



Everything You Need  
to Know

(and more)

About

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**Cyberbullying**

# Who do you think poses the greatest threat to online student safety?

During just one school year, among schools and districts that use Gaggle Safety Management, 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, over 20 times more often the greatest threat to a student is his or her peers. These harmful situations include cyberbullying, intentions of violence or self-harm, drug and alcohol use, serious domestic troubles and more.

***When asked this question, some might imagine a shady, older, online predator with malicious and abusive intentions.***

Media and television have no doubt reinforced this presupposition: The greatest threat to your students lies outside of your school's walls. To counteract this threat, schools and districts will sometimes limit student communications to other students and teachers within the respective school or district. This is often referred to as a "walled garden" approach to student safety.

After years of reviewing data on student safety, we've come to the conclusion that the greatest threat to student safety isn't online predators. Rather, the greatest threat is other students, and cyberbullying remains the number one culprit. In this ebook, you will learn about some of the lesser-known ways students experience cyberbullying; preventative measures that schools and districts can take; and how you can prepare yourself and react when cyberbullying occurs in your school or district.



## Cy·ber·bul·ly·ing

/sībər bo olēiNG/

### **Noun:**

Bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets, as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

*Source: stopbuylling.gov*

### **Moreover, cyberbullying can include:**

- mean text messages or emails
- rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites
- embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles

## Signs of Cyberbullying

Emotional Distress during or after using the Internet.

Withdrawal from friends and activities.

Avoidance of school or group gatherings.

Slipping grades and "acting out" in anger at home.

Changes in mood, behavior, sleep or appetite.

# Not-So-Obvious Ways Students Experience Cyberbullying

*One of the best ways to combat cyberbullying is to have open conversations with your children and students. To help parents and teachers keep these conversations ongoing and relevant, here are some ways cyberbullying occurs of which you might not be aware.*

## Tagging

You can tag friends on just about every social media platform. It's supposed to be a way to share messages or images with a specified group of people. The problem with tagging is that some people use it in unintended and malicious ways. For instance, someone might tag another person in a post about something derogatory or insulting. Once the person gets tagged, all of their friends can see it. Remind children that settings exist on most social media platforms that allow them to prevent someone from tagging them.

## Unfollowing

This one seems pretty harmless, right? Well, think again. Teens sometimes use this feature to taunt their peers. They unfriend them or unfollow them to send a very clear message that they should, unfairly, be considered an outcast.

## Friend Requests

This one seems even more harmless, but the key here is the intent. Sometimes students will send friend requests just to find personal information they can use against their peers. It seems like a generous gesture, but the purpose is utterly foul. Remind children to be careful of whom they add as a friend on social media. If it isn't someone you consider a friend offline, they probably shouldn't be a friend online.

These three examples of cyberbullying make it difficult to know when they're malicious, but awareness here is key. If you're aware that children are using seemingly harmless methods to attack others, you will be better prepared to address them.

# Stop Being Scared & Be Prepared

*Some of the most inventive achievements of human beings throughout history are attempts to prevent or curb the many threats we face. The concept of "insurance" dates as far back as four millennia ago, when Chinese and Babylonian traders would distribute their goods across numerous shipping vessels in order to reduce risk of great loss.*

We've cured diseases and put an end to various plagues, some of which were of epidemic proportions. The erection of territorial walls and their destruction have both served to preserve lives and the integrity of the human spirit.

Throughout history, human beings at their best have found ways to be proactive in the face of threats and fears. We are successful when we find ways to be prepared and stop being scared. There are many ways K-12 schools and districts, too, have safeguarded themselves against the threats to online student safety, many ways you can stop being scared and start being prepared.

## Network Security

Network security provides a baseline for how you might be proactive against the threat of student

safety, by limiting access to malware, access to inappropriate online content and more. Although it provides a decent starting point for student safety, it cannot be regarded as a complete solution. For example, even if access to social media is blocked, students can use school-sanctioned communication services like G Suite for Education or Office 365™ to harass one another.

## Reporting Harassment and Bullying

Some schools have implemented reporting systems as a measure to prevent students from bullying and harassing one another. Often referred to as "hotlines," these reporting systems can be anonymized, so that parents and students are more likely to report incidents. While this offers a great step forward, again, it's only a piece of a fully-effective solution for student safety.

## Safety Management

Safety Management refers to content analysis and expert review of student content in email communications, calendars, files and more. This is a great complement to network security and reporting systems, inasmuch as it will catch a lot more than those solutions on their own.

Safety Management provides the review of internal collaboration and productivity tools (e.g. without restricting student communications to teachers or peers).

Safety Management will provide early warning detection of incidents in situations where students are concerned about the consequences of reporting harassment and bullying. Also, Safety Management has proven to track records of alcohol and drug abuse, domestic abuse and other similar situations that cannot be detected by other means as easily.

## Digital Citizenship Education

Perhaps the best, albeit most difficult, measure is Digital Citizenship education. It is one thing to put into place measures that limit student access or catch students in the act. It is another thing entirely to train students on how to behave online and engender in them a sense of decency and

respect towards others. This is difficult because it actually entails shaping the moral attitudes of students. It is, however, the greatest, because if it is done truly well, other measures become increasingly obsolete.

Of course, that likely won't happen in the near future

(and some would convincingly argue that there will always be issues with student behavior), so the best approach to student safety involves combining all of these measures.

64%

of the students who experienced cyberbullying stated that it really affected their ability to learn and feel safe at school. \*

1/3

students have experienced cyberbullying in their lifetime.\*

\*Source: Cyberbullying Research Center

# How to Prepare 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

This might seem like the most obvious tip, but exercising good attentiveness is difficult to master. Many telltale signs of troubled students slip outside our attention because we're busy attending to our jobs or affairs in our personal lives. Be on the lookout for signs, like a sudden and unexpected decline in performance, engagement or confidence.

## Be savvy

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. Before the advent of the Digital Age, there was no way to know a quiet student was bullied, but now there are ways to learn about bullying on your own.

## Be understanding

Handling cyberbullying does not only involve 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 possibility of counseling and the benefits of parental involvement.

Also, consider why the bully decided to act out in the first place. Inappropriate behavior is always an outgrowth of poor choices, poor conditions and poor influence. It is important to note that this will not always be the fault of the bully's family, but might also be caused by other influences, such as media, friends and mental health.

## Be a role model

Many people will say the media is to blame for cyberbullying. To be sure, children and adolescents imitate oppressive male and female characters from reality television and movies, because it helps them cope with insecurity and a drive for dominance.

The way you treat your peers, your students, animals and even physical property will be observed by your students. If you live a life that inspires the respect of your students, you will impart your own values upon them.



## A Bullying Hotline is Not Enough

It's good to remember that a bullying hotline is not a complete solution to the problem of bullying, especially cyberbullying, which is showing no signs of regression. Here are two key limitations:

**The websites generally are not monitored during weekends, holidays or after school hours.** When students finally do bring themselves to report a bullying incident, it's because the situation has gotten out of hand. Many bullying situations need immediate attention, due to a threat of the life or well-being of the victims involved.

Based on Gaggle Safety Management data, approximately 40% of threatening situations discovered occur outside of school hours, which means reporting systems will not be able to respond in a timely manner to almost half of reported incidents.

**A solution that catches bullying in action is still better than one that depends on students and parents actively reporting it.** No doubt, a website reporting system will increase school and district awareness of these issues, but some other situations will still go unreported. A reporting system needs to be combined with other technical resources to catch bullying, especially cyberbullying, in action.

What can you do as an adult when you suspect that cyberbullying is taking place?



# How to React When Cyberbullying Occurs

*Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying requires no physical venue and isn't confined to a schoolyard. Incidents of cyberbullying can occur in text messages, email, Facebook posts, snaps and many other ways, at any time of day. New social networks are created quicker than ever, and with the debut of every new network comes a new place for cyberbullying to occur.*

## Save it

There's a good chance you can save the cyberbullying interaction by archiving social network chatter, saving a chat log or just taking a screenshot. Make sure this practice is clearly stated in your acceptable and responsible use policies, and then keep any suspected cyberbullying incidents 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 it

In many cases, reporting abuse can be beneficial. If it's a common practice for one student to show signs of bullying behavior, multiple reports could result in the deletion of the student's social network account or disciplinary action. Reporting these incidents can help improve the overall social network experience for all users.

