Curbing Cyberbullying Starts with Empathy

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Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place specifically through digital media. It has really done a lot to prove the old adage, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" is not true. Words do hurt. With the addition of digital media to make sure they last and follow us everywhere, the consequences can be deadly.

The thing I have seen consistently in reaserach, this week's materials, and my own experience has been to start with empathy. Ansary, Elias, Greene, and Green (2015) start off with discussing that the school needs to first focus on a positive school climate and develop the social-emotional well-being of all of the students. This is something that we are actively working on in my school and the district. It is something that we are working on with the faculty, the learners, and the parents. We are making it a community-wide endeavor.

The things we are doing as a district fall right in line with the suggestions made by Hinduja and Patchin (2015). We have had things like tip-lines and programs to raise awareness before. Now, we are taking even stronger approaches to work with everyone. The main thing we are doing is building the empathy of everyone in the community. Along with that, we aer working hard to instill the ethics of digital citinzenship within the context of citizenship as well. Throughout the whole school, these values are everywhere. We aer moving from it being a top-down, lecture situation. We are working to make it a part of the culture.

In our community, we have seen the effects that cyberbullying can have. On the surface, our students are generally nice and well-mannered. Unfortunately, our school is like most others and has mor than its share of cyberbullying problems (Cyberbullying statistics, n.d.). Just like other digital citizenship problems, it wasn't caused by new technology. It was made possible through our own inaction, not staying up to date on how these technologies work, and using the

convience that they bring to think that children were learning how to be safe on them through using them. As we've seen, that isn't the case.

Changing the course of cyberbullying is something that will require a lot of work and dedication by everyone. We can't just wish it away or put up a poster and hope it stops. The solution lies in hard work by everyone and creating common understandings between us. From what I've read and seen, cyberbullying is not the root of the problem or the cause. It is a symptom of larger problems that we need to address.

References

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