



# **Cyberbullying:** Protecting Kids from Online Harassment

Information Paper  
May 2009

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## Introduction

Schools have always had to deal with bullying. From verbal insults to playground violence, bullying has been an issue at the forefront of school safety. Most schools have the policies, experience, and education to deal with regular bullying. But the use of the Internet and other forms of technology has opened up the doors to another type of bullying: cyberbullying.

Because of the nature of the Internet, cyberbullying can be more difficult to identify and address than other types of bullying. However, as many recent and tragic cases of cyberbullying have shown, the repercussions are just as, or more, severe. Schools must take steps to prevent cyberbullying in order to maintain a safe environment conducive to learning.

## What is Cyberbullying

The National Crime Prevention Council defines cyberbullying as: "When the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person."<sup>i</sup> The increasing use of these technologies by children has led to an increase in the occurrence of cyberbullying, with often devastating and violent consequences.

Cyberbullying is a problem that can't be ignored. Research indicates that almost half of all teens have experienced cyberbullying. One in four have had it happen more than once. And 35% of kids have been threatened online.<sup>ii</sup>

In many cases, cyberbullying can be more extreme and damaging than other types of bullying because of the anonymity on online personas and the prevalence of the Internet in children's lives. Bullies can feel protected by the Internet, and may therefore be more vicious. The bullied students may not know the attacker, and may feel powerless to fight it. In addition, cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day, anywhere, without the protection of home or school walls.

## Types of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms. Properly identifying and preventing cyberbullying requires an understanding of the different ways technology can be used to hurt others.

In "An Educator's Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats,"<sup>iii</sup> Nancy Willard breaks down cyberbullying into these categories:

- **Flaming.** Online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar language.
- **Harassment.** Repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages.
- **Denigration.** "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships.

- **Impersonation.** Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble or damage their reputation.
- **Outing.** Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online.
- **Trickery.** Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information and then sharing it online.
- **Exclusion.** Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone.
- **Cyberstalking.** Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

## Effects of Cyberbullying

The harmful effects of cyberbullying can range from mild to severe. As with other types of bullying, victims of cyberbullying may experience depression, isolation, dropping grades, loss of interest in things previously important, and fear. However cyberbullying can seem more extreme to its victims.

The emotional and psychological effects of cyberbullying can be especially extreme because:

- It often occurs in the places where students are supposed to feel safe, such as homes and schools, and can therefore feel inescapable.
- Cyberbullying attacks can be more extreme than in-person bullying, as people often say things online they wouldn't say to someone's face.
- Cyber-attacks and insults can be quickly and easily broadcast to large groups.
- Many kids don't know how to deal with cyberbullying, and many adults don't know how to respond when it is brought to their attention.
- The anonymity of the attacker can make the victim feel more afraid.

## Best Practices for Preventing Cyberbullying

1. **Create policies and educate users.** As part of their policies for acceptable use of the Internet and other technologies, schools should address cyberbullying. In addition to educating students and faculty on what cyberbullying is and why it will not be tolerated, specific guidelines for acceptable communication and clear consequences for cyberbullying behavior should be laid out.
2. **Prevent the use of inappropriate sites or the sending of inappropriate messages.** Some sites, such as unmoderated chat rooms, have been shown to be particularly prone to cyberbullying. By blocking, or limiting access to such sites, cyberbullying from the school network can be

prevented. Also, blocking access to sites with inappropriate content and blocking messages that contain inappropriate words can help prevent cyberbullying. Because students are often adept users of technology, it is also important that Internet filters employ sophisticated means to prevent users from bypassing Internet filters with proxy tunnels.

3. **Monitor adherence to policies and adjust as necessary.** To ensure that policies are being adhered to, it is important that suspicious browsing, emailing, attachments, and instant messaging be regularly reviewed. When inappropriate behavior is identified, policies and filters should be adjusted to stop that behavior.
4. **Preserve the evidence.** In order to investigate instances of cyberbullying, schools should keep records of inappropriate behavior and archive email messages. This information can help school officials talk with students, as well as inform legal authorities, should they need to be involved in serious cases.<sup>iv</sup>

## Preventing Cyberbullying with Lightspeed

Lightspeed Systems is committed to helping schools maintain the safety and security of their networks, in order to create an effective 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning environment. Our solutions help schools address the issues that impact the use of the network and the Internet while ensuring a balance between safety and learning.

