



EAB

# Preventing and Addressing Cyberbullying

---

District Leadership Forum

# District Leadership Forum

**Juliana Parra**

*Research Associate*

**Michelle Berger**

*Research Manager*

## Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

### **IMPORTANT: Please read the following.**

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its partners. Each partner acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each partner agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1) Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Key Observations .....	4
<b>2) Preventing Cyberbullying</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Policies.....	5
SEL and Digital Citizenship.....	7
Wraparound Programming .....	11
<b>3) Addressing Incidents</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Identification.....	15
Multi-Tiered Remediation.....	17
<b>5) Research Methodology</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Project Challenges .....	21
Project Sources .....	21
Research Parameters .....	22

# 1) Executive Summary

---

## Key Observations

**Implement social emotional learning (SEL) initiatives and digital citizenship instruction to prevent cyberbullying.** Teachers at **District B, District C,** and **District D** frame SEL discussions and activities around the [CASEL](#) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) model and focus on how to practice the five competencies—self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness offline. Digital citizenship instruction reinforces these competencies, emphasizing the importance of interacting respectfully and responsibly in virtual environments. Administrators at these three profiled districts report that combining these two initiatives both prevents students from harming each other online and equips students to handle cyberbullying incidents responsibly, thus promoting a positive school culture. To ease the implementation of these two initiatives, teachers at **District B** and **District C** use lesson plans and training modules from a vendor—[Common Sense](#).

**Form extracurricular programs that create opportunities for peer-to-peer trainings on cyberbullying prevention.** To maximize student understanding and engagement in prevention strategies, administrators at **District A, District C,** and **District E** operate extracurricular programs that educate and empower students to combat cyberbullying together. While each program operates differently, all three of their mission statements center around fostering a safe, supportive, and positive school culture where students feel a sense of belonging and part of a community. Contacts at these profiled districts report that creating peer-to-peer training programs promotes student leadership and autonomy in curbing cyberbullying and similar social issues affecting students.

**In standardized mental health check-ins, identify students in need of support and determine if cyberbullying contributed to their distress.** Twice a month, teachers at **District D** gather responses via an online form that asks students how they feel that day. If students indicate feeling unhappy, teachers connect with them or refer them to school counselors. If cyberbullying caused the student's distress, these check-ins allow teachers to learn of those cyberbullying incidents. Further, the two-week interval between the check-ins grants teachers time to intervene as needed before collecting a new set of data.

**Apply multi-tiered remediation strategies that focus on preventing future cyberbullying incidents instead of relying on punitive or exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension).** To effectively respond to cyberbullying incidents, administrators should implement tiered remediation strategies that promote student accountability and community building. Contacts at **District B, District C, District D,** and **District E** report a successful response to cyberbullying incidents focuses on corrective behavior for both the target(s) and aggressor(s) to uncover the underlying intent behind the actions, address the emotional and mental impact, and prevent repetition. Multi-tiered systems allow administrators to focus on the needs of each student involved and issue an individualized course of action that prevents repetition.

## 2) Preventing Cyberbullying

### Policies

#### Create a Cyberbullying Policy that Establishes the Organizing Principles for Anti-Cyberbullying Initiatives

According to research<sup>1</sup> on effective district policies addressing cyberbullying, administrators must address the following components—*definition, communication plan, training and preventative education, investigation and response procedures, and counseling referrals for the students involved in the incident and their families*. All five profiled districts in this report, **District A**, **District B**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** include a definition of cyberbullying within their district bullying guidelines and discipline policies.



#### What is Cyberbullying?

StopBullying.Gov, a federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, defines cyberbullying as bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content.<sup>2</sup> Cyberbullying also includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.<sup>3</sup>

Administrators at all profiled districts use a version of this definition to introduce the processes in place at their districts to combat this issue. For example, **District B** states cyberbullying includes the transmission of harassing communications, direct threats, or harmful texts, sounds, or images on the internet, social media, or other technologies using any wireless communication device.<sup>4</sup>

All profiled districts' cyberbullying policies contain procedures that align with these recommended components. Administrators publish these procedures to the district website to communicate their cyberbullying initiatives and policies to the district community. By providing the language and protocol to address cyberbullying incidents in district policies, administrators clearly define how the outlined parameters function to maintain a safe and supportive school environment.






1) "Preventing and Addressing Cyberbullying through Equitable State and Local Policies." *Intercultural Development Research Association*. <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/preventing-addressing-cyberbullying-equitable-state-local-policies/>

2) "What Is Cyberbullying?" stopcyberbullying.gov. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>

3) Ibid.

4) State School Board of Education. *Bullying*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

## Components of Cyberbullying Policies at Profiled Districts

Component	Description	Example
<p><b>Definition of Cyberbullying</b></p> 	<p><i>The policy uses cyberbullying research and examples of the harmful effects of cyberbullying on students to define the term.</i></p>	<p>At <b>District E</b>, cyberbullying includes repetitive harassment or intimidation that causes a student to fear for his/ her physical safety, thus affecting his/her ability to perform academically and attend daily classes.</p>
<p><b>Communication Plan</b></p> 	<p><i>The policy includes processes for notifying students, family members, and school staff of the policy.</i></p>	<p>Administrators at <b>District A</b> send email notifications to community members to invite them to cyberbullying prevention events and post cyberbullying information to the district's learning management system (LMS).</p>
<p><b>Training and Preventative Education</b></p> 	<p><i>The policy requires schools to provide training for all school staff and students on prevention, identification, and response strategies to cyberbullying</i></p>	<p>Students at <b>District E</b> receive education and information through classroom instruction, peer-to-peer initiatives, and school-wide programs on how to address bullying in an appropriate manner.</p>
<p><b>Investigation and Response Procedures</b></p> 	<p><i>The policy outlines an investigation and reporting timeline</i></p>	<p><b>District D</b> follows an investigation and reporting timeline for all student and parent complaints (see <b>page 7</b>).</p>
<p><b>Counselor Referrals for the Target and Aggressor</b></p> 	<p><i>The policy includes contact information for school and community personnel to connect with for additional support when an incident occurs.</i></p>	<p>Social workers at <b>District C</b> connect students and their families to mental and emotional health support resources and services in their community upon referral.</p>

## Establish an Investigation Process for Serious Cyberbullying Complaints

Contacts at **District D** report administrators use a reporting and investigation timeline to assess harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) policy complaints, in accordance with federal policy. Administrators reference this protocol to handle all student, parent, or staff complaints and examine whether the incident reported violated HIB policies or not. For example, if a student confides in a school counselor that they received harmful text messages last night and do not feel safe going to class, the school counselor reports the incident, and the HIB complaint process begins.

## Components of *District D's* Reporting and Investigation Timeline<sup>5</sup>

<b>1</b>	Acts of HIB will be reported verbally to the school principal on same day of the event is witnessed or the same day the school principal received the as reliable information.
<b>2</b>	School principal will inform parents/guardians of all students involved in the incident.
<b>3</b>	Acts of HIB will be reported in writing to the school principal within two days of when event was witnessed, or reliable information was received.
<b>4</b>	An investigation will be initiated by the principal or designee within one day of the report.
<b>5</b>	The investigation must be completed within ten days of the date of the written report.
<b>6</b>	Results must be reported to the superintendent within two school days of the completion of the investigation.
<b>7</b>	Results will be reported to the Board of Education by the next meeting date.
<b>8</b>	Parents/guardians of students involved in the investigation may receive information about the investigation, which will be provided in writing within five school days after the Board of Education receives a report of the results.

## SEL and Digital Citizenship

### Implement SEL Initiatives That Promote Student Accountability and Peer Relatedness to Build Positive School Culture

Teachers at four out of five profiled districts, **District B**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** focus on building a strong foundation in social-emotional skills at the elementary school level. By using the [CASEL](#) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) model, teachers frame classroom lessons and activities around five competencies—self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness to learn and practice constructive ways to address negative or harmful situations should they arise. These SEL initiatives help administrators promote a positive school culture early, which allows for conversations about preventing harmful behavior, such as cyberbullying, to unfold.

Although SEL instruction at **District D** and **District B** does not specifically discuss cyberbullying, teachers use an SEL framework to proactively empower young students to regulate their emotions and consider the consequences before reacting to an incident. The SEL framework that teachers at **District D** follow contains two key components. Administrators tasked elementary and middle school teachers with the responsibility of designing and delivering instruction around these components.

Elementary school teachers choose monthly character traits and middle school teachers choose twice-monthly character traits. To encourage students to apply the character traits to their everyday lives, teachers also establish weekly self-affirming statements, or affirmations. Teachers connect and reinforce the weekly affirmations to the character trait through classroom lessons and activities. This SEL framework creates a sense of community and teaches students the type of behavior they should exhibit to maintain a positive learning environment.

