



WEBWISEKIDS
WISDOM BEGINS WITH YOU



Stopping Bullies: Cyberbullying & Digital Citizenship For Classrooms

Offering Real Help in Critical Situations and Reaching Kids Through Real Life Learning Experiences



Web Wise Kids
SchoolReach, Instant Parent Contact

Stopping Bullies: Cyberbullying & Digital Citizenship for Classrooms

*Offering Real Help in Critical Situations and Reaching Kids
Through Real Life Learning Experiences*

Carol Urton / Web Wise Kids

“Technology is exploding with unlimited, positive possibilities for students and teachers.”

Educators are faced with numerous challenges in today’s economic culture. In addition to their obligation to teach, educators are confronted with numerous non-scholastic demands and expectations while given limited time and resources. Among the pressures of teaching and testing, teachers are expected to know how to understand and respond to cyberbullying situations which can be complicated for even the most technology savvy instructor. While most teachers agree that good digital citizenship (beyond the scope of bullying) and digital literacy are among the myriad of skills today’s students need to learn, they find themselves at a loss for how to teach these concepts.

Technology is exploding with unlimited, positive possibilities for students and teachers. The Internet provides immediate answers to questions, fast information and unlimited resources for research. Socialization and staying connected with friends and peers is now easier than ever via mobile devices and computers. However, without proper instruction on how to navigate real life situations, technology can take kids down a dark path. Students who are cyberbullied can quickly become overwhelmed before parents or teachers see the warning signs. Students may be reluctant to attend school, become depressed, their grades may drop and in the most extreme cases, they turn to suicide.

Social media plays a large role for students in communication with their peers. The latest survey by Pew/Internet tells us that:

- 75% of teens have a cell phone
- 73% of teens use an online social network site
 - 37% of SNS users send messages through social networks daily
- 80% of teens have a gaming console
- 51% of teens have a portable gaming deviceⁱ

Teens and tweens are extremely advanced in using modern technology but lack proper boundaries and wisdom when using cell phones, email, social networking sites and gaming devices. Our children have been thrust into a cyber-world with little guidance on how to analyze and use information wisely and appropriately. Bullies are able to target their

victims through social media using mass messages resulting in widespread exposure for the child being bullied.

Attention to cell phones and social media has become problematic in the classroom. While students may not have their cell phones out in the open, most have them on vibrate and carry them on their person or within close enough reach to be distracted by incoming messages via text or email. Students can be tempted to cheat on quizzes and exams via their mobile devices. Teachers have reported that some students have the ability to create text messages and send them to their peers without ever removing their phone from their pocket. These kids have the ability to text by feel. Others have recounted many situations where students feel obligated to respond to text messages sent to them by their parents in spite of school regulations that forbid texting during classroom time. These situations leave kids torn between following school policies and following parental instructions.

Good Citizenship and Bullying

What is bullying? **"A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself."**

Teaching children to be good citizens and not to bully others is nothing new. We expect students to follow school rules, be kind to each other, not to cheat or lie, etc. But what are kids learning about their behavior in the digital world? Here is where the boundaries of good behavior on and off campus can become blurred. We trust that kids are modeling positive behavior at school and when they are not, educators and parents have the ability to step in and stop certain unwanted or unsafe actions. However, with the use of computers and mobile devices students may engage in behavior they would not otherwise engage in if an adult was looking or listening. What is the responsibility of the school and its administration if students are engaging in bullying through social media that is conducted off site?

The problem of distraction and inappropriate messaging is not just evident in the world of teens and tweens but in the adult world as well. Employers are faced with the dilemma of workers who spend time gaming or on social networking sites instead of working.

Email or instant messaging can be brutal at times; people are more apt to say something unkind in writing while hiding behind their computer screen than they would if they were talking to their colleague face to face. Kids will take this shielded type of interaction with their peers to an extreme. With the security of anonymity and the lack of physical presence of their peers, students will engage in abrasive and insensitive

"...with the use of computers and mobile devices, students may engage in behavior they would not otherwise engage in if an adult was looking or listening."

communication with each other which can lead to bullying. It is understandable that without guidance on appropriate communication in the digital world, students will cross the lines of good digital citizenship.

