

Parliamentary Committee Inquiry “Cyber-Safety”

“Ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying”

Summary

Stride is a non-profit organisation that aims to deliver programs to create change in the culture of the school and allow students to develop skills and resilience when dealing with bullying, issues and problems in the school environment. Stride has researched and developed a preventative program that can be delivered to students to reduce the incidence of Cyber Bullying. The program has been trialled, evaluated and delivered to 1958 students and 219 teachers over the past 15 month period.

Included in this Parliamentary Inquiry:

- Overview of the Stride Foundation
- Overview of Stride’s ‘Cyber Savvy’ program
- Research paper
- Information on Cyber Bullying
- Outcomes from the NCAB Conference April 2010
- An evaluation and endorsement of Stride’s ‘Cyber Savvy’ program by Ms Robyn Treyvaud – Director Cybersafe World

Stride Foundation

Stride Foundation Limited (Stride) is a non-profit, non-government organisation dedicated to helping improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of young people and their communities. Stride’s purpose is to empower young people to realise their full potential and to have the opportunity for a brighter future.

Young people face many issues in our school system with concerns with bullying, conflict, stress, depression, suicide and low self-esteem. In the community young people are confronted with drugs, unemployment and peer pressure.

Stride Foundation is different from other organisations in that we work with young people before any issues encountered start to have a negative effect on lives. We work with people aged from primary school through to young adults.

Stride Foundation has an innovative approach to the issue of youth development. Our research shows that once young people have gained these skills they can maintain them, and build a more supportive and inclusive

whole-school culture. This can have a positive impact on young people's relationships with each other, and their teachers, families and the broader community. Ultimately as young people move into the community with greater self esteem and relationship management skills, these skills can impact not just their long-term lives, but also the broader community.

Our organisation was the first provider of student well-being programs in Victoria and it continues to present the most extensive range of preventative interventions and resources for schools anywhere in Australia with a primarily Victorian focus. Having collaborative arrangements with similar organisations in other states allows the peer support concept to achieve Australia-wide coverage. As well as our innovative programs, we have developed a range of creative resources for schools which have been distributed Australia-wide.

We are proud of our long history and reputation for relevant and meaningful programs which address all the difficult issues facing young people today including: bullying; depression and suicide; conflict and anger management; stress and time management for study; motivation and leadership; risk-taking; involving drugs, alcohol and sexual behaviours; and grief and loss.

Stride's "Cyber Savvy" Program

With daily advances in technology and young people's continual 'need' to embrace the digital world as part of their own, it is understandable that issues like cyber bullying will inevitably increase!

One only needs to open the daily newspaper to be constantly reminded how today's youth are struggling with online bullying and the life changing impact that it can have.

It is evident that there is a pressing need to work with young people to ensure they are able to safely navigate the world of 'Information Technology' and become responsible digital citizens.

Enter CyberS@vvy!

CyberS@vvy explores the issue of cyber-bullying, its negative repercussions and how to tackle the problem using young people as part of the solution. Furthermore, it addresses the behaviours associated with the use of various forms of information technology and how to keep safe on social networking sites.

Like all Stride's workshops, CyberS@vvy delivers its message in an interactive and discussion based context ensuring students comprehend all required learning outcomes.

Cyber-Bullying Research Paper

Introduction

Since its inception in 1993 most adults have become comfortable with 'surfing' the internet and employing email as one of their primary communication tools. There is no doubt that the digital revolution has been one of the most profound changes in the past 100 years, indeed many would argue even greater impact than the transport or industrial revolutions. While many adults who have learned their digital skills in their teenage or adult life congratulate themselves on their prowess and ability to 'surf' most fail to realise that almost all children and teenagers have never known a life without the internet and for them communication by email is a clumsy and outdated method.

The internet and the digital evolution has been a tremendous development in our lives. It has allowed people from a disparate geographical spread to communicate easily and effortlessly. It has allowed the backpacker in Nepal to have access to as much research as a Harvard professor of fifteen years ago. It has provided people who were traditionally socially isolated including many people with disabilities and older adults to create and maintain a friendship base. It has allowed us to access a range of services, products and information that is as diverse as it is available.

Any person who has dealings with young people will realise that a discussion on the internet will illuminate the listener as to the benefits and positive nature of the digital age. Any attempt to demonise the technology or its usage will be met with disinterest and an affirmation in the mind of the young person that once again they are talking to an adult who is out of touch.

Young people are aware that the digital tools they use can be misused and have the potential to create harm to others. The term 'Cyber Bullying' is one they hear constantly through school, the media, and friends. Students express willingness in becoming part of the solution to minimise the problem of Cyber Bullying but not if it is at the expense of denying access or demonising their world. They want to deal with the issue while expressing the many positives of the digital world.

What is Cyber Bullying

"Cyber Bullying" from a school student focus is when a student is targeted by another student through the use of digital technology, mobile communication devices or through the internet. The aim of this targeting may be harassment, stalking, threats or other forms of malicious behavior.

One of the key components of the definition of Cyber Bullying is that it relates to students on student behaviour. It does not include adult on student or adult on adult behaviour as there are clear laws and definitions that cover these areas.

Cyber Bullying takes many forms and may involve the use of websites, mobile phones, chat rooms, email, SMS and the uploading of pictures or video. It could involve the sending of threatening messages, communication using false pretences, forwarding of other students private communication, establishment of websites designed to humiliate, or the posting of humiliating messages or pictures.

Like the traditional definition of bullying, Cyber Bullying usually involves systemic communication over a period of time. A one off communication would not usually be considered cyber bullying. The only exception would be messages containing death threats or indication of serious intended harm.

One of the often unseen consequences of Cyber Bullying is that because the intimidation or bullying action is delivered via the written word then the target can read and therefore be affected by the same words again and again.

Prevalence of Cyber Bullying

While research results differ slightly in exact percentages there is no doubt that the many studies on the prevalence of Cyber Bullying have now confirmed that, similar to playground bullying, Cyber Bullying is a real and serious issue which has the potential to significantly harm its targets.

i-Safe America surveyed 1500 students from fourth to eighth grade and found that 42% of students had been bullied (i-Safe, 2006). A 2006 survey conducted by Michael Carr-Greg of 13000 readers of Girlfriend magazine also found that 42% has been bullied online.

There have been a number of other studies and newspaper reports all reporting significant percentages of Cyber Bullying behaviour. While there is no doubt Cyber Bullying is a real issue an accurate prevalence is hard to measure due to the vague definition of bullying in student based studies. Often students, particularly younger ones, confuse a one-off incident with systemic bullying.

In one of the largest studies conducted, between 2003-2005 i-Safe America surveyed 55000 students in the United States regarding their attitudes of the internet. While 25% expressed concern about safety on the internet, a very significant 73% believed there was a need for students of all ages to learn more about internet safety. In a potential indicator of future usage of digital communication tools over 17000 students reported they found talking to people easier on the internet than in the offline world (i-Safe, 2007)

The technology of Cyber Bullying

There are a number of different uses of technology whereby Cyber Bullying can occur. These include:

- Mobile phones – Cyber Bullying through the use of mobile phones can occur a number of ways. The simplest is by the sending of text messages that are designed to harm or humiliate. A more traditional method is a series of silent or abusive phone messages. A more recent method is the use of video phones whereby a picture or humiliating video of the target is circulated. A person engaging in Cyber Bullying through the use of a mobile phone will usually try to hide their identity by blocking out their call number or using a stolen phone.
- Internet based communication tools – Email, instant messaging services and chat rooms are all web based communication forums whereby a person can be bullied through threats, defamatory comments or by someone using a pseudonym to engage the person in potentially revealing conversation
- Websites – Blogs or specifically designed websites can be used as Cyber Bullying forums.

As the technology evolves there is little doubt that the above Cyber Bullying methods will change, modify or be superseded using a new type of digital experience. Due to the rapidity of change and development, focusing on the actual technology as a primary Cyber Bullying tool would seem difficult and time consuming.

Characteristics of bullies and targets

There is a significant difference in the genders in term of potential targets of Cyber Bullies. The Mpower program established by Stride Foundation was designed to reduce the impact of relationship 'aggression' between girls, which in its most common forms revolves around rumour spreading, exclusion, and manipulation of others (Simmons, 2006). While this type of behaviour has been well documented in the past, mobile phones and the various internet based communication methods have added further options for

girls to engage in this type of manipulative behaviour as a way of conflict resolution. A 2006 study conducted by University of Melbourne found that girls were two and a half times more likely than boys to be targets of Cyber Bullying.

Anecdotal evidence also supports the involvement of girls more than boys, as girls typically have a higher rate of usage of the internet and phones for means of communication (Blair, 2003). As the usage of the internet and mobile phones is more prevalent in the lives of secondary school students than primary school students so to will the misuse of the technology be more of an issue for older students.

Another factor that research shows is that if an individual is a potential target of bullying offline then they are also a potential target online (Davis, 2007). Given both the bullying behaviour of girls and the characteristics of targets are very similar whether offline or online it adds weight to the recognised premise that any strategy to minimise Cyber Bullying should be within a whole school bullying strategy or social programme approach to student wellbeing.

US Cyber Bullying researcher Parry Aftab went further and identified four key types of Cyber Bullies:

1. "The Vengeful Angel" – this involves a person who has been a target of either online or offline bullying and retaliates. The Cyber Bully in this case is motivated by revenge or trying to right a perceived wrong. While usually engaging in this type of behaviour alone the person may share their activities with their friends.
2. The "Power-Hungry" or "Revenge of the Nerds" – the Cyber Bully is keen to ascertain some power over another student with the aim of inflicting harm. The Power-Hungry Cyber Bully is very much alike the traditional school yard bully except for the method being used. Again like traditional bullies the Power-Hungry Cyber Bully needs others to know about their actions and often brag or escalate their actions to gain maximum attention and reaction. Again like the vengeful angel they often have been the target of offline bullying. While the "Revenge of the Nerd" Cyber Bully also wishes to inflict harm on others through the use of power, unlike the Power Hungry Cyber Bully, will only share their activities with those they think are sympathetic or potentially keep it a complete secret. Hence the "Revenge of the Nerd" Cyber Bullying are seen the most serious of Cyber Bullying behaviour.
3. "Mean Girls" – Similar to offline female group dynamics the "Mean Girl" Cyber Bully (typically female) is using the technology for the same reasons as traditional female bullying methods such as rumour spreading, exclusion and manipulation. These reasons include a need to 'belong' by impressing others or to 'get back' for previous behaviours. This Cyber Bully is encouraged by group admiration or by those in a clique.

4. The Inadvertent Cyber Bully – this type of person is usually engaging in Cyber Bullying behaviour by default. They usually fail to realise the seriousness of their prank, joke or online behaviour and are surprised if they receive a negative response from others. The inadvertent Cyber Bully would, in ignorance, not consider their behaviour as a form of Cyber Bullying.

All of the above types of Cyber Bullies are characterised by the commonality that often they have been a target of bullying themselves. However as the motive for each type differs, different strategies may be required to address each type. Designing a strategy to deal with Cyber Bullying is not simple a matter of coming up with one solution

What not to do

In the early stages of the Cyber Bullying phenomenon, strategies were ad hoc and often reactionary rather than proactive. While these reactionary strategies seemed logical and many previously unknown situations demanded a response there is now a number of common responses that have been proven not to be effective.

Out of school incidents

One of the most difficult areas for schools to deal with is the Cyber Bullying incidents or inappropriate use of technology that occurs out of school. In the United States there have been a number of cases whereby schools have tried to intervene in out of school incidents that have involved students in a private capacity. This intervention has in these cases resulted in lawsuits against the school by the disciplined student. The courts generally to date have ruled that the schools have exceeded their authority. While schools generally have no right to intervene in off-campus conversations it could be recommended that the school discuss with students an inclusion in the usage policy that students can be disciplined for cyber incidents off-campus if they intended to have an effect on a student (in their role as a student) or they adversely affect the safety and well-being of student(s) while in school. If students are engaging in conversation or interacting with others outside school and cannot be identified by school signage or uniform then the school has dubious legal authority to intervene in their online behaviour.

Demonising the technology

Often borne out of frustration a common response to either specific Cyber Bullying incidents or the whole issue is for teachers and parents to blame or 'demonise' the technology. Facebook, Myspace, and MSN are no more to blame for Cyber Bullying incidents than the car is for road fatalities. It is usually the irresponsibility of the driver or in the case of Cyber Bullying the misuse of the technology that causes the harm. The criticising of the technology is often due to ignorance or lack of understanding. As stated earlier, while accepting misuse can occur, students are passionate about the

positives of the technology. Constant or strident criticism will alienate students or fail to address the real issue of lack of peer support or a breakdown in student culture.

Trivialisation of incidents

It is well documented the harm that bullying can inflict and Cyber Bullying is no exception. To trivialise the incidents or not take the target seriously can compound the harm. To tell the target to 'ignore it', 'get over it', 'don't worry, or it happens to everyone' does not in anyway help the target to deal with the lack of confidence, self-esteem or social comfortability.

Key educative principles to prevent Cyber Bullying

Lack of empathy and inhibition

The anonymity of communication in the online world often creates a perception of invisibility. This invisibility removes the normal feedback one derives from in person communication, provides an environment where empathy for others is reduced and increases the misconception that no harm is occurring. The anonymity of online communication removes the concern of disapproval and creates language and meanings that would rarely occur in the off line world (even then the chance of detection and punishment would be higher). The novel "Destroying Avalon", (McCaffrey, 2006) although fictional, is an excellent story that mirrors real life contemporary cyber-bullying and clearly illustrates the potential harm that can occur. A number of schools in Victoria have started to use the book as a compulsory resource for students as part of their overall whole school approach to bullying and student well being.

