

Hello, Parents

We are seeing an alarming increase in cyberbullying reports this spring. What exactly is cyber bullying? According to [stopcyberbullying.org](http://stopcyberbullying.org), "Cyberbullying is when a child, pre-teen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, pre-teen or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones." The methods of cyberbullying are limited only by the child's imagination and access to technology. A cyberbully may be harassing a peer at one moment, and become the victim the next. The kids often cycle through roles, going from victim to bully and back again.

Parents, we are asking for your help. Please discuss with your child the consequences of cyberbullying. Often students send inappropriate messages (usually things they would never say to someone's face) because they are experiencing hurt feelings, anger, frustration and feeling threatened. And when people, especially kids, act out of anger, frustration or fear things get out of hand quickly. Emotions create situations where we click send, text that photo, or post to Facebook before thinking. The best way to counter this problem is by teaching our children to Take 5! Put down the mouse and step away from the computer. By not reacting and taking time to calm down, we can avoid becoming a cyberbully ourselves. Ask your child what they will do to Take 5. (Shoot hoops, read, listen to music, bake cookies, etc...) Also, encourage your child to talk with you if they are or have been a victim of cyberbullying. Finally, all good people - including your child ;- ) - make poor choices. Parents have an excellent opportunity to help limit (and we mean limit; it is impossible to shield children from life) a students' opportunities to make poor choices. Parents should know who their child is texting and the context of those conversations, as well as access to their child's social networking site. Check the parent resources of your cell phone provider to permit access during limited hours only. Your teen may scorn your involvement now, but they will thank you for it later. For more information on cyberbullying, visit <http://csriu.org/cyberbully/docs/cbctparents.pdf> or contact your child's school counselor.