## Block it

Once the situation is under control and the abuse is reported, the best way to avoid any future turmoil—as mentioned above—is to block the

user. Many chat applications, or "friending-based networks," allow a user to block another user from interacting with them.

## Follow up

Unfortunately, cyberbullying behavior will likely not be restricted to one interaction, or even one social network. Make sure you follow up with the target of the bullying behavior to ensure everything is being done to prevent any future incidents. Although 50% of students have been a victim of cyberbullying, only 1 in 10 report it to a parent, according to BullyingStatistics.org, 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 being aware of possible issues could keep a student out of a horrible situation. Responsible educators should be aware of how to deal with situations as they arise. Most popular social networks will have a way to report abuse, albeit sometimes it is not as conspicuous as one would hope.

# Additional Methods of Prevention

*Schools can play a large role in the prevention of cyberbullying. There are several steps that you can take in efforts to fight back against cyberbullying.*

## Create acceptable use policies

Construct school-wide policies that outline consequences of bullying as well as offer students a safe place if they are victims.

## Know the law

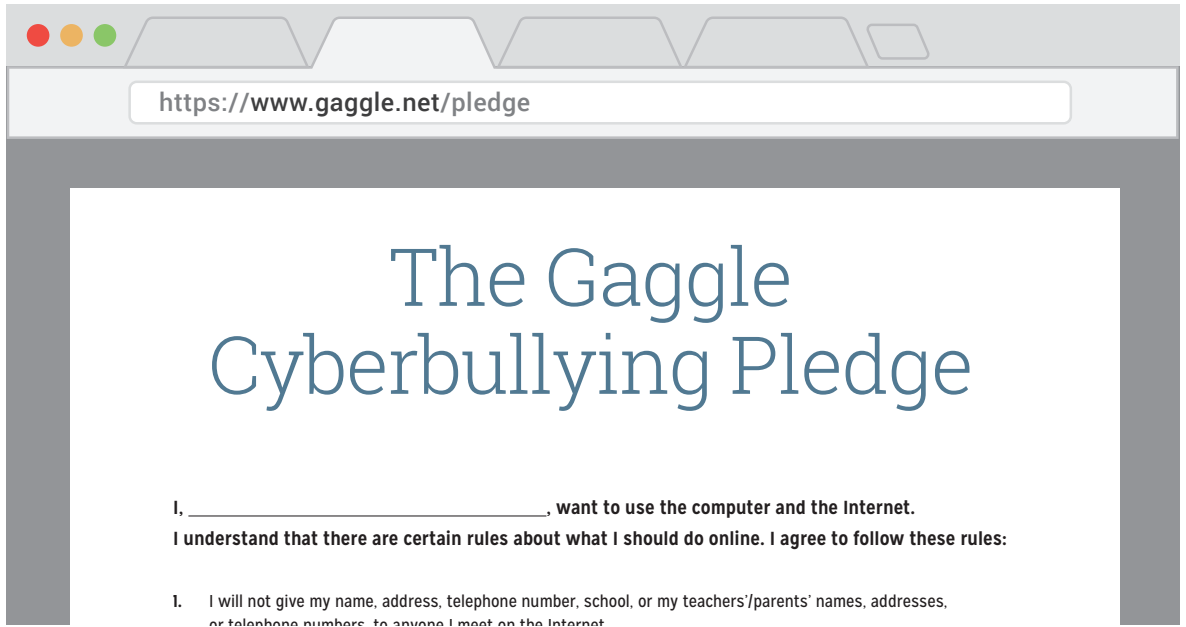
Many states have enacted laws to punish those involved in cyberbullying. While some states have chosen to extend existing bullying laws, others have passed new legislation specific to those involved in cyberbullying.

## Use Gaggle Safety Management

Partner with Gaggle to ensure the proper safety features are in place that allow for 24/7 review and analysis of student behavior online.

## Share information with parents

Remember that preventing cyberbullying is a team effort and you should get parents involved as well.



While you might not be able to fully control cyberbullying or the disheartening effects, as school faculty and administrators, you're able to take a stance to help reduce it. Encourage your students to take a stand against cyberbullying. Just because they aren't the bully does not mean they don't have a role in the harm being done to other students.

Empower your students to report cyberbullying when they receive messages instead of joining in the charade and forwarding the messages on. Help them understand the results of cyberbullying so they are sensitive to the victims.

