

CYBER BULLYING

As the new school year gets into full swing in the Montgomery County Schools, the School District Police Department created this brief Public Service Announcement to educate parents and students alike about the dangers of cyber bullying. A vast majority of complaints investigated here at the schools stem from online or digital interaction that begins off campus or in the home. Mobile phones, Internet access and social networking have opened many doors for teenagers to stay connected to one another. However, this increased connectivity has also brought the dangers of bullying to the forefront, as more and more teenagers are exposed to its verbal and visual violence. The focus of this announcement is to define cyber bullying and equip parents and students with the necessary skills to prevent or minimize the problems associated with Cyber bullying.

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber bullying is bullying behavior (tormenting, threatening, harassment, etc.) that takes place through electronic media, including the Internet and mobile phones. This form of bullying can take on various forms, including:

- Delivering threats or hurtful messages to someone via email or text message
- Spreading false rumors through text message, online boards or social networking sites
- Leaving hurtful, harassing or threatening messages on web pages or social networking sites

While this list is not comprehensive, but is intended to provide examples of what constitutes cyber bullying. It does not discriminate and is something that affects teens of all races and genders. Recent statistics show that boys are more likely to receive threats from cyber bullies than girls, while girls are just as likely as boys to engage in cyber bullying or fall victim to cyber bullying.

Cyber Bullying Statistics

The following cyber bullying statistics help shed light on a growing problem among teens throughout the world:

- According to i-Safe Foundation, one in three teens have experienced cyber bullying threats online and over 25 percent of teens have suffered repeated cyber bullying.
- Half of teens who use the Internet, social media or cell phones have experienced cyber bullying.
- According to the Pew Internet Research Center, 55 percent of teenagers witness bullying on social media, while 95 percent of teenagers who have witnessed this bullying have seen others ignoring this behavior.

How to Stop and Prevent Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is a form of teen violence that has lasting and even deadly repercussions for many teenagers. It's also a form of violence that most parents don't find out about until it is too late, since over half of young teens who experience or witness online bullying does not tell their parents.

This is why we encourage all parents to become engaged in what your students are doing online. Ask for passwords to social media sites, check cell phone texts, and so on. These are all measures that can be taken to build trust between parents and children and ultimately works to make sure that the parent is helping their child be safe from online attack. Victims of cyber bullying should keep messages as proof for parents and/or law enforcement officials, especially if the messages are threatening or sexual in nature.

There are other ways parents and teens can help stop cyber bullying in its tracks:

- Teens should never share personal information online or meet people they only know online.
- Parents might keep the computer centrally located in a shared area (i.e. living room or family room) and not allow teens to have computers or Internet access in their own rooms.
- Teens should be encouraged to not share anything they don't want made public through texting or instant messaging.

As always, the Montgomery County School District Police Department is committed to the safety of our students and staff. If your child is experiencing cyber bullying, please feel free to reach out to us or have your child do so at any time.

Thank you; and we look forward to another awesome year with your student(s) at Montgomery County Schools. Go Indians!