

Why Bother about Cyberbullying?

Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation (BCSC) has a strong focus on bullying prevention within their schools and uses an evidence-based program/curriculum designed to address this issue effectively. Not all bullying is physical, and the ability to hurt someone verbally/emotionally can occur outside the realm of traditional face-to-face encounters. With the incorporation of multiple communications technologies into our daily lives, bullying now also occurs online and via other electronic means. This type of bullying is known as **Cyberbullying**. In response, BCSC has recognized the need to expand its bullying prevention efforts to include Cyberbullying prevention and Internet/Cyber safety.

BCSC has established a subcommittee of the Bullying Prevention Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan for educating all stakeholders -students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and community members- about this potential for misuse of these technologies and to promote the responsible and safe use of Internet/Cyber communications, both within and beyond the walls of school buildings. General starting resources may be found at <http://www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx> or <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/cyber-bullying.aspx>.

Over the next three months, information will be shared with the community via multiple formats designed to assist parents with minimizing their child's chances of being the target of such attacks. During the upcoming school year, teachers will receive training on Cyberbullying and understand how to recognize, address, and prevent these incidents. Students will receive education that will give them the tools they need to stay safe while away from school and in controlled environments. Parents and other community members will have opportunities to attend educational forums and have access to a designated school contact person for issues related to Cyberbullying, as well as online resources and links.

The following is an excerpt from www.parade.com (the full online article http://www.parade.com/articles/editions/2007/edition_02-25-2007/Cyberbullying includes a video link to the Today's show Matt Lauer's interview of Rosalind Wiseman).

Kids are using technology to hurt and humiliate each other.

How To Fight the New Bullies

By *Rosalind Wiseman*

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divagirl: *Hey, loser, watch your back.*

surferchick: *What r u talking about?*

divagirl: *Why don't you kill yourself while u r ahead?*

surferchick: *Why can't you just leave me alone?*

divagirl: *Ugly girls like you need to be put in their place.*

Bullies used to be big kids who picked on smaller ones. But instant messages (like the exchange above), cell phones and the Internet have changed that. Today, young people are using technology against each other: It's called cyberbullying, and it can be as frightening as face-to-face aggression. While most parents worry that their child will fall victim to a sexual predator online, cyberbullying often slips under the radar. Here's what you need to know:

Cyberbullies use e-mail, instant messages (IMs), cell phones, text messages, photos, videos and social networking sites to humiliate and threaten others. For example, a student uses her cell-phone camera to take a picture of a classmate changing clothes after gym, then uploads it onto her computer and forwards it to friends along with cruel commentary.

What makes cyberbullying so easy—and tempting—is the mask of anonymity the Web provides, along with a potentially huge audience. As Parry Aftab, executive director of wiredsafety.org, explains: "There's a lack of social norms when children use technology to communicate. Because you can be anonymous, there's no fear of detection. Even if you identify yourself, you don't see people's reactions and realize you have gone too far." For the victim, cyberbullying can be especially damaging because it's so pervasive. . . .

Consider these statistics...

90% of middle school students have had their feelings hurt online.

75% have visited a Web site bashing another student.

40% have had their password(s) stolen and changed by a bully who then locked them out of their own account or sent communications posing as them.

Only 15% of parents polled knew what cyberbullying was.

SOURCE: wiredsafety.org