Any educative strategy should include develop an increased level of empathy for others and a real understanding of how language and interpersonal communication changes once anonymity is assumed. Part of this strategy would involve the encouragement of 'bystander involvement' and the development of effective peer support strategies.

Digital footprints

As discussed there is an assumption by many students that the use of digital technology provides anonymity and protection for those who misuse it. There is the common belief that the use of delete buttons, pseudonyms, websites, blocking of numbers/addresses and chat room forums all provide a guaranteed security for those who wish to induce harm on others. A National Cyber-safety Symposium held in Melbourne in 2007 concluded that making students aware that their online activities can be traced was one of the key recommendations (NCAB, 2007)

Legal Penalties

Assumed anonymity and the perceived lack of penalties have created the image that the internet is a lawless world which provides great freedom to the user. What is often lacking is an awareness by students of the potentially serious legal ramifications of their behaviour. Teachers and students need to be made aware of current penalties that exist. For example in NSW the Crimes Act, Section 545AB covers the offence of intimidation. Teasing or spreading rumours about someone online is considered intimidation and under the Act carries a maximum penalty of five years detention and/or \$5500 fine. Harassing someone online or making threats electronically can carry penalties of up to 10 years detention. (Signy, 2007)

Students need to be made aware that the misuse of tele-communication devices is considered a very serious situation in Australia and a Commonwealth offence. Interviews with Cyber Bullies have often revealed they considered their online harassing behaviour as pranking or joking around. Both students and adults involved with online behaviour need to understand the sending of offensive or harassing messages is considered by the law as assault (Carr-Gregg, 2007).

Any educative program that aims to address the issue of Cyber Bullying should have as its core components the above three factors. The National Cyber-safety Symposium also concluded that any programs addressing Cyber Bullying should be part of a whole school approach to bullying and student wellbeing. A further conclusion reiterated that any strategy must be developed with student participation.

Although a summary of the research supports the above key factors, a number of simple further preventative principles exist including:

- Giving students a contact number to report suspicious online behaviour
- Teaching students how to properly save suspicious emails or messages
- Safeguarding passwords
- If you would not say it to someone's face do not put it into writing
- Do not send a message when upset.

Young people as the solution

Susan McClean, a member of the Victorian Police Force, who has specialised in the area of cyber safety has likened the strategy to deal with Cyber Bullying as similar to the strategy on illicit drugs. Rather than focusing on draconian punishment or prohibition the current strategy from the Victorian Police Force perspective revolves around harm minimisation (McClean, 2007). The current challenge of educators involved in this area is how best to employ this strategy.

i-Safe America conducted a major study of 55000 students focusing on their attitudes to the internet. While 25% of those surveyed did not feel safe on the internet a very significant 73% supported the need for children and teenagers to learn about internet safety. As 53% liked being alone when 'surfing' the internet and 64% had seen or heard of other students engaging in 'risk' or inappropriate behaviour on the internet then there is little doubt that a large part of the solution lies within student themselves.

In terms of formal programs there are two types of programs that have been shown to reduce the incidence of traditional bullying. One type is focused on social programs. These include buddy, peer support, and transition programs. These peer based programs are built around the premise that students are more likely to talk to other students before teachers and parents. Studies have shown that somewhere between 58% and 70% of students have not told parents or teachers about online 'incidents' primarily due to fear of losing access. (i-Safe America, 2004)

It is a logical assumption to assume that if peer support programs have regularly been shown to minimise the incidence of traditional bullying (Campbell, 2005; McGrath & Stanley, 2006) then the same type of social programs can be effective in addressing Cyber Bullying. This peer support approach is reaffirmed by the US Centre for Safe and Responsible Internet Use who have acknowledged that teenage students need to have the skills to handle most internet issues independently. A student with an internet based concern will most likely seek out other students for advice. As stated by the CSRIU one of the most effective strategies in addressing Cyber Bullying is to 'empower savvy teens to provide effective peer guidance' (Willard, 2006). Another significant US based organisation goes even further and argues that the first stage of a Cyber Bullying strategy should involve students. This involvement revolves around giving students the skills so they can take an active role in assisting and supporting each other and taking a leading assertive role in preventing and dealing with Cyber Bullying (Stopcyberbullying, 2007) .

One example of this peer support strategy has been the establishment of the Teenangels. This program was established by well known author Parry Aftab. In 2000, Aftab authored The Parents Guide to Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace. Aftab's research for this book led her to believe that educating students was the main priority. Her Teenangels program involved training selected students and like traditional peer support programs, the trained students were then empowered to help others. Again like traditional peer support programs Aftab reaffirmed that younger internet users were more influenced by messages delivered from their peers (Aftab, 2007) The Victorian Government's Safe Schools are Effective Schools strategy reiterated the benefits of establishing peer support programs to reduce the incidence of bullying.

Conclusion

There are three key stakeholders in the prevention or reduction of Cyber Bullying. These are the school, students and parents. While each has an important role this paper is primarily concerned with the role the school and students can play.

Most schools now recognise the need for a whole school approach to bullying and student wellbeing. The issue of Cyber Bullying should not have a separate strategy that sits outside of any existing policy or framework. Rather with student consultation and involvement existing policies should be reviewed and strengthened to include the concept of Cyber Bullying.

Programs based on the concept of peer support have been operating in Australia for over 25 years. While their popularity has like any program changed over the years recent research has reaffirmed their effectiveness in reducing the incidence of bullying and be particularly effective as a preventative strategy for Cyber Bullying. A peer support based program that includes the key educative aims of students developing empathy for other students, students understanding the concept of digital footprints, and the realisation of the seriousness of Cyber Bullying has the potential to create a supportive environment whereby students engage less in Cyber Bullying practices and increases peer to peer support. The key underlying concern at all times in the development of any strategy must be the welfare of the young people in the school community.

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What is cyberbullying, exactly?

"Cyberbullying" is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to have a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor. Once adults become involved, it is plain and simple cyber-harassment or cyberstalking. Adult cyber-harassment or cyberstalking is NEVER called cyberbullying.

It isn't when adult are trying to lure children into offline meetings, that is called sexual exploitation or luring by a sexual predator. But sometimes when a minor starts a cyberbullying campaign it involves sexual predators who are intrigued by the sexual harassment or even ads posted by the cyberbullying offering up the victim for sex.

The methods used are limited only by the child's imagination and access to technology. And the cyberbully one moment may become the victim the next. The kids often change roles, going from victim to bully and back again.

Children have killed each other and committed suicide after having been involved in a cyberbullying incident.

Cyberbullying is usually not a one time communication, unless it involves a death threat or a credible threat of serious bodily harm. Kids usually know it when they see it, while parents may be more worried about the lewd language used by the kids than the hurtful effect of rude and embarrassing posts.

Cyberbullying may arise to the level of a misdemeanor cyberharassment charge, or if the child is young enough may result in the charge of juvenile delinquency. Most of the time the cyberbullying does not go that far, although parents often try and pursue criminal charges. It typically can result in a child losing their ISP or IM accounts as a terms of service violation. And in some cases, if hacking or password and identity theft is involved, can be a serious criminal matter under state and federal law.

When schools try and get involved by disciplining the student for cyberbullying actions that took place off-campus and outside of school hours, they are often sued for exceeding their authority and violating the student's free speech right. They also, often lose. Schools can be very effective brokers in working with the parents to stop and remedy cyberbullying situations. They can also educate the students on cyberethics and the law. If schools are creative, they can sometimes avoid the claim that their actions exceeded their legal authority for off-campus cyberbullying actions. We recommend that a provision is added to the school's acceptable use policy reserving the right to discipline the student for actions taken off-campus if they are intended to have an effect on a student or they adversely affect the safety and well-being of student while in school. This makes it a contractual, not a constitutional, issue.

How cyberbullying works

There are two kinds of cyberbullying, direct attacks (messages sent to your kids directly) and cyberbullying by proxy (using others to help cyberbully the victim, either with or without the accomplice's knowledge). Because cyberbullying by proxy often gets adults involved in the harassment, it is much more dangerous.

Take a stand against cyberbullying

Education can help considerably in preventing and dealing with the consequences of cyberbullying. The first place to begin an education campaign is with the kids and teens themselves. We need to address ways they can become inadvertent cyberbullies, how to be accountable for their actions and not to stand by and allow bullying (in any form) to be acceptable. We need to teach them not to ignore the pain of others.

Teaching kids to "Take 5!" before responding to something they encounter online is a good place to start. Jokingly, we tell them to "Drop the Mouse! And step away from the computer and no one will get

hurt!" We then encourage them to find ways to help them calm down. This may include doing yoga, or deep-breathing. It may include running, playing catch or shooting hoops. It may involve taking a bath, hugging a stuffed animal or talking on the phone with friends. Each child can find their own way of finding their center again. And if they do, they will often not become a cyberbully, even an inadvertent cyberbully. Teaching them the consequences of their actions, and that the real "Men in Black" may show up at their front door sometimes helps. Since many cyberbullying campaigns include some form of hacking or password or identity theft, serious laws are implicated. Law enforcement, including the FBI, might get involved in these cases.

But we need to recognize that few cyberbullying campaigns can succeed without the complacency and the often help of other kids. If we can help kids understand how much bullying hurts, how in many cases (unlike the children's chant) words *can* hurt you, fewer may cooperate with the cyberbullies. They will think twice before forwarding a hurtful e-mail, or visiting a cyberbullying "vote for the fat girl" site, or allowing others to take videos or cell phone pictures of personal moments or compromising poses of others. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that in the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. We need to teach our children not to stand silently by while others are being tormented. While it is crucial that we teach them not to take matters into their own hands (and perhaps become a "vengeful angel" cyberbully themselves) they need to come to us. And if we expect them to trust us, we need to be worthy of that trust. (Read more about this at "[Goldilocks and the cyberbullies...not too hot and not too cold](#)," a guide for parents.)

And, in addition to not lending their efforts to continue the cyberbullying, if given an anonymous method of reporting cyberbullying Web sites, profiles and campaigns, kids can help put an end to cyberbullying entirely. School administration, community groups and even school policing staff can receive these anonymous tips and take action quickly when necessary to shut down the site, profile or stop the cyberbullying itself.

They can even let others know that they won't allow cyberbullying, supporting the victim, making it clear that they won't be used to torment others and that they care about the feelings of others is key. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

We need to teach our children that silence, when others are being hurt, is not acceptable. If they don't allow the cyberbullies to use them to embarrass or torment others, cyberbullying will quickly stop. It's a tall task, but a noble goal. And in the end, our children will be safer online and offline. We will have helped create a generation of good cybercitizens, controlling the technology instead of being controlled by it.

Offsite Internet activities and schools

Our guide for schools on Internet-related risk management will be published here at our Web site, without charge, shortly. Until then, some quick pointers:

When a school disciplines a student for creating a Web site, posting a message online or sending a digital communication (text-messaging, instant message, e-mail, etc.) outside of school grounds and school hours, it is treading on very dangerous ground.

The Web sites and messages vary from school bashing, administration and teacher bashing and student bashing, to cyberbullying and harassment of fellow students, vulgarities and threats, to encouraging others to hurt or kill others. Sometimes the students are just behaving badly, or are rude and hurtful, and sometimes they are committing serious crimes, including hacking, identity theft, vandalism and targeting victims for attacks by hate groups and predators.

Cases have challenged the school's authority in many states and federal jurisdictions under constitutional and procedural grounds. And the decisions conflict. There is some guidance from the U.S. Supreme Court on free speech issues in schools, but the last definitive case was decided during the

Vietnam War. Most others issues will be resolved by lower courts and the law will vary depending on the state or federal district or circuit in which the school is located. So, before taking action it is essential that the school district seeks advice from knowledgeable counsel in this field. The normal school district lawyer may not have the requisite level of expertise to advise on this, and a constitutional or cyber-free speech lawyer may have to be retained.

There are a few generalizations we can provide, which can give some general guidance. But these cases are very fact specific and the facts in your case may differ from those in the cases already determined in your jurisdiction.

- Clear threats: If there is a clear-cut threat (one that is seen by both the person making the threat and those who have seen it or received it), the school is generally entitled to take action, including suspension and expulsion.
- Clearly disruptive of school discipline: If the school had proof that the speech has or will disrupt school discipline, the school has a better chance of succeeding. Ungrounded fear or speculation is not sufficient to support the school's burden.
- In-school activities: If the student is bringing in print-outs of the Web site, or promoting other students in school to visit the site, or if the student accesses the Web site while at school or creates or works on the Web site from school, there is a greater likelihood that the actions will not be deemed out-of-school activities and would fall within the school's authority.
- School-sponsored activities: If the Web site belongs to the school or is created as a school-sponsored project, it will fall under existing U.S. Supreme Court decisions permitting school authority.
- Cyberbullying: If a student targets another student using interactive technologies or the Internet, there is almost always an in-school activity related to the cyberbullying. Privacy-invading e-mails and harassing messages are often printed out and distributed in school and on school grounds. In addition, cyberbullying typically creates a disruption in school, where the victim is afraid, may seek counseling or miss school, their grades may be impacted and friends may get involved. Any proof of an in-school student impact will help support a finding of school authority. Although, you should note that some courts have not extended the school's authority to offline and off-premises actions in a cyberbullying case when the cyberbully himself did not bring the printed materials into the school.
- Cyber-staff harassment: If the school can demonstrate that the student's Web site or harassment has had a real impact on the staff, the school has a greater likelihood of success in upholding its authority. If the teacher or staff member quits in reaction to the harassment or take a leave of absence or seeks medical treatment to help deal with the emotional implications of the student's actions, the courts tend to be more sympathetic and are more likely to give the school the authority to discipline the student. Without this, the courts tend to lean towards leaving the staff member to other legal recourse.

