Educator's Guide to Cyber Bullying and Cyber Threats

GISD Staff Training

Cyber Bullying Awareness

Although most of the information we receive on bullying and cyber bullying focuses on our students, increased attention is being placed on workplace bullying. Our young people are entering the work force with a sophisticated level of social media abilities. It is important for students to be trained on appropriate on-line behavior in preparation for when they become adults and enter the work force.

Adults do not always use appropriate on-line behavior.   Look at this news clip from *ABC News* on April 21, 2014.

Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying & Cyberthreats
*Information by Nancy Willard, Center for Safe & Responsible
Use of the Internet*

The internet is being used as both an environment and as a tool for socializing.
Via the internet and other technologies, we can:

Send e-mails.

Create our own web sites.

Post intimate personal news in blogs (online interactive journals).

Send text messages and images via cell phones.

Contact each other through IMS (instant messages).

Chat in chat rooms.

Post to discussion boards.

Seek out new friends in various sites.

Internet Concerns

There are increasing concerns regarding the use of these technologies:

- Posting damaging texts or images to bully peers or engaging in other aggressive behavior .

- Posting material that raises concerns that people are considering an act of violence toward others or themselves.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or other digital technologies.

Cyber bullying can take different forms:

- **Flaming.** Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.

Forms of Cyber Bullying, cont.

- **Harassment.** Repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages.

- **Denigration.** "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships.

- **Impersonation.** Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble/danger or to damage that person's reputation or friendships.

Forms of Cyber Bullying, cont.

- **Outing**. Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online.

- **Trickery**. Talking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, then sharing it online.

- **Exclusion**. Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

- **Cyberstalking**. Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Cyber Threats

Cyber threats are either **direct threats** or **"distressing material"** – general statements that make it sound like the writer is emotionally upset and may be:

- *Considering harming someone else, harming himself or herself or*

- *Considering committing suicide.*

Cyber Threats, cont.

Jeff wrote in his blog: "I'm a retarded [expletive] for ever believing that things would change. I'm starting to regret sticking around. It takes courage to turn the gun on yourself, takes courage to face death." Jeff was also sharing his plans for an attack with a friend via e-mail.

True story: Jeff killed nine people & then himself.

Cyber Threats, cont.

Celia met Andrew in a chat room.
Andrew wrote: "bring a gun to school, ur on the front of every . . . i cant imagine going through life without killing a few people . . . if i dont like the way u look at me, u die . . . i choose who lives and who dies"
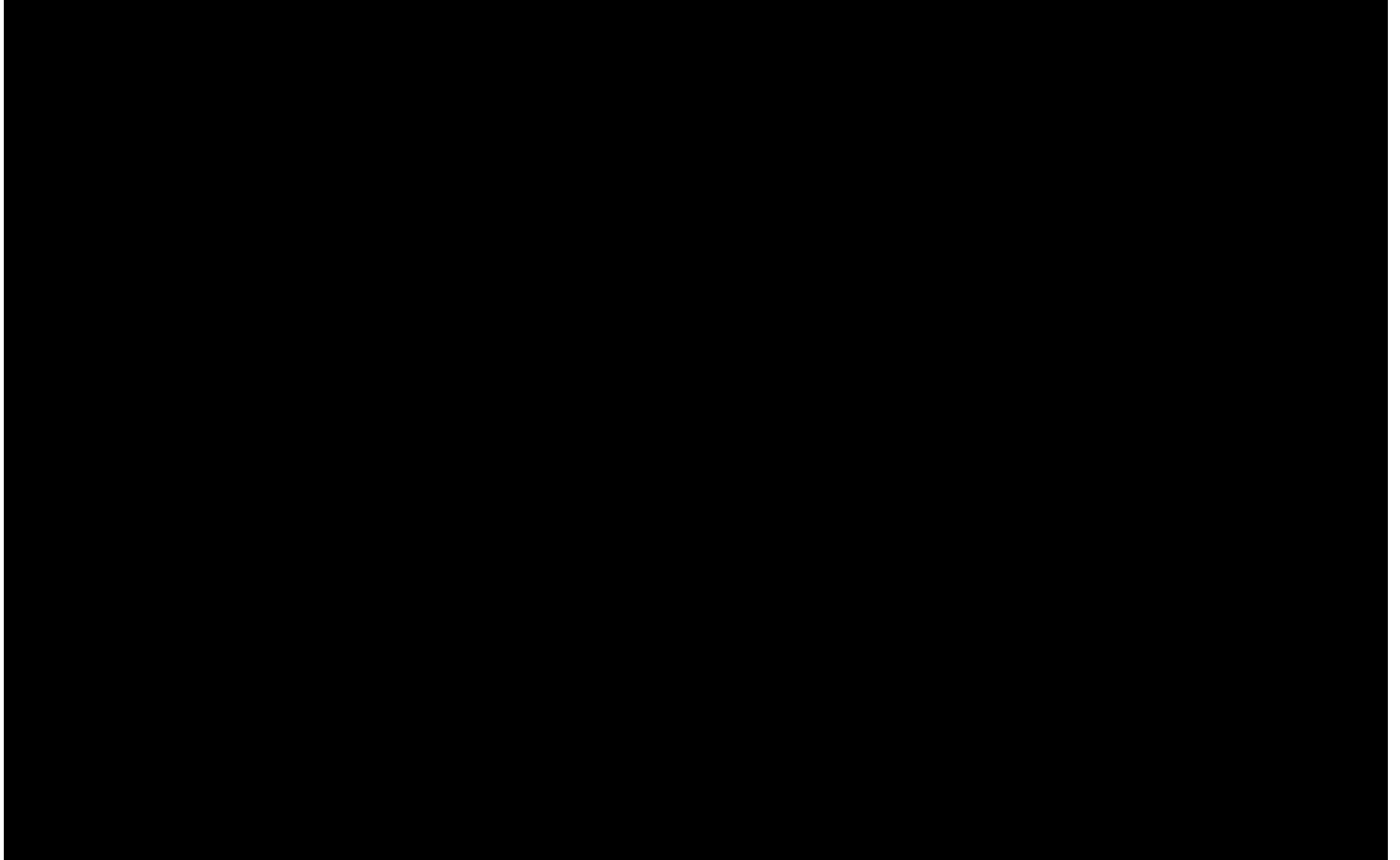
True story: Celia reported her online conversation to her father, who contacted the police. The police found that Andrew had many weapons, including an AK-47. He is now in prison.