“...Cyber bullying, like traditional bullying, involves an imbalance of power, aggression, and a negative action that is often repeated.” Olweusⁱⁱⁱ While bullying certainly isn’t a new phenomenon, when it is done through multiple modes of communication, we see that students can rapidly become overpowered with a feeling of helplessness if they are being targeted. With the use of modern technology a bully has easy access to continually threaten and/or harass their victim. They may use one or more of the following methods to reach their mark:



All of these methods of communication are available on one handheld device. If a child has a cell phone and no one is monitoring their use, it can be the vehicle for non-stop bullying. The mobile device is a lifeline to their social life; many kids sleep with their phones under their pillow in the vibrate mode. This enables them to receive messaging at all hours. Bullies have been known to continually send messages day and night.

Smart phones are now key to the spread of information among teens. Anyone with a regular cell phone is now “uncool.” A smart phone gives students access to FaceBook and MySpace and any posting to a “wall” is instantly seen by all who have been “befriended” by that account holder. Kids accept everyone as friends – they do not have the wisdom to see the magnitude of their actions. So now, instead of just texting one person, they post a message to a wall and their words are instantly multiplied to hundreds or thousands.

Texting is replacing talk among teens. The feature is so important to them that if texting was no longer an option, 47% of teens say their social life would end or be worsened – especially among females, 54 % compared to 40% of males.^{iv} Most cell phones today have the capability of taking photos. Many teens are engaging in “sexting” which is writing sexually explicit messages and/or taking sexually explicit photos of themselves or others and sending them via text to each other. So why are teens engaging in this type of behavior?

- 51% of teen girls say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send sexy messages or images; only 18% of teen boys cited pressure from female counterparts as a reason.
- 23% of teen girls and 24% of teen boys say they were pressured by friends to send or post sexual content.^v

Once the message or image is sent, there is no way for the sender to retrieve it. Some tweens/teens rely on the promise that the recipient will not share the messages or photos with others but these messages are often forwarded to others and can quickly become out of control. The embarrassment and humiliation that follows can be devastating for the sender.

“School administrators are being held responsible for stopping cyberbullying.”

Children must be apprised of the ramifications of bullying and sexting. Both are serious crimes and can be punishable by law. A quick touch of a button or click of the mouse can lead to severe consequences for students and their parents. School administrators are also being held responsible for stopping cyberbullying. “Last month, the Chicago Board of Education took a systemwide stance on cyberbullying to clear up confusion at the school level. The tougher approach, which equates cyberbullying with aggravated assault and burglary, is part of Chicago Public Schools’ new student code of conduct.”^{vi} In the Q & A, Jennifer Nielson, of the Greater Chicago chapter of the Anti-Defamation League said “Schools need an anonymous reporting technique. Whether it is through a Web site or drop box, there has to be a way that students and parents can report incidents anonymously”^{vii}



The six most common forms of cyberbullying have been described as:

- Harrassment:**
Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
- Denigration:**
Distributing information about another that is derogatory and untrue through posting it on a web page, sending it to others through email or instant messageing, or posting or sending digitally altered photos of someone.
- Flaming:**
Online "fighting" using electronic messages with angry, vulgar language
- Impersonation**
Breaking into an email or social networking account and using that person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to /about others.
- Outing and Trickery:**
Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information, or tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information and forwarding it to others.
- Cyber Stalking**
Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety (depending on the content of the message, it may be illegal)

viii ix

In the days before social media and cell phones, students who were harassed at school typically could escape conflict when they went home or were a safe distance away from school. Now, with the modern methods of communication; it is virtually impossible for a student to get away from their harassers without adult intervention. Tammy, a 12-year-old middle school student was found by her stepmother sitting on the couch crying. When she asked Tammy what was wrong, through her tears she blurted out, "Is there any way to stop a person from text messaging you?" She was being bullied by her school mates who were bombarding her with text messages. She didn't know how to respond or make it stop. The first thing Tammy's stepmother had her do was, turn the cell phone off. While Tammy is a bright, straight "A" student,

she did not have the insight or the wisdom to know that she did not have to read or respond to the hurtful messages. ***She never thought about just turning the cell phone off and asking for help.***