Schools are also attacked (often successfully) when they fail to follow their own procedures. Often pressured by angry staff members, other parents and fear of the problem growing out-of-control, they fail to adhere to their own written rules. They fail to give the requisite notice, in the requisite manner and allow the requisite respond period to lapse before calling a hearing. They sometimes fail to notify the parents and give the student's family a chance to respond. This is not a time for shortcuts or acting without careful planning.

Sometime the schools over-reach in their policy, attempting to prohibit speech too broadly. These policies are generally knocked down unless the school can demonstrate a practice that limits an over-broad reach and clarifies what is prohibited and what isn't for the purposes of the policy and school rules. One school even reserved the right to examine any home computer of their students, to determine whether a cybercrime or abuse has taken place using that computer.

The schools have a valid concern and legal obligation to maintain discipline and protect their students while in their care. But in this tricky area, especially when damages for infringing on the students' rights can exceed the annual salary of much needed teachers and other educational resources, schools cannot afford to guess. Until the law becomes better settled, the schools need to be careful before acting, seek knowledgeable legal counsel, plan ahead and get parents involved early.

Look for our school cyber-risks management guide soon at Internetsuperheroes.org, wiredkids.org and wiredsafety.org and our new StopCyberbullying.org Web site.

www.stopcyberbullying.org

Parry Aftab's guide for schools on cyberbullying

Sticks and Stones - Defaming Others Online

Sticks and stones will break their bones, but words will never hurt them—right? Wrong! While the First Amendment gives us the right of free speech, it does not give us the right to say false and horrible things about others. In the United States, someone whose reputation is damaged by a false statement made by another can sue that person for defamation. (Libel is when the defamatory statement is written, and slander is when it is spoken.) Under rare circumstances, such statements and the way they are delivered may rise to the level of cyberstalking or harassment, considered a crime in more than 46 states.

Unfortunately, since the advent of the Web, many are taking their grievances to the public, online. They are building defamatory websites and posting defamatory comments online. While initially the victims of the defamation may ignore the postings and websites, they are starting to take action more and more frequently. And kids and teenagers are getting into the act as well. When harassment occurs and young people are on both sides of the events, with a young person harassing another young person, it is typically called cyberbullying. (When an adult is on one side or another, it is typically called cyberstalking or harassment.)

Our kids need to know that the online services and ISPs will provide their identity pursuant to legal process. And they can be found and held responsible for what they say and do online. It's very important that we teach our children to understand accountability, online and offline. Schools can be very helpful here. Unfortunately, sometimes when cyberbullying occurs the schools get involved in trying to discipline the students for off-hours and off-premises activities, often to their detriment.

Off-School Web sites

Just as kids have circulated derogatory jokes and drawings of teachers over the generations, these digital kids circulate their jokes, insults, and drawings using the power of the Web, where they can be viewed by everyone. They then share the URL (Web address) of the site, so fellow classmates can appreciate their work. Often the URL ends up in the hands of a teacher. Teachers and administrators who are the target of the site report it, and threaten to file a lawsuit or to report it to the police. The school then feels compelled to do something. Typically the child is suspended or expelled, or college recommendations are withdrawn.

But several times the ACLU has taken these schools to court for disciplining a child for actions taken off-premises, and in most cases the school has lost the lawsuit. It can be a very costly mistake—a school system may have to pay \$50,000 or more in damages when it exceeds its authority in this area. So what's a school to do? I would suggest they take their lead from a very experienced school superintendent.

A teenager in that high school, after getting angry with certain teachers and administrators, lashed out by posting some pretty vulgar and insulting things about them on a personal website. He wrote the site from home and posted it online. It wasn't posted on the school's server, but was available to everyone with Internet access once they had the URL. URLs of classmates' sites get passed around quickly, and many of the kids in the school accessed the site from the school's computers.

When the word got back to the teachers and administrators, they were understandably furious. They sought help from the police, who threatened to charge the teenager with harassment (but they wouldn't have been able to make that charge stick).

Everyone involved seemed to lose their head, but the superintendent managed to keep his. He recognized that this wasn't a school matter, and that the parents needed to be involved. He called in the parents, who were appalled and took this situation as seriously as they should have. Together they worked out a suitable apology and a way to handle the case without blowing it out of proportion. The press had a field day. This superintendent stood firm against the anger of the teachers and the pressures of the community. He was right.

Months later he shared something with me. He told me that he had met the young teenager at a school event, and the student apologized once again. He also thanked the superintendent for handling the situation with grace. The boy had acted out in anger, and hadn't thought about the consequences of his anger. Eventually, even the teachers came around. I was sorry my children were already out of high school—they would have benefited from attending a school system run by such a patient and wise administrator. We could use many more like him.

An even greater risk occurs when a student is targeting another student with cyberbullying tactics. They may post derogatory things about them online, pose as them in communications with others or postings online, change their passwords, hack into their accounts, take digital images of them and post those (sometimes in altered pornographic poses) using mobile phone cameras, digital cameras and video. The methods used by kids to harass each other are limited only by their limitless imaginations, bandwidth and tech skills.

The courts in the United States have reviewed several of the cases where the school has taken disciplinary action to protect its staff or the school itself from harassment and another student from cyberbullying, even if it occurs from outside of school. Most cases rule against the school, but some new ones are ruling in the school's favor on the basis that these matters affect the safety in the school itself. (Our WiredSafety.org cyberbullying and cyberharassment legal pages will launch soon, check back, or sign up for notice of our Web site alerts.)

What Can a School Do About This?

While taking disciplinary action against a student that does something outside of school hours and off school grounds may exceed a school's normal authority and land the school in legal hot water, doing so with the consent of the parties is not. Most schools have an acceptable use policy. And the smart ones have it signed by the parents and the students. It typically deals with what is and is not permitted use of the school's technology and computer systems. And, it is a legal contract binding the parents and the school (and the students themselves once they are of legal contracting age).

By adding a provision that covers dangerous or abusive actions by a student that directly affects another student, the school itself or its staff, the school now has authority to take appropriate action to deal with the dangerous or abusive conduct. It is the impact on the school, its safety and the safety and well-being of its staff and students that will trigger the school's authority, not whether the actions took place from a school computer within school hours. Laying out the problems and the impact of these problems on others at the school and the need to protect students, staff and the educational environment of the school is the place to start. Then, add an express consent to the school's taking action in the event it deems the matter to have an adverse impact on safety and the welfare of students, staff and the educational environment. It's that simple. But, as in all things legal, the devil is in the details. School board attorneys, or special cyberspace attorneys expert in children's issues should be retained to draft and implement policies to enforce acceptable use policies and risks management programs. This is not an area for amateurs or "wanna-be lawyers." It's also not the time to cut and paste another school's acceptable use policy and use it as your own.

