TECHNICAL SERVICES ESPs AND BULLYING PREVENTION

Bullying Happens Both in School and Over the Internet

Bullying behavior is a growing concern among America's educators. Bullying is generally defined as repeated aggressive acts intended to do harm, and is characterized by a power or status difference between the students. Bullying includes not only physical aggression such as hitting or stealing, but also verbal aggression, such as threatening, name calling, spreading rumors, socially rejecting and isolating someone, or cyberbullying (where perpetrators can hide behind the anonymity of the Internet).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), more than 70 percent of students play some role in bullying, whether as one who bullies, is bullied, or witnesses bullying. A U.S. Department of Education study found that in 2006-2007, one-third of U.S. students 12 through 18 reported being bullied. Students who have been bullied report feeling depressed, anxious, and isolated. Many have low self-esteem. Their school attendance and performance may suffer. And in some cases, as the nation has seen recently, they are so tormented, they take their own lives.

Even though there are many training programs that can provide educators with tools to intervene in bullying situations, bullying often occurs outside the classroom, beyond teachers' reach. Technical services ESPs, especially computer operators and programmers, systems analysts and data processing specialists, are especially challenged by bullying over the Internet, known as "cyberbullying." Sometimes cyberbullying is carried out on school time and on school computers or related equipment. Or it occurs after school hours and on home computers, but schools nevertheless are affected when anger, bullying and violence flow onto the school campus as a result of the cyberbullying. Technical services ESPs can play a vital role in stemming this disturbing tide, especially if they are offered the opportunity to participate in bullying prevention programs and learn how to recognize and intervene in all bullying situations.

NEA has long been committed to bullying and harassment prevention and intervention. For decades, members have received training in how to recognize and intervene in student-to-student bullying situations. In addition, NEA has made an effort to assess the opinions of both ESPs and teachers on issues relating to bullying. Of the 4,870 ESPs responding to a 2012 survey that included questions about bullying, 401 were technical services staff.

Highlights of their responses are presented on the next page.

- Request a bullying prevention and intervention training session from NEA at www.nea.org/neabullyfree (there is a training link). Work with your local affiliate to ensure these trainings are scheduled at times that are convenient for technical services ESPs to attend along with other school staff.

- Become involved in bullying prevention teams, committees and other activities at your school or Education Association.

- Offer training to Association members on online etiquette, safety, cyberbullying and sexting.

- Initiate meetings with other staff to share concerns about bullying in general or specific students in particular.

Resources

www.nea.org/neabullyfree
NEA's official website for the NEA Bully Free: It Starts with Me campaign.

www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html
Guidance on bullying from the U.S. Department of Education.

www.pta.org/bullying.asp
National PTA guide on safeguarding children from bullying.

www.nea.org/home/3207.htm
Education Support Professionals website with links to bullying resources, including the *2010 NEA Nationwide Study of Bullying*

www.stopbullyingnow.samhsa.gov
Educator Tip Sheets are available, such as: *How to Intervene to Stop Bullying: Tips for On-the-Spot Intervention at School.*

http://www.staysafeonline.org/ncec/
The host organization of this website, the National Cyber Security Alliance, noted in October 2012 that it is working with the National Cybersecurity Education Council (NCEC) to formally institute and promote cyber security education programs in K-12 schools, higher education, and career and technical education environments nationwide.

http://www.onguardonline.gov
This website of the Federal Trade Commission provides PDFs of an excellent booklet, *Net Cetera*, about keeping youth safe online.

http://www.netsmartz.org
The NetSmartz Workshop is an interactive resource from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

References

1. Willard, Nancy E. (2007). *Cyberbullying and cyberthreats.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

2. *Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids about Being Online.* www.onguardonline.gov.

NEA'S BULLY FREE PLEDGE

I agree to be identified as a caring adult who pledges to help bullied students. I will listen carefully to all students who seek my help and act on their behalf to put an immediate stop to the bullying. I will work with other caring adults to create a safe learning environment for all students in my school.

BULLY FREE IT STARTS WITH ME nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Be that caring adult. Take the pledge at nea.org/neabullyfree

Bully Free: It Starts With Me!

CYBERBULLYING & SEXTING

Cyberbullying includes sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the Internet or other digital devices.[1]

Sexting is a term coined by the media, merging the terms sex and texting. It includes sending or forwarding sexually explicit photos, videos or messages from a mobile phone or other digital device.[2]

What Technical Services ESPs Said

Students and parents tell them about bullying. Approximately 43% of tech services ESPs surveyed said bullying was a major or a moderate problem in their school.

They witness bullying. Tech services ESPs were less likely than other ESPs to report seeing a student being bullied at their school. Still, about 10% of them reported witnessing it as frequently as several times a month, and 5% saw bullying daily.

