This week's issue:
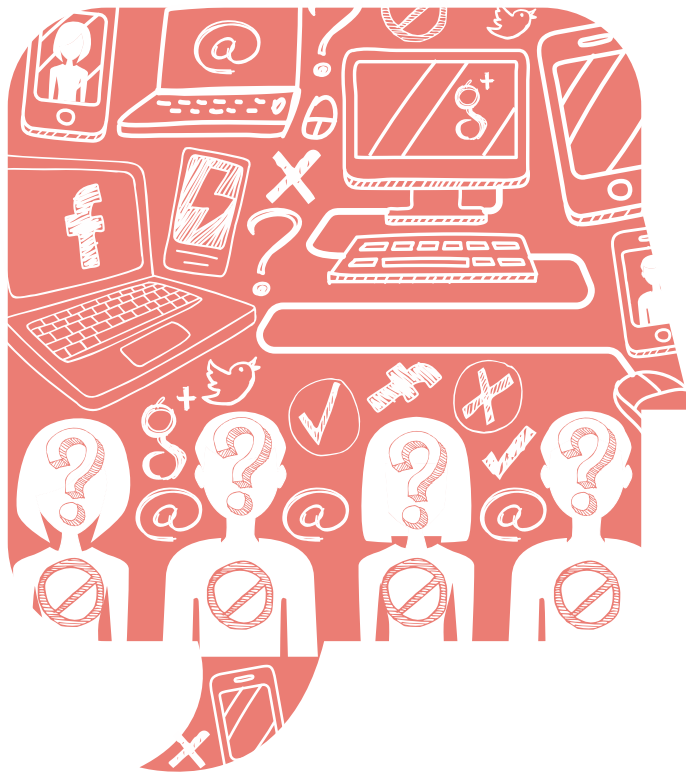
ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

Sixteen-year-old Megan Meier was thrilled when she started chatting with Josh Evans on Myspace. Before she had been sad and lonely, but Josh was good-looking and very kind to her. He even told her that she was his "number one." However, one day Josh's messages suddenly turned from nice to cruel. Megan was devastated. She was so hurt and upset by the way he treated her that she committed suicide. Later, Megan's parents learned that Josh Evans was not a real person. Neighbors had created the false profile to harass Megan.

Whereas bullying has existed in schools for years, cyberbullying is a new method that bullies use to harm their victims. Cyberbullies use text messages, instant messages, email, or sites like Facebook to send harmful messages. Cyberbullying also includes spreading rumors and manipulating photographs online. Studies show that cyberbulling increases as students get older and that both victims and bullies are more likely to be girls than boys.

Cyberbullying is especially common among middle school students. Over half of all middle school students are involved in cyberbullying either as a bully or as a victim. When a child is having problems in school, cyberbullying can be an **underlying** cause. Students who are bullied online may be afraid to come to school, participate in class, talk to their peers, or go to recess. When people are afraid, they are less able to learn.

Perhaps schools should get involved to help stop cyberbullying. Some say school police officers should investigate cyberbullying as a crime of **harassment**. Others say teachers should talk with students about cyberbullying. Class discussions could address how to stay safe on the internet, how to handle cyberbullies, and where to get help if you are hurt by cyberbullies.

Some people say schools can only control what happens at school, not what happens out of school. They argue that schools do not have the **capacity** to **adequately** address student harassment on the internet. Since many of the harmful comments come from **anonymous** sources, teachers and principals are unable to determine who the cyberbullies are. In most cases, schools have no access to students' social media accounts.

What role can students play in preventing online harassment? When should parents step in? What can schools do to help protect their students?

ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

USE THE FOCUS WORDS

anonymous *(adjective)* not named or identified

➡ *Sample Sentence:* Since many of the harmful comments come from **anonymous** sources, teachers and principals are unable to determine who the cyberbullies are.

🗩 *Turn and Talk:* Describe a situation when you would want to write an **anonymous** note.

underlying *(adjective)* fundamental but not revealed or expressed

➡ *Sample Sentence:* When a child is having problems in school, cyberbullying can be an **underlying** cause.

🗩 *Turn and Talk:* What could be some **underlying** reasons that a student refuses to participate in P.E.?

capacity *(noun)* ability

➡ *Sample Sentence:* Tanya is the most popular student in school. Her **capacity** to make friends is unmatched.

🗩 *Turn and Talk:* Do you think you would have the **capacity** to run a marathon if you trained every day? (A marathon is 26.2 miles. The average marathon runner takes about 4.5 hours to finish the race.)

adequately *(adverb)* well enough

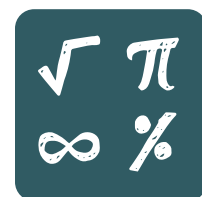➡ *Sample Sentence:* Because Abdul did not water his plant **adequately**, it shriveled up and died.