Cyber Threats, cont.

Greg set up an anonymous IM account and sent a threatening message to his older sister suggesting that she would be killed the next day at school.

<u>True story</u>: Greg's sister told her parents, her parents told the school, and the school went into "lockdown." Greg was identified easily—and arrested for making a threat.

Video

School officials must recognize that what initially appears to be an online threat can be any of the following:

⬜

 A <u>joke</u>, parody, or game.

⬜A <u>rumor</u> that got started and has grown and spread.

⬜Material posted by a young person who is <u>trying out a fictitious threatening online character</u>.

⬜The final salvos of a <u>"flame war"</u> that has gotten out of hand, but <u>will unlikely result in any real violence.</u>

⬜Material posted by someone <u>impersonating someone else</u> for the purpose of getting that person into trouble.

⬜<u>Distressing material</u> posted by a depressed or angry young person that could foretell a violent or suicidal intention, but <u>does not represent an imminent threat</u>.

⬜<u>A legitimate imminent threat</u>.

The problem is that when school officials or law enforcement are first appraised of an online threat, it may be difficult to tell which of the above possibilities might be involved.

Messages to Students

Don't make threats online.

If you post a threat online, adults may not be able to tell whether the threat is real. There are criminal laws against making threats. If you make a cyber threat, even if you are just joking, you could be suspended, expelled, or even arrested.

Adults are generally not present in online communities where such material is being posted.

Report threats or distressing material.

If you see a threat or distressing material posted online, it could be very real. It is extremely important to report this to an adult. If the threat is real, someone could be seriously injured.

The Who & Why of Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying may be posted at school or off-campus.

The off-campus cyber bullying can have an impact on:

School climate.

Interfere with the ability of students to be successful.

Cyber bullying may be:

Related to in-school bullying.

Retaliation for face-to-face bullying or cyber bullying.

The Who & Why of Cyber Bullying, cont.

Cyber bullying may be:

- **Conducted by a familiar person or an unknown person.**

- **On-line fights about relationships.**

- **Based on hate and bias.**

- **Entertaining**

Impact of Bullying & Cyber Bullying

Face-to-face bullying can result in long-term psychological harm, including low self-esteem, depression, anger, school failure and avoidance, and, in some cases, school violence or suicide.

The harm caused by cyber bullying may be greater because . . .

Online communications can be extremely vicious.

There is no escape — victimization is ongoing, 24/7.

Posted material can be distributed worldwide and is often irretrievable.

Cyber bullies can be anonymous and can involve unknown "friends."

Teens may be reluctant to tell adults what is happening online or through their cell phones because they are emotionally traumatized, think it is their fault, fear greater retribution, or fear online activities or cell phone use will be restricted.

Impact of Bullying, cont.

A group of girls at Alan's school had been taunting him through instant messaging, teasing him about his small size, daring him to do things he couldn't do, suggesting that the world would be a better place, if he committed suicide.

One day, he shot himself. His last online message was "Sometimes the only way to get the respect you deserve is to die."

This is also a true story.

Bully, Target & Bystander

- **Bullies –** *"Put-downers"* who harass and demean others or *"get backers"* who have been bullied by others & are using the internet to vent their anger.

- **Targets –** The targets of the cyber bully.

- **Harmful Bystanders –** Those who encourage and support the bully or watch from the sidelines, but do nothing to intervene or help the target.

- **Helpful Bystanders –** Those who seek to stop the bullying, protest against it, provide support to the target or tell an adult.

You Can't See Me – I Can't See You

- **You Can't See Me –** People perceive they are invisible, which removes concerns about detection.

- **I Can't See You** – Tangible feedback is not received about the consequences of their actions, such as hurting someone, so think no harm has been done.

- **Everybody Does It** –

- *"Life online is just a game."*

- *"Look at me – I'm a star."*

- *"It's not me. It's my online persona."*

- *"What happens online stays online."*

- *"On the internet, I have free-speech right to write or post anything I want regardless of the harm it might cause to another."*

Monitoring Internet Use

- Technical monitoring of district internet use is the best approach for deterring inappropriate internet activity.

- Awareness of district monitoring should be sufficient to establish the expectation that there is a high probability that instances of misuse will be detected and result in disciplinary action.

Video of Technology Department