Another overwhelming aspect of bullying is the range of peers who see the harassment via social networking sites and blogs. A bully may enlist others to join in on the harassment leading to multiple derogatory, embarrassing and threatening messages being left on the sites. This adds to the feeling of isolation and helplessness on the part of the victim. If a child has taken and emailed or texted sexually explicit photos of themselves to a girlfriend or boyfriend it can easily be distributed to the masses with just a forward to a phone list or a posing on a website or SNS. Many children are reluctant to report the bullying for fear that parents/teachers will over-react and make things worse.

“Many children are reluctant to report the bullying for fear that parents/teachers will over-react and make things worse”

The Challenge of Educating Parents

Today’s culture bombards families with new parenting challenges in the field of technology. Making even basic decision about the family’s computer and Internet usage can be quite a hurdle for parents whose kids are often more Internet-savvy than they are. Parents who suspect their child is being bullied or may be a bully can follow some simple steps to ensure their child is having safe and positive online experiences.

Web Wise Kids offers the following advice for parents and educators through their Wired With Wisdom online parent program:

- **Know** what your kids are doing online and with digital tools (i.e. personal music players, cell phone, and gaming consoles)—you have moral and legal obligations to ensure they are safe and being responsible in their interactions with others.
- **Talk** to your kids about how online conduct impacts real people, even though you don’t see them. Assure them that you trust them to handle themselves online, but you are there to help.
- **Help** your kids develop empathy, self-awareness, and effective decision-making by asking them to always consider:
 - Am I being kind and showing respect in my online interactions?
 - How would I feel if I or a good friend were treated the way I am treating others online?
 - What would a trusted adult think of my online behavior?
 - How would I feel if others could see me?
- **Tell** your kids to report online threats or distressing material to you, the school, school violence or suicide hotline, or the police. They shouldn’t retaliate or respond to any threatening

messages. They should block the bullies immediately and tell someone they trust. Ask them to save the files. Ensure them that you will never blame them or remove their cell phone or computer access privileges for reporting what they see.

- **Monitor** what your children are posting and check their mobile messages. If your kid is doing the bullying, establish strict consequences and stick to them. That goes for mean or sexual comments about teachers, friends, and relatives.
- **Educate** your child that forwarding mean messages or just standing by and doing nothing empowers bullies and hurts victims even more. If you can, tell bullies to stop, or let them know bullying is not cool – it’s cruel abuse of fellow human beings. If you can’t stop the bully, at least try to help the victim and report the behavior.
- **Be aware** of signs that your child might be bullied; fatigue, difficulty focusing, sadness, anxiety, anger or fear; avoidance of friends, school, activities; decline in grades; personality changes. Be extra vigilant if he or she has traits that make them stand out, such as obesity, the perceptions they are gay or lesbian, being an alternative thinker, being unwilling to play social games or sports, and either desperately wanting to be in the “in crowd”, or just the opposite—hating the in crowd.

The Challenge of Educating Students

Limited time and resources are a challenge for educators nationwide. The lack of awareness of digital citizenship and the mechanism to effectively report bullying for students has become a matter of national attention. Federal officials recently held a Bullying Prevention Summit in Washington, D.C. to address the issues our children are facing in relation to bullying and possible solutions. “Calling attention to one of education’s fastest growing problems, Education Secretary Arne Duncan on Aug. 11 spoke at the nation’s first ‘Bullying Prevention Summit’ to incite a call to action, as well as invite government officials, behavioral experts, and education organization to brainstorm scalable solutions to bullying in classrooms nationwide.”^x

“Web Wise Kids and SchoolReach take a positive and proactive approach to educating student about online behavior and cyberbullying.”

