

This week's Social Emotional Learning assignment is about bullying in the school and the workplace. We are discussing this subject because bullying is an illegal form of discrimination under America's Civil Rights Act. It is also prohibited by many laws in Washington State.

Puget Sound Skills Center has a policy prohibiting bullying in this school not only because it is illegal, but because it creates unproductive, unpleasant, and sometimes a hostile learning and working environment. That is not what we want for our school or students.

What exactly is bullying, why is it harmful, and what can you do about it?

Step 1: Read the articles on the following pages.

Step 2: Complete the quiz questions/statements integrated within the reading. Use the **highlight tool**, **bold face** or underline to mark the correct answer, or ~~delete the one you think is incorrect~~.

If you get 80% or higher correct on those 10 questions you will receive a certificate on Bullying Awareness.

Step 3: Complete the short answer section at the end.

Step 4: Submit your work through Google Classroom.

Fighting Back Against Bullies

A new Teaching Tolerance documentary points the way.

The film this article discusses is based on a true story. Jamie Nabozny carefully planned his every move at school. He had to. The bullying by his classmates in Ashland, Wisconsin, was unrelenting. The attacks began in middle school. Jamie knew he was gay and had told his family, but hadn't come out to friends and classmates. It didn't matter; his classmates saw him as gay. At first, the bullies called him names. That progressed to tripping and shoving, and then to kicks and punches. They ganged up on him in the restroom. Jamie was once kicked so hard that he had to go to the hospital.

Jamie adapted as best he could. Before the first class bell rang, he was already mapping out his day. Jamie got to school early to miss the rush and took refuge in quiet corners. He used hall passes to avoid crowded class changes. And he looked for out-of-the-way restrooms where he wouldn't be attacked. Only after other students left school would Jamie finally make his way home. "I spent a lot of time thinking defensively, which is a strange thing to have to do at school," said Jamie, who is now in his mid-30s. "Looking back, I feel like I tried to be numb as much as possible to not feel what was happening."

Jamie reported the abuse to teachers and administrators, but they did little to stop the bullies. A middle school administrator told Jamie he should expect to be bullied if he was going to be gay. A high school official asked him what he did to cause the attacks.

Nabozny's story is told in the new Teaching Tolerance film *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History*. The documentary shows how Nabozny courageously stood up for his rights. He filed a lawsuit against the district and school officials. His suit led to an important court decision that public school officials had to protect all students from bullies, including those who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender (LGBT).

Viewer's Guide Offers Advice for School Leaders: *The Bullied* viewer's guide that comes in the film kit includes professional development activities and guidance for school leaders as well as classroom lessons. While most schools and educators will act promptly when faced with bullying based on race, religion or ethnicity, many are less likely to confront harassment based on sexual orientation. *The Bullied* guide provides guidance in a series of answers to the questions educators who use the kit may be asked by their colleagues, members of the community or parents.

The guide addresses these important issues: Why is a film on anti-gay bullying necessary? What are the risks to students? What is at stake for the school? Does the ruling depicted in *Bullied* apply to my school? What about a teacher's, student's or parents' personal beliefs? How can I explain the decision to use *Bullied* to my school community? How can I use *Bullied* in staff development? How can I assess my school's climate? Where do I find resources for effective anti-bullying programs?

1. Should someone who is LGBT have to endure being bullied because of their orientation?
Yes No

2. Everyone is free to have their own personal beliefs on matters. However, do personal beliefs give someone the right to bully someone else? Yes No

Suicide by Bullying

Phoebe Prince is loved by her peers. At least, now she is. Hundreds of people have lent their voices to support her on Facebook. Taylor Gosselin wrote, "Your story touched my heart." Dori Fitzgerald Acevedo added, "I am so glad we are not letting this get swept under the carpet." This is what some might call "**bullicide**" – **suicide by bullying**.

Before Phoebe Prince hanged herself, she was a new student at South Hadley High School in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Phoebe was a newly arrived Irish immigrant, but that doesn't seem to be what ignited the ire (hateful anger) of other peers - or her own self-doubt. Instead, Phoebe reportedly dared to date boys whom others thought should be off limits to her.

Girls at Phoebe's school reportedly called her an "Irish slut," a "whore" and a "bitch," viciously harassing her in person and on Facebook. Public documents indicate that at least one student gloated after Phoebe took her own life, "I don't care that she's dead."

Phoebe's tormentors have since been dubbed the "Mean Girls," after the clique in the 2004 Tina Fey-scripted movie of the same name. And for the Mean Girls of South Hadley, the consequences of their purported actions have been severe. They are now maligned across the Internet, from postings on Facebook to the comment areas of news websites worldwide.

The Mean Girls, along with two male students, also face an array of criminal charges for allegedly bullying Phoebe Prince. Since then, it's become clear that Phoebe's reasons for taking her own life were complicated. She had struggled with depression and had even attempted suicide once before. But the bullying she endured definitely had an impact on her.

3. Bullying affects everyone involved (including aggressors, witnesses, bystanders), not just the victim. True False

New Term, Old Concept

Cyberbullying. The word didn't even exist a decade ago, yet the problem is pervasive in children's lives today. **Simply put, cyberbullying is the repeated use of technology to harass, humiliate or threaten.** When fingers take to the keyboard, or thumbs type into a cellphone and type messages of hate or malice about a specific person, cyberbullying is emerging. And unlike most types of traditional bullying, it comes with a wide audience.

"You can pass around a note to classmates making fun of a peer, and it stays in the room," said Sheri Bauman, a 30-year education veteran who now works as director of the school counseling master's degree program at the University of Arizona. "But when you post that same note online, thousands can see it. The whole world becomes witness and is invited to participate."

Anywhere from one-third to one-half of youths have been targeted by cyberbullies. And those experiences produce damaging consequences- everything from a decline in academic performance to thoughts about suicide. "Our study of upwards of 2,000 middle school students revealed that **cyberbullying victims were nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to students not targeted with online abuse,**" said

Sameer Hinduja, the study co-author, who is also an associate professor at Florida Atlantic University and a founder of the Cyberbullying Research Center. "Cyberbullying clearly heightens instability and hopelessness in adolescents' minds."

Findings like these, and actual deaths like Phoebe's lend a sense of urgency to anti-cyberbullying efforts. Legally speaking, those efforts can be tricky for school administrators. The judiciary has long struggled to balance freedom of speech against the darker side of digital communication. More and more though, courts and law enforcement are sending the message that cyber bullying will not be tolerated. For instance in March 2010, California's Second Appellate District concluded that online threats against a student were not protected speech and allowed a civil lawsuit against the alleged perpetrators, their parents and school officials to proceed.

The notion that schools must respond to behavior that takes place off-campus and online may seem like a tall order. But schools are coming to understand that bullies don't just attack in the cafeteria or on the playground. "Wherever kids go with their computers or phones, which is nearly everywhere, the bullies come with them," explained Bauman.

A 2010 study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation Found that technology access among children has skyrocketed since 1999. Today, 93 percent of children ages 8 to 18 have computers at home, 66 percent have personal cellphones (on which they are more likely to text than talk), and 76 percent own another multimedia device, such as an iPad. These percentages have increased since the study was done.

These tools give them access to a dizzying array of social media. Some of them, such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook, are well known among parents and teachers. But others, such as Formspring, fly well below the radar of most adults. Yet it is sites or apps like Formspring and Kik that can create the biggest headaches. Formspring and Kik can offer its users total anonymity. That makes it at once a huge draw for curious teenagers and a nearly perfect medium for cyberbullies.

4. Cyberbullying (done online) can have a greater negative effect than traditional bullying.
True False
5. Victims of cyberbullying are more likely to commit suicide than in-person bullying.
True False
6. Websites and social media apps that allow anonymous postings and comments are less likely to encourage cyberbullying than those like Facebook and Twitter. True False

Reliving the Drama

The ostensible boundary between off-campus behavior and school life evaporated for Highline Academy, a K-8 charter in Denver, last spring when a conflict fueled by Facebook posts ultimately led to a physical altercation in the middle school. (*Editor's Note: The original author sits on that district's board of directors.*) "When I looked at the pages, I was shocked by how freely and harshly the kids were talking to and about one another," said Principal Gregg Gonzales.

In the wake of the incident, Highline officials spoke with students in morning meetings and issued a special packet of information to parents and guardians about cyberbullying and Internet safety. Still, a new Facebook page soon appeared, with a growing stream of posts about a student directly involved in the altercation.

"As a community, we needed to step back from the incident and relieve some of the drama," Gonzales said. He asked every parent in the middle school to support a 48-hour moratorium on Facebook activity at home. He also asked parents to discuss the use of the social networking site with their children. Gonzales and his colleagues also placed personal phone calls to parents of students who had engaged in the on-line conversations.

"It may be outside our jurisdiction to dictate what students do on their own time, but it was important to let parents know we'd discovered their child had engaged in cyberbullying or inappropriate conversations about the incident," Gonzales said. As it turned out, his initial shock about students' online behavior was shared. "Numerous parents came back to us and said, 'I had no idea'- no idea what their child was doing online, or even that they had a Facebook page."

Such responses are typical. A 2009 study from Common Sense Media found that parents nationally underestimated children's use of social networking sites and often are unaware of how they are used. Thirty-seven percent of students, for example, admitted they'd made fun of a peer online, but only 18 percent of parents thought their child would engage in such conduct.

"The episode taught us- teachers, parents and students- that practicing respect, one of our core values, means practicing it wherever we are, at school or online," Gonzales said.

7. What happens online, and outside of school time, has no effect on school culture and campus life. True False
8. Parents are fully aware of what is happening in their child's online life. True False

Getting in Front of the Problems

The Seattle Public School District took a proactive stance last year when it launched a pilot curriculum to prevent cyberbullying in its junior high and middle schools. Mike Donlin, the senior program consultant who led the curriculum's development, says the district chose to create its own resources rather than use off-the-shelf products. This ensured that the resources would be easy to use and easy to integrate into existing curricula. "There also was the issue of cost," he said. "We believed we could create something great with far less expense."

Unlike many programs that address cyberbullying piecemeal -focusing only on Internet safety skills, for example-the Seattle curriculum attacked the entire problem. It did this by using the four most promising prevention practices. They are:

- Debunking misperceptions about digital behavior
- Building empathy and understanding
- Teaching online safety skills
- Equipping young people with strategies to reject digital abuse in their lives

The Seattle curriculum also recognizes the importance of parental engagement by offering take-home letters and activities. Academically, the curriculum focuses on writing. This not only boosts student skills in a tested area, it also allows the program to discard common, ineffective practices. Instead of asking students to sign a pre-crafted pledge, for example, the curriculum prompts children to write personal contracts for themselves about their online behavior.

The curriculum also educates teachers about cyberbullying and introduces a language they can share with

their students. "We couch lessons in a way that resonates for teachers, too," said Donlin. "So, we use the Golden Rule. We use the old-fashioned mantra "don't kiss and tell" to address sexting." Still, some information requires repeated explanation. Some might wonder, for example, why the curriculum prompts students to try to see things from the bully's perspective. "A single student can be a victim, a bystander and a bully indifferent moments," Donlin explained. "Maybe a child was bullied at school this morning but gets online later and bullies back. Their roles shift. Technology gives them tremendous freedom and power to reach out and touch in nearly every moment, for good or evil."

Learning how to resist the urge to "bully back" is important. Many students have common myths about being online. They often think that they can be anonymous on the internet, or that what they do there is fleeting. Both ideas are mistaken. The Library of Congress, for example, is archiving all Twitter messages sent from March 2006 forward. Even the "mean tweets" will be immortalized for future generations. "Everything students do online reflects on them, permanently," says Donlin. For teachers, a common stumbling block revolves around First Amendment protections and discomfort about corralling students' speech. Donlin believes that should not be a problem in most cases."

We have Second Amendment rights to possess weapons, but that doesn't mean we allow children to bring guns to school," he observed. "When it comes to cyberbullying, we're still talking about school safety."

The new curriculum hasn't been a total remedy for Seattle's schools. In January, one middle school suspended two dozen students who "friended" or became "fans" of a Facebook page maligning another child. It was a reminder that, despite the best efforts, a school's struggle against cyberbullying never ends. "Phoebe Prince was lost earlier this year," Donlin said. "There were others before her. Their names and stories faded. My fear is that we' will forget the lesson learned again. We have to teach this *now*".

9. The First Amendment protects all forms of speech, so there cannot be any legal consequences for what you post online. True False

Disciplining Bullies

Not as Easy (or Effective) as it sounds

Advocates have spent years trying to get schools to take cyberbullying and its traditional counterpart seriously. It's no wonder then that so many express support for increasingly harsh consequences being handed out across the country.

When a prosecutor charged nine students with criminal offenses related to bullying Phoebe Prince, Elizabeth Englander, director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, called it a "watershed" moment. Across the country, in Seattle, after more than 20 students were suspended for taunting a classmate online, Mike Donlin, a senior consultant in the district, called it "a clear message- hard and fast." Many states and districts mandate required punishments like suspension or expulsion, and some are now considering heftier use of criminal penalties as well.

Sheri Bauman, the director of the school counseling master's degree program at the University of Arizona, encourages everyone to take a deep breath. "Pushing children out of school isn't going to help," she said. "Bullying, online and in person, is rarely solved with punitive methods. Children who are punished typically persist; they just change their methods."

Bauman, who has studied cyberbullying and its traditional counterpart in the United States, Australia, Canada,

Germany and Norway, points to different models of justices. She prefers the "Method of Shared Concern," which involves all parties-the bully, the victim and the bystanders-in examining and addressing conflicts. However, this needs to be done by educators who have been properly trained or it can make the situation worse.

"We need to expand our toolbox," Bauman said. "Punishments may make us feel better or safer, but other options can yield actual results."

Is Cyberbullying Largely a Problem for Girls?

Conventional wisdom suggests that boys are more likely to bully in person and girls are more likely to bully online. Sheri Bauman, the director of the school counseling master's degree program at the University of Arizona, cautions against jumping to conclusions. "Cyberbullying is a new area of inquiry, and it's just hard to draw definitive conclusions from the research that is currently available," she said.

What is clear is that cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, is about power. "Students attempt to gain social status through cyberbullying," said Bauman. Sameer Hinduja of the Cyberbullying Research Center says that gaining social status often means tearing someone else down, and boys and girls often do that differently.

"Girls tend to target each other with labels that carry particular meanings for them," said Hinduja, Labels like "slut," "whore" and "bitch" – the epithets reportedly used against Phoebe Prince – are common within girl-to-girl cyberbullying. The main tactic of boy cyberbullies who attack other boys is to accuse them of being gay. "The amount of abuse boys encounter because of real or perceived sexual orientation is pronounced." Bauman said.

10. Bullying and cyberbullying look the same for boys and girls. True False

Short Answer Section

A. Describe bullying in your own words

B. Describe an incident of bullying or harassment that you have seen, and how it turned out or was resolved. If you have been fortunate enough to have never experienced this, please describe a scenario that might happen and discuss how you would respond.