Terrible tEXt

Overview

Students watch the NSTeens video "Terrible tEXt" and discuss different kinds of cyberbullying. In groups, they read about real-life cyberbullying cases and give group presentations explaining the cases to the class. After this activity, students will have a better understanding of cyberbullying, including its effects and possible consequences.

Materials / Preparation

- Computer lab or computer hooked up to an LCD projector
- Video - "Terrible tEXt"
- Attachment 1 - "Kinds of Cyberbullying"
- Attachment 2 - "Real-life Cyberbullying Cases"
- Attachment 3 - "Group Presentation Guidelines"
- Attachment 4 - Follow-up worksheet
- Pens or pencils

45-50 minutes

Introduction

Prompt students with discussion questions: *What is cyberbullying? What are some of the ways that kids can be cyberbullied? Has someone ever sent you a mean e-mail, text, or IM? Have you ever sent someone else a mean e-mail, text, or IM? What can you do if you are the victim of cyberbullying?*

Activity

Watch the "Terrible tEXt" video. Review Keyan's advice to Lolo about how to deal with a cyberbully: never respond to a cyberbully, save the messages, and tell a trusted adult if it doesn't stop or if you feel threatened in any way. Introduce students to the six different kinds of cyberbullying (see attachment 1; each student should have their own copy). Ask them if they have experienced any of these forms of cyberbullying.

Divide students into groups; give each group a copy of the real-life cyberbullying cases (see attachment 2) and the group presentation guidelines (see attachment 3). Assign each group one of the real-life cases and have them prepare their presentations by answering the questions on attachment 3. Each student should be responsible for at least one of the questions during the presentation.

Follow-Up

Have students research their school's cyberbullying policy and answer the questions on attachment 4 as homework. Discuss the students' findings in class.

KINDS OF CYBERBULLYING

>> FLAMING & TROLLING <<

sending or posting mean messages intended to "inflame" the emotions of others

>> IDENTITY THEFT/ IMPERSONATION <<

stealing someone's password and taking over their online accounts to send or post incriminating or humiliating pictures, videos, or information

>> HAPPY-SLAPPING <<

recording someone being harassed or physically bullied, then posting the video online for everyone to see

>> PHOTOSHOPPING <<

altering digital images so that the main subject is placed in a compromising or embarrassing situation

>> PHYSICAL THREATS <<

sending messages that involve threats to a person's physical safety

>> RUMOR SPREADING <<

spreading gossip through e-mail, text messaging, or social networking sites

Hinduja, S., Patchin J. *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2009.

REAL-LIFE CYBERBULLYING CASES

CASE #1 – At the age of 13, Ryan committed suicide after a lengthy battle with bullies at school and online. Ryan was constantly teased at school because he was developmentally slow. In seventh grade he had problems with a bully, who later pretended to be his friend and then revealed personal information about Ryan and spread rumors online. During the summer before he started eighth grade, Ryan received frequent e-mails and IMs from classmates making fun of him because of the rumor the bully had started. Ryan had a crush on one girl who pretended to like him; then she sent his personal e-mails to her friends so they could laugh at him. While his parents knew of the bullying at school, Ryan never told them about the cyberbullying. He kept it to himself and went into a deep depression. Just after he started eighth grade, Ryan committed suicide.

CASE #2 – Teenager David was always teased and bullied in school. His home was a safe haven away from these bullies, until they took their bullying online. David's classmates set up a website called "Welcome to the Page that Makes Fun of David K******." They posted mean comments about him and his family, and made up rumors about him. David also received cruel e-mails making fun of him. David no longer felt safe at home and he dreaded having to go online. He told his parents, who went to the school, the police, and the Internet Service Provider (ISP) that hosted the website. Eventually, the website was removed, but David decided to finish school at home so he could get away from the bullies.

CASE #3 – Kylie was in eighth grade when two of her classmates started a website called "Kill Kylie Incorporated." On this website, the cyberbullies posted degrading comments and made threats of physical harm. Another cyberbully also created an IM screen name very similar to Kylie's and sent people messages that made Kylie look bad. Kylie was devastated; she told her parents and the police. After an investigation, the police filed charges against the cyberbullies for the death threats. In the end, Kylie transferred to another school.

CASE #4 – Joanne was a freshman in high school when she had a fight with one of her friends at a sleepover. After that, she received e-mails that threatened her life. The cyberbully also constantly left rude and threatening messages on her blog. This cyberbullying lasted for three months. Joanne hated going on her computer and feared what she might find when logging on to the Internet. She told her parents and her school about the cyberbullying. The cyberbully finally stopped after the school got involved.

CASE #5 – Students from a group of private schools decided to hold a vote on a free virtual voting website. They logged on to this site to list and rank 150 girls in their schools to decide who was the most sexually active. The girls' full names were used, and voters posted vicious comments, explicit stories, and rumors of what the girls had done. Parents and teachers found out about the vote and tried to get the website to take it down. That didn't work; but the vote eventually came down when a District Attorney contacted the website about it.

REAL-LIFE CYBERBULLYING CASES

CASE #6 – 12-year-old Angel was jumped after school by a classmate. Then, six other girls joined the fight and punched and kicked her. The entire fight was caught on tape by other students. Two days later, the video was posted on YouTube. Her classmates left comments below the video, including one that said "They should have killed Angel." Angel's school investigated the fight and punished the students involved. Angel's mother also filed a report with the police department.

CASE #7 – Amy was teased at school because she was taller than the other kids, so she was happy to find a website where she could chat with others about art. One day, Amy got into a fight with another girl on the website because of an unanswered e-mail. Although Amy wanted to make up, the other girl ignored her and began bullying her online. A group of girls from the site sent Amy nasty e-mails. They also signed onto the site using Amy's name and sent other members mean and threatening messages. Amy was blamed for these messages. First she got upset and later she went into a depression. Amy's mother asked her to stop going to the website, but Amy still had friends there and so kept logging on. Finally, Amy took a break from the website; when she went back to it the bullies left her alone.

CASE #8 – Amanda was the new girl in an eighth grade class. One day, a group of girls stole her pencil case filled with makeup. Amanda told on them, and she came home to constant IMs calling her a tattletale and a liar. Amanda was upset and sent an IM back telling them "You stole my stuff!" The cyberbullies kept sending IMs calling Amanda awful names. Later that night when Amanda left the house, she received 50 IMs on her cell phone from the cyberbullies. Amanda never spoke to the girls again and they were never punished for their cyberbullying.

CASE #9 – 17-year-old Sam was "mosh" dancing at a concert when Alex, someone she didn't know, snapped a photo. Alex posted the photo online and others began photoshopping Sam's image in humiliating and obscene ways, calling her "moshzilla." The photos spread quickly online and someone even started a website called moshzilla.com to collect all the pictures. Even though Sam thought some of the pictures were funny, she felt humiliated. At the request of Sam and her parents, the website was taken down, but the moshzilla photos can still be found online today.

CASE #10 – Teenager Julianne was bullied in school by a group of girls in her class. She thought of her bedroom as a refuge from the bullies, until they started taunting her online. The girls found her profile on a social networking site and began posting hurtful messages. They called her names and threatened her. Later, they found out what her IM screen name was and started talking to her. Julianne thought it was one of her friends, until they started calling her names. They told her that they were going to hurt her at school the next day. Julianne was frightened, so she printed the conversation and showed it to her father. Together, they went to the police and filed harassment orders to help keep Julianne safe.

GROUP PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Read your group's real-life cyberbullying case and prepare a presentation by answering the questions below. Each student should be responsible for at least one of the questions during the presentation so that everyone participates. Your presentation should be no more than 5 minutes long.

1. Summarize your real-life cyberbullying case for the class.

2. What kind of cyberbullying was it? (Hint: there may be more than one kind)

3. How did being cyberbullied make the victim feel? What are the physical, social, and emotional effects of this kind of cyberbullying?

4. Did the victim follow the rules for dealing with cyberbullies (ignore them, save the messages, and tell a trusted adult)? What could they have done differently?

5. What steps, if any, were taken by trusted adults (parents, guardians, school officials, or law- enforcement) to stop the cyberbullying? Were they effective?

6. Were there consequences for the cyberbully/bullies? If not, what do you think should have happened to them?

Watch videos and play games at NSTeens.org

WHAT DOES YOUR SCHOOL DO
TO HELP PREVENT CYBERBULLYING?

Research your school's cyberbullying policy and write a paragraph that answers the following questions:

Does your school have a cyberbullying policy?

- **If so**, what does it include? What are possible consequences for the cyberbully? What kind of support is available for the victim? Would you add or change anything about the current policy? Consider writing to the school board with your suggestions.

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- **If not**, is your school considering adopting a cyberbullying policy? Why should they implement a cyberbullying policy? What would you include in the policy? Consider writing a letter to the school board explaining the importance of having a cyberbullying policy.

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Visit your school's website, read through the Policies and Procedures Handbook, or talk to your teachers, principals, or guidance counselors to find the answers to these questions. Be confident in talking to them about what you've learned and telling them what you think. Remember, if you keep quiet, things definitely won't change!