Web Wise Kids and SchoolReach take a positive and proactive approach to educating students about online behavior and reporting cyberbullying. Interactive computer games help educate students through online simulated learning experiences. Students have an opportunity to learn by playing games that are created from real life situations other kids have been through. They are able to experience the consequences of poor decisions without painful real life consequences. This approach helps educators and parents alike to teach kids about good digital citizenship without having to give a boring

lecture or go through time consuming curricula...and students get to do something they love—play computer games.

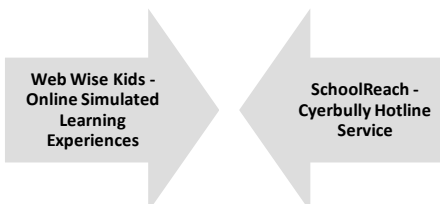
Web Wise Kids’ learning model is based on research that supported the efficacy of gaming and simulation technologies in working with people of all ages, but especially computer-savvy youth. Educational researchers now recognize that games are powerful motivators for today’s youth and promote broad problem solving skills. Games offer second-by-second decision making that takes learners through the loop of **decision, action, feedback, and reflection**—the basis for all learning.^{xi} Dr. David Williamson Shaffer, an education science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, argues that computer simulations, “allow learners to do things that would otherwise be too costly, too complicated or too dangerous to do.” In his book, *How Computer Games Help Kids Learn*, he notes that complex games adapt to each player’s ability, making them feel like they want to continue and struggle, because they feel like they can win despite the challenges. Simulation games have been proven to be an effective learning tool with one study finding that simulation learners demonstrated 22% higher mastery than learners using standard methods.^{xii}

The Challenge of Reporting

As discussed, students are reluctant to report that they are being bullied. With multiple modes of communication a child can be in real trouble before parents and educators see the warning signs. Kids must be taught about bullying so they understand the importance of reporting it and stopping it. Children need to learn that it is not only OK but imperative to report bullying whether they are the target or another student is being bullied. Optimally, students should have a trusted adult at home or at school they can talk to and get help handling the situation. However, there also must be an anonymous reporting mechanism for students to turn to should they be too embarrassed or too fearful to report in person.

The Web Wise Kids / School Reach Solution

Web Wise Kids and SchoolReach, have teamed up to address the problem of cyberbullying and effectively teaching digital citizenship on campuses nationwide. With Web Wise Kids’ easy to use, fun educational online game “It’s Your Call” and the SchoolReach Cyberbully Hotline, administrators and educators have hands on tools to teach students the importance of digital citizenship, the importance of reporting cyberbullying and an easy to use, anonymous way for students to report.



“It’s Your Call”

The engaging and educational cell phone safety game for middle-school students



With the vast number of children and teens who use cell phones and the advanced technology of these devices, cell phone safety has never been more important. All around the world, issues such as sexting, bullying and cheating occur every day, creating harmful situations for children and their families.

Understanding the need to educate these children on cell phone safety, Web Wise Kids introduces *IT'S YOUR CALL*, the first game of its kind. *IT'S YOUR CALL* offers teens guidance about responsible cell phone behavior and how to use these devices to enhance their personal safety in a fun, innovative way.

Based on true stories, the interactive game allows users to play out difficult situations in the safety of cyberspace before they live them out in real life. Players become a live action character in an interactive movie and are presented with a series of difficult decisions and view the consequences of their actions in the corresponding video.

Regardless of the outcome, *IT'S YOUR CALL* players learn vital lessons about cell phone safety, preparing them for real-life situation...all while playing a game.

***IT'S YOUR CALL* is available online and is playable in one class period.**

SchoolReach Cyberbully Hotline Service



SchoolReach offers a safe and anonymous way for students to report cyberbullying.

