

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an illegal activity that can negatively impact students at school and at home. We all have rights and responsibilities when we are online, texting and communicating through social media.

Some examples of cyberbullying include:

- Sending nasty or insulting electronic message over the Internet or on cell phones
- Sending or posting gossip, secrets or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
- Pretending to be someone else and sending negative messages or posting material to get others in trouble or to hurt their reputations or friendships
- Purposely excluding someone from an Internet group, chat room or friend list.
- Posting real or digitally-altered photographs of someone online without their permission
- Using websites to rate peers' popularity or appearance
(all examples from <http://www.witsprogram.ca/families/cyberbullying/>)

Cyberbullying is hurtful, damaging and can have wide-reaching consequences as things that are posted are almost impossible to remove completely from the internet. Parents should know their children's passwords and have awareness of their on-line activities. Talk as a family about the websites and social media sites they are using. AskFM, Spring, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Chat Roulette and Facebook are examples of social media apps and sites that are known to cause problems for students. As a family talk about on-line gaming experiences as well. There are people waiting to take advantage of our children in on-line servers and chat rooms.

Remind children that when they are online, the same rules of treating others with dignity and respect still apply. Tell them that if they see or read something that does not feel right online to close their computer and tell you immediately. Steps to follow are:

Take a screenshot- (or print) the offensive comments

Block-the sender

Report-as soon as possible to a trusted adult-parents, teachers, principals. If you do not feel comfortable sharing with a trusted adult, report what has happened to safeschools@rccdsb.edu.on.ca (RCCDSB's safe bullying reporting site).

As in all situations of safety, if you feel that something criminal has occurred, contact the police.

Recently, the federal government has introduced legislation which will make the sharing of inappropriate images a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.