Challenging Cyber Bullying

Tips for Parents

The internet has created a whole new world of social communications for young people who are using e-mail, websites, instant messaging, chat rooms and text messaging at younger ages and with increasing frequency. While most interactions are positive, increasingly kids are using these communication tools to antagonize and intimidate others. This has become known as cyber-bullying.

The anonymity of online communications means kids feel freer to do things online that they wouldn't do with adult knowledge and/or supervision. Technology, too, can also affect a young person's ethical behavior because it doesn't provide tangible feedback about the consequences of actions on others. This lack of feedback minimizes feelings of empathy or remorse.

There are several ways that young people bully others online:
- They send e-mails or instant messages containing insults or threats.
- They spread hateful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging or posting on message boards or online diaries.
- They steal passwords and send out threatening e-mails using an assumed identity.
- Technically savvy kids may build whole websites, often with password protection, to target specific students or teachers.

Outside of the computer, an increasing number of kids are being bullied by text messages through their cell phones. These phones are challenging the ability of adults to monitor and guide children because, unlike a computer placed in a home, school or library, mobiles are personal, private, connected and always accessible. Built-in digital cameras in cell phones are adding a new dimension to the problem.

Get involved and Be Aware

- Learn everything you can about the Internet and what your kids are doing online. Talk to them about the places they go online and the activities they are involved in.
- Encourage your child to come to you when anybody says or does something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Caution your child against sharing their contact information with others.
- Caution your child against responding to harassing messages.

Encourage Online Ethics

- Talk to your child about responsible Internet use.
- Report any incident of harassment and/or physical threats to the appropriate officials including school leaders, local police and your Internet service provider.

Take Action

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children CyberTipline: 1-800-843-5678 / www.missingkids.com/cybertip

Burlington Township High School – Hopkins Building: 609-387-3774
Burlington Township Police Department: 609-386-2019
New Jersey State Police School Safety Hotline: 877-624-8082