

Preventing Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Educators



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- 1. Formally assess** the extent and scope of the problem within your school district by collecting survey and/or interview data from your students. Once you have a baseline measure of what is going on in your school, specific strategies can be implemented to educate students and staff about online safety and Internet use in creative and powerful ways.
- 2. Teach students that all forms of bullying are unacceptable**, and that cyberbullying behaviors are potentially subject to discipline. Have a conversation with students about what "substantial disruption" means. They need to know that even a behavior that occurs miles away from the school could be subject to school sanction if it substantially disrupts the school environment.
- 3. Specify clear rules** regarding the use of the Internet, computers, and other electronic devices. Acceptable Use Policies tend to be commonplace in school districts, but these must be updated to cover online harassment. **Post signs or posters** in school computer labs, hallways, and classrooms to remind students to responsibly use technology.
- 4. Use peer mentoring** - where older students informally teach lessons and share learning experiences with younger students - to promote positive online interactions.
- 5. Consult with your school attorney BEFORE incidents occur** to find out what actions you can or must take in varying situations.
- 6. Create a comprehensive formal contract** specific to cyberbullying in the school's policy manual, or introduce clauses within the formal "honor code" which identify cyberbullying as an example of inappropriate behavior.
- 7. Implement blocking/filtering software** on your computer network to prevent access to certain Web sites and software. Just remember that a tech-savvy student can often find ways around these programs.
- 8. Cultivate a positive school climate**, as research has shown a link between a perceived "negative" environment on campus and an increased prevalence of cyberbullying offending and victimization among students. In general, it is crucial to establish and maintain a school climate of respect and integrity where violations result in informal or formal sanction.
- 9. Educate your community.** Utilize specially-created cyberbullying curricula, or general information sessions such as assemblies and in-class discussions to raise awareness among youth. Invite specialists to come talk to staff and students. Send information out to parents. Sponsor a community education event. Invite parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and any other relevant adult. Bribe if necessary.
- 10. Designate a "Cyberbullying Expert"** at your school who is responsible for educating him/herself about the issues and then passing on important points to other youth-serving adults on campus.

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The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. For more information, visit <http://www.cyberbullying.us>. © 2009 Cyberbullying Research Center - Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin