Cyberbullying, what it entails and how to handle it

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying (also known as online bullying) is repeated behavior intended to tease, demean or harass someone less powerful.

Common types of bullying behaviors:

- **Flaming and trolling** – teasing or fighting online using angry, demeaning or vulgar language.
- **Harassment** – repeatedly sending insulting, obsessive and/or unwanted messages.
- **Denigration** – sending or posting gossip/rumors in order to damage a reputation or friendships.
- **Impersonation and catfishing** – pretending to be someone else in attempt to get the victim in trouble, damage their reputation, or lure them into unwanted situations.
- **Outing** – sharing someone else's secrets, embarrassing information or images/videos online.
- **Trickery** – pretending to be friendly in order to convince someone to reveal secrets or embarrassing information, with the intention of publicly sharing it online.
- **Exclusion** – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from a discussion or online group.
- **Stalking** – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates fear.

Class discussion: gaming

Being a good sport

Just because there's no referee in online gaming, doesn't mean it's okay to be a bad sport or a sore loser. Advise students to recognize when emotions are getting heated and take a deep breath before they speak.

Spotting toxic behavior

There's a big difference between a joke and being a jerk. If they notice the conversation is starting to "punch down" – making fun of someone when they're down, weak or struggling, then it's probably not funny – especially if the target isn't laughing.

Not feeding the trolls

Everyone can do their part by not joining in when behavior gets toxic. They can block, report and/or mute bad behavior as they come across it. Gaming should be fun, safe and inclusive for everyone.

How can teachers help prevent and respond to cyberbullying?

Make the rules clear and your support available

Start by working with fellow teachers to foster inclusive, respectful class environments. Develop lesson plans on bullying behaviors: what it is, how to spot it, what to do about it, how to have empathy and standing up for others. Ensure students have multiple ways to discreetly reach out to you or other trusted adults.

Include parents

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur 24/7, which means it can reach outside school hours into the home. That's why it's vital to also teach parents about the risks, laws and procedures they should follow if their child is being cyberbullied or is taking part in bullying behaviors.

Develop your skills and awareness

Familiarize yourself with the technologies and tech terms your students use, so you can clearly understand what they are dealing with. Your IT staff may be able to help with this. Develop awareness of the student behaviors that can reveal they are bullying or being bullied.

Help the victim create a safety plan

If someone comes to you with a cyberbullying problem, a great action is to co-author a safety plan. This might include changing login details, blocking bullies, reporting negative posts, filtering certain words, turning off location tracking and logging out of accounts after use.

Quiz

Page 2 of this document features a short quiz. Use it as a departure point to see how much students understand or as a summative assessment to see how much they have learned. Answers are below so that they do not appear on the sheet.

1. Pretending you're someone else. Sending repeated anonymous messages. Making a meme about someone you don't like. Making a private group about someone you don't like. Making fun of someone without saying their name. Revealing someone else's information. Reposting a rumor somebody else already shared.
2. Block the bully, tell a trusted adult and make a safety plan.
3. Block, mute or report their account.
4. Think twice before posting anything and report any negative behavior.
5. Increased absences from school. Loss of interest in hobbies and activities. Depression, anxiety, self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Staying safe from cyberbullying

Microsoft

Are you ready to handle bullying behavior?

1. Which seven are examples of cyberbullying behaviors?

   ☐ Pretending you're someone else to get others to share secrets with you

   ☐ Sending repeated anonymous messages

   ☐ Making a meme about someone you don't like

   ☐ Reporting a violent post

   ☐ Starting your own blog

   ☐ Making a private group to discuss someone you don't like

   ☐ Blocking someone for their negative behaviors

   ☐ Making fun of someone without saying their name

   ☐ Revealing someone else's private information

   ☐ Reposting a rumor someone else already shared

2. Which one of these should you do if you are being cyberbullied?

   ☐ Keep it to yourself and see if it stops

   ☐ Confront the bully directly and threaten to do the same back to them

   ☐ Block the bully, tell a trusted adult and make a safety plan

   ☐ Get your friends together and publicly shame the bully

   ☐ Delete all your accounts and stop going to school

3. What should you do if someone is behaving badly while gaming?

   ☐ Join in, because it's just fun

   ☐ Block, mute or report their account

   ☐ Try to turn the other players against them

4. What can you do to help prevent bullying behaviors?

   ☐ Ignore cyberbullying if you see it – you don't want to embarrass anyone

   ☐ Wait until it gets really serious, in case the victim is exaggerating things

   ☐ Think twice before posting anything and report any bad behavior you see

   ☐ Confront the bullies before any teachers find out

5. Which three can be warning signs that someone is being cyberbullied?

   ☐ Increased absences from school

   ☐ Suddenly getting a new hairstyle

   ☐ Loss of interest in hobbies and activities

   ☐ Depression, anxiety, self-harm or suicidal thoughts