



Dear PPS Families,

Cyberbullying is bullying or harassment that happens online. It can happen on a social networking site, in a text message, an email, an online game or comments. It might involve rumors or images posted on someone's profile or passed around for others to see, or creating a group or page to make a person feel left out. Because cyberbullying messages can be rapidly sent to many people, they can cause considerable damage to children. There are many guidelines and resources to help parents navigate and stay involved in their child's online activity. It is our goal to provide families with helpful information about some of the more frequently asked questions related to internet awareness and cyberbullying.

How can I monitor my child's online activity?

It is a good idea to keep the computer in a common area of the house where it's easier to monitor what your child is viewing. Talk to your kids about when and where they can use their cell phones. You may want to establish rules for responsible internet and cell phone use, and you can involve your child in writing family guidelines. Consider using privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's profile. Also consider using filtering or monitoring software. Parents can limit access to certain websites, and can apply filters to email, instant messenger, and chat. Parents should make sure they have their student's passwords to all social media sites. Cell phones also have privacy settings and safety controls, and your phone carrier can help you with choosing the options that are right for your child.

How do I talk to my child about internet safety and cyberbullying?

The most important thing parents can do is talk with their child about online safety and listen to their input. You can discuss privacy settings and your expectations for appropriate online behavior. Help your child to understand what private information is and that they should not post things like passwords, phone numbers, address or family information online. Ask your child to let you know about any uncomfortable experience and to tell an adult if they see something mean online. You can work together with your child to develop a written safety plan, and include specific strategies for what they will do if they are concerned with an online encounter.

What else can I do?

Know which social networking sites your child is viewing and who their online friends are. View their pages and online activity routinely and read the comments. If your child is being bullied you can sometimes block or delete the user name or email address. Tell your child not to respond to an inappropriate message or image, and work with them to save the evidence. Make sure they know you expect them not to participate in any mean conduct, including forwarding or "liking" mean comments.

How do I report offensive or inappropriate online content?

Many social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Kik and Vine have links to report threatening, abusive or inappropriate content. You can work with your child to report concerns to the social networking site and ask to have the content removed. You can also help your child review and set up the site's privacy setting and blocking features. Be very cautious about sites that encourage anonymous posts, or that do not have an easy way to report inappropriate content. "Ask.fm" is an example of a site that is commonly used for inappropriate, bullying comments.

What can the school do?

Cyberbullying can happen anytime, 24 hours a day. It is primarily the responsibility of the student, family and community to report and address problems with online harassment. The school is not responsible for preventing and responding to all instances of bullying 24 hours a day. There are restrictions that limit the school's ability and authority to investigate who is being threatening and who will respond to intimidation or threats. Portland Public Schools has an anti-harassment policy that pertains to bullying at school. Parents can report harassment that occurs during the school day to school administration. If the harassment occurs at school, it will be investigated and if applicable, school administration will take appropriate action. In addition, the school is a community partner and can provide information and resources for families.

When do I notify the police or the school?

If bullying continues, you can save the evidence and help your child report it. Ask your child to tell you if an online message or image makes them feel threatened or hurt. If you fear for your child's safety, contact the police. To report incidents of threatening or harassing behavior outside the school day, contact the police. If the cyberbullying occurs during the school day, during school-sponsored activities, or substantially interferes with the school environment, you should report it to the school. The school will work with you, your child and, if appropriate, law enforcement to investigate the concern.

Understanding the ways in which you can talk with your children, monitor their online activity and report instances of cyberbullying will go a long way toward ensuring that you and your children are aware of potentially harmful things on the internet. Additional resources and links to helpful internet safety content are located in the "Parent Resources" section of the PPS Information Technology website located here:

<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/departments/information-technology/1242.htm>