
To enhance learning and empower our students, we all need to be skillful users of the tools related to information technology.

All users need to recognize the challenges of information technology as it applies to cyberbullying.

Education

We will maintain safe learning environments by developing both intervention and prevention programs.

What is cyberbullying?

It is the use of electronic communications tools to antagonize and intimidate others.

Some common forms of this are:

- spreading hurtful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging, postings on a website and/or online diaries; or
- using cell/camera phones to send hurtful text, photos or video.

Facts to consider:

- 25% of Canadian children claim they have been e-mailed with hurtful content about someone.
- 44% of Canadian children have e-mail accounts their parents do not know about.
- 70% of parents say they know a great deal about the websites their child visits; 55% of their children disagree.
- 45% of kids use instant messaging; one third of these students use it every day (source: www.media-awareness.ca).

Legal Implications

- In conjunction with the Ontario Code of Conduct, York Region District School Board Policy #668 - Safe Schools clearly identifies that misconduct carried out over the internet may be subject to school discipline whether carried out at school, home or elsewhere.
- Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communications cause them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.
- It is a crime to publish a “defamatory libel” (writing something that is designed to insult a person or likely to injure a person’s reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt, or ridicule).
- Acts of cyberbullying may violate the *Canadian Human Rights Act* if a person spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or disability.

Meeting the challenge to ensure that our schools remain safe, secure and supportive places for learning.

Supporting Your Child

Children cannot solve bullying issues without adult support and intervention.

Research shows there are possible long-term negative effects of bullying for both victims and bullies; both victims and bullies need help.

The student who is being victimized should:

- tell the adults they know and trust; help is available through the Kids Help Phone line at 1-800-668-6868;
- not reply to the messages; bullies feel empowered when they cause fear;
- keep the messages as evidence;
- in consultation with an adult, inform their internet service provider;
- set up a new e-mail address and be cautious about who you share it with; and
- in consultation with an adult, call the police when persistent and serious cyberbullying is ongoing;

What Parents Should Do

The parents of a cyberbullied child should:

- not accept the bullying behaviour; reassure your child that there are many adults who will be supportive in solving this problem;
- report concerns to your internet service provider; refer to www.cyberbullying.ca for a contact list;
- report any threats directly to the police: 1-866-8POLICE and ask for the complaint taker;
- discuss your concerns with your child's principal; and
- visit the Board website for further information (www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca).

The parents of a child who is being a cyberbully should:

- Hold your child accountable for their actions and help them change their behaviour;
- Remind and teach your child that anonymity is only a perception;
- Discuss your concerns with your child's principal; and
- Consider the benefits of short term professional counseling.

Preventative Measures for Parents & Guardians

- 1 Maintain open lines of communication with your children.
- 2 Teach children to stop immediately if they see or read anything that upsets them.
- 3 Locate the internet access computer in a high traffic area of the home.
- 4 Restrict access to the internet when there is no supervision available.
- 5 Consider drafting a contract with your child for the privilege of using the internet.
- 6 Take a course on internet use or have their child teach them.
Make it a family activity.
- 7 Be sensitive to the actions of your child - "signs to watch for":
 - spend long hours on the computer;
 - close programs on their computer when you enter the room;
 - be secretive about internet activity;
 - exhibit behavioural changes (e.g., sudden disinterest in computer); or
 - always doing homework on the computer but getting behind with school work.