

Staying Safe on the Internet

Lesson 5: Computer Misuse

Teacher's Hints for Group Discussions

Erin's Story - Activities

Question 1:

“Think about action that victims could take against cyberbullies. What can they do to block out cyberbullies? What can they do to stop cyberbullies?”

Here are some hints for the group discussion:

Victims of cyberbullying can collect evidence against cyberbullies. Many of the means of communication that cyberbullies use are recordable— nearly every time they abuse someone, they create evidence which can be used against them. Victims can:

- Save abusive texts as evidence. There is software available for most phones which allows SMS messages to be downloaded and saved on a computer. The texts contain the mobile number that they were sent from (and forensics experts have been able to identify the handset they were sent from in some crime cases).
- Save abusive Instant Messages as evidence. Most types of Instant Messaging programs on computers have the ability to save Instant Messaging conversations.
- Save and print abusive social networking sites and websites as evidence.
- Many pictures do have information in them that reports when there were taken and exactly what kind of device (e.g. type of camera, type of mobile phone) took them.

Victims of cyberbullying can also take cyberbullies down off the internet. They can:

- Report abuse on Social Networking sites to the administrator to get them banned from the site.
- Report abusive websites to the webspace provider. Webspace providers prohibit the use of their facilities for any purpose that is abusive, and an abusive user's account can be cancelled.
- Report cyberbullies to school authorities.
- Report threats of violence, intimidation and blackmail to law enforcement.

Victims of cyberbullying can also stop cyberbullies reaching them in the first place. They can:

- Block calls and SMS messages from a cyberbully's mobile phone number —this used to be difficult, but mobile phone companies are gradually making this easier to do. Some phones also have applications available which will block unwanted numbers.
- Block Instant Messages from cyberbullies—most Instant Messaging software allows this now.
- Block emails from a cyberbully's email address.

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Question 2:

“Think about things from the Principal’s point of view. Suggest guidance on how the school should protect its pupils and staff from cyberbullying.”

Here are some hints for the group discussion:

Teachers and school management have a “duty of care” to the students while they are on the school site. This means that they are responsible for protecting them from harm and from people who might harm them. They also have a duty to defend their staff from professional attack and internet abuse against their reputations.

Planning against cyberbullies:

- Schools should have anti-bullying codes that identify bullying and cyberbullying as unacceptable and contrary to the basic aims of the school, and class them as serious disciplinary offences.
- There are now some excellent educational resources which schools and teachers can use to raise awareness of cyberbullying and help defeat it.
- Schools should acknowledge that both students and teachers can become victims of cyberbullying – it is a problem which affects everyone.

Preventing cyberbullying:

- Schools can help prevent cyberbullying by making it clear that it won’t be tolerated. They can also teach all pupils about how to block out cyberbullies, and how to record and collect evidence of cyberbullying for authorities / service providers / website administrators to act on.
- Think about it from the victim’s point of view: if they’re not sure whether the school will take them seriously, or they think the school will give the cyberbully a mild rebuke but not make the cyberbully strongly regret having done it in the first place, they’re not likely to come forward, as reporting might only make the cyberbully more aggressive and spiteful in revenge.

Reacting to cyberbullying:

- Schools should have policies of investigating all claims of cyberbullying seriously and helping students to collect evidence properly. They should also investigate both sides of the story, to be fair to both sides. They should also make sure that the investigation and discipline of cyberbullying makes it worth the victim’s while coming forward, and gives confidence to other victims to come forward.

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Question 3:

"Think about what Erin is doing. Why is it easy for her to use the internet to bully?"

Here are some hints for the group discussion:

Access:

- Bullies only used to be able to hurt their victims when they had physical access to them. Now, most young people have mobile phones, so cyberbullies can send abusive messages to them at any time of day or night. Victims can be made to feel that they can never escape it, and they have no place to be safe.
- Social networking and Instant Messaging are extremely important means of socialising for many young people. This means that cyberbullies have an extra social space in which they can cause fear, harm and distress.
- Young people now often express who they are and who they want to be online. This means that cyberbullies can interfere not just with socialising but also with personal self-expression, by making the online world a painful place to be.

Collaboration:

- The nature of "web 2.0" - where users come together and create their own content in things like blogs, wikis, shared videos, etc, can be misused by cyberbullies. Cyberbullies can create blogs or pages on social networking sites dedicated to abusing their victims in public, and invite contributions from others.

Cameras:

- The inclusion of cameras on most mobile phones means that cyberbullies can take photos of their victims and apply degrading treatments to them or use them in their campaign of abuse.

Communication:

- Cyberbullies can use the internet and mobile phones to instantly spread abusive rumours and images to a large number of people for little or no cost.