- Individual toll free number per school
- Allows victim or tipster to report incidents without speaking with a live person
- Recorded Statements immediately forwarded by email to one or more parties
- All recording archived and exportable
- 24-hour availability
- No onsite hardware required
- Hosted solution
- Low cost

Cyberbullying Prevention & Response Kit

*SchoolReach and Web Wise Kids have joined forces to help schools prevent and respond to cyberbullying. Together they have created the **Cyberbullying Prevention & Response Kit**.*

Cyberbullying can be effectively combated with education and communication. The Cyberbullying Prevention & Response Kit offers solutions for both. The kit includes:

- **Web Wise Kids' award-winning "It's Your Call" digital citizenship learning simulation game (classroom edition)**
- **SchoolReach Cyberbully Hotline**
- **White Paper: Stopping Bullies: Cyberbullying & Digital Citizenship for Classrooms**
Offering Real Help in Critical Situations and Reaching Kids Through Real Life Learning Experiences

"It's Your Call" is a training aid for teachers which allow students to see the consequences of social networking and cell phone usage choices. Through an interactive learning simulation game students get to choose what they would do when faced with real-life decisions. Actors demonstrate the results of students' judgment to help guide them in making appropriate decisions.

SchoolReach Cyberbully Hotline can help students, victims and witnesses anonymously report incidents of cyberbullying and other bullying or harassment. SchoolReach provides a reporting line open 24/7 where individuals can safely report threats or incidents. Bullying reports are recorded and forwarded to school administrators via email as a .wav file.



White Paper: Stopping Bullies: Cyberbullying & Digital Citizenship for Classrooms will help educators understand the problem of cyberbullying. It also helps educators understand the media in which it is played out and offers tips and resources for combating this disruptive behavior.

To Purchase Your Cyberbullying Prevention & Response Kit:

Call: 1-800-420-1479

**Email: sales@schoolreach.com
schoolreach.com/cyberbully.html**

ABOUT SCHOOLREACH

SchoolReach is the education marketing division of St. Louis-based GroupCast, an instant messaging notification service. From emergency notification and schedule changes to absentee notification and rumor control, SchoolReach simultaneously delivers administrators' personally recorded message to tens, hundreds or thousands of individuals. More information about SchoolReach or GroupCast can be found at www.schoolreach.com and www.groupcast.com.

ABOUT WEB WISE KIDS

Web Wise Kids is a unique organization that offers fun, challenging and interactive simulations based on real-life criminal cases—*MISSING*, *Mirror Image* and *Airdogs*. The award winning game, "It's Your Call" was recently launched to help educators teach students cell phone safety and digital citizenship. Each program has been designed specifically for use with young people in classrooms and computer labs and is guaranteed to be easy to use and flexible with your classroom schedule. The Web Wise Kids *Wired With Wisdom* program is designed to prepare parents to help their children have safe and rewarding online experiences. Web Wise Kids is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Southern California. Since 2000, Web Wise Kids has been committed to preventing online child victimization by providing innovative and effective tools to assist youth to stay safe online. More information can be found at www.webwisekids.org.

ⁱ Pew/Internet, Cyberbullying What the research is telling us, May 6, 2010

ⁱⁱ Olweus, Dan *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Malden: Blackwell, 1993

ⁱⁱⁱ Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. 20 August 2010 http://www.olweus.org/public/cyber_bullying.page

^{iv} CTIA/Harris Interactive. "A Generation Unplugged: Research Report," September 12, 2008

^v National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Sex and Tech: Results from a Nationally Representative Survey of teens and Young Adults, 10 Dec. 2008

^{vi} Mack, Kristen; Bowean, Lolly. 10 August 2010 www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-schools-internet-safety-2-20100810,0,4536915.story

^{vii} Mack, Kristen; Bowean, Lolly. 10 August 2010 www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-schools-internet-safety-2-20100810,0,4536915.story

^{viii} Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. 20 August 2010 http://www.olweus.org/public/cyber_bullying.page

^{ix} Educators guide to Cyberbullying, Cyberthreats & Sexting, 20 October 2010, <http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cbcteducator.pdf>

^x Stansbury, Meris. eSchool News. 16 August 2010 <http://www.eschoolnews.com/2010/08/16/federal-officials-aim-to-prevent-bullying/>

^{xi} Mark Prensky, "The Difference between Simulations and Games," Edutopia.com March 9, 2007

^{xii} Mark Prensky, "Simulation Nation," Edutopia.com. March 9, 2007.