

TIPS TO HELP STOP CYBERBULLYING

POSITIVE CULTURE: Promote a positive and safe classroom culture. Whether or not you have technology in the classroom, setting norms of respectful communication sends a message to your students about what is and isn't acceptable. Find ways to demonstrate that your classroom is a safe, emotionally caring environment. Provide resources in the classroom to help students identify, respond to, and avoid cyberbullying. This could be tips on how to respond to and avoid cyberbullying.

EMBRACE TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Step up when you encounter a teachable moment related to cyberbullying or respectful online communication. Encourage students to pay attention to "red flag moments"—when something happens on digital media that makes them feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious. Explain to students the three ways they can and should respond if they witness cyberbullying: support the target of the bullying (be an ally); try to stop the cyberbullying (be an upstander); and/or tell a trusted adult (report it). It may not be part of your lesson plan, and it may set you off track for a bit, but every time you reinforce anti-cyberbullying messages, you're doing the critical work of cyberbullying prevention. And as hard as it may be to admit, ignoring these teachable moments also sends a message your students will remember.

INTERNET IS PUBLIC AND PERMANENT: As part of your drive to reinforce the concept that empathy is necessary to prevent cyberbullying, you should also make these lessons another opportunity to remind your students that EVERYTHING that happens on the Internet is both public and permanent.

CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATION: With so much attention and concern being paid to issues of cyberbullying, it is essential to bring your school administration into the situation as soon as possible. As involved as you may want to be in addressing the situation (as many dedicated teachers want to be), always remember that the school administration is ultimately responsible for these matters.

REMAIN DISPASSIONATE: If you learn of cyberbullying, it is important to simply act as the receiver and recorder of the information. Teachers who bring intense passion and enthusiasm to their work need to keep in mind that strong emotions can get in the way of judgment and communication in situations involving student behavior and discipline. Avoid appearing biased at all costs. Doing so will help prevent situations where parents say you have allowed your personal feelings to get in the way.

AVOID JUDGEMENT: If you discover a student has taken part in particularly vicious cyberbullying, it will be very tempting to judge the child or the parents. Do not climb on a moral "high horse" and lecture the child or family. Rather, continue to point out why what happened is against the school's expectations, explain how the child was taught to avoid it and show how the school will respond. Appearing judgmental will undermine all of your goals.

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