

Preventing Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Educators



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1. Formally assess the extent 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 subject to discipline. Students need to know that even a behavior that occurs miles away from the school could be subject to sanction if it substantially disrupts the school environment or interferes with the rights of other students at school.

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. Create a comprehensive formal contract specific to cyberbullying in the school's policy manual, or introduce a formal "honor code" which identifies various forms of bullying as examples of inappropriate behaviors.

6. Consult with your school attorney BEFORE incidents occur to find out what actions you can or must take in varying situations.

7. Teach social and emotional learning skills. Research shows that teaching students how to more effectively manage their emotions and relationships with others can be useful in preventing interpersonal conflict. Encourage social awareness and self-management.

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 among students. In general, it is crucial to establish and maintain a school climate of respect and integrity where violations result in appropriate sanction. Also, include students in policy decisions regarding technology.

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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