We invite you and your school to take the Gaggle Online Safety Pledge at <https://www.gaggle.net/pledge>. Cyberbullying is an occurrence that should be taken very seriously. It shouldn't be brushed off as traditional bullying and child's play, because children and teens are being adversely affected by bullying that happens on the web. Reward students who take the pledge against cyberbullying so other students follow their lead.

# Top Cyberbullying Resources

*In addition to this ebook, there are so many great cyberbullying resources available that you might have a difficult time discerning where to begin or turn to next. We've compiled a list of some of our favorites while also letting you know whom each resource is ideal for, whether administrators, educators, parents or students.*

## **ConnectSafely**

**Who? Educators and Parents**

Founded by journalist and author Larry Magid, ConnectSafely.org is a Silicon Valley-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security. You'll find research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news, a blogging community and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.

## **Cyberbullying Research Center**

**Who? Administrators, Educators, Parents, Law Enforcement and Students**

Cyberbullying.org offers an array of helpful resources, including detailed accounts of bullying and sexting laws; cyberbullying research, facts, and statistics; cyberbullying presentations for all types of purposes; references to blogs and books; and much more. The site continually updates material, so be sure to visit it regularly for new content.

## **Cyberwise**

**Who? Educators and Parents**

CyberWise is dedicated to supporting busy grownups who want to help youth use digital media confidently and safely. In addition to providing this website packed with free videos, ebooks, curated news and research about digital media, Cyberwise provides workshops and professional development, offers an award-winning course called Cyber Civics and produces great content for both parents and educators on how to keep kids safe online.

## **End to Cyber Bullying**

**Who? Administrators, Educators, Parents and Students**

The End to Cyber Bullying Organization (ETCB) is a state-certified, non-profit organization founded in the hopes of creating a social networking world devoid of cyberbullying. The focus, therefore, is not simply on informing the public, but also effecting change. The website offers ways to volunteer, act and donate, in addition to learning.



## MediaSmarts

Who? Teachers and Parents

MediaSmarts is a Canadian non-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to digital and media literacy. In addition to promoting educational technology, it also does a great job focusing on the risks, including cyberbullying. This website offers great resources for teachers and parents in particular. When reading, remember that any laws referenced might not be applicable in the United States.

## Nobullying.com

Who? Administrators, Educators, Parents and Students

Nobullying.com is an online forum aimed at educating, advising, counseling and, all importantly, helping to stop bullying, in particular, cyberbullying. Resources are neatly divided according to whom they will help, whether parents, teens, teachers and others. You will learn about the different types of bullying and laws and gain access to articles on health and well-being. This site focuses on bullying as such, not just cyberbullying, so it's possible you may find more than you're looking for.

## SafeKids.com

Who? Educators and Parents

SafeKids is one of the oldest and most enduring sites on Internet safety. Founder Larry Magid (also the founder of ConnectSafely) is the author of the original National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's 1994 brochure, "Child Safety on the Information Highway." You will find safety advice, guides, answers to frequently asked questions, tips for parents and more.

## StopBullying.gov

Who? Administrators, Educators, Parents and Students

StopBullying.gov provides a ton of information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk and how you can prevent and respond to bullying. Operated by the federal government and managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, it's as action-oriented as it is informational, so you can learn a lot about how you can take steps forward in reducing cyberbullying. You will also find references to laws relevant to cyberbullying.

Lastly, don't forget to learn how Gaggle Safety Management provides early warning detection of cyberbullying for schools and districts across the country.



# About Gaggle

Gaggle has been providing safe online learning products and solutions to the K-12 market since 1999 with an ongoing focus on student safety so educators can allow learners to take advantage of technology for communication, collaboration and productivity.

Gaggle Safety Management ensures the safety of students by combining machine learning technology with real people who review questionable and suspicious content in online file storage, inbound and outbound email, attachments, links to websites and in other tools.

The company continues to innovate, providing school and district websites that unify the online experience, affordable archiving, backup and records retention, and professional development and training on Gaggle products, G Suite for Education and Office 365.™

For a risk-free demo, visit <https://www.gaggle.net/demo>.



Contact Us Today! 800.288.7750 • [sales@gaggle.net](mailto:sales@gaggle.net) • [@gaggle\\_k12](https://twitter.com/gaggle_k12)