

# Middle School Cyberbullying Introduction

Welcome to the Cyberbullying curriculum for Middle School or Junior High School. This curriculum is written to be adaptable for use with students in grades 6 through 9.

Cyberbullying, the use of Internet-connected devices to bully and harass others, is damaging to targets, cyberbullies, and the school environment. The abuse may be carried out exclusively online, or it may be an extension of physical bullying that occurs before, during or after school. It is particularly damaging because it can be unrelenting for the targets as it can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The anonymity of the Internet allows bullies to approach their target with less fear of retaliation than with traditional bullying. Also, cyberbullying can give the bully a much bigger audience and burden the target with the knowledge that everyone can see it. Furthermore, the words and images bullies post may be impossible to track down and remove.

The frequency of cyberbullying has risen sharply in the last few years and now directly affects over 30 percent of students across the nation. This number is growing! Virtually all students are indirectly impacted by cyberbullying in roles as bystanders, friends of the target, or as friends of and possibly accomplices to the bully. By using this curriculum, you will help to combat this disturbing trend in our schools and communities.

For context for this course, it's important to remember how middle school students behave, and to understand how those behaviors relate to their use of technology. As you know, in general students at this age are beginning to take on more responsibility for their actions and are gaining greater autonomy. This growing independence is being played out online as well as in the "real" world. They are still primarily interacting with friends and family, but the more adventurous are meeting new people online.

Over ninety percent of teenagers in America have daily or frequent computer access. Middle school students are also using cell phones, computers, and game consoles. Their use of technology involves completing online profiles, downloading music files, using e-mail and instant messaging (IM), and playing games. Students may also have had experience with **Club Penguin** or **Webkinz** or other tween (pre-teen) social networking sites. Some will have lied about their age and have their own pages on **MySpace**, **Facebook** or other social networking sites. (These sites are restricted to ages 14 and older.)

## ***The lessons***

This middle school course on cyberbullying includes nine lessons:

- Lesson 1: Respect and Responsibility
- Lesson 2: What Is Cyberbullying?
- Lesson 3: Cyberbullying across Devices and Services
- Lesson 4: Cyberbullying Impacts and Consequences
- Lesson 5: Cyberbullying Techniques and Scenarios

Lesson 6: What to Do If You're Being Cyberbullied

Lesson 7: What to Do If You're A Bully

Lesson 8: Standing Up For Others

Lesson 9: Serious About Getting Help

### ***What each lesson contains***

- **Preparation information for the lesson:** Under this topic you will find the suggested time to complete it, the resources and materials you will need, lesson goals, and the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) addressed. You will also find the general and technical vocabulary that will be useful for understanding the concepts. Finally, here's where you'll find teacher background information to get you up to speed on the topic quickly.
- **The lesson** itself includes discussion **topics** and **activities**. There are also **homework** assignments. We hope that students will share what they learn with their parents and that families will engage in discussions about cyberbullying. To this end, we have included take-home resources for parents with the key concepts and vocabulary from many of the lessons.
- **Teaching resources** are included with each lesson as well. **Teacher Resources (TR)** assist the teacher with additional information to support the concepts taught in that lesson. **Student Activity (SA)** sheets are designed to guide students in learning and internalizing key concepts. **Parent Resources (PR)** allow for consistent communication with parents about the cyberbullying focus their student is experiencing.



We tried to make the lessons as flexible as possible so you can teach them all at once or in shorter chunks. When you see this logo, you'll know it would be a logical spot to break up the lesson.

- **Student journal:** Frequently, throughout the lessons, we suggest that you ask students to write about what they have learned that day. A typical entry should consist of a paragraph of four to eight sentences that addresses specific questions and key points from the lesson. A journal is an exercise (not unlike a zero draft) where students are given a topic to write about. It is not graded but builds writing stamina and broadens the student's context and thinking, plus leads to a culminating writing project which, in this case, will be a personal essay.

We suggest that you encourage your students to create a separate section in a notebook or three ring binder for this cyberbullying course, as they will need to refer back to specific focuses as a refresher for a current lesson. This is also a good place to keep their on going **journal** entries.



- **Writing Extensions:** Within each lesson, a Writing Extension has been suggested. These writing focuses are designed as minilessons to teach facets of the writing process where students are allowed to ponder, plan and extend their thinking skills through dialogue with their peers. The result of this exercise is the student creation of a written piece, be it a journal entry, an opinion paragraph or possibly an essay. These

writing minilessons are intended as coaching models that, as a teacher, will become second nature through practice.

The Writing Extensions embrace the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements, which should transfer easily to the writing standards of most other states. Many of the terms used will be familiar to you but may be called something else depending on where you live. It is hoped that the soft scripting presented within the minilessons will trigger understanding of the writing process being taught, and will allow you to adapt the script to fit your teaching personality and style.



This icon will signal that a **Writing Extension** is available and recommended to be used at that point in the lesson.

An overview of this writing focus, **Introduction to Neilia Solberg and Writing Essentials** (MS Cyberbullying-WE Introletter.doc) is included at the end of this Cyberbullying Curriculum Introduction section. Now would be a good time to read that letter!

- **Student Teams:** In each lesson, students are asked to reflect on statements, questions, a video segment or other focuses on cyberbullying. An efficient way to have students accomplish this is for them to work in small teams of 2, 3 or 4 students. This allows them to discuss, question, and pursue clarity with their peers before they present their thoughts and conclusions in a whole class setting. There are a variety of ways student teams can be formed, i.e. members grouped by the teacher, groups self choose themselves, or having students choose numbers to make their groups totally random. It has been our experience that student teams are generally most effective when they group themselves, as this takes into account their comfort level with each other and thus increases their sense of safety in sharing their thoughts most honestly.



- **Letters to motivate and inspire:** In each lesson a set of supplementary, motivational materials have been created to enhance the lesson and extend the learning beyond the classroom. These materials take the form of letters, written by Chris Gentes (a counselor at the junior high school level) that are intended to motivate, inspire and personalize this curriculum. Each lesson will have three such letters; one of these letters will be written for the student, one for the teacher and one for the parent/guardian. They will be termed CRS (Counselor Resource Student), CRT (Counselor Resource Teacher) and CRP (Counselor Resource Parent) and will correspond to each lesson's theme.

Distribution of letters:

**Counselor Resource Student Letter (CRS):** Email is the ideal way to send these letters. If your school has a system that provides students with email accounts, the teacher could email the letter prior to the first lesson as an introduction/"hook". If that is not available, the teacher could read the letter and visually show the letter to students using whatever technology was available (overhead – or computer presentation station.)

**Counselor Resource Teacher Letter (CRT):** Teacher letters are designed to motivate, connect with and encourage teachers. They should be read and used prior to teaching the lesson.

**Counselor Resource Parent Letter (CRP):** Truly, email is the most effective way to use these letters. The teacher would need to make a distribution list for their class (keeping the email addresses private) and send them out at the end of the day that the lesson was taught. It is not recommended to print letters and send them home. Not only is it ecologically expensive – it is also considerably less likely to be read.



This icon will signal that a [Counselor Resource](#) letter is available and recommended to be used at that point in the lesson.

The first three of these letters, which serve to introduce this program to teachers, parents and students are found at the end of this Cyberbullying Curriculum Introduction section.

We suggest that, on the day before formally beginning this curriculum with students, **you email the Introductory Parent Letter to your students' parents**, and spend a few minutes with your students, introducing them to this cyberbullying focus with the Introductory Student Letter.

Thank you for taking a lead role in getting this important information to your students and their families!

 **Note:** This material is still in draft form. We are in the process of testing it with teachers like you and will be integrating your feedback before we finalize it. We also see this curriculum as ever evolving, and plan to add new material and information to it when it is posted on the Internet.