To prevent, identify, and address cyberbullying issues in your school, Lightspeed offers best-of-breed solutions with essential features for filtering, monitoring, and reporting on user behavior.

### Prevent

Preventing certain communications and browsing behaviors can reduce the possibility of cyberbullying on your school network.

With Lightspeed you can prevent behavior that could lead to cyberbullying:

- Keep users from bypassing your filter and accessing blocked sites with multiple layers of secure, unsecure, and anonymous proxy detection and blocking
- Block web sites categorized as containing adult and pornographic subject matter , and web sites categorized as promoting violence, hate, and weapons
- Block web sites categorized as containing unmoderated forums, instant messaging services, web mail services, chat and dating services, as well as personal and social networking services.
- Block web sites promoting and/or supporting illicit and illegal network intrusion and infiltration
- Filter mobile users of school computers with the Guide Mobile Filter, which provides filtering protection—without a VPN, from any location with any type of Internet connection

- Filter email content to ensure that communications do not contain offensive material or keywords

## Identify

Early identification of cyberbullying can minimize the impact and consequences of the behavior.

With Lightspeed, you can monitor user behavior and identify possible cyberbullying with:

- Comprehensive and customizable reporting and alerts for suspicious activity on the network
- The ability to drill-down to investigate the browsing and messaging behavior of individual users
- Searching on specific keywords related to hate, violence, or other inappropriate content

## Address

Should cases of cyberbullying be identified, documentation and adjustment of policies can allow school officials to effectively address the situation.

With Lightspeed, you can be equipped to address cases of cyberbullying with:

- Archival of inbound and/or outbound SMTP traffic, AOL Instant Messaging (AIM) and MSN Messenger, and attachments (including documents, programs, and multimedia files)
- Message file storage with indexing parameters for: From, To, Subject, Date, Keywords, and Body Text
- The ability to modify policies for specific users
- The ability to integrate your Lightspeed solution with your Student Information System (SIS) for a complete view of individual student activity and progress

## Lightspeed Solutions

**Lightspeed Web Access Manager** provides flexible filtering for school networks, ensuring that users' web browsing is in line with Acceptable Use Policies—while they are on the network or when utilizing school computers off the network. Our education-specific database is comprehensive and accurate, ensuring that inappropriate sites are no longer a click away, but that valuable content remains available to users.

**Lightspeed Email Manager** helps you ensure that your Acceptable Use Policies on email usage are being enforced without hindering staff's ability to work and communicate. Email Manager lets you monitor, regulate, report on, and archive all messaging communications.

**Total Traffic Control** (which includes Web Access Manager and Email Manager as well as Security Manager and Network Traffic Manager) is the complete solution for managing your school network's

usage, health, and security. With this comprehensive solution you can monitor user activity, ensure Acceptable Use Policies are being followed (on email, the Web, or the desktop—both on the network and off), reduce dangerous and costly security threats, ensure school resources are utilized safely and effectively, and easily view and share critical information with custom reports.

## For More Information

Learn more about Cyberbullying:

<http://www.cyberbullying.org/>

<http://www.cyberbullying.us/>

<http://www.stopcyberbullying.org/index2.html>

<http://www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying>

<http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cbcteducator.pdf>

## About Lightspeed Systems

Lightspeed Systems Inc., founded in 2000, develops comprehensive network security and management solutions for the education market. We are committed to helping schools operate their networks effectively and efficiently, so educators can provide safe online teaching and learning environments.

Our software is used in more than 1,000 school districts in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to protect more than 5 million students. For the past two years, Lightspeed Systems has been recognized on the Inc. 5,000 list as one of the fastest-growing private companies.

[www.lightspeedsystems.com](http://www.lightspeedsystems.com)

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.ncpc.org/cyberbullying>

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=op&sub\\_id=media\\_cyber\\_bullying](http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=op&sub_id=media_cyber_bullying)

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.cyberbully.org/cyberbully/docs/cbcteducator.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup>

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/cyberbullying/respondingtocyberbullying/investigation/>

“Schools should advise pupils and staff to try to keep a record of the abuse, particularly the date and time, the content of the message(s), and where possible a sender’s ID (e.g. username, email, mobile phone number) or the web address of the profile/content. For example, taking an accurate copy or recording of the whole web-page address will help the service provider to locate the relevant content.... Keeping the evidence will help in any investigation into the cyberbullying by the service provider, but it can also be useful in showing what has happened to those who may need to know, including parents, teachers, pastoral-care staff and the police.”