



Should Schools Be Held Responsible for Cyberbullying?

Yes

Technology has created a way for children to harass and bully each other in damaging and inescapable ways. Whether cyberbullying takes place on or off school grounds, it is clear that it greatly affects the school environment. That means that the individuals associated with the school cannot ignore it. In fact, to deal effectively with this problem, all educational stakeholders—teachers and administrators as well as parents and the students themselves—must work together, because if one group is not on board, then cyberbullying will continue to be pervasive in the culture of teenagers.

Teachers. Teachers of all grade levels need to learn what cyberbullying is and address it. They need to listen to students who come to them to report cyberbullying. They need to know the rules and laws in place as well as the kinds of resources that are available to help victims. And they need to be



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No

Considering the role of schools in society, they clearly cannot be held responsible for cyberbullying. So many schools today are full of children with serious behavioral problems that did not begin in, and cannot be solved in, the classroom. This is not the fault only of parents, but also of society, because we have ceased to seriously support the family as an institution. The high number of bullying cases is a consequence of the weakening of the family, and that cannot be the responsibility of schools.

The elements that are necessary to prevent a child from becoming the offender in bullying come from the root, the basic starting point in education, which is love.

Children who have been taken care of from the beginning of their lives with parental love already have the vaccine against bullying. Some children bully others because they lack this very basic ingredient that should



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willing to document cases of reported or observed cyberbullying and never assume such behavior is typical of children and teenagers.

School administrators. In addition to all of the above, administrators need to establish clear and enforceable consequences. They also need to be willing to contact law enforcement to send a strong and clear message that cyberbullying is simply not tolerated.

Parents. Parents should always be involved in what their children are doing online and with their cell phones. This should include “friending” their own children on social networking sites as well as checking their cell phone and computer histories. Parents should have access to and passwords for their children’s e-mail addresses, instant messaging accounts, and social networking sites, and if they see something inappropriate, they should

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demand that the child remove the offending material, or the parents should take it down. If this seems like overkill, keep in mind that being passive about what children do online can lead to disastrous consequences. Just ask the parents of Ryan Halligan, Megan Meier, and Phoebe Prince—children who all took their own lives.

Students. Bystanders need to understand what cyberbullying is and be educated about what they can do to help. Too often students are unwilling to stand up for those they see being victimized because they are afraid of drawing some of the same disdain to themselves. Kids should learn that if they see cyberbullying taking place, they should be assertive in assisting victims by standing up for them and reporting it.

The victims of cyberbullying should never be expected to just deal with the problem on their own. Rather, they should expect their harassment to be taken seriously and see that it is dealt with. They should also receive counseling as necessary to learn strategies for dealing with cyberbullies.

If all of these stakeholders take a role in combating cyberbullying, then we will have the benefit of seeing it diminish and can move toward a culture of tolerance and respect among children and teens. When the majority of one group does not come on board, everyone else’s efforts fall flat.

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have come from home, and the result is a higher incidence of bullying as well as other types of negative behavior at school. Many, if not all, of these behaviors, could be drastically reduced if children began receiving more support at home.

Unfortunately, getting love at home these days can be difficult. How can children get it if both parents are away from home most of the day? How can they get it if they live in a broken home? How can they get it if their parents don’t have the appropriate education and are unaware that loving their children requires much more than giving them food to eat, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads?

We need to remember that parents are the first educators of their children. Schools and other institutions come next, so their powers are limited. What these institutions can do is establish close communication with

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parents to discover and understand the educational plan that each family has for its children, then provide all available resources to support those plans at school. In some cases, schools may need to guide parents in the preparation of the plan itself. Of course, given the number of students in some schools and the type of education they offer, this is not always possible. Although some schools do offer this type of personalized education, others lack the resources, and many offer but fail to deliver it.

That doesn’t mean that these schools can’t do anything to help with cyberbullying. On the contrary, they can do—and some schools are doing—a lot of work to help families recover their role as primary educators. Many schools have found out

that effective education for children can happen only if they help educate their families. It is so much easier to educate when there is an understanding between the family and school, and both institutions educate collaboratively, complementing each other. But in the end, a healthy family is the basis for a healthy society, and schools can only support that role.

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