<sup>5</sup>) District D's Reporting and Investigation Timeline. *District D*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

## Components of *District D's* SEL Framework<sup>6</sup>

January's Character Trait: **Resilience**

Weekly Affirmation: **"I learn from my mistakes and improve next time"**

### Provide an Example to Introduce the Skill:

Teachers share a short story or video about a main character who shows resilience when they go through a challenge at school and work with teachers and peers to overcome it.



### Develop an Activity to Practice the Skill:

Teachers ask students to think of a time they made a mistake and to share two things they learned from it with a peer.



Contacts at **District B** report direct SEL instruction allows teachers to discuss with students how to use the competencies to address real-life situations. Using cyberbullying prevention as an example, teachers focus on strengthening skills related to social awareness and relationship management to ensure students can communicate the behavior they witnessed or experienced online with their peers and a caring adult (e.g., teacher, counselor, or parent). In addition to an SEL framework, administrators at **District B** use a vendor called [Panorama](#) to supplement SEL lessons. Panorama offers SEL screenings to help districts identify early warning indicators of students struggling to achieve social-emotional competencies. The screening results allow administrators and teachers to recognize growing trends and issue the appropriate intervention and level of support. For example, second grade teachers might reinforce lessons on the five competencies if several second grade students report low scores in SEL.

## To Deploy SEL Initiatives Provide Supplemental SEL Resources and Trainings to Teachers on Methods of Effective Instruction

Administrators at **District B**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** offer professional development and specialized training for effective SEL classroom delivery in one of three ways—vendors (e.g., programs with a cost), open-access platforms (e.g., free programs), or in-house curricula (e.g., programs created by district area specialists). Contacts report that administrators choose a method based on several variables such as adequate funding, time for implementation, and stakeholder buy-in.

For example, contacts at **District D** and **District E** report how their use of in-house lesson plans and trainings boosts teacher buy-in and their involvement in strengthening SEL initiatives. Each building at **District D** houses an SEL committee of six to seven staff members, which includes school counselors, principals, and assistant principals. These teams co-run summer curriculum writing workshops for classroom teachers on how to design and implement lessons within their SEL framework. By utilizing a customized framework, administrators noted an increase in teacher excitement to deliver relevant and personalized content to their students.

Alternatively, administrators at **District C** ease SEL implementation by using lesson plans and training modules from three separate vendors—[Kimochis](#) (for kindergarten instruction), [Second Step](#) (for elementary instruction), and [Character Strong](#) (for secondary instruction). These materials help teachers build a positive school culture and, specifically, prevent cyberbullying. For example, one of the Second Step lessons discusses bullying prevention and teaches students the three

6) Adapted from Archived SEL Lesson Plans from District D. Accessed February 26, 2021.



Rs—recognize, report, and refuse—to understand and address bullying and cyberbullying in an incident occurs. Contacts report explaining cyberbullying and its negative effects to students enables them to stop and speak out when they witness bullying behavior.

In addition to instructional professional development, administrators should offer training opportunities for teachers and staff on bullying/ cyberbullying prevention to reinforce their understanding of district policies if an incident occurs. Administrators at **District A** and **District E** use an external vendor and in-house curricula, respectively, to educate staff members.

## Teacher Trainings on Cyberbullying Polices at Two Profiled Districts

Initial Training	Continuous Support
<div data-bbox="634 579 732 674" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="467 695 870 747"><b>Offer Training to Interested Staff Using a Reputable Vendor</b></p> <ul data-bbox="467 758 938 1024" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At <b>District A</b>, administrators partner with <a href="#">Olweus Bullying Prevention</a> (OBS). OBS provides information on how to address bullying, the impacts, and how to support peers engaging in bullying behavior.</li> <li>• OBS-trained staff lead classroom meetings for all grade-levels to discuss bullying and cyberbullying prevention with students.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="467 1066 894 1119"><b>Provide Policy Training to Teachers Annually</b></p> <ul data-bbox="467 1129 915 1339" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators at <b>District E</b> provide annual training to staff with significant contact with students related to the district’s bullying policy.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• These trainings aim to enable staff to recognize and react in accordance with the policies if a situation arises under their supervision.</li> </ul>	<div data-bbox="1170 579 1268 674" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="998 695 1408 747"><b>Develop Activities for Teachers to Administer at Each Grade-Level</b></p> <ul data-bbox="998 758 1468 1024" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At <b>District A</b>, OBS staff create video vignettes to stream on the school TV system to emphasize classroom lessons on cyberbullying identification and prevention.</li> <li>• OBS staff offer additional conversation points to teachers to continue discussing with their students on ways to address and report cyberbullying when an incident occurs.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="998 1066 1463 1119"><b>Create Resources to Support Teachers throughout the Academic Year</b></p> <ul data-bbox="998 1129 1471 1339" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>District E’s</b> professional development department creates mini lessons on their cyberbullying policies to reinforce material from the annual training.</li> <li>• The professional development department sends these policy review lessons via email so staff can refer to them as needed.</li> </ul>