🗩 *Turn and Talk:* How can you tell whether the mayor of your city is doing his or her job **adequately**?

harassment *(noun)* the act of verbally or physically harming or annoying someone

➡ *Sample Sentence:* The **harassment** continued even after Isaac asked James to stop calling him names.

🗩 *Turn and Talk:* Which is worse: verbal or physical **harassment**? Explain.

ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

DO THE MATH

Option 1: Cell phones and computers are popular, but also have the **capacity** to be used for **harassment**. In a 2014 survey by NoBullying, 52% of teens reported that they had been cyberbullied, and 25% even said they were repeatedly cyberbullied. The **underlying** problem with online threats is that they are **anonymous**. This can leave some victims with no way to report or stop the bully, making them feel inadequate and alone.

Based on the percentages above, in a class of 400 students, how many students would experience cyberbullying at least one time?

A.   52
B.   208
C.   100
D.   308

Option 2: In one high-profile case of online **harassment**, several of the victim's classmates were brought up on criminal charges. In cases like this, courtrooms often fill to **capacity** with families of both the accused and the victim. Although several students were involved in the cyberbullying, prosecutors only had adequate evidence to prosecute a few. Many of the bullies will remain **anonymous**. Even so, they may carry **underlying** feelings of guilt for the rest of their lives.

Say that for every 10 students who bullied the student, only one was brought up on charges. Let b = the number of bullies and c = the number of students brought up on charges. Which equation is true?

A. $10b = c$
B. $c = b/10$
C. $.1c = b$
D.   none of the above

🖎   **Discussion Question:** The internet offers new ways for people to engage in bullying and **harassment**. People who are usually kind may discover an **underlying capacity** for meanness when they are online, where they feel **anonymous**. Some people suggest rules to help others remember to be kind. For example, "Don't say something online that you wouldn't say in person." Does this rule **adequately** address the temptation to be unkind online? What are some other good rules for online interactions?

ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Students in Mr. Seemy's class were discussing widespread bullying and **harassment** at middle schools across the United States. The students believed teachers could not **adequately** spend time on arguments among students, so problems tended to get worse and sometimes even caused fights on campus. Everyone agreed that something ought to be done. But what?

Aliyah and Jacky were members of the Peer Mediation Club, where they had been specially trained to work with other kids to solve conflicts amongst themselves. They believed that increasing students' **capacity** to deal with problems on their own saved teachers' time and was more likely to solve problems permanently.

"We take the time to find out the **underlying** reasons for the problems in our mediation meetings. Sometimes kids are arguing over the same crush, or have arguments that go back to elementary school," said Aliyah.

Chris wasn't so sure. "But kids take adults more seriously. Plus teachers can assign detention or other punishments and kids can't."

Jacky said, "Let's see if peer mediation is as effective as we think it is. We'll ask everyone to take an **anonymous** survey and then tally the results."

Question:
Are peer mediators more effective at solving student conflicts than teachers?

Hypothesis:
Students will be more likely to solve conflicts with support from kids their own age rather than teachers.

Data collected from the survey:
Who would you rather go to if you someone were harassing you: another student or a teacher?

■ another student: 53%   ■ a teacher: 47%

If a peer has mediated a problem with you, did the process solve the conflict permanently?

■ yes: 76%   ■ no: 18%   □ not sure: 6%
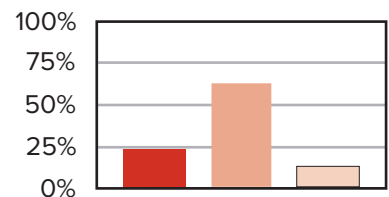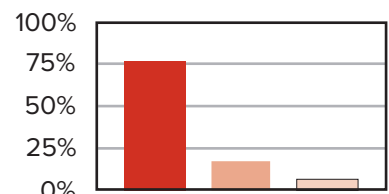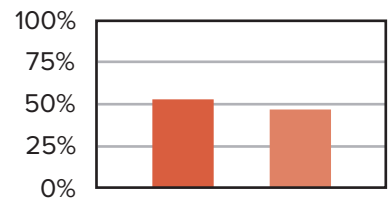
If a teacher has mediated a problem with you, did the process solve the conflict permanently?

■ yes: 24%   ■ no: 63%   □ not sure: 13%

What do you think? Based on the survey results, are student mediators more effective at solving problems? Do you think the results would be similar if a survey like this were done at your school?

SERP © 2015

ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A ☐ Schools are not responsible for protecting students from cyberbullying.

OR

B ☐ Schools are responsible for protecting students from cyberbullying.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

Can you show me evidence in the text that...

I believe that...

You make a good point, but have you considered...

I agree with you, but...

SERP © 2015

ARE SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING KIDS FROM CYBERBULLYING?

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____