



## Using Technology to Combat Bullying in Schools: Exploring an Innovative Solution

### Executive Summary

As we all know, bullying is a common problem in modern schools, both inside and outside of the school building. More than one out of every five (20.8%) students report being bullied each year, which makes bullying the most common form of violence amongst children under the age of 18 (NCES, 2016). Bullying behavior was once considered normal for kids and was not treated seriously. Now, however, teasing and bullying are seen as serious issues that can cause emotional and psychological damage to victims, perpetrators, and bystanders (CDC, 2015). Both boys and girls bully others, although generally in different ways. Boys tend to be more physical, whereas girls tend to engage in emotional and psychological bullying.

Many schools now have anti-bullying policies in place that address bullying specifically. However, addressing this problem must go way beyond a small section of a school handbook. Just as teachers and other school employees are the front line of defense in detecting and preventing child abuse, they serve as the eyes and ears of bullying awareness. All school personnel are responsible for keeping abusive language and behavior out of the classroom and the school culture. Talking openly about the issue of bullying is perhaps the most robust way that educators can prevent it from happening by making victims feel less isolated in their struggle (Evans, Fraser & Cotter, 2014).

For their part, schools must provide their educators with the strategies and resources that they need to counteract bullying in its many incarnations (Evans, Fraser & Cotter, 2014). To accomplish this, schools must be aware of the latest research and innovations in bullying prevention. The purpose of this whitepaper is to discuss the many ways in which research-based education technologies such as NetSupport DNA can assist schools in preventing bullying events before they start and responding to bullying events that become fully realized.





## What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as aggressive, calculated actions perpetrated by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend themselves. Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual in nature (Smith, 2014).

- **Physical bullying** includes punching, pushing, hair pulling, beating, biting, choking, kicking, and damaging the victim's property.
- **Verbal bullying** includes unwanted name calling, gossip, and teasing.
- **Emotional bullying** includes ostracizing; frightening; defaming; embarrassing; blackmailing; the grading or assessment of individual features such as physical limitations, height, weight, ethnicity, race or perceived sexual orientation; peer pressuring, isolating, etc.
- **Sexual bullying** includes many of the items listed above as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual innuendos or comments, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and unwanted touching.
- **Cyberbullying** involves bullying through the use of electronic media and devices, such as e-mail, text messages, social media, and/or other Internet-based platforms.

Bullying involves an imbalanced relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The bully gains power, while victim loses power (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Because of this, it is hard for the victim to deal with the problem. An imbalance of power can be created from physical strength, social status, etc. Power can also be gained as a result of understanding a person's perceived weaknesses (e.g., appearance, disability, home life, personal characteristics) and using this knowledge against them.

## How does bullying impact students?

We as adults have to stop telling kids that bullying is a harmless part of growing up.

In reality, bullying is extremely hard for the victims (CDC, 2016). Its immediate effect is lowering a child's academic achievement and enjoyment of school. Kids who are bullied report being unable to focus, physical ailments, mental health impacts such as anxiety and depression, and low self-esteem. Feeling powerless and helpless to stop the harassment can lead to long-term psychological damage (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

Bullies are also negatively impacted by bullying. Researchers have found that some children who repeatedly bully others have mental health issues and exhibit criminal and antisocial behavior later on in life (CDC, 2015). This does not mean that bullying results in criminality in adulthood, but bullying is a signal that something is not right.



Children who are bystanders of bullying are not immune to its effects. They may feel distressed and anxious about seeing something that they know is wrong but feel powerless to stop it from occurring. They may be concerned about their own safety or possible loss of social stature. Also, they may be afraid of becoming bullied themselves (CDC, 2015).

The school years are a time when you are just figuring out how to be in relationships. The internet adds another level of complexity to this experience. While the online environment can be a great way to develop relationships, it can also destroy relationships. Students don't seem to understand that there is actually another person on the other side of that keyboard (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016). Another person that has feelings just like they do. Bullying is unacceptable in the real world and online and can have devastating consequences in both environments. We need to teach young people always to ask themselves if what they are posting might hurt someone.





## Conclusion

School should be an environment where students feel safe and protected and where they can expect to be treated with respect. Unfortunately, the reality is that a large number of students are the victims of bullying events that can result in severe, long-term academic, physical, and emotional consequences. It is disheartening to know that school personnel often trivialize or underestimate the extent of bullying and the harm it can cause. In many cases, harassment is ignored or tolerated. When educators do not intervene, some victims take matters into their own hands, often with deadly results.

In a perfect society, issues such as bullying would be nonexistent. As education professionals, we have to live in the real world, where harassment continues to be a significant problem in classrooms throughout the globe. However, as products like NetSupport DNA demonstrate, the purposeful use of technology can be used to prevent bullying events and respond to those events that become fully realized. Educators can breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that they can protect their students from being bullies. Students can also exhale, knowing that NetSupport is keeping them safe.



## References

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