

Everything

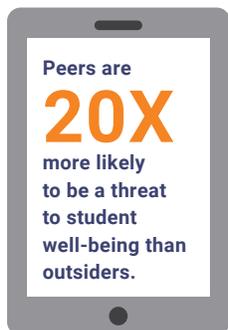
You Need to Know About

Cyberbullying



A Threat to Student Safety Online

During just one school year, Gaggle analyzed over 6.25 billion email messages and files, and over 95% of the harmful situations discovered by Safety Representatives involved threats within the respective school or district. While there are predators outside the school district, a student's peers are 20 times more likely to be a threat to the student's well-being. These harmful situations include cyberbullying, intentions of violence or self-harm, drug and alcohol use, serious domestic troubles, and more.



To ensure student safety on digital devices, schools and districts will often limit student communications to other users within the district with hopes that students will be protected online from strangers and predators. But after years of reviewing data on student safety, we've come to the conclusion that the greatest threat to online student safety isn't strangers or predators—it's other students.

Cyberbullying is a substantial concern when it comes to protecting students online. In 2018, **nearly 15% of students ages 12–18** had been bullied online, which doesn't include the significant estimate of students who experience cyberbullying but choose not to report.

In this eBook, you will learn about some of the ways students experience cyberbullying, preventative measures that parents, schools, and districts can take against cyberbullying, and how you can prepare yourself and react when cyberbullying occurs in your school or district.



CHECK OUT OUR VIDEO
Wichita Falls ISD: Being Aware of Bullying

Cy·ber·bul·ly·ing

/sībər bo olēiNG/

Noun:

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices and includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean-spirited content about someone else. Cyberbullying can occur anywhere people can view, participate in, or share content. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

Special concerns of cyberbullying include:



Persistent: Students can communicate with peers through their digital devices 24/7.

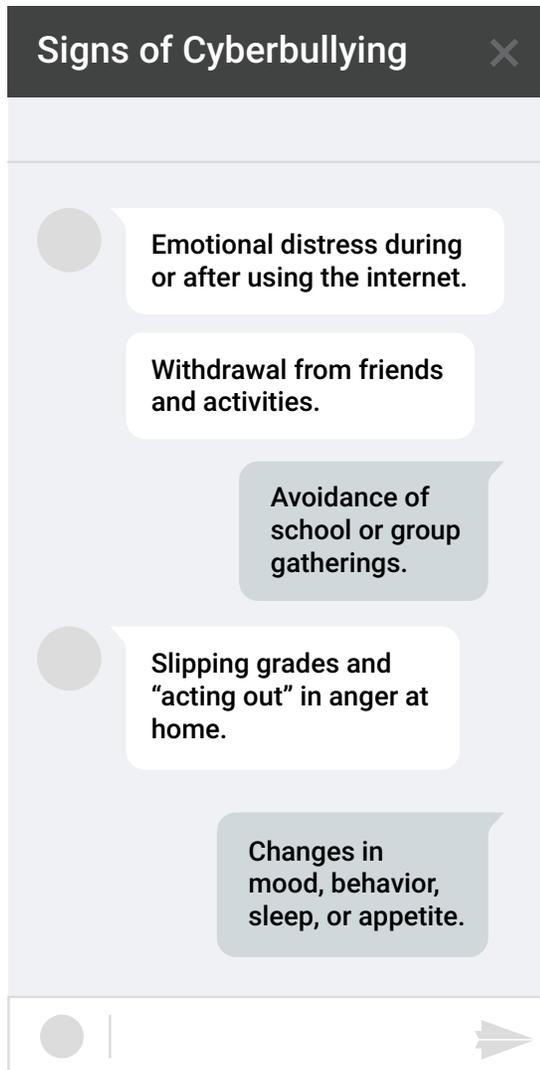


Difficult to catch: Because cyberbullying is often private or occurs through accounts adults don't have access to, it can be hard to recognize.



Permanent: Digital communications often can't be undone once they've been sent or posted online. Online reputation can negatively impact future college admissions or employment.