The school should conduct an audit of its technology uses and needs. It needs to know how the technology is being used currently, as well as the recommendation of the experts within the school. These experts should include, at minimum, the school safety officer, the school board attorney, the principal, disciplinary officer, technology lab instructors, IT department and the librarian or library media specialist. It is best to also include a student representative and a parent representative, guidance counselor and mental health professional.

Then do some strategic planning. What's on the horizon as far as new software applications and hardware installations? What is the five-year plan? Does the school even have a five-year plan? If not, what's the two-year plan? (If you don't have one of those, do not read further...find a professional to

help you on more elemental things. You have serious problems.) Are their possible partners you can rely on? What about your computer suppliers? Your ISP? These companies have an amazing number of resources available to them to help schools. See what they have and don't be afraid to ask for their help.

Once you have a snapshot of what you are doing and what you plan to do, think about what you should be doing. Look to other schools for guidance as well as professional educational associations. Then, put your pen to paper (or your fingers to the keyboard) and explain what you are now doing, what you will be doing and the rules. Once that is done, lay out the range of disciplinary actions that might be taken and the parameters. Use simple language that the students and non-techies can understand. When that's all done, run it by the lawyers to make sure you haven't done anything wrong and haven't left anything out. Then cross your fingers, hold your breath and wait.

I am interested in hearing from those of you who have been through this process, and would love to highlight your work and share your successes (publicly) and your disasters (anonymously). Drop me an e-mail. We're all in this together.

Parry

The Internet Super Heroes' Philosophy

Spider-man 2's Aunt May said that "there is a hero in all of us [that] gives us strength [and] makes us noble." Super Heroes have the responsibility to use their powers wisely, not solely for their own benefit. They strive to improve the world, help others and right wrongs. Parry Aftab believes that there is a hero in all our children, as well. And tapping that power to do good and respect others is essential to guiding our children in using digital technologies, wireless communications and the Internet responsibly and safely.

Most Internet safety programs focus on the basic safety tips. (As Parry herself did for many years.) They are designed to teach our children and their parents about online sexual predators, how to avoid pornography and other inappropriate content and not to share personal information with strangers online. While important lessons, Parry believes that our children need to learn more. Much more. They need to be taught to respect others online, how to tell the difference between misinformation and credible sources, how to find what they are searching for and how to protect their privacy. They need to be taught not to misuse the technology and to maintain a healthy balance between their online and offline activities. They need to be taught how to function safely, privately and responsibly in a world where Internet and wireless technologies exist at every level. They need to be taught how to be good cyber-citizens.

Most of our children have never known life without the Internet. Since its launch in 1993, the Web has been a significant force in our and our children's daily lives. Now all schools in the United States have some kind of Internet connection. And many classrooms are connected as well. Until recently it was an advantage for our children to be online. Now they are at a distinct disadvantage if they are not.

One of Parry Aftab's favorite statements is "The greatest single risk our children face in connection with the Internet is being denied access." She insists that she has a solution for all other risks, but none for children who are prevented from using this important educational and communication tool.

Since Parry's first book, *The Parents' Guide to the Internet*, was published in 1997, she has devoted her life to helping families stay safe online. But following the publication of her second book, *The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace*, worldwide in 2000, she has shifted her primary focus to helping children and teens use the "filter between their ears." She understood that although educating parents was essential to keeping children safe online, educating the children themselves had to be prioritized. Parry felt we needed to help the children directly.

To help her, she recruited her WiredSafety.org volunteers. She also recruited caring and talented teens and created the *Teenangels* (Teenangels.org). *Teenangels* volunteers are between the ages of 13 and 18 and are trained in a comprehensive and intense program on all aspects of the 4Ps (privacy, predators,

pornography and piracy). The FBI, FTC and other leading governmental agencies in the United States participate in their training. (Equivalent groups help train Teenangels outside of the United States.) The program was so well-received that a younger group was formed, called the Tweenangels, to include preteens between the ages of 10 and 13.

The Teenangels have helped identify new issues as they arise over the years. These have included spyware and pop-ups, interactive gaming, instant messaging away-messages and new types of cyber-bullying and online harassment. They also included new ways online predators are trying to lure children into offline meetings and sexually exploit our youth. This special insight has been invaluable to the development of new programs and messages.

While some Internet safety rules still talked about putting the computer in a central location, Parry realized that unless we can also keep their interactive computer games, cell phones and text messaging devices in a central location, our children had to be educated to practice defensive surfing. Like its offline driving equivalent, defensive surfing teaches our children to avoid dangerous cyber-situations, when to come to us, as their parents, and how to report cybercrimes and abuse.

Parry quickly learned that by educating these special teens, she was also empowering them to help others. Additionally, other young Internet users responded better to messages delivered by their peers.

What methods work with the different kinds of cyberbullies?

The four types of cyberbullies include:

- The Vengeful Angel
- The Power-Hungry or Revenge of the Nerds
- The “Mean Girls”
- The Inadvertent Cyberbully or “Because I Can”

Some methods of cyberbullying are unique to a certain kinds of cyberbullies. And so are the ways the cyberbully maintain their secrecy or broadcast their actions to others. Some are secretive, some require an audience and some are entirely inadvertent.

Because the motives differ from each type of cyberbully, the solutions need to address their special issues. There is no “one size fits all” when cyberbullying is concerned. But understanding more about why they cyberbully others will help. You have to address the motives. That’s why awareness campaigns need several different messages to address the problem.



“The Vengeful Angel”

In this type of cyberbullying, the cyberbully doesn’t see themselves as a bully at all. They see themselves as righting wrongs, or protecting themselves or others from the “bad guy” they are now victimizing. This includes situations when the victim of cyberbullying or offline bullying retaliates and becomes a cyberbully themselves. They may be angry at something the victim did and feel they are taking warranted revenge or teaching the other a lesson. The “Vengeful Angel” cyberbully often gets involved trying to protect a friend who is being bullied or cyberbullied. They generally work alone, but may share their activities and motives with their close friends and others they

perceive as being victimized by the person they are cyberbullying.

Vengeful Angels need to know that no one should try and take justice into their own hands. They need to understand that few things are clear enough to understand, and that fighting bullying with more bullying only makes things worse. They need to see themselves as bullies, not the do-gooder they think they are. It also helps to address the reasons they lashed out in the first place. If they sense injustices, maybe there really are injustices. Instead of just blaming the Vengeful Angel, solutions here also

require that the situation be reviewed to see what can be done to address the underlying problem. Is there a place to report bullying or cyberbullying? Can that be done anonymously? Is there a peer counseling group that handles these matters? What about parents and school administrators. Do they ignore bullying when it occurs, or do they take it seriously? The more methods we can give these kinds of cyberbullies to use official channels to right wrongs, the less often they will try to take justice into their own hands.



stopcyberbullying.org

The “Power-Hungry” and “Revenge of the Nerds”

Just as their schoolyard counterparts, some cyberbullies want to exert their authority, show that they are powerful enough to make others do what they want and some want to control others with fear. Sometimes the kids want to hurt another kid. Sometimes they just don’t like the other kid. These are no different than the offline tough schoolyard bullies, except for their method. Power-Hungry” cyberbullies usually need an audience. It may be a small audience of their friends or those within their circle at school. Often the power they feel when only cyberbullying someone is not enough to feed their need to be seen as powerful and intimidating. They often brag about their actions. They want a

reaction, and without one may escalate their activities to get one.

Interestingly enough, though, the “Power-Hungry” cyberbully is often the victim of typical offline bullying. They may be female, or physically smaller, the ones picked on for not being popular enough, or cool enough. They may have greater technical skills. Some people call this the “Revenge of the Nerds” cyberbullying. It is their intention to frighten or embarrass their victims. And they are empowered by the anonymity of the Internet and digital communications and the fact that they never have to confront their victim. They may act tough online, but are not tough in real life. They are often not a bullying but “just playing one on TV.”

Revenge of the Nerds cyberbullies usually target their victims one-on-one and the cyberbully often keeps their activities secret from their friends. If they share their actions, they are doing it only with others they feel would be sympathetic. They rarely appreciate the seriousness of their actions. They also often resort to cyberbullying-by-proxy. Because of this and their tech skills, they can be the most dangerous of all cyberbullies.



stopcyberbullying.org

“Mean Girls”

The last type of cyberbullying occurs when the cyberbully is bored or looking for entertainment. It is largely ego-based and the most immature of all cyberbullying types. Typically, in the “Mean Girls” bullying situations, the cyberbullies are female. They may be bullying other girls (most frequently) or boys (less frequently).

“Mean Girls” cyberbullying is usually done, or at least planned, in a group, either virtually or together in one room. This kind of cyberbullying is done for entertainment. It may occur from a school library or a slumber party, or from the family room of someone after school. This kind of cyberbullying requires an audience. The cyberbullies in a “mean girls” situation want others to know who they are and that they have the power to cyberbully others. This kind of cyberbullying grows when fed by group admiration, cliques or by the silence of others who stand by and let it happen. It quickly dies if they don’t get the entertainment value they are seeking.



stopcyberbullying.org

The Inadvertent Cyberbully

Inadvertent cyberbullies usually don't think they are cyberbullies at all. They may be pretending to be tough online, or role playing, or they may be reacting to hateful or provocative messages they have received. Unlike the Revenge of the Nerds cyberbullies, they don't lash out intentionally. They just respond without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

They may feel hurt, or angry because of a communication sent to them, or something they have seen online. And they tend to respond in anger or frustration. They don't think before clicking "send."

Sometimes, while experimenting in role-playing online, they may send cyberbullying communications or target someone without understanding how serious this could be. They do it for the heck of it "Because I Can." They do it for the fun of it. They may also do it to one of their friends, joking around. But their friend may not recognize that it is another friend or make take it seriously. They tend to do this when alone, and are mostly surprised when someone accuses them of cyberabuse.

Instant messaging 101

Instant messaging is what kids do online more than anything else. There are many different kinds of instant messaging technology, and most are free. AIM (AOL's instant messenger free application) is the most popular, but MSN's free instant messenger application and Yahoo's free instant messenger application are also very popular.

IM is more like talking than e-mail is. You can do it while playing games, or doing homework or even while talking on the telephone to the same people you are IMing. Some kids IM certain kinds of things while talking about others in the same conversation. IMs are used to emphasize certain points, or to add additional thoughts or information.

Text-messaging devices, like mobile phones and mobile text-messengers, are very popular with kids as well. They are used to chat, send messages and communicate with their friends and, increasingly, parents. Many schools have banned these devices, as kids have learned to use them to cheat on tests (IMing each other for the answers) or to pass messages in class.

Some of the newer applications allow voice IM, and photo or video IMs too.

Attachments, including malicious code and viruses, can be sent by IM too. And spam has moved over the IM, being renamed SPIM to differentiate it from its e-mail counterpart.

Most IM safety tips mirror e-mail and chat safety tips. Not sharing personal information with strangers, making sure you really know the person you are IMing, checking all attachments with an updated anti-virus program are all at the top of the lists. Knowing how to use the privacy and security settings for your IM application is essential, as well. Blocking any person who bothers you, or who sends you unwanted or inappropriate messages or attachments is very important. And blocking anyone not on your approved or buddy list is too.

Cyberbullying, cyberstalking and harassment often occur using IM applications. Trojan horse hacking and virus programs are often sent that way too. Since many screens are open at once, kids are not as careful when opening IMs as they are with e-mails.

When things go wrong, it's harder to trace an IM than an e-mail. They don't use the traditional headers used by e-mail applications, so spotting the IM source isn't easy. And finding who is behind the IM message is much harder with IM as well. Many e-mail accounts require a paid subscription and can be traced to the sender easily. IM accounts, like many free web-based e-mail accounts, can be opened by anyone and shut down as fast. No proof of who you really are is required. And, while chat rooms often receive the biggest blame for online sexual predators, in the U.S. at least most cases involve IM, not chat. That's why using a logging or monitoring product that will capture IMs is important in case anything goes wrong. Otherwise, the message is lost in the ether and taking any disciplinary actions or legal action is difficult, if not impossible.

Many kids use more than one IM application, since with the exception of Trillian, they only communicate with others using the same IM platform. And having eight or nine IM communications open at the same time isn't unusual at all, when kids are IMing. Because it is more like talking than writing, kids find themselves breaking the privacy and safety rules when using IM more than in other applications, except chat. And IMing with strangers is much more dangerous than chatting with strangers. I always explain that most of us would prefer that our children are approached on a full playground, rather than one-on-one, if they encounter a sexual predator. There is strength and safety in groups. When approached one-to-one our children are often easier prey.

But banning IM is not an option. The kids would feel and be isolated if their friends communicate using IM. They wouldn't know what social events are planned and wouldn't be informed when everyone else learns about things. It's much better to screen out strangers and teach ourselves and others not to respond when a stranger sends an IM with "hi!" and tries to make us "guess" who they are. If they are really someone you know, they will find a way to let you know. Block and report any misuse as well.

The only way to monitor IMs and to capture them for any future reporting or prosecution needs is to use a monitoring software, like Spectorsoft.

NCAB Conference 9th / 10th April

Conference Outcomes

As a result of the conference, NCAB is calling for the following:

Early intervention:

- Need to identify early (at pre-school and early primary school) those who may have peer relationship issues, and implement appropriate programs.
- Additional focus is needed on pre-school education to prevent bullying and promote wellbeing.
- Need to raise awareness among schools and parents of the emerging evidence that children are using social networking sites at a young age.

Training Teachers:

- Need for pre-service teacher education programs to include a mandatory component, which addresses awareness and skills for preventing and managing bullying situations.
- Teachers must have ongoing access to training to develop the skills needed to respond effectively to bullying situations.
- Need for general education programs for teachers, students and parents as to the possible effects of the criminal and civil law on the use of communications technologies.

An appropriate legal framework:

- Need to legally define the rights and responsibilities of schools in responding to bullying and Cyber Bullying situations, and cyber-defamation.
- Legal remedies in themselves are not a solution to bullying, but are a necessary part of the solution. Need to clarify the role of the criminal and civil law in relation to Cyber Bullying and bullying.

Increased focus on school transition:

- Bullying peaks at times of transition between pre-school and primary school, and primary school and high school, therefore, education institutions need to increase their focus on bullying, including Cyber Bullying at these times.

A whole-school approach:

- Schools need to use evidence-informed strategies and include teachers, parents, students and the wider community to enhance cybersafety and wellbeing, and reduce bullying.
- Funding is required to ensure every school has the required welfare personnel to support students.

A whole-community approach:

- Solutions need to go beyond the school gate, given that bullying in schools is often a reflection on community behaviours and attitudes to violence.
- There is also a need to address all forms of bullying as a health problem. Health professionals need to undergo appropriate training and be involved in developing solutions.

Young people to be part of the solution:

- Young people are essential to the solution and must be involved in policy development, parent education and development of multi-media education materials.

Technology to be part of the solution:

- Adults, including parents and teachers, need to break down the digital divide by becoming savvy about technology.
- We all must recognize the creative use of technology as a powerful teaching and socializing tool.
- The focus needs to be on behaviours and positive relationships; and it is counterproductive to ban access to technology.

Support for ongoing research in Australia:

- Research into cybersafety and wellbeing, including effective strategies for engaging parents, keeping up-to-date with changes in technology, appropriate interventions in schools, etc.

Federal Funding:

- Sufficient Federal funding for an Australia-wide system to implement these cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools.

The following were the main keynote speakers:

Bill Belsey:

From Alberta, Canada, is the president and creator of the award-winning website www.bullying.org - the world's most-visited website about bullying. A former consultant on the Dr Phil Show, Mr Belsey is also the creator of www.cyberbullying.org, believed to be the world's first website about cyberbullying and the founder of Canada's annual Bullying Awareness Week.

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Deputy Prime Minister

The Hon Alastair Nicholson, Chair of NCAB

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg: The 'princess bitchface' syndrome at school- girl bullying and what can be done about it.

Mr Greg Gebhart: What are the main Cyber Safety issues in schools.

Prof Donna Cross

Prof Ken Rigby



Ms Robyn Treyvaud Dip Teach. B. Ed
Director CyberSafeWorld
robyn.treyvaud@cybersafeworld.com

August 4, 2008

As a consultant working in the internet health and safety domain nationally & internationally I was asked on 30 July to assess the content, resources & delivery of the Stride Foundation Ltd **Cyberbullying Program.**

I was provided with the outcomes of the trial program in 5 schools in the Knox City Council and spoke with both Sonya Tufnell and Michael Lanyon from the Stride Foundation for further background information.

In the sections:

About Cyberbullying I have made the following recommendations and provided further content on the basis that by providing relevant background information to the trainer-teacher the more effective the sessions with students will be. Because adults lack the personal experiences of the young people in the digital space this is the most efficient way of getting us 'up to speed'. To be credible the trainers have to have a good understanding of the complexities of the issues being experienced by the young people.

- Include a broader definition of cyber-bullying allowing differentiation of understandings on the basis of age and experience.
- Outline of behaviours that fall under the cyber-bullying definition/s.
- What is the impact of bullying?

Prevalence of cyber-bullying. Inclusion of a well researched international project 'Pew Internet and American Life Project Study Cyberbullying and Online Teens' for statistics that resonate with the Australian experience.

The technology of cyber-bullying: include a list of sources and data about the online environments where they occur.

Characteristics of bullies and targets: Use of Aftab's categories is excellent.

Supported by some Australian data. What was missing from this section was the 'signs of a child being cyberbullied' and the concept of dis-inhibition.

Out of school incidents lacked resources for Acceptable Use Policies which schools are developing to help them navigate the 'grey' areas between what happens out of school and the impact on schools in terms of the health and well being of its students. Exemplars have been provided for sharing with school management.

Demonising the technology: This is a very important aspect of the program delivery articulated as follows: 'As stated earlier, while accepting misuse can occur, students are passionate about the positives of the technology. Constant or strident criticism will alienate students or fail to address the real issue of lack of peer support or a breakdown in student culture.' Trainers will need to acknowledge the benefits and opportunities provided by technology early in the session to set the tone for the program.

Trivialisaton of incidents and Foster empathy are excellent inclusions in the background information and based on sound research both anecdotal and academic.

Inform about digital footprints is picked up as reminder that what happens online often has consequences in the 'real' world. I have added further information as a way to explore with the students the issues faced when publishing content online.

Highlight legal penalties will need differentiating given the different state jurisdictions. If Federal laws cover this I would include it but also acknowledging state laws.

Program Structure

The activities and model of **Reaction Activity** and **Debrief** will work successfully in this program. For many young people this may be the first time they have shared their experiences publicly with peers and adults.

They are conscious that as adults we don't understand let alone use the technology as they do: 'kids are fearless and parents /teachers are clueless' is often how this gap is expressed. As there is no perceivable consequence for inappropriate or offensive behaviour I would strongly recommend talking about the moral compass:

It's what you do when no one is watching. It's the premise on which young people base their online behaviour:: I'll do it as I know I won't get caught ::

Consequences of being a cyberbully is very powerful and relevant. It's also what many young people haven't considered. Excellent overview without being 'doom & gloom'.

Further resources have been added which include:

'Let's Fight It Together' CyberBullying Film
(<http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying/film.aspx>)

On this area of the Digizen site you will find a number of very important resources (below) to help address the issue of cyberbullying in schools. These include Childnet's Cyberbullying film and a unique drama documentary produced by students with accompanying drama lesson plan.

I would recommend where possible to use this film and the smaller vignettes that provide the perspectives of each character. Having used the film with students from Y6-12 the feedback has been extremely positive and provides further resources for teachers to use in their exploration of the issues it raises.

This is an outstanding program and I fully endorse the content and delivery of such an important resource for young people. Providing sufficient time and resources to support the trainers as they develop a greater understanding of cyber-bullying is key to its success.

Robyn Treyvaud

August 4, 2008