
Preface

When we began our work in the area of cyber bullying approximately five years ago, our major emphasis was on the education of schools and families regarding the nature of what this term entailed. Terms like “cyber bullying” and “blackberries” were known only to an isolated minority. Responders were left somewhat paralyzed as they navigated these uncharted waters, and this behavior seemed prevalent mostly at the middle school to early high school levels. While a lot has changed since the inception of our original work, certain areas of need persist. Positive modifications include an increased understanding of what cyber bullying is, and a better grasp of appropriate school policies and legal responses. Negative changes consist of a broader age net caught in cyber bullying acts, technological advances that have increased cyber bullying, and the diversity of means used to accomplish this type of social cruelty. Areas that seem to have stayed stagnant are the lack of attention on intervention as an adjunct to, or in place of, disciplinary responses, and a focus on education as a proactive, preventative approach to technological misuse.

It would be unheard of to send children off to school for the first time without some type of orientation as to the expectations and guidelines associated with such academic study. Nor would most parents send their children to visit families and friends without some discussion of proper behavior. Can we not demand that similar guiding principles be applied to the preparation of children with regard to their introduction to the cyber world? While it is true that schools now have Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) concerning proper computer usage on school grounds, and that students are required to sign an agreement to properly use technology on school premises, are these steps enough? We would argue the answer is “no.” While these doubtless are important first steps, and they are absolutely necessary, in themselves they are not sufficient. Moving beyond the focus of cyber bullying in our first book, *Demystifying and Deescalating Cyber Bullying in the Schools: A Resource Guide for Counselors, Educators, and*

Parents (booklocker.com, 2006), our intent in this publication is to provide a more comprehensive picture of technology use by children and youth, including an emphasis on education, prevention, and balance.

Throughout this book, you will come across what we refer to as “Cyber Stories.” These are actual stories that have been collected over the years of our experience with technology and youth. Some of the Cyber Stories have been collected from our own personal experience with our families and friends, or during presentations; others come from students; and some have been taken directly from the news media. In order to maintain privacy, names have been changed unless the material was directly quoted from the news. These Cyber Stories are designed to create awareness as to the potential side effects of technology, allowing you, the reader, to customize and design how you and your family will maintain cyber balance.