Via these resources and trainings, administrators at all five profiled districts provide teachers the tools needed to build a safe and supportive school culture that, in turn, curbs cyberbullying.

## Assign Behavioral and Mental Health Staff to Deliver SEL Lessons to Students Both Proactively and in Response to Cyberbullying Incidents

Behavioral and mental health personnel support students involved in a cyberbullying incident from the moment administrators become aware of the situation until the students feel safe in their school environments once again. Administrators at **District B**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** depend on student health personnel to prevent cyberbullying through additional SEL classroom instruction. Contacts at these four profiled districts report this SEL instruction encourages students to see

7) District E’s Bullying Policies. *District E*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

themselves as advocates for their own support so that when an incident arises, they will feel able to confide in a caring adult.

For example, school counselors at **District B** deliver lessons on socio-emotional learning to all elementary school classrooms to create a culture of strong and positive peer relations at a young age. At **District E**, school counselors and social workers hold grade-level meetings from elementary to high school regularly for in-depth discussions on district policies about cyberbullying prevention. In addition, when an increase in cyberbullying incidents occur, school sites may receive a supplemental presentation from either the professional development department or someone on the behavioral and mental support team (e.g., school counselor, social worker, or a social emotional behavioral therapist). These opportunities for further conversation about how to express ones' feelings strengthen the adult-and-student relationships at these districts, which result in more appropriately-handled incidents.

### **If Feasible, Hire Social Workers to Support Administration and School Counselors with Cyberbullying Prevention**



Administrators at **District C** utilize a referral process to connect students in need of additional support to a social worker. Using a Google form, school staff members (e.g., administrator, teacher, or counselor) submit a referral directly to the social workers with information regarding the identified student. Social workers will then work with school staff to reach out to the student and their families and offer targeted mental and emotional services in the community.

## **Teach Emotional Literacy to Discourage Cyberbullying**

The CASEL model includes direct instruction of emotional literacy (i.e., the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy manner).<sup>8</sup> Emotional literacy may help prevent cyberbullying by teaching students to express themselves through more constructive channels. To teach emotional literacy, teachers at **District D** recently implemented morning meetings and connection circles at the elementary and middle schools to provide students with opportunities to reflect on their emotions and build relationships. For instance, teachers may pose a certain question of the day for students to reflect on personally, and then the teacher asks students to share their thoughts with the hopes of identifying a new connection with a peer. By creating safe and positive spaces for students to communicate openly with one another, they feel encouraged to pause and respond instead of immediately reacting.

Students at **District E** also use circles to practice emotional literacy, specifically to remediate the impacts of a negative or harmful situation with when an incident occurs. Research defines restorative circles as safe and open environments for students to share, listen, and proactively develop a sense of community.<sup>9</sup> In practice, administrators may use this approach to respond to peer conflicts freely and encourage relationship building.<sup>10</sup> Since students normally congregate in a circle formation during classroom instruction or in normal conversations, they feel accustomed to listen and share in this structured practice. Restorative practices encourage community building, and circles create opportunities to put emotional literacy into practice by strengthening harmed relationships.

8) "Increasing emotional literacy improves behaviors." *The Center for Child Development*.

<https://thecenterforchilddevelopment.com/emotional-literacy-its-important-and-can-be-learned/#:~:text=Emotional%20literacy%20is%20the%20ability,or%20often%20mislabel%20their%20feelings>

9) "Defining Restorative- 5.2 Circles." *IRRP Graduate School*. <https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative/5-2-circles>

10) "Building Community with Restorative Circles." *Edutