CYBERBULLYING: IT WILL TAKE A VILLAGE TO PREVENT IT
How Technology Can Help Take the Bite Out of Bullies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
A recent survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates certain youth violence behaviors are decreasing. In 2017, 6 percent of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon at school; compared with 7.8 percent a decade earlier. However, it’s not all encouraging as schoolyard violence has shifted to cyber space.

Cyberbullying is a serious global public health concern. Paired with mental illness and gun access, a bullied victim can turn violent as witnessed by recent mass school shootings. Finding ways to reduce cyberbullying requires action on many fronts.

In this paper, we’ll look at the school-age cyberbullying crisis and learn why a collective effort is needed from parents, school districts, mental health specialists, local government, and the children. We’ll also take a look at a technology solution that can help prevent cyberbullying acts, in real time.

INTERNET IS FRONT AND CENTER IN CLASSROOMS
The popularity of digital education has broadened the way children learn and teachers instruct. Whiteboards and books are now supplemented by computers, wireless networks, and the internet. Online learning exposes students to a wealth of information and teachers use internet resources for lesson planning and interactive and personalized instruction.

Online options such as email, text, and social media apps have improved collaboration and communication. The need to stay connected by young people is clear in this video. However, an open internet is also a conduit for hacking and abuse. Cyberbullies use internet-based platforms to torment others, even when attending school.

- Fifty-nine percent of U.S. teens have been bullied or harassed online.
- Girls (40.6%) are more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than boys (28.8%). Girls dominate social media, while boys tend to play videogames.
- Only 40-50 percent of cyberbullying targets know the identity of the perpetrator.
- Parents in India and Brazil claim the highest incidence of cyberbullying with their child; Russia and Japan the lowest.

2 “A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyberbullying,” by Monica Anderson, Pew Research Center, September 27, 2018
3 Cyberbullying Research Center, 2015
4 “Bullying statistics,” National Bullying Prevention Center, updated December 27, 2017
5 “Cyberbullying facts and statistics for 2016-2018,” by Sam Cook, Comparitech, November 12, 2018
CYBERBULLIES TAKE THEIR SEATS

Unlike schoolyard brawlers, identifying online bullies is difficult. They come in all shapes, sizes, and they’re found on either end of the social spectrum. Popular kids might bully to show off and reinforce their popularity or power. The less socially successful may see bullying as a way to cope or to try and fit in.

What cyberbullies do share is a lack of empathy needed to know their threats, bantering, and harassment can cause victims long-term emotional damage. Young people subjected to cyberbullying suffer more from depression than non-victims and they’re at least twice as likely to self-harm and to attempt suicide. Young victims are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, skip school, lose self-esteem, and develop health problems. Online bullying is hard to switch off. Victims can be tormented 24/7, at school and at home, and witnessed by hundreds of people.

Cyberbullied teens do try and counter the bullying: They ask a bully to stop, block communication, talk to friends, go offline, or simply do nothing. However, almost a third of victims consider revenge. Without professional intervention, the war of words can escalate to physical violence and tragedy.

CAN TECHNOLOGY HELP VICTIMS?

For years, schools have used URL filtering to control what internet websites can be accessed on school networks. This has allowed districts to establish safe computing policies, specifying which websites to allow, block, or limit access. Schools can screen out unsuitable language.

Check Point offers similar capabilities for 7,800 internet applications, with both web site and application access managed from one common rule-base, one management console, and one reporting system. But, the filtering of unwanted content alone doesn’t fully address cyberbullying.

CHECK POINT SANDBLAST FOR EDUCATION: HOW ANTI-BULLYING WORKS

Cell phone social media apps are often used to cyberbully, however, school-issued laptops and tablets can also be used. To improve safety with student’s online experiences using Chromebook laptops, Check Point introduced SandBlast for Education. This solution shields learners from online abuses such as inappropriate content, phishing exploits, and cyberbullying. A special anti-bullying capability prevents online bullying in chats, instant messaging, and social network sites, including Instagram and Facebook.

7 “Can this technology put an end to bullying?” by Sarah Griffiths, BBC, February 11, 2019
SandBlast for Education allows you to monitor, prevent, and alert for profanity usage.

Figure 1. Blacklisted words are censored and blacked out

Figure 2. Blocking inappropriate websites

Figure 3 shows how you can customize the anti-bullying feature by blacklisting keywords, enforcing web site categories, and setting up Detect/Alert/Block actions.

Activate anti-bullying by inserting checks in the content filtering settings as seen below:

Figure 3. Customize by blacklisting words

Figure 4. Easy to activate Anti-Bullying
In addition, a safe browsing feature allows students to search safely in Google, Yahoo, and Bing search engines and with YouTube to filter out disturbing content and images. The graphic below shows you can turn on the safe search capability by checking a few boxes.

![Content Filtering Settings](image)

*Figure 5. Check the boxes to enforce safe searches*

**IN CONCLUSION**

Cyberthreats targeting school-age children are a clear and present danger. Cyberbullying is not child’s play as it can give rise to violent behavior. It will not begin to be eradicated without the active participation of students, parents, teachers, school districts, and community experts.

New technologies like SandBlast for Education have begun to identify and remove the words and actions used by cyberbullies on social media apps, text, and email. Such innovations will help school district IT administrators move forward to give children a safer place to learn and thrive, free of cyberbullying.

For more information on SandBlast for Education, visit [https://www.checkpoint.com/solutions/education/](https://www.checkpoint.com/solutions/education/)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON CYBERBULLYING**

“What is Cyberbullying,” at [Stopbullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov)

“Bullying and Cyberbullying,” [HelpGuide](https://www.helpguide.org/)

“Bullying Statistics,” [National Bullying Prevention Center](https://www.stopbullying.gov)

“Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, & Response,” by S. Hinduja and J. Patchin, Cyberbullying Research Center, 2019

“Education,” [International Bullying Prevention Association](https://www.ibpa.org/)

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