Where to Watch for Cyberbullying

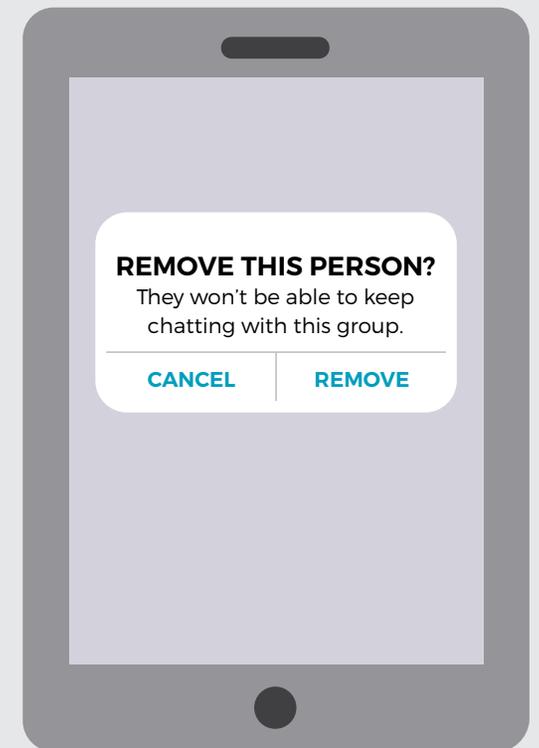


Email and Digital Communication Tools

Cyberbullies will sometimes create fake email accounts to antagonize peers, sending hurtful messages or content to peers’ school email addresses. Students have also been known to communicate through cloud-based shared documents, such as Google Docs, where they change the font to the same color as the background so teachers can’t see what they’ve written. Gaggle Safety Management is able to catch harmful situations through both of these channels right away and block any dangerous content before it reaches students.

Texts and Group Messages

Cyberbullies will often add other students to a group chat to make fun of them in private, and removing a peer from a group chat is also a form of cyberbullying in itself. Students are less likely to report that they’re being bullied over chat for fear of incriminating a group of their peers and the backlash they might receive from doing so.



Removing a peer from a group chat is a form of cyberbullying

Social Media

Cyberbullying on social media is increasingly prevalent, as harmful posts can be spread to a large number of peers instantly. Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are some of the most popular social media apps K-12 students use on a daily basis. Fake accounts are easy to create, meaning that cyberbullies can easily hide behind a secret persona online. Some of the most common ways students experience cyberbullying on social media include:



Follow requests: Cyberbullies will sometimes follow peers' accounts just to find out personal information to use against them. Some cyberbullies also will unfollow or unfriend a student to make them feel outcast.



Tagging: Tagging on social media is usually used to connect with friends and share content with peers who might not follow the original poster. However, tagging is sometimes used with malicious intent to tag students in posts that are insulting, share personal or derogatory information outside a students' friend circle, or make it look like a student has done something embarrassing.



Fake accounts: Unfortunately, this type of cyberbullying is very hard to catch. Cyberbullies will often create fake accounts to bully other students behind a secret persona or masquerade as another student and post humiliating content. Accounts like this are often in violation of social media platforms' terms, so it's important to teach students to report and block any fake accounts they encounter.



Cyberbullies create fake accounts to bully other students

Preventing Cyberbullying Before It Begins

The first line of defense for cyberbullying is taking proactive measures to prevent cyberbullying from occurring in the first place. While this is not a perfect solution, it can greatly reduce the number of incidents of cyberbullying in your school or district. There are many ways to prevent cyberbullying and protect students online, but these are a few of the most effective methods:

Digital Citizenship

One of the best ways to be proactive about cyberbullying and protect students online is to **promote digital citizenship** from a young age. Here are a few ways to promote good digital citizenship with students in your school and district:

- Implement responsible technology use policies and agreements
- Set a standard for digital etiquette and respect
- Encourage a healthy and safe digital footprint
- Create channels for communication and reporting cyberbullying incidents

Digital citizenship creates students who are respectful to their peers and others online, while simultaneously taking care of their personal digital safety and well-being. The greater awareness students have of what good digital citizenship looks like, the more likely they are to make positive decisions online and speak up against cyberbullying.



**Good digital citizenship helps students
make positive decisions online**

Safety Management

Safety management refers to analysis and expert review of student content in email communications, calendars, files, chat apps including Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts, and more. This is also a great complement to network security and reporting systems, and can support existing web filter platforms. A safety management platform can provide review of internal collaboration and productivity tools, without restricting student communications to teachers or peers. By eliminating false alerts and pressure on staff to manage and monitor all of these services, Gaggle Safety Management helps to deploy a stronger safety net than these solutions can provide on their own.

Gaggle Safety Management will provide early warning detection of incidents in situations where students are concerned about the consequences of reporting harassment and bullying. It can also catch harmful content and cyberbullying happening on social media if the account is attached to a school-associated email account.

SpeakUp for Safety

Some schools have implemented reporting systems as a measure to prevent students from bullying and harassing one another. These reporting systems can be anonymized so that parents and students feel more comfortable reporting incidents.