Tech services ESPs are less likely to hear reports of bullying from students than most other ESPs. Approximately 11% of the tech services ESPs surveyed indicated that a student reported bullying to them within the past month.

A majority of tech services ESPs say it's "their job" to intervene in bullying situations.

They feel it's their job to intervene. A majority of tech service ESPs surveyed—76%—report that it is "their job" to intervene when they see bullying situations.

They need training on bullying prevention and intervention. Nearly all the tech service ESPs surveyed report that their school district has a bullying policy, but fewer than 40% of them said they received training on that policy.

They need to be invited/encouraged to join school committees on bullying prevention. Among all ESPs, tech services ESPs are one of the least likely groups to be involved in formal bullying prevention efforts in their schools. Only 1% reported being involved in formal school teams, committees or prevention programs dealing with bullying.

ESPs generally report feeling slightly more connected to their school community than teachers, which influences bullying intervention. Connectedness is the belief by adults in the school that they are cared about as individuals and professionals involved in the learning process. Research has shown there is an important link between feeling connected to the school and being comfortable intervening with all forms of bullying among all types of students. The more staff members, including tech services ESPs, feel connected to their school, the more likely they are to intervene and stop bullying when they see it.

They are likely to live in their school community. The ESP survey found that 60% of tech services ESPs live in the school community where they work. This is considerably higher than the 39% of teachers who live in the community served by

VIEW FROM THE COMPUTER LAB

"As the network manager for my district, I have been involved in dealing with cyberbullying as students have created fake social media accounts (Facebook and MySpace, for example) for both students and staff. After they create the accounts, they post pictures and messages from the individual's point of view and defame and humiliate them. They also try to get friends to make hurtful comments on both the fake and legitimate social media accounts. I am responsible for making sure that they are not doing this at school using district resources. I assist school administration and counselors in getting the information to law enforcement to get the sites removed and to defuse the situation. We also work with School Resource Officers in sites that have them."

Jerad Reay, Network Manager, Box Elder School District, Utah

TIPS FOR TECHNICAL SERVICES ESPs

To Prevent Bullying

✔ Treat students the way you want to be treated and the way you want them to treat each other.

✔ Encourage students to use peaceful, non-aggressive ways to resolve bullying.

✔ Focus on developing empathy and respect.

✔ Use positive, non-verbal interactions—a smile, a nod, a thumbs up, a high five, a pat on the back.

✔ Notice something positive the students do and say something about it to them or someone else where they can hear it.

✔ Don't expect students to solve bullying incidents themselves; they lack the skills.

✔ Encourage students to report incidents of bullying to you and other adults.

✔ Create online ways for students to report all instances of bullying.

✔ Request ongoing training on the latest technology-related issues, so tech services staff can stay ahead of the students.

✔ Tech services ESPs, once trained themselves, can provide training on online etiquette, cyberbullying and sexting to other school staff.

✔ Maintain a log of cyberbullying and sexting incidents, shared with administrators for their follow up.

✔ Become familiar with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and ensure school administrators are also familiar with the law.

✔ Routinely update the CIPA-required school Internet use policy.

✔ Become familiar with the Broadband Data Improvement Act (BDIA), especially Title II, the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act, and ensure school adminstrators are also familiar with the law.

✔ Increase the role of tech services staff in "educating minors about appropriate online behavior," required by the BDIA.

To Intervene in Bullying

✔ Learn about bullying so you know what you're looking for (see resources)

✔ Learn what your school's consequences are for those who bully, including cyberbullies, and what supports exist for targets.

✔ Work with counselors and administrators on determining appropriate consequences for cyberbullying and sexting incidents that disrupt the educational setting.

✔ When you see something, do something—be assertive and calm.

✔ Express strong disapproval of and stop all forms of bullying when it occurs.

✔ Start with warnings. Use the name of the student who is bullying/cyberbullying.

✔ Report incidents as required by your school's policy.

✔ Maintain your own log of bullying/cyberbullying incidents.

✔ Talk to other school staff about what you've witnessed so they are alert to possible retaliation during the balance of the school day.

✔ Maintain copies of school policies around student bullying behaviors to share with parents and community members.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

the school. This means that tech services ESPs know the students and their families, and can be an invaluable resource when seeking answers to bullying incidents.

They are likely to live in their school community. The NEA survey found that 69% of techical services ESPs live in the school community where they work, which is considerably higher than teachers. This means they are more likely to know the students and their families outside the school setting, and can be an invaluable resource when seeking answers to bullying incidents.

Inform Yourself and Your Association

■ Visit www.nea.org/neabullyfree, a good go-to source for resources about how to help bullied students and how to prevent bullying in your school.

■ Seek input and collect data from other school staff to whom students go for support.

■ Ask your school district to provide training on the content of current policies for bullying prevention and intervention.