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THIS WEEK'S LIVE CHAT

Cyberbullying and Schools
When: Friday, October 10, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern time.
Where: http://www.edweek-chat.org

Attached please find the archive of the discussion related to
cyberbullying, a problem affecting growing numbers of students,
administrators, teachers, and parents.

At its best, the Internet helps students find information and
stay in touch with friends through everything from text-messages
and blogs to social-networking and other video- and photo-sharing
Web sites. But the Internet can also enable students to
aggressively target and harm their peers. This chat will inform
educators and parents on how to recognize cyberbullying and
protect young people from becoming victims.

About the guests:
Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin are Internet-safety experts
who are co-authors of the new book Bullying Beyond the
Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying. Mr.
Hinduja is an assistant professor of criminology and criminal
justice at Florida Atlantic University, and Mr. Patchin is an
assistant professor of criminal justice at the University of
Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Together they maintain
www.cyberbullying.us, an information clearinghouse on
cyberbullying.

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 NOTE: This is not an audio chat. No special equipment needed.
The chat is now **OPEN**. Please submit questions. **Click here to enter the chat.**
Cyberbullying and Schools

Submit questions here.

(Please do not click refresh after submitting your question. That will re-submit it. The chat will refresh every 50 seconds. **Click here to turn OFF automatic refreshing**.)

NOTE: The newest postings appear at the bottom of the page.
Andrew Trotter (Moderator):

Good afternoon. We have received dozens of questions about cyberbullying for our guests, Internet-safety experts Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin. So, let's get started.

Question from rajashree pande, co-ordinator, army school, allahabad, india:

how can we identify that a student has become a victim of cyberbullying in school since they are at social-networking sites at home as school computer programs are very controlled and syllabus based?

Justin W. Patchin:

Educators, perhaps better than almost anyone else, are very good at identifying students who seem distressed. The easiest way to determine the cause of that distress, whether or not they are being bullied—online or off—is to ask them. Or maybe ask one of their friends if they know is something is wrong with their friend. It is important for educators to create a welcoming environment where students feel comfortable talking with them about these kinds of issues. Students have to know that teachers and counselors are available to help with these situations.

Question from Louise Hall, teacher, First Avenue Public School:

Is it wise to go on Facebook or other such venues in order to understand our students' social network?

Justin W. Patchin:

Yes, I think it is important that teachers have a good understanding about the kind of activities their students are into. You will definitely learn something about their interests and relationships. Be prepared for what you might find, though. If you see evidence of inappropriate behavior, what actions are you prepared to take? Another question worth considering is whether or not it is appropriate for teachers to become "friends" with their students on these social networking sites. We have been discussing this issue a lot lately and simply acknowledge that there can be some great benefits to such a relationship but not without some potential risks. In fact some districts are moving to prohibit such relationships. Certainly this is a discussion you should be having within your district.

Question from Linda Melin, Dispositions Coordinator, Northern Illinois University, Parent of recent victim:

How can a person prove that s/he did not post inappropriate material? How does one fight a rumor that s/he was guilty of posting "trash talk"? What, if any, role do high school administrators play in the fight against cyber-bullying?

Sameer Hinduja:

Work with the content service providers (MySpace, AT&T, Sprint, Facebook, AOL, etc.) to obtain logs of communications with date- and time-stamps. Also, those who cyberbully usually forward or CC their communications to their friends to share with others what they are doing - figure out if evidence can be collected from these other individuals. Rumors should be countered by finding the truth, but even then - people tend to believe what they want to believe (which is a shame). High-school administrators have a role to educate and inform youth, parents, and teachers as to the reality of cyberbullying and to implement specific, tangible prevention and response strategies.

Question from Tom D'Agostino, Managing Editor, School Safety & Security Alert:

What should schools do to make sure their policy doesn't violate students' First Amendment rights?

Sameer Hinduja:

Great question. Schools must specify that there *are* certain forms of expression that are not protected by the 1st Amendment. These include speech that substantially or materially disrupts learning, interferes with the educational mission or school discipline, or threatens other students or infringe with their rights. Policy must clarify and detail each of these clauses. Schools can restrict student expression when students use school-owned technology to cyberbully others, but they can also discipline students for off-campus expressions using a home computer that are in line with the exceptions noted above.

Question from Denise White, School Counselor, JN Fries Middle School, NC:

What are the legal rights of students who are being bullied via text messages and internet?

Sameer Hinduja:

Victims can always pursue action in civil court (defamation, invasion of privacy, intentional infliction of emotional distress, negligence). Criminal law may also be violated via cyberbullying, and action can be pursued in this area when online harassment involves: threats of violence to people or their property; coercion; stalking; sentiments indicative of a "hate crime"; sexual exploitation; and the creating or sending of sexually explicit images of teenagers.

Question from Pam Letourneau, Instructional Coach, Moriarty Municipal Schools, Moriarty, NM:

How young are the children or at which grade does this begin?

Justin W. Patchin:

We see children as young as 4th or 5th grade reporting experiences with cyberbullying though the behaviors really seem to jump between 6th and 7th grade. Accordingly, we think it is really important to educate 5th and 6th graders about these issues.

Question from Emanuel Goss, Teacher, Kemp & Eastmont Elementary Schools - Dayton Public Schools, OH:

1. By definition, what is bullying? 2. What is cyberbullying? 3. Would it be bullying if you increased font size on certain words in your text? What about making some words bolder? 4. Is emailing an un-truth about someone to 25 people at the same time considered bullying?

Sameer Hinduja:

Bullying can be defined as unprovoked aggression often directed repeatedly toward another individual or group of individuals. We define cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." Conceptions of cyberbullying victimization must stem from the target's perspective. If the target is harmed or threatened by receiving repeated messages with some words in CAPS or *bold* or a larger font size, then cyberbullying has occurred. Emailing an un-truth about someone to 25 people at the same time can be considered cyberbullying if the subject of the email is harmed by it.

Question from Vince Jones, Secondary Education Coordinator, Network of Victim Assistance:

From my research concerning cyberbullying prevention education, helping young people to recognize that though there are not speed limits and stop lights online, there are indeed "cyberrules" that all users need to abide by and that every action taken online has a consequence as the best message in prevention. Do you agree?

Justin W. Patchin:

Yes, we agree it is important to stress to youth that there are rules and consequences associated with violations of those rules. One of the things we try to stress to students when we speak to them is the concept of integrity – doing the right thing, even when no one is looking. Of course very often no one is looking at what youth are doing online. The concept of integrity can be difficult for some younger groups to grasp, but we suggest that everyone knows what the "right thing" is—they just need to be strong and do what they know is right. We also talk about the fact that it is actually very easy to track cyberbullying behaviors because there is always a written record. So, they need to be careful what they put online.

Question from Mary Chris Adams, Technology Director, South Bend Community School Corporation:

Do you have suggestions for materials to give parents to discuss bullying at school?

Justin W. Patchin:

We have a lot of resources on our web site www.cyberbullying.us that teachers and parents can use to introduce the topic of cyberbullying. Feel free to download and disseminate these resources to folks in your community.

Question from Laura Gordon, Guidance Counselor, Stillwater Middle School, Stillwater, Oklahoma:

I teach guidance classes to 6th graders. What are your best tips for teachers to tell kids this age?

Justin W. Patchin:

It is important at this stage that students learn to trust that teachers will take their concerns seriously and that they will do all in their power to help them through any difficult situation. Many youth get the message from adults that cyberbullying isn't a big deal because it is only text. Kids need to know that cyberbullying or other inappropriate behavior online will not be tolerated and that if they experience or see cyberbullying they need to talk to an adult about it. Then it is up to you to do something about it! In short, teachers need to create a culture where students feel comfortable talking to them about all of these issues.

Question from Sue Olenski, Counselor, Mother McAuley HS:

As HS students, my kids have more unsupervised access to setting up a MySpace that is mean to someone else. Is there anyway to intervene or monitor these situations?

Justin W. Patchin:

You are right, most students have easy access to the Internet from a location where they are not directly supervised (friend's house, library, etc). You could always browse MySpace and search for students in your district to see if you find any inappropriate behavior, but that isn't necessarily an efficient way of doing it. I guess I would simply say that if you learn of inappropriate comments on MySpace or other cyberbullying taking place, you need to investigate it (question students, etc). Also, you can contact MySpace to have them remove offensive contact when it is identified. Just make sure to keep an eye on students who are using the computers in your classroom. Even if you have filtering software that prohibits access to MySpace, kids are very good at finding ways around these restrictions.

Question from Stacy Marcynuk, Director of IT Curriculum, Kingsway College School:

Do you have any activities or lessons that can really convey the notion that the Internet is a public place? That there is no such thing as anonymity? Despite the varied teaching styles and lessons, there are a few students who still believe they can 'hide' behind pseudonyms online.

Justin W. Patchin:

We haven't yet developed any formal lessons that other educators can easily use, but in our presentations with students we often use one particular example to stress this point. We obtained the AOL Instant Messaging screen name of a "friend of a friend." With this one piece of information we were able to create an 80 slide PowerPoint presentation with various pieces of personal and identifying information that we found online, including: cell phone number, address, hundreds of pictures, medical history, picture of her car, location of her church, sibling names and pictures, etc. etc. So the point we stress is that anything someone puts online can often times be tracked back to them – and that once something is put on the Internet it is impossible to completely remove it. We also talk about IP addresses and the fact that every computer has a digital address that can be traced.

Question from Mike Donlin, Senior Program Consultant (aka Program Manager), Seattle Public Schools:

Good Morning, The new Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard book is excellent. Both readable and comprehensive. I have three questions: 1. How can we consistently involve all the major stakeholders - educators, legal, the tech industry, families and youth - in sustained conversations around these critical issues? 2. Assuming that the digital immigrants all begin to get it with all the current technologies, what's going to be the next big thing we will have to be on the lookout for, cyber-danger-wise? 3. We are implementing a full cyberbullying curriculum, starting with the middle school/junior high grades. What do you see as something we absolutely should not overlook in our materials? Thanks, Mike

Sameer Hinduja:

Great questions. School districts should contact relevant private sector companies who may want to demonstrate that they care about the community, and have them fund/sponsor events that the school district can organize which brings together the multiple stakeholders. Local foundations also can help – this has been successful in my school district. Parents' nights can be sponsored, and speakers can be brought in to administer assemblies to youth (even in elementary school). We have found these efforts bear much fruit, and are prompting youth to go to parents and other youth-serving adults more readily with their cyberbullying problems. These events should happen annually at worst and biannually at best – there are many issues to cover and so material needn't be repeated. The next big thing cyber-danger-wise in my opinion isn't harassment on Second Life and IMVU and other 3-D virtual realms, but cyberbullying among pre-teens and even children on the new social networking sites that cater to them (e.g., Club

Penguin) – even if they are somewhat "locked-down" and supervised web-based environments. Even if certain curse words or hateful words are filtered, youth can still ostracize (through silence and passive-aggressive methods) others in these venues…and can still reveal personal information that may get them into trouble…. I should also say that we may see more picture- and video-based forms of cyberbullying, which will likely include more sexually-explicit images of teens. Finally, cyberbullying curriculums would be remiss if they fail to include the cultivation of empathy and self-esteem among youth. Honestly, if our kids were more naturally inclined towards the golden rule, and had internal and external buffers that provided a protective bubble from hurtful words or actions of peers, this wouldn't be the problem that it is.

Question from Lee Pastor, student teacher & parent, University of Montevallo, Alabama:

My daughter set up a personal page on a social network website that was designed by some girls (with parental help) at her middle school. It is primarily for kids at her middle school. She invited a friend to join (who does not go to her school), and there have been some really rude, ugly things said about the new girl (all from other girls at her school)- and now about my daughter too. I am upset at the terrible things these girls are saying to each other on this website. I do not think parents know what is going on this website. What is the best course of action I can take to deal with these bullies - and let their parents know (most probably don't read what is being said)- without making my oy daughter's life miserable because she told me about the problem and showed me the blogs?

Justin W. Patchin:

This can be a tricky situation. One of the biggest reasons victims don't tell adults is because they think it will only make things worse or that they will be retaliated against for telling. I would suggest involving a 3rd party to intervene. Perhaps recruit an understanding counselor or vice principal at your school to contact the parents of those involved. Provide them with the context and the evidence and hopefully they would be willing to get involved.

Question from George Swain, Head of Middle School, Poughkeepsie Day School:

Have you found that incidents of cyberbullying increase, decrease or remain constant in schools with 1:1 laptop programs?

Justin W. Patchin:

We haven't done any research specific to this question (nor are we aware of any that has been done), though we suspect that with the increased availability of technology in these schools there would be increased opportunities to utilize the technology to cause harm. We would also hope, however, that schools with 1:1 laptop programs would be very

proactive about educating about online safety and responsibility. Certainly this is an area ripe for research…

Question from Mary Sue Backus, Associate Professor of Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law:

In your view, does the recent Supreme Court decision in Morse v. Frederick ("Bong Hits") significantly extend the reach of a school's authority to regulate student speech and therefore assert more control over cyberbullying?

Sameer Hinduja:

Great question. The story with Morse v. Frederick is that the Supreme Court found that schools can restrict student expression even if that expression occurs off-campus when it occurs during a school-sponsored event (much like a field trip) and when it goes against the value system that a public school is trying to promote (in this case, the student displayed a banner with (what a reasonable person could conceive as) a pro-drug message). Only time will tell, but it is possible that this decision will allow schools to intervene in off-campus cases of cyberbullying that are obscene or supportive of a deviant behavior that contravenes what the public educational system would promote/endorse/support.

Question from Mark Strohm, Principal, Delaware County Christian School:

Some parents feel they are intruding on their child's privacy to "spy" on his or her online activity. These same parents do not let their kindergarten child alone at the park or their pre-teen at the mall by themselves because they understand the danger. How do you compel parents to understand the dangers and the need for a parental presence with online activity?

Justin W. Patchin:

I think it is important that parents monitor the Internet behavior of their children. Perhaps what is necessary is a presentation to the parents of your school/district that highlights some of the problems kids can get into online. We don't particularly like the idea of secretly spying on a child's online activities – what do you do if you find a problem? If parents choose to monitor the behaviors of their children, either through software or simply just by looking at the browser history, etc., they should definitely tell their kids that they will be doing these things. Violating the trust relationship by secretly spying is perhaps too great a risk (depending on your unique situation, of course). Besides that, telling them that you will be looking may act as a deterrent to them if they are tempted to do something inappropriate. So, in short, it is important that parents keep an eye on what their kids are doing online, but they need to make sure their children know that they are looking (and why they are doing it).

Question from Tabitha Long, Instructional Technology Coordinator, Russell County Public Schools:

Do you believe that most cyberbullying occurs during or outside of school hours?

Justin W. Patchin:

It is clear that the majority of cyberbullying behaviors are initiated away from school (while kids are at home using their own technology). That certainly doesn't suggest, however, that this isn't the school's problem. As you all know well, what is done and said away from school can often have a significant impact at school.

Question from Mrs. Kathy Schmidt, School Counselor, 5/6th, Lakeview Intermediate School:

What suggestions do you have in the areas of preventing the effects and concerns about cyberbullying from coming to school? We are educating parents via I-Safe programming and kids via classroom lessons, but this issue of boundaries or lack there of is truly permeating in every facet of education. For girls especially it becomes yet another "under the radar"means of taking control.

Justin W. Patchin:

It sounds like you are on the right track. At this point it is all about educating your community about issues associated with the responsible use of technology. I don't think you are ever going to completely stop all forms of bullying and cyberbullying from occurring and affecting your school. What you want to do is prepare the students, staff, and parents in the school to identify and respond to it when it occurs. The legwork you are doing now will help enable everyone to identify inappropriate behavior quickly so hopefully it can be stopped before it escalates into a more serious problem. With regard to the issue of boundaries, I think this is always a challenge. I'm not sure I have the answer to that except to encourage you to maintain a good relationship with your students and parents so that they feel comfortable coming to you with questions and concerns they have. Good luck!

Question from Amanda Green, Information Specialist, Federation for Children with Special Needs, Boston, MA:

Is there any data showing that students with disabilities are more or less likely to be either cyberbullies or cyberbullying victims? What specific strategies can help students with disabilities who are bullies or victims? Does this differ in any way from your advice to their non-disabled peers?

Justin W. Patchin:

This is a great question but we unfortunately haven't examined this issue directly (yet). We are also not aware of anyone who has. At a basic level it is useful to educate all populations about Internet responsibility and safety. Hopefully sometime in the near future we will have some clarity from the research about whether or not certain populations of students are more or less susceptible to cyberbullying victimization or offending. (On a related note, we are in the process of looking at the relationship between sexual orientation and cyberbullying…more to come on that…)

Question from Roxanne Wilderman, Denver Public Schools:

My high school son "talks" to other videogame players (WOW or XBox), most of whom are kids he knows in what I would label as "aggressive" talk (e.g. name calling). Would this be considered cyberbullying? It is not the kind of talk he would engage in if he were face to face.

Sameer Hinduja:

Absolutely. We hear instances of this with increasing frequency. We've found that high percentages of boys engage in online gaming and that insults, curses, and other forms of harassment are readily exchanged during emotionally-charged first-person shooter or strategy games. While much of this does not seem to harm the victim, there are some cases where the victim is hesitant to continue participating for fear of continual badgering and mistreatment.

Question from Shelly Eidsness, Child/Youth Advocate, Association of Alaska School Boards:

Recently I was asked to present a teacher in-service on Bullying. While I agreed to address the bullying issues, I did not base my workshop on that alone, because if you target one form of bullying, students will simply find another way to do it. My approach is to focus on building the social and emotional skills that are necessary for life, relationships, and success. If students learn how to manage themselves & their feelings, can recognize emotions in others and have empathy and compassion for them, they are much less likely to be instigators of painful bullying. Does your work address building these skills as a preventive measure?

Justin W. Patchin:

I agree with how you proceeded. We definitely want to build these skills as they not only help reduce bullying but also foster character and integrity in youth - which will help them more successfully navigate the difficult waters of adulthood. Role-playing exercises and peer mentoring can prove fruitful in developing these positive traits. I applaud your work.

Question from Victoria Pilotti, HS Teacher, NYC Public Schools:

I am a volunteer facilitator with Child Abuse Prevention Services of Long Island and have presented workshops in elementary and middle school classrooms on cyberbullying. To make cyberbullying prevention workshops more effective, I would like to see principals, guidance counselors and social workers invite facilitators back for a followup session one month or so later to revisit the topic and assess the impact of the first workshop on students' behavior and attitudes. What do you think?

Justin W. Patchin:

I think this is very important. First of all, it is sometimes easy for schools to say: "Well, we did an assembly on this, now we are ok." I think it is a really good idea to assess perceptions of and experiences with cyberbullying prior to any intervention or education effort and then follow-up at some point to see if the perceptions/behaviors changed. Also, shorter but more frequent programs will likely be more effective than one day long presentation (especially for students). They should receive regular messages about the appropriate use of technology—this should become intertwined throughout the regular curriculum.

Question from Earl Stroup, Assistant Principal/Rush Strong School/Strawberry Plains, TN/Jefferson County School System:

At what point does what appears on the Internet become a school issue/responsibility in terms of discipline?

Sameer Hinduja:

When it substantially or material disrupts learning, interferes with the educational process, compromises the value system that the school district and school are trying to foster, infringes upon another student's rights (civil rights or their ability to learn without distraction and harassment), when it is obscene, when school-owned technology is used to mistreat others, and when it involves a school-sponsored activity or a school-sponsored resource. With this said, we encourage informal responses and only suggest formal responses (changes of placement, suspensions, expulsions) in severe cases.

Question from Fred Hutchinson, Literacy Specialist, BOE member, ENYRSSC:

The largest and most complex issue surrounding cyberbullying is the disconnect between the home and the school. Filters can allow a school to govern internet use, but how can what schools know about this issue be translated into a discussion with the community homes without the appearance of intrusive governance?

Sameer Hinduja:

One idea is to convey to parents how youth indiscretion online (e.g., through cyberbullying) can compromise their chances of future success (for example, getting into a good university, landing quality employment). When we talk to parents at both public

and private schools, we share cases that really grab their attention as they realize that all of the opportunities they are giving their children may be undermined due to adolescent carelessness or foolishness. Parents are then much more willing to proactively deal with the problem through informal and formal monitoring, and to engage in more dialogue at home about these issues.

Question from Brenda Riley, Teacher, Washington High School:

My students will admit that cyberbullying is common but won't admit how hurtful and damaging it is. Therefore, some students think it's ok because the reciever can just shut off the apparatus used to bully. How does an "adult" get to the kids to convince them about the damage inflicted by cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

Well, the simple answer to this is just have them talk to John Halligan, Tina Meier, Debbie Johnston, and Mark Neblett. They all had children who committed suicide after experiencing cyberbullying. That's evidence that it can be extremely damaging. The whole "just turn the computer" argument bothers me because that doesn't necessarily stop the bullying. I guess it boils down to teaching empathy and trying to get youth to see the incident from the perspective of the victim. This can be difficult for younger children because the part of their brain that allows for this isn't fully developed until middle or even late adolescence. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that bullying is bullying – no matter where it is occurring…

Question from Denise Boswell, Middle School Teacher, Morgan Park Academy:

What is the most effective way of addressing cyberbullying with middle school and high schools students? Is it best to do so in a legal context or counseling/psychological context?

Sameer Hinduja:

I think it's most effective to use both. Demonstrating how courts have responded and how students have gotten into trouble promotes some measure of deterrence. That said, I believe that using counseling/psychological strategies to convey how important it is to utilize technology wisely and appropriately, and to interact with others in the proper (respectful and empathic) way, are the best tacks to take.

Question from Ronna Schneider, Law Prof, U of Cincinnati College of Law:

What have you found to be the most effective legal standard in determining the extent to which schools may or may not take action against such behavior when all the computer work and equipment is done or located off campus?

Sameer Hinduja:

There are multiple cases which have all contributed to building a body of incipient case law to which future cases will be compared. Some involve technology and some do not. We cover them in our book in detail, and we provide a broad-brush presentation of them in our Legal Issues Fact Sheet available at www.cyberbullying.us

Question from Chris Duque, CyberSafety Specialist, Hawaii Dept of Education:

Is there any template for drafting a computer/Internet use policy for the students and parents?

Justin W. Patchin:

We have a couple of resources available with this in mind. First, on our web site we have a sample Internet Use Contract and Cell Phone Use Contract that schools/parents can use to make sure everyone is on the same page about what is expected. Second, in our book we detail the elements of an effective school policy concerning cyberbullying and also talk about Acceptable Use Policies. It is really important that you involve all constituencies in drafting your own policy (teachers, administrators, parents, and yes, even students!).

Question from Bill Storm, Coord. for Instructional Technology, Davis Joint Unified SD:

On the peremptory side: is cyber-bullying as a discreet behavior set being incorporated into district AUPs? Examples of AUP-language employed?

Sameer Hinduja:

Yes, cyberbullying is being added as a distinct clause in district AUPs (as I believe it should). Here is some sample language from a private school: --- Cyberbullying in any form will NOT be tolerated. This applies to the school's network AND the broader Internet, whether accessed on campus or off campus, either during or after school hours. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another person by e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or Web site postings (including blogs). Often the author (sender or poster) of the inappropriate material is disguised (logged on) as someone else. A community member who believes she has been the victim of Cyberbullying should not erase the offending material from the system. She should print a copy of the offending material and immediately report the incident to a school official. All reports of Cyberbullying will be investigated fully. ---

Question from Joan Foley, Doctoral Student, Temple University:

It appears that one of the recent solutions to bullying has been to offer the bullied student the option of cyber school. What are your thoughts on the cyber school approach and cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

I'm not an expert on these types of alternative educational opportunities, though I do acknowledge the benefit in working to find an acceptable solution to the problem that is occurring. The fact that many parents/students feel it is necessary to leave the school as a result of a bullying incident should be evidence that it is a serious problem that we need to take seriously.

Question from Janis Gibbs Counselor:

How do I obtain information about how to handle cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

Check out our web site and book for information about how to deal with cyberbullying (www.cyberbullying.us)...

Question from Lyfu Vang at Hmong International Academy:

Bullying is already too much. Cyberbullying has to stop. My understanding is that there is a software available for a minimal premium to any end users track down any messages (just like MapQuest) pointing all away to the computer that initiated the email. Is this software still out there and available? Besides emails, how can we track it down to the right person, instead of pointing our finger every where to any one?

Sameer Hinduja:

Yes, absolutely. The best strategy is to work with the content provider (cell phone provider, social networking site, Internet service provider) to obtain logs and digital evidence. Also understand that peers/friends may have evidence as well on their computers and cell phones because messages often circulate outside of just the offender and victim. Finally, there are third-party software packages available to help identify the source/sender as well.

Question from Beverly Stern, Mgmt Analyst, US Dept of Educ:

What is the most important thing a child can do when he/she first suspects he/she is being cyber-bullied?

Justin W. Patchin:

Talk to an adult! Parent, teacher, school counselor, or someone else they trust to help them.

Question from Anne Wolchesky, Social Issues Teacher:

I have a student who has been harassed by another student who attended a summer program with her. He got her cell number and email from a list provided to the participants by the program. Should programs be providing lists like this?

Justin W. Patchin:

You are right that this probably wasn't the best idea. I agree that this may create problems.

Question from Kathy Johnson, Director, Alabama Broadband Initiative:

As our state moves forward with ubiquitous broadband accessibility and increased use of technology, we will no doubt receive questions of how parents/children gaining access to high-speed Internet and the wonderful resources that are available, will also be faced with understanding the dangers that exist with advanced technology. What is the best resource we can point parents/eductors to in order to educate them on how to recognize and address issues like cyberbullying? Thanks! Kathy Johnson, Director Alabama Broadband Initiative Office of Governor Bob Riley

Sameer Hinduja:

We have worked tirelessly to create downloadable and distributable documents for parents and educators. These include, but are not limited to: Cyberbullying Basics Emotional and Psychological Consequences Victimization of Adolescent Girls Cyberbullying Victim and Offender Warning Signs Cyberbullying Legal and Policy Issues Safe and Responsible Use of Social Networking Sites Cyberbullying Scripts MySpace: Personal Information of Adolescents on the Internet Cyberbullying Word Find Cyberbullying Crossword Puzzle Glossary of Cyberbullying Terms Common Chat Abbreviations How to Preserve Cyberbullying Evidence Through Screenshots Viewing Cyberbullying Email Headers Internet Use Contract for Parents and Children/Teenagers We have many more. Please avail yourself of them at: www.cyberbullying.us/resources.php and distribute them to your colleagues and constituents. Let us know if we can help further!

Question from Bob Kovachik - Principal - Walter Whyte School - Manitoba, Canada:

Like youth in the United States, Canadian students are engaging in this activity here as well. How are school administrators addressing cyberbullying when it is occuring during the evening when youth are either at home, are parents supportive in addressing the problem if it is not occuring at school?

Justin W. Patchin:

It is really important to develop a good relationship with the parents in your school/district so that you are able to talk with them about these kinds of issues. As you know, some parents are very open to this while others are not. Perhaps it would be useful

to distribute something to parents talking about these issues early in the school year so that they won't be caught off guard if you need to contact them. It really takes a partnership between parents and educators to deal with this problem.

Question from Buffy Fegenbush, Principal, Berwick High School:

Do you believe that the common practice of school systems' revising current zero tolerance policies to address cyberbullying issues at school is an effective way of addressing the issue through policy?

Justin W. Patchin:

We don't think zero tolerance is a good policy for just about anything. There is wide variation in the types of cyberbullying that occur and there is no "one answer" with regard to how to deal with it. Schools need to be creative in responding to cyberbullying. Zero-tolerance in my view is very limiting and not very instructive. It also doesn't take into account developmental aspects of how kids learn…

Andrew Trotter (Moderator):

We have had so many great questions today, and Justin and Sameer have graciously agreed to keep answering them, till 2:15pm EST. So we'll continue.

Question from Kevin, Assistant Principal, LaBelle Middle:

First of all, it takes too much time, to obtain evidence needed to find cyberbullying, and with the E-Rate, all schools have filtering software that prevents us from even checking some of the blogs, and social networking sites (myspace, etc). Why can't schools have a designated person(s) who can get into these sites, and monitor it? To prevent, some legislation must be passed to make evidence collecting easier, and obtainable. We're suppose to be proactive, prevent, and enforce, but where do the resources come from??

Sameer Hinduja:

The more progressive school districts have at least one person who has unfiltered access to these sites that they can investigate and engage in proactive monitoring. Some school districts have their own law enforcement team, or partner with local law enforcement for this purpose. Evidence collection isn't as hard as you may think if you work with the Content Service provider (e.g., MySpace, Facebook) or the Internet Service provider (Earthlink, Comcast, AOL), or the Cell Phone service provider. I have found they are more than willing to work with you, especially if law enforcement gives them a call. Finally, resources should come down from the state level or from private foundations or from the private sector who are willing to demonstrate that they care about the community and keeping youth safe in cyberspace. We just have to get out there, make the calls, set up the meetings, and see what is possible. I know we are strapped for time, and

pulled in every direction, and have way too much on our plates as it is. But we must do what we can, as this is a very real, viable, and potentially serious issue.

Question from Ana Maria de Samper, Principal, Colegio Santa Maria, Colombia:

What can be done about "observers" of cyberbullying? They don't actively do anything but they condone and perhaps encourage bullies.

Justin W. Patchin:

We try to empower bystanders to act on behalf of the victim and report the incident to an adult.

Question from Andrew Trotter:

Have student newspapers with Web sites been susceptible to use in cyberbullying? Should advisors and student editors be concerned, and if so, what should they do?

Justin W. Patchin:

I can't think of any example off the top of my head where this has happened – though it wouldn't surprise me if it did. Clearly it is the responsibility of teachers or administrators to monitor what is published in school newspapers especially because they are explicitly sanctioned by the school.

Question from Joanne Darrell Herbert, Senior School Counsellor, York House School:

Are you able to recommend books/workshops or overall ideas for student leaders wishing to tackle bullying at school?

Sameer Hinduja:

In our book, we cover how peer mentoring can bear fruit as younger students are more willing to listen to and receive from older students than from teachers/administrators/counselors sometimes. Many peer mentoring programs that have been developed for traditional bullying can be adapted to address cyberbullying. I would also encourage helping student leaders develop some sort of PSA campaign or other creative endeavor using multi-media or art to spread the word about cyberbullying across campuses and grade levels.

Question from Tricia Cummins, STLP Coordinator Fourth Street School:

What grades/ages are most affected by cyberbullying? And at what grade level does it usually begin?

Justin W. Patchin:

We see most evidence of cyberbullying in 7th and 8th grade (not surprisingly this is also a time when traditional bullying is common). We see a dramatic shift from 6th to 7th grade though have had examples of it occurring in elementary school…

Question from Jessica Raspa, Instructional Tech. Teacher Specialist, AACPS:

You wrote in your answer to Tom, "but they can also discipline students for off-campus expressions using a home computer that are in line with the exceptions noted above." What do you suggest discipline measures should be for different infractions?

Sameer Hinduja:

Great question. A continuum of sanctions should be used. The type of response should be proportionate to the weight of the offense and convey the extent of its gravity and severity (and go no further). The measure of an effective response is that the offender comes away knowing that the behavior is clearly inappropriate and will not be tolerated and that subsequent refusal to follow the rules will result in future disciplinary action. Sanctions should range from informal sit-downs...to parent conferences...to behavior plans...to prohibition from extracurricular activities...to suspension/expulsion or civil/criminal penalties. It should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis - and it all depends on the gravity of the offense. Finally, we are fans of disciplinary measures that are creative and capitalize on the teachable moment of using technology unwisely.

Question from Debra Bradley, Director of government Relations, NJ Principals and Supervisors Association:

I work for a professional association that represents school principals at all school levels. What specific strategies can you recommend to school principals generally in this area and what strategies should principals use when faced with a specific allegation of cyber bullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

First of all principals can convene an in-service or workshop to educate the staff at the school about cyberbullying. The principal needs to make it clear to the staff that these behaviors will not be tolerated and get involved in investigating if something is brought to their attention. If the principal simply tries to dismiss these behaviors that sends a strong message to students and staff alike that cyberbullying isn't a serious problem. So, principals should educate themselves about these issues and provide opportunities for the staff at their school to learn more about how to identify, prevent, and respond to cyberbullying.

Question from Kay Trinkle, Counselor, Thomas Jefferson HS, IL:

What policies around technology/cell phones/txting are schools enforcing that are proving to be effective? How are they enforcing?

Sameer Hinduja:

Some schools are completely banning use of cell phones during school hours. Some are allowing use immediately before and after the first and last bell of the day. Most are confiscating phones if they see them out when they are not supposed to be. What seems to be effective is instructing youth about the proper USE of cell phones and communications technologies, rather than reactive sanctions following misbehavior. That said, penalties need to be prescribed for violations and to deter others. The reality is that students are tethered to their cell phones and we simply need to clarify to them (in creative ways) that harassing text messages...and inappropriate pictures/video captured and shared...is unacceptable. We also need to remind them that "digital footprints" are largely available in these cases that can identify the source in concrete ways (so it is not just one kid's word against another).

Question from Roni Benson, co-director The Bully Frog Program:

Do you believe that more education on bullying/cyberbullying needs to be done in the elementary schools, emphasizing that behavior that would not be appropriate face to face, is not appropriate on the internet. As an educator and author of a book on childhood bullying, I believe that bullying is learned behavior. Bullies are cowards and can only feel good about who they are by making others feel badly. Will you be discussing cyberbullying and the rise in teen suicide? Thanks, Roni Benson

Justin W. Patchin:

We should certainly educate elementary-aged students about appropriate behavior. We might begin by focusing on responsible Internet use generally and gradually move into areas of what bad behavior is and why it is bad. With regard to cyberbullying and suicide, we talk about this in our book in a section on "cyberbullicide" and are currently working on a research paper examining this relationship. Here's a hint at the results: victims of cyberbullying have significantly greater suicidal ideation…

Question from Mike Donlin, Senior Program Consultant (aka Program Manager), Seattle Public Schools:

The legal questions are really important within a school context. Chapter 5 of your new book does a great job convering situations and case law. One point that I always make when talking to educators - esp. administrators - is: Check with your Legal Office. How does this work with other LEA educators?

Sameer Hinduja:

Usually they have legal staff on hand…but if they don't, I would check with the legal team at the state level. For example, here in Florida I work with the state Department of Education, and they have staff who can assist districts towards this end. With

cyberbullying being relatively new, seeking the counsel of many is a great idea rather than trying to figure out the best legal solution or strategy by yourself.

Question from Robin, President, Kinderguarded:

Do you believe there is a way to safely use the internet in school to teach students about the dangers of cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

Yes, depending on the grade level, a facilitator could show examples of cyberbullying and then discuss the incident with students so that they learn the effects and consequences of such behavior. This would probably require a smaller group, but I think it could be effective. I would say this would be a good strategy for upperclassmen and once they are trained to understand the effects, they could give presentations to younger students.

Question from Jenn DeFreitas Insight Schools:

What are the signs that a student is being cyber-bullied?

Sameer Hinduja:

I wish there were clear red flags to indicate when a child is being cyberbullied. There are, however, various clues that may indicate a problem meriting deeper inquiry. For example, they may be being cyberbullied if they: unexpectedly stop using the computer; appear nervous or jumpy when an instant message or email or text message appears; appear uneasy about going to school or outside in general; appear to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after using the computer or cell phone; avoid discussions about what they are doing on the computer; or become abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members.

Question from Ronni Mathews, Youth Advocate Northside School, Cool, California:

Are myspace pages really "private" when set as private?

Justin W. Patchin:

Yes and no. Being private means only those who the user accepts as friends can see the full profile. But unfortunately many adolescents are out to accumulate as many "friends" as possible and therefore are generally inclined to accept requests to be friends from people they may not know (or not know very well).

Question from Andrew Trotter:

Is one gender more susceptible to cyberbullying than the other?

Sameer Hinduja:

Our research has found that both boys and girls are equally as likely to have experienced cyberbullying, though the types of behaviors can be different. I should point out that there is some research that we are aware of that suggests girls are more likely to be involved – it really just depends on how cyberbullying is defined…

Question from Kim Mazauskas School District of Palm Beach County, Florida violence Prevention /Bullying Prevention Coordinator:

Our dept. of safe Schools has been working with Dr.'s Hinduja and Patchin for years now, and we are using their new book as the foundation for our cyberbullying prevention campaign. We are using this book as the primary reference guide on the topic of online harassment among youth and it has been a great resource to us as we develop district-wide trainings and our Professional Staff Development Component. I am fascinated by the relationship you present that finds a dirrect link between cyberbullying victimization and school climate. Can you elaborate on this issue further? Also can you talk about how important it is to access data from their own districts as this has helped me tremendously to influence new policy? sincerely, Kim Mazauskas

Justin W. Patchin:

In our research, we found that students who experienced cyberbullying (both those who were victims and those who admitted to cyberbullying others) perceived a poorer climate or culture at their school than those who had not experienced cyberbullying. School districts MUST cultivate an environment where students feel safe at school, enjoy going to school, and feel that teachers really care about them and want them to succeed. This is significantly linked to reduced incidence of victimization and offending. Secondly, schools cannot just go by media reports as to how big a problem cyberbullying is (or is not). They must establish a baseline in their own district as to the scope, frequency, extent, and contributing factors of cyberbullying among their students. As such, conducting survey research or focus groups towards this end is essential. Finally, districts (and the powers that be) appreciate hard numbers, and so requests for more resources to deal with issues (such as cyberbullying) displayed through actual, localized data should be received much more willingly. If hard numbers illustrating sizable victimization among the student body doesn't move the district to action, you've got a major problem.

Question from Russell A. Sabella, Ph.D., Professor, Florida Gulf Coast University:

First off, thank you for all your work. Your new book is incredible. My question is, if cell phones are the primary tool for cyberbullying, should we promote child-friendly cell phones among children (no video, no web, no IM ... only approved calls coming in or out)?

Sameer Hinduja:

Fabulous question. We are promoting special cell-phones for the elderly (in case of emergency)...we should definitely support restricted cell phones for youth. New technologies are evolving where GPS is helping adults keep tabs on youth via cell phones...we must marshall the technology in similar ways to combat cyberbullying. Already there is software on the market which alerts parents via text message if youth receive (on their computer) a harmful email or other instance of cyberbullying (based on cross-referencing a dictionary of cyberbullying-related terms within the software). Again, let's use technology to keep kids safe. Your suggestion is on point.

Question from Jan Arnold, Health Resource Teacher, MD:

How are schools collecting data on cyber-bullying? Are those violations being coded differently than others for administrative referals?

Justin W. Patchin:

This is a good question. My guess is that most schools are not actively collecting data on cyberbullying – except for the few cases that come to their attention. And I am not sure how they are being coded. When we speak to districts we encourage them to assess through a survey the extent to which cyberbullying is occurring at their school. They are often surprised at what they learn…

Question from Ana Maria de Samper, Principal, Colegio Santa Maria, Colombia:

Where can one find statistics, if there are any, on cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

Our web site has a lot of statistics on cyberbullying (www.cyberbullying.us)

Question from Caroline Overfelt, E-Learning Coord. Roanoke County Public Schools:

You mentioned that schools can impose consequences for home computer usage if it meets the qualifying information you have listed. How can you prove it meets those qualifying conditions?

Sameer Hinduja:

It is all about how well the school district collects a body of evidence to support their position (about substantial/material disruption of the learning environment, etc.), and how well they are able to articulate that position. One case comes to mind where the district stated that an instance of cyberbullying (perpetrated by a student against the principal) had disrupted delivery of curriculum over the school computer network and in the school computer labs...but upon appeals in court, were not able to support that contention with evidence/logs and substantive proof. The point to take away is to be meticulous in building your case.

Question from Joanne Darrell Herbert, Senior School Counsellor, York House School:

Are you able to recommend books/workshops or overall ideas for student leaders wishing to tackle bullying at school?

Justin W. Patchin:

I'm not aware of any books/workshops directed specifically at students, though I would think our book would be fine for this. We do talk about peer mentoring and offer suggestions for how students can be involved in educating about this issue.

Question from Jill DeVoe, Researcher, American Inst for Research, DC:

The description of your book says that you provide "Illustrations of what cyberbullying looks like." Can you elaborate and provide some examples?

Sameer Hinduja:

Yes, we describe dozens of real life examples of cyberbullying and provide a number of pictures of actual cyberbullying (that were anonymized). After you read the book, you will have a good sense of what cyberbullying looks like…

Question from Mike Donlin, Senior Program Consultant (aka Program Manager), Seattle Public Schools:

Thank you for the comments about younger and younger children as the "next big thing". We're getting more and more calls from elementary schools to talk to staff and parents of kids from pre-K and early elementary ages. Younger and younger kids have access to more and more. Are others experiencing this same phenomenon?

Justin W. Patchin:

We've been traveling in and out of our own states, and yes - absolutely - it seems that kids are embracing communications technology at an increasingly earlier age.

Question from Sarah White, Case Manager, NYS Missing Children Clearinghouse:

What are the recent statistics on cyberbullying?

Justin W. Patchin:

Depending on how you define cyberbullying and what population you are interested in, I would estimate that anywhere from 10-35% of adolescents have been victims of cyberbullying. And probably about that many would admit to cyberbullying others. You can find more specific statistics for middle-schoolers at our web site (www.cyberbullying.us).

Question from Elisabeth Hensley, Research Associate, MPR Associates, Inc:

In my work with upper-grade teens, I've heard some of them say that they know the cyber-environment is more hostile, but it's just "like that - it's part of the fun - everyone knows not to take it seriously." Obviously, as adults we know that it is serious - at least the consequences can be. Any thoughts about how to counteract this attitude?

Sameer Hinduja:

Some youth can definitely shrug it off, especially as they grow in the ability to positively cope with harassment, and develop their own self-identity that is less affected by peer perception. That said, many youth still struggle mightily (even those in upper-grades), and reveal experiencing school problems, family problems, depression, and suicidal ideation. We simply need to try to pique the consciences of adolescents through real-life stories and examples where online harassment has taken a very real toll outside of cyberspace. Obviously this shouldn't be done in a "Scared Straight"-type of way, but in a manner that conveys the gravity of cyberbullying and that some youth are definitely more vulnerable to these types of harms (and that the harms can be long-term).

Question from Carmen Torres, Human Development Coordinator, CEDI:

What strategies can teachers or parents use to teach children who are bullied to handle the situation?

Justin W. Patchin:

First, students should be taught how to temporarily deflect cyberbullying behaviors, by logging off the computer, changing screen names, or just ignoring it for the time being. We always recommend that victims keep all evidence of cyberbullying and perhaps even keep a journal describing the incidents. This can be useful evidence if the bullying continues and becomes more serious.

Question from Emily Brandi, President, Seaford Harbor PTA:

Our PTA has been looking for a presentor of this exact topic to come into our school and present to the parents. We are located on Long Island. Are you affiliated with any such group with the ability to make such a presentation?

Sameer Hinduja:

We give presentations like this all of the time – see our web site for more details and feel free to contact us with any questions.

Question from Peter Davies, Lower School Principal, Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ:

In trying to be proactive, what is best practice in educating students about cyber bullying before they have done it or it has happened to them? At what age or grade should we begin the process?

Justin W. Patchin:

We suggest that educators (and parents) start very early in educating about these issues. When they are introduced to a computer for the first time, they need to learn how to use it responsibly. Basically, you need to assess the maturity of your students and adjust your curriculum accordingly. But in general you can start very early. That said, we are lagging behind in developing and evaluating cyberbullying prevention curriculum. This is certainly something we need to do!

Question from Jennifer Michaelis, law student, University of Alabama:

Do you have any specific examples of cases where cyberbullying has been criminally prosecuted (even if unsuccessfully)? What about civilly -- or are the laws still too new?

Sameer Hinduja:

We have talked to and counseled with some attorneys as it relates to cyberbullying among adults...but we haven't seen any cases where student vs. student cyberbullying has been dealt with civilly or criminally. I am sure it is inevitable....

Question from Laura Rivera, High School Counselor, St. Michael's School, D.R.:

What advice would you give to the parents of the victim/bully in terms of network security, monitoring, and consequences?

Justin W. Patchin:

Parents need to be up front with their children with regard to what the rules are. We have an Internet Use Contract on our web site that can be used for this (www.cyberbullying.us). If children violate the terms of this contract, they need to know what the consequences are.

Question from Mrs. Faheem, Mother of 15 year-old male High School Student:

What specifically should a parent do when our child becomes a victim of cyberbulling? Last school year, my son was threatened on both MySpace and FaceBook. (One boy copied and pasted his threat on both sites.) I told the parents I could printout the threats and take them to law enforcement and let them deal with it. Is this the correct procedure? Please advise. Thank you...

Sameer Hinduja:

The step you took was appropriate. Is the perpetrator known to your son and does s/he go to your son's school? If your student feels threatened and feels concern about going to school, please let the school district know so that they can move to action as well.

Question from Paula New Berlin Public Schools:

What is the law regarding Cyberbullying?

Sameer Hinduja:

The law regarding cyberbullying is ever evolving. Please see our fact sheets at www.cyberbullying.us/resources.php - we'll continue to update these are new developments become known to us.

Question from Adam Collins, School Psychology Doctoral Student, The University of Nebraska-Lincoln,:

Where do believe the future of cyberbullying research needs to be directed? What aspects or areas need the most attention?

Justin W. Patchin:

At this point it is important to identify the causes, correlates, and consequences of cyberbullying victimization and offending. More importantly, though, I think it is necessary to identify curriculum that is effective at preventing and/or models of response that are successful. So we need more evaluation research…

Question from Judy Wearne, Counselor, Lakeside Jr. High, Clay County School District, Fl:

The investigation of cyberbullying is very time consuming as it can sometimes involve numerous students. At what point is this an administraion/law enforcement issue rather than guidance counselor.

Sameer Hinduja:

I agree with you that investigations are very time consuming. Law enforcement should be involved where there are threats to personal safety, explicit images, coercion, cyberstalking, and criminal invasions of privacy. Otherwise, administrators should be the ones who step in (when the school or other students are somehow implicated in the situation) to address the matter formally or informally.

Andrew Trotter (Moderator):

We will wrap up this chat, having extended it by 15 min. Many thanks to our experts Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin for their thorough answers to your questions. You are

invited to continue talking about cyberbullying at a discussion forum at
http://tinyurl.com/43eo5j,