Gaggle's SpeakUp for Safety tipline offers 24/7 reporting with real-time review, and calls can be made anonymously. Safety professionals look into students' concerns, making direct contact with the district or local authorities when necessary.



**Gaggle's SpeakUp for Safety
tipline offers 24/7 reporting with
real-time review**

Cyberbullying Prevention: Keeping Distance Learning Environments Safe

Cyberbullying can be hard for parents and educators to spot and even harder on students' mental health and academic success. Social distancing measures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have forced students to both learn and socialize in online environments, opening them up to the [dangers of cyberbullying](#). In a time when digital communication tools are students' main platform for learning and staying connected with one another, it's important that these digital spaces are kept positive and safe.

While teaching students remotely, educators can still watch for signs of cyberbullying and support students who are being harassed online. Here are three steps to help prevent cyberbullying in distance learning environments:

- Monitor how students communicate and [watch for signs](#)
- Provide a safe space for students who are being bullied
- Have a clear cyberbullying policy

Even with all of these measures in place, it's still possible that students might get cyberbullied in private. As parents and educators, our hope is that students will always feel like they can share their struggles with us—including when they're being bullied—but teens especially can feel embarrassed, ashamed, or afraid to incriminate their peers.

[Gaggle Safety Management](#) acts as a safeguard for students who choose not to speak up about cyberbullying, protecting them from harmful content and notifying school or district contacts about mentions of bullying in students' school-associated accounts. In addition, Gaggle's [SpeakUp for Safety tipline](#) offers students a safe environment to report concerns without feeling as though they will get themselves or their peers in trouble. With these safety measures in place, you can protect students from online harassment that is detrimental to both their mental health and academic success.



Educators can still watch for signs of cyberbullying during distance learning

Preparing Yourself for Cyberbullying

Your school or district can be prepared for cyberbullying if the right practices and policies are in place. Here are some exercises that can help you prevent, manage, and even respond to cyberbullying during the new school year:



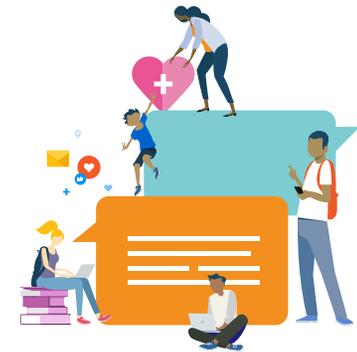
Be Aware

Staying attentive and monitoring cyberbullying is important to the management of online student safety. The way that students react to cyberbullying often mimics negative behaviors that students receive discipline for. By staying on the lookout for signs of cyberbullying and recognizing any sudden changes in students' behaviors, you can catch cyberbullying situations before they become a larger problem.



Be Perceptive

Thanks to technology, one advantage you have is that you can track and record incidents of cyberbullying. Be sure to archive and, if possible, review all school-provided means of student communication. This helps protect students who aren't ready to speak up about being bullied online.



Be Understanding

Handling cyberbullying not only involves prevention and detection but also your reaction to instances of cyberbullying. It is important to investigate and consider as much context as possible when reflecting on a cyberbullying situation. Consider why the victim was targeted and the benefits of possible solutions. Also, consider why the bully decided to act out in the first place. Inappropriate behavior is often an outgrowth of poor choices, poor conditions, and lack of resources.

How to React When Cyberbullying Occurs

Save It

Keeping a record of cyberbullying instances through a screenshot or by other means is an important step to collect evidence against a cyberbully, as most forms of cyberbullying occur on platforms where posts and messages can be instantly deleted or hidden from view. This practice should be clearly stated in your acceptable and responsible use policies, and any suspected cyberbullying incidents should be kept on file for later reference. If the situation progresses to the point of involving law enforcement, past incidents can be helpful in building a case.

Report & Block It

In many cases, reporting abuse can be beneficial. If a student is engaging in recurrent bullying behavior, multiple reports can help identify and corroborate other students' stories. This can also ensure that cyberbullies receive the right penalty for their actions toward peers. Once the situation is under control and the abuse is reported, the best way to avoid any further cyberbullying is to block the user.

Address It

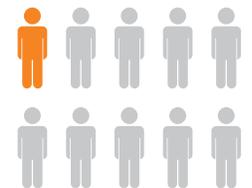
Bullying laws mandate schools in every state to create a formal policy to determine which student behaviors are considered bullying and to discuss disciplinary actions, ensuring all students get treated with the same scrutiny when accused of bullying. All 50 U.S. states have laws to criminalize the actions of people who are engaging in certain bullying behaviors, but there are no federal laws that directly refer to cyberbullying. Most states have a reference to cyberbullying within their general harassment laws, but even those laws start to get confusing when it comes to schools' ability to discipline cyberbullying, formal bullying policies, and off-campus behavior.

By determining the laws that apply within your state and creating a formal policy for your school or district, you are fully prepared to address instances of cyberbullying as soon as they are reported.

Follow Up

It's risky to assume that once a cyberbullying behavior has been addressed, the situation has been resolved. Many times, these incidents are not restricted to one interaction, or even one social media app or channel of communication. It's crucial to follow up with the student who has been bullied to ensure everything is being done to support them

Only 1 in 10
students report
cyberbullying
to a parent



and prevent future incidents. According to [BullyingStatistics.org](https://www.bullyingstatistics.org), while 50% of students have been a victim of cyberbullying, only one in 10 report it to a parent, so being proactive is important. Cyberbullying is a serious issue that can be detrimental to the quality of a student's life. Staying alert and following up with possible issues could keep a student out of a subsequent negative situation.

Top Cyberbullying Resources



While you might not be able to fully control cyberbullying or its harmful effects, as school faculty and administrators, you have a unique position to help reduce it. Encourage your students to commit to taking a stand against cyberbullying, even if the issue doesn't affect them directly. Empower students to report cyberbullying both when they experience it personally and when they see others being harassed. Help students understand the consequences of cyberbullying so they are sensitive to victims and choose to break the cycle instead of joining in and forwarding harmful content to others. Support from all members of a school or district community is key to instigating a social change to commit to the fight against cyberbullying.

In addition to this eBook, there are so many great cyberbullying resources available. We've compiled a list of some of our favorites, labeling them each by their intended audience: administrators, educators, parents, or students.

ConnectSafely

For Educators and Parents

ConnectSafely.org is a nonprofit dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy, and security. Here, you'll find research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news, and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.

Cyberbullying Research Center

For Administrators, Educators, Parents, and Students

The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. You will find research-backed facts, figures, and detailed stories from those who have been directly impacted by online aggression. In addition, the site includes numerous resources to help you prevent and respond to cyberbullying incidents.

CyberWise

For Educators and Parents

CyberWise is a resource site for adults who want to help youth use digital media safely and wisely. The site offers clear breakdowns of digital citizenship and cyberbullying topics, as well as helpful blogs about specific and timely issues.

Internet Safety 101

For Educators and Parents

Internet Safety 101—a program of **Enough is Enough**—is a widely renowned resource and teaching series that paints a comprehensive picture of the dangers children encounter online. The Internet Safety 101 program strives to educate and empower parents, educators, and other caring adults with the information they need to effectively protect children from internet dangers.



MediaSmarts

For Educators and Parents

MediaSmarts is a Canadian nonprofit for digital and media literacy working to ensure that children and youth have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens. MediaSmarts has been developing digital and media literacy programs and resources for Canadian homes, schools, and communities since 1996.

Not In Our Town

For Administrators, Educators, Parents, and Students

Not In Our Town (NIOT) is a movement to stop hate, address bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all. NIOT focuses on solutions that inspire and empower communities, helping local leaders build vibrant, diverse cities and towns where everyone is encouraged to participate.

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center

For Administrators, Educators, Parents, and Students

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center actively leads social change to prevent childhood bullying, so that all youth are safe and supported in their schools, communities, and online. PACER provides innovative resources for students, parents, educators, and others, and recognizes bullying as a serious community issue that impacts education, physical and emotional health, and the safety and well-being of students.

StopBullying.gov

For Administrators, Educators, Parents, and Students

StopBullying.gov provides information and resources from various government agencies on bullying, cyberbullying, the risks of bullying, and how to prevent and respond to bullying.



About Gaggle

Since 1999, Gaggle has been the leader in helping K-12 districts manage student safety on school-provided technology. Using a powerful combination of artificial intelligence and trained safety experts, Gaggle's safety solution proactively assists districts 24/7/365 in the prevention of student suicide, bullying, inappropriate behaviors, school violence, and other harmful situations. Most importantly, Gaggle continues to help hundreds of districts avoid tragedies and save lives, while also protecting their liability. During the 2019–20 academic year, Gaggle helped districts save the lives of 927 students who were planning or actually attempting suicide. For more information, visit www.gaggle.net and follow Gaggle on Twitter at [@Gaggle_K12](https://twitter.com/Gaggle_K12).



Gaggle Mission

To ensure the safety and well-being of students and schools by leveraging people and technology.

Gaggle Vision

All schools are safe and all students get the mental and emotional help they need.

Contact Us Today!

800.288.7750 • sales@gaggle.net • www.gaggle.net

