

Q&A:

Strategies to Prevent Cyberbullying

This brief by the New York State School Boards Association is intended to help parents and educators better understand how to recognize and prevent cyberbullying.

Q: What is cyberbullying?

A: Cyberbullying is “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices,” according to the Cyberbullying Research Center.

Q: What can parents do to prevent cyberbullying?

A: As a parent, you are in charge of your children’s out-of-school time, which includes teaching your children not to be a cyberbully or cyberbullying victim. To assist you with this effort, the New York State School Boards Association suggests the following tips:

- Know your children’s online habits and passwords to monitor them, if need be, but encourage them not to share their passwords with others. If possible, “friend” or “follow” your children on social media websites.
- Ensure all privacy settings are in place on social media sites that your children may use. Remind your children to log out of all online sites when not in use.
- Develop guidelines for technology use with your children. Work with your children and model for them what online safety means. Establish a contract with your children for Internet and technology device use.
- Know your school’s policy regarding

online behavior. Under New York’s Dignity for All Students Act, school districts are required to adopt policies regarding bullying, discrimination and harassment, including cyberbullying. Since state law requires collaboration with parents and community members whenever the code of conduct is changed, there are opportunities for you to participate in the process. For information on the specifics of New York’s Dignity Act, go to <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>.

- Periodically do an Internet search for your children’s names to see what information is available online about them. If any personal data is online, take steps to remove this data by contacting the content provider.
- Understand your children’s developmental skill-level concerning perspective-taking, social awareness and empathy, and help promote these skills for your children through dialogue and modeling. For example, developmentally, children typically are unable to take multiple perspectives into account until after the age of seven.
- Discuss published incidents of cyberbullying with your children regarding their feelings, familiarity with similar incidents, causes and consequences.

Sources

Cherry, Kendra, “Preoperational States of Cognitive Development” <http://psychology.about.com/od/piagetstheory/p/pre-operational.htm>

Commonsense Media <http://www.commonsensemedia.org/cyberbullying>

Cyberbullying Research Center <http://cyberbullying.us/>

New York State Education Department <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>

Stopbullying.gov <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>