

## Internet Safety and Protection Flip Chart

The Internet Safety and Protection Flip Chart is a convenient reference tool for teachers and parents as they explore the appropriate uses of the information superhighway with students. Divided into fourteen tabbed sections for easy access, the flip chart provides an overview of the Internet. The information contained in the flip chart empowers teachers and parents to make wise decisions about student use of the Internet. In addition, it details the benefits and risks of students using the Internet and provides links to resources for further information.

Although the Internet has many benefits, the dangers to which it may expose students have become more pervasive. Child predators and cyber bullies are two such threats. The *Internet Safety and Protection Flip Chart* explains steps that students and their parents should take to minimize the threat of these dangers.

Bullying is not a new issue. A strong interest in bullying began in Scandinavia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Efforts soon emerged to stop bullying in Scandinavia led by the research of Dan Olweus, a noted authority in the field of bullying. In the 1980s, bullying received much media coverage and became a focus for research. This notoriety of bullying was due to a few incidents of tragic deaths of boys in Norway. Further study of the deaths was shown to directly relate to bullying. The suicides followed persistent bullying by some of their peers. According to national and international studies, data shows a victim of bullying is between 9% and 15% of any student population (Horowitz, Vessey, Carlson, Bradley, Montoya, McCullough, and David, 2004; Malecki, 2003; Olweus, 1993).

"Recent research in the United States and abroad has documented that bullying is a common and potentially damaging form of violence among children" (Limber, Nation, 1998). Sylvia Rimm, the Director of the Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, a clinical professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, and the author of books on parenting, has worked with and studied numerous children. Rimm (2000) noted one constant among the angry children who displayed violent behavior: they all had been victims of bullies.

"Today, bullying is rightfully being recognized for what it is: an abusive behavior that often leads to greater and prolonged violence," state June Arnette and Marjorie Walsleben (1998) in the OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin, *Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools*. "Both bullies and their victims need help in learning new ways to get along in school."

Dan Olweus, a psychology professor at University of Bergen Norway, is credited as a leading expert on bullies and their victims. Olweus (1993) stated that bullying affects the social climate and the learning environment of the classroom. His research discovered that students in schools or classrooms with serious bullying problems reported feeling unsafe and dissatisfied with school. Olweus emphasized that bullying is not a problem that will go away without adult intervention.

Bullying is harmful to the health and academic progress of students. Actions taken by the school and parents can significantly reduce the occurrence of bullying, Dr. Ken Rigby (2000), a Professor at University of South Australia noted. Both those who bully and those who are victims of bullying could suffer physical and mental health problems. As a result, the educational progress could be limited and life contributions could be negatively affected. Bullying can have negative consequences on the overall school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear.

A study supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2001) reported that bullying is widespread with 16 percent of school children sharing that other students bullied them. After a survey of 15,686 students in grades 6-10 in public and private schools within the United States, Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt (2001) purported that 29.9 % of the sample had been involved in bullying, 13% of the students acknowledged they were bullies, 10.6% reported being victims, and 6.3 % admitted being both a bully and a victim.

Bullying has become a serious public health issue as identified in the Educational Forum on Adolescent Health hosted by the American Medical Association in May 2002. Physicians, psychologists, health educators, and other professionals in attendance met to focus on bullying and how to address this problem. Research presented at the forum found that bullying occurs predominantly on school grounds (Fleming and Towey, 2002). Wessler (2003) reported that some students plan indirect or out of the way travel routes to various locations to maintain safety. On the other hand, many victims will not report any incidences of bullying (Shakeshaft, Mandel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, and Barber, 1997). Thus, schools have a responsibility to stop bullying and create a safe learning environment. Initiatives which include parents and community members greatly enhance preventative bullying efforts. Limber (2003) advocates that schools involve these audiences to address the bullying problem.

As Internet access and usage become more pervasive in schools and homes, it is important that children become wise consumers of the information they find on the Internet. Students must be taught to think critically about information they find, to analyze the sources for reliability and veracity, and to evaluate different or conflicting information.

Critical thinking is cited as an important issue in education today. Attention is focused on good thinking as an important element of life success (Huitt, 1998; Thomas and Smoot, 1994). "Perhaps most importantly in today's information age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important to tomorrow's workers and citizens as the ability to learn and make sense of new information" (Gough, 1991).

The ability to engage in careful, reflective thought is viewed in education as paramount. Teaching students to become skilled thinkers is a goal of education. Students must be able to acquire and process information since the world is changing so quickly. Some studies purport that students exhibit an insufficient level of skill in critical or creative thinking. In his review of research on critical thinking, Norris (1985) surmised that students' critical thinking abilities are not widespread. Most students do not score well on tests that measure ability to recognize assumptions, evaluate controversy, and scrutinize inferences.

Thus, students' performances on measures of higher-order thinking ability reveal a critical need for students to develop the skills and attitudes of effective thinking. Furthermore, another reason that supports the need for thinking skills instruction is the fact that educators appear to be in general agreement that it is possible to increase students' creative and critical thinking capacities through instruction and practice. Presseisen (1986) asserts that the basic premise is students can learn to think better if schools teach them how to think. Adu-Febiri (2002) agrees that thinking can be learned. According to Sousa (2006), students are not actually taught to think because children are born with the brain organizational structure that originates thinking. As educators, students can be assisted in organizing the content of their thinking to facilitate complex reasoning. Sousa supports

Bloom's Taxonomy as an organizational structure that is compatible with the manner in which the brain processes information to promote comprehension.

Research indicates that thinking skills instruction makes a positive difference in the achievement levels of students. Studies that reflect achievement over time show that learning gains can be accelerated. These results indicate that the teaching of thinking skills can enhance the academic achievement of participating students (Bass and Perkins, 1984; Bransford, 1986; Freseman, 1990; Matthews, 1989; Nickerson, 1984).

Solving problems in the real world and making worthwhile decisions is valued in our rapidly changing environment today. Paul (1985) points out that "thinking is not driven by answers but by questions." The driving forces in the thinking process are the questions. When a student needs to think through an idea or issue or to rethink anything, questions must be asked to stimulate thought. When answers are given, sometimes thinking stops completely. When an answer generates another question then thought continues. Paul ascertains that students who ask quality questions are really thinking and learning.

The prevailing research and literature emphatically indicate that schools have a responsibility to address the issue of bullying effectively. Schools must ensure that students in their care are safe, healthy, and can achieve. Furthermore, schools must address critical thinking as a lifelong skill that all students must acquire. As former educators, the Mentoring Minds' team recognized the need for resources that would contribute to a school's preventative efforts toward bullying. The Product Development Team at Mentoring Minds reviewed available literature, visited with administrators/teachers/students/parents, and drew upon the team's wealth of educational experiences to develop useful educational tools. The *Internet Safety and Protection Flip Chart* assists the school community in collectively making informed judgments about how to proceed in addressing the serious problem of bullying and other safety issues when using the Internet.

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