The Role of Adults in Electronic Bullying

It is the moral responsibility of adults to ensure that the rights of youth are honored and that healthy development and citizenship are promoted. Electronic bullying is extremely hard to monitor as adults are often unaware of, or unable to detect, internet and cell phone use.[1] Even if electronic bullying is detected, it is difficult to address because freedom of speech rights complicate the removal of hurtful websites and other electronic media.[2]

<u>Key Research Findings</u>

- Over 50% of youth who are victimized by electronic bullying don't inform any adults about the incidents and less than 35% of all students report that they would inform adults if/when they knew about someone else being electronically bullied.[3]
- 57% of the youth who are bullied electronically confide in an online friend, but fewer than 9% inform an adult.[4]
- Among youth who are victimized by electronic bullying, female youth are more likely than male youth to inform adults.[5]
- 64% of students believe that adults in schools try to stop electronic bullying when they are informed of incidents.[6]
- Students are unlikely to report electronic bullying to adults at school because it frequently occurs through cell phones and it is against the school policy to have cell phones on during school hours.[7]
- Students are more likely to report cyber bullying to parents than teachers, especially if the bullying is threatening in nature. They are still reluctant because they are afraid of losing online privileges as a consequence.[8]

<u>Key Themes</u>

- The majority of youth who are victimized through electronic bullying do not report this bullying to an adult.
- Female youth are more likely to report electronic bullying than male youth.
- Students are more likely to report electronic bullying to parents than teachers, but still fear that their online privileges may be revoked as a result.
- School policies prohibiting cell phone use may make teachers and adults at school less approachable when youth are interested in reporting the bullying to an adult.

<u>Implications</u>

Education
- Teachers, school personnel, parents, and adults in the community need to receive education to help them identify and respond appropriately to incidents of electronic bullying.
- Teachers, school personnel, parents, and adults in the community need to learn about the sites children and youth visit on the internet and how to use this technology.

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Assessment

- Because electronic bullying by nature is constantly changing and evolving as technology evolves, so must the assessment tools used to understand it.

Intervention

- Adults need to talk to youth about electronic bullying, letting youth know that they will be supportive.
- Reduction of harm approach: Students can use technology in prosocial and beneficial manner but need education on net-etiquette and safety.
- Adults need to make it clear that online and cell phone privileges will not be revoked if electronic bullying is reported.
- Electronic bullying is a relatively new phenomenon, more work needs to be conducted in order to create and evaluate intervention and prevention programs.

Policy

- Within the schools, at home, and in the community, policies related to appropriate electronic behavior and bullying need to be developed by adults in collaboration with children and youth.
- Policy should include a set of rules for behaving properly online.
- These policies need to recognize that although electronic bullying may not occur on the school grounds, the negative effects associated with electronic bullying will influence the school climate.

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[1] Patchin, J. W. & Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies move beyond the schoolyard: A preliminary look at cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 4,* 148-169.
[2] Li, Q. (2006). Cyberbullying in schools: A research of gender differences. *School Psychology International, 27,* 157-170.
[3] Li, Q. (2007a). Bullying in the new playground: Research into cyberbullying and cyber victimization. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology, 23,* 435-454.
[4] See note 1 above.
[5] Agatston, P. W.,Kowalski, R. M., & Limber, S. P. (2007). Electronic bullying among middle school students. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41,* S22-S30.
[6] See note 2 above.
[7] See note 5 above.
[8] See note 1 above.