Cyberbullying and Social Media: Supporting Students Online

Denver Public Schools is committed to the social emotional intelligence and safety of all students. This handout provides information and resources on cyberbullying and social media for parents in support of their child’s online learning.

Understanding Cyberbullying
The challenge of addressing cyberbullying is that perpetrators can create and sustain anonymity; meaning, there is no face-to-face cyberbullying. Examples of cyberbullying include hurtful texts, posting or sharing of embarrassing photos or videos, and spreading rumors. It occurs on social media sites that include Facebook, Twitter and SnapChat. It extends to popular websites such as gaming sites, phone use (calls or texts), emails and online learning.

Strategies for Parents
As a parent, it is important to identify when cyberbullying occurs, and know how to act.

How to identify it:
- Noticeable increases or decreases in device use, including texting.
- A child exhibits emotional responses (laughter, anger, upset) to what is happening on their device.
- A child hides their screen or device when others are near, and avoids discussion about what they are doing on their device.
- Social media accounts are shut down or new ones appear.
- A child starts to avoid social situations, even those that were enjoyed in the past.
- A child becomes withdrawn or depressed, or loses interest in people and activities.

What to do:
- **Notice** – Recognize if there has been a change in mood or behavior and explore what the cause might be. Try to determine if these changes happen around a child’s use of their digital devices.
- **Talk** – Ask questions to learn what is happening, how it started, and who is involved.
- **Document** – Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and DPS’s policy note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.
- **Report** – Denver Public Schools and most social media platforms have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact social media platforms to report offensive content to have it removed. If a child has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police and the school.
- **Support** – Peers, mentors, and trusted adults can sometimes intervene publicly to positively influence a situation where a negative or hurtful comment is posted about a child. Public Intervention can include posting positive comments about the person targeted to try to shift the conversation in a positive direction. It can also help to reach out to the child who is bullying and the target of the bullying to express your concern. If possible, try to determine if professional supports are needed for those involved, such as speaking with a guidance counselor or mental health professional.
Other tips:

- Monitor use of technology to include cell phone and computer time
- Monitor social media access by setting privacy controls
- Monitor a teen’s social media sites, apps, and browsing history, if you have concerns about cyberbullying
- Report concerns to your child’s school, local law enforcement agency, or by calling Safe2Tell at 1-877-542-7233

Resources for Parents from stopbullying.gov

What is Cyberbullying?

Qué es el ciberacoso

Digital Awareness for Parents

Concientización digital para padres

How to deal with “haters”

Cómo lidiar con los “Haters”

Cyber Bullying Tactics

Tácticas de ciberacoso

Establishing Rules

Establecimiento de normas

Preventing Cyberbullying

Prevenir el ciberacoso

Social Media and Gaming

Niños en redes sociales y videojuegos

Reporting Cyberbullying

Reportar casos de ciberacoso

Resources for Parents from Common Sense Media

Screen Time

Social Media

Privacy and Internet Safety

Learning with Technology

Sexting

Spanish documents