



Are schools responsible for protecting kids from cyberbullying?

GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage discusses issues related to cyberbullying. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

Cyberbullying Organizations

Cyberbullying happens when people use cell phones, e-mail, chat rooms, or sites such Facebook to threaten or intimidate someone. There are many different ways that young people can learn about cyberbullying. There are a variety of organizations that offer information and advice. One of these organizations is called WiredSafety. WiredSafety is for people of all ages who experience uncomfortable situations online, on cellphones, or on gaming devices. WiredSafety is run by a group of unpaid volunteers who understand how digital technologies work and are abused.



image from www.wiredsafety.org

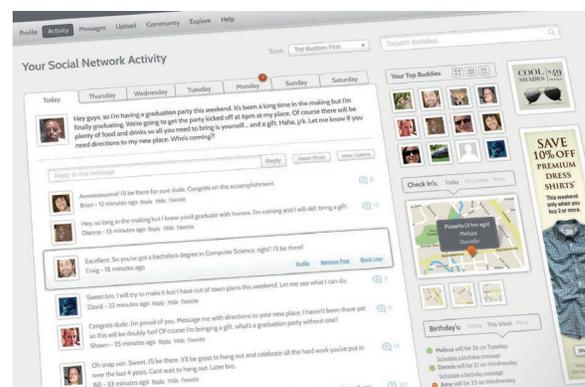


School Climate

Many problems related to cyberbullying begin at school. Schools have become more and more involved in programs that discourage bullying both around school and online. Whereas the word “climate” is generally used to describe weather conditions, “school climate” has come to mean the atmosphere that is felt at the school. Most principals realize that school climate is almost as important as school instruction; they want their students to feel safe and for all adults and students to work together to make school a positive community. Young people are encouraged to develop healthy relationships with a variety of students.

False Profiles

The word profile means describing something in outline form. It can either be drawn or written. When we say that someone created a false profile online, we are saying that the person described himself and his life in a way that is not truthful. Facebook does not allow false profiles on its site. They say that they are committed to investigating and removing false profiles. Libel, or writing things that aren't true about someone, is against the law. However, when free website owners don't ask for names or addresses, tracking offenders can be difficult. Some cases have gone to court, and people have been awarded money for their pain when they have suffered as a result of untrue profiles.





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EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
School Leaders	Many school leaders believe they are responsible for providing a healthy school climate for students. In creating this atmosphere, they do things to help students feel safe. Many schools have a “zero tolerance” policy, which means teachers punish students for any rule that is broken, regardless of the circumstances. These zero tolerance policies were created to prevent violence and drug abuse in the schools. Many administrators believe that this should extend to cyberbullying among students, since it is a form of emotional violence.	Some school leaders don’t want to take on the responsibility of protecting students from cyberbullying. They fear it will cost too much money and valuable time. They may feel they can’t control what goes on outside of school and that is outside of their authority. These leaders think that parents and others should be responsible for preventing cyberbullying. They don’t want to risk being sued for something that they can’t really control.
Students	Some students believe that it is the responsibility of the school to protect them from cyberbullying. They feel vulnerable, like they could be easily hurt or harmed and want to know that other students who engage in this kind of cruel activity will be punished. They want to feel safe at school.	Other students do not think they need to be protected by the schools. They feel that they can handle these kinds of things on their own and don’t want the school interfering or getting in the way. Students may also prefer to get help from their parents or other adults, if they do need help against cyberbullying.
Parents	Parents usually want schools to protect their children from cyberbullying. They may consider it part of the duty or job of the school to protect their children from harm. They see cyberbullying as something that begins at school between students, even if the interaction online may continue later at their own homes. These parents may want schools to start anti-bullying campaigns and class conversations about cyberbullying.	Some parents may think schools should do what they can to protect students, but they do not believe that the school has full responsibility. They realize that schools have limited resources and many students and problems to deal with. These parents believe that it is their own responsibility to protect their sons and daughters and that they will need to communicate regularly and openly with their children to help them understand these problems.

Additional Information

- More than 50% of cyberbullying is conducted anonymously.
 - Just as individuals have personalities, so do schools; a school climate may be thought of as the personality of a school.
 - More and more states are adopting cyberbullying laws requiring schools to adopt and implement cyberbullying policies and procedures.
 - Safe, supportive, and civil schools are characterized by norms, values, and expectations that make people feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe.
 - Over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyberbullying.
 - Well over half of young people do not tell their parents when cyberbullying occurs.
- Over 95% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most popular form of technology and a common medium for cyberbullying.
- Tips for Identifying Fake Profiles
<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/tips-identifying-fake-facebook-profiles/story?id=14379498>
- Cyberbullying Research Center
<http://www.cyberbullying.us/>
- Improving School Climate
<https://www.schoolclimate.org/about/our-approach/what-is-school-climateAbout Cyberbullying>
- Ideas for Stopping Cyberbullying
<http://www.common sense media.org/cyberbullying>
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/prevention/index.html>



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ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Features of Academic Text: Compressed language

The highlighted sentence in this passage is typical of academic text. In a less formal text, a writer would use several sentences to convey this message. For many students, there are a couple of difficult words in this sentence:

Whereas - This signal word indicates that there are going to be two contrasting ideas in this sentence.

Cyberbullying - This sudden introduction of a new term is typical of academic texts. The scenario in the first paragraph illustrated a concept that is now given a label. This is called a nominalization, which is common in academic writing.

Sixteen-year-old Megan Meier was thrilled when she started chatting with Josh Evans on Myspace. Before she had been sad and lonely, but Josh was good-looking and very kind to her. He even told her that she was his “number one.” However, one day Josh’s messages suddenly turned from nice to cruel. Megan was devastated. She was so hurt and upset by the way he treated her that she committed suicide. Later, Megan’s parents learned that Josh Evans was not a real person. Neighbors had created the false profile to harass Megan.

Whereas bullying has existed in schools for years, cyberbullying is a new method that bullies use to harm their victims. Cyberbullies use text messages, instant messages, email, or sites like Facebook to send harmful messages. Cyberbullying also includes spreading rumors and manipulating photographs online. Studies show that cyberbullying increases as students get older and that both victims and bullies are more likely to be girls than boys.

Cyberbullying is especially common among middle school students. Over half of all middle school students are involved in cyberbullying either as a bully or as a victim. When a child is having problems in school, cyberbullying can be an **underlying** cause. Students who are bullied online may be afraid to come to school, participate in class, talk to their peers, or go to recess. When people are afraid, they are less able to learn.

Perhaps schools should get involved to help stop cyberbullying. Some say school police officers should investigate cyberbullying as a crime of **harassment**. Others say teachers should talk with students about cyberbullying. Class discussions could address how to stay safe on the internet, how to handle cyberbullies, and where to get help if you are hurt by cyberbullies.

Some people say schools can only control what happens at school, not what happens out of school. They argue that schools do not have the **capacity to adequately** address student harassment on the internet. Since many of the harmful comments come from **anonymous** sources, teachers and principals are unable to determine who the cyberbullies are. In most cases, schools have no access to students’ social media accounts.

What role can students play in preventing online harassment? When should parents step in? What can schools do to help protect their students?



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GENERATING WORDS

Using words with *-ing* as nouns

We use *-ing* at the end of an action word when we are talking about something that we are doing right now.

→ I am *learning* about words. I am *talking* with my partner about cyberbullying.

Wait! Cyberbullying ends with an *-ing*, and I'm not bullying anyone right now. My partner isn't bullying anyone either.

That's because we also use the *-ing* form of a word when we are talking about an activity, even if it's something that we or others are not doing right now. The "to cyberbully" can become a noun or thing when *-ing* is added to the end.

Investigating is hard because cyberbullies use anonymous e-mail accounts.



Practice:

Here are some *Word Generation* focus words that are verbs, or action words. All of these words can be used as nouns by adding *-ing*. Choose three of these words and write a sentence for each that uses the word as a noun. Share with a partner.



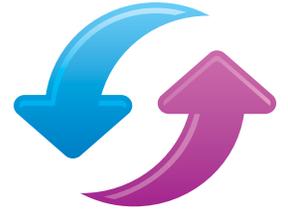
Example: *Researching* must have been slower before the internet.







- to debate
- to research
- to extract
- to export
- to conduct
- to confront
- to interfere



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DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

Fortify a Conversation

Below is a conversation between two people. The casual conversation is the way two friends might talk. The fortified conversation uses school language that is more precise and academic. With a partner, read these two versions of the same conversation. Fill in the missing boxes with either the casual or fortified response.

Topic of Discussion: Many parents feel like they don't have the **capacity** to protect their children from online **harassment**, known as cyberbullying. They feel like they cannot **adequately** deal with the problem because its source is usually something that occurred at school. They want schools do deal with the **underlying** issues that result in cyberbullying. But others think that schools already have too much to do. Do you think schools should protect kids from cyberbullying?

Casual

Schools shouldn't do anything about it.

But what about all that stuff about bullying ruining learning? It messes with their minds.

But schools should do more than just teach things, and a lot of parents don't know what to do about it.

Fortified

In my opinion, schools should not take the time to get involved. They should focus on learning.

*I don't agree, necessarily. I think that bullying limits students' **capacity** to learn. This makes it relevant to schools, whose job it is to foster learning.*

Perhaps. Yet, how much can schools get involved in preventing this type of **harassment**? It is online and takes a lot of time and resources to monitor. Parents or someone else should take responsibility for this issue.

Rehearse your fortified conversation. Share with another pair of students.