying has increased exponentially with the boom of twenty-first century technologies. These new discoveries and innovations have changed everything, from how we drive to how we teach, and, most substantially, how we communicate. These new channels of communication, while highly valuable to modern society, also have negative aspects. One of the most prominent of these among school-aged children is cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Examples of this include malicious text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and posting embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

Cyberbullying is usually not a one-time communication. Kids usually know it when they see it, while parents may be more worried about the lewd language used by the kids than the hurtful effect of rude and embarrassing posts.

Cyberbullying is different than verbal, social or physical, because it has the potential to follow the student

home long after they leave school. It can happen any time of the day or night, and leave the student feeling like they cannot escape their attackers. However, unlike the three other forms of bullying, it can be difficult to track a cyberbully because messages and images can be posted anonymously and rapidly spread around a wide audience.

Research shows that 95% of all teens are now online, and 85% of these teens are on social media. Approximately 88% of social media using teens have witnessed other people being mean or cruel on social media.

From 2010-2011, one million children and teens reported being harassed, threatened, or subjected to other forms of cyberbullying on Facebook.

Since cyberbullying often takes place in the home, versus on a campus, educators may feel that they are overstepping boundaries if they intervene. However, students who are cyberbullied are usually being bullied on the school campus as well. Oftentimes, schools may not even know of this bullying, and are unaware that their students feel unsafe.

Schools can be very effective brokers in working with the parents to stop and remedy cyberbullying situations. They can also educate the students on cyberethics and the law. By adding a provision to the school's acceptable use policy, schools can avoid the claim that their actions exceed their legal authority for off-campus cyberbullying actions. Schools can reserve the right to discipline the student for their actions taken off-campus when the intentions of the bullying act are to adversely affect the safety and well-being of the victim while in school. This makes it a contractual, not a constitutional, issue.

How Cyberbullying Works

Cyberbullying is starting at younger ages each year. The average age for a kids' first cell phone is just over 11 years old. With 77% of kids ages 12-17 having a cell phone, direct attacks (messages sent to kids directly) are the most commonly used forms of cyberbullying. Cell phones are the primary form of communication for teens and tweens; they send texts more frequently than placing phone calls.

Cyberbullies use many different methods:

1. Instant Messaging/Text Messaging Harassment. Kids may send hateful or threatening messages to other kids without realizing that, while not said in real life, unkind or threatening messages are hurtful and very serious. A kids may create a screen name that is very similar to another kid's name. The name may have an additional "i" or one less "e". They may use this name to say inappropriate things to other users while posing as the other person.

2. Stealing Passwords. A kid may steal another child's password and begin to chat with other people, pretending to be the other kid. He/she may say mean things that offend and anger this person's friends or even strangers. Meanwhile, readers won't know it is not really that person they are talking to.

3. Blogs and Online Journals. They are a fun way for kids to send messages for all of their friends to see. However, kids sometimes use these blogs to damage other kids' reputations or invade their privacy. For example, in one case, a boy posted a bunch of blogs about his breakup with his ex-girlfriend, explaining how she destroyed his life, calling her degrading names. Their mutual friends read about this and criticized her. She was embarrassed and hurt, all because another kid posted mean, private, and false information about her.

4. Sending Pictures through E-mail and Cell Phones. There have been cases of teens sending mass e-mails to other users, that include nude or degrading pictures of other teens. Once an e-mail like this is sent, it is passed around to hundreds of other people within hours; there is no way of controlling where it goes.

With sites like Instagram and Snapchat and with modern cell phones, kids can easily send and receive pictures directly to everyone in their contact list on their phones. Also there are reports of an emerging issue of kids taking pictures of other students in locker rooms, bathrooms and dressing rooms. These pictures are then shared in a text message or on the internet.

5. Internet Polling. Who's Hot? Who's Not? Who is the biggest "loser" in the sixth grade? These types of questions run rampant on the Internet polls, created by kids. Such questions are often very offensive to others and are another way that kids can "bully" other kids online.

6. Interactive Gaming. Many kids today are playing interactive games on gaming devices such as X-Box Live and Sony Play Station 2 Network. These gaming devices allow children to communicate by chat and live Internet phone with anyone they find themselves matched with in a game online. Sometimes kids verbally abuse others in their group using threats and lewd language. Sometimes they take it further, by locking them out of games, passing false rumors about them or hacking into their accounts.

7. Junk E-Mail and IMs. Often cyberbullies will sign their victims up for e-mail and IM marketing lists, sometimes even to porn sites. When the victim receives thousands of e-mails from pornographers their parents usually get involved, either blaming them (assuming they have been visiting porn sites) or making them change their e-mail or IM address.

8. Impersonation. Posing as a victim, a cyberbully can do considerable damage . They may post a provocative message in a hate group's chatroom, pretending to be the victim. They also send a message to someone posing as the victim, saying hateful or threatening things.

Take a Stand Against Bullying

Bullying can affect the level of safety that students feel at school, impacting their ability to learn. Therefore, the best way to address bullying is to stop it before it starts. Education can help considerably in preventing and dealing with the consequences of bullying by teaching students to not stand silently while others are being tormented, as well as the importance of reporting any incident that they witness. The sad truth is that too many students are bullied, and they don't always report it. Only about 20-30% of students who are bullied report it to an adult. Sometimes they feel ashamed of being a victim. Sometimes they fear the stigma of being called a "snitch".

To help more students come forward to report bullying, Jupiter iO has unique new Anti-Bullying Hotline. This feature lets students send anonymous messages to their counselor, teacher, or any trusted staff member. Because it is anonymous, students avoid the embarrassment and stigma, and because they can use their smartphones, they can do it immediately, and bystanders can send videos and photos. The hotline allows teachers and staff to correspond with the student while the student remains anonymous, to give them emotional support. This gives students the peace of mind to report bullying that normally would have been overlooked.

With this anonymous method of reporting bullying, students can take an active role to help end cyberbullying. School administration, community groups and even school policing staff can receive these anonymous tips and take action quickly when necessary to shut down the site, profile or stop the cyberbullying itself. Jupiter iO helps your campus remain a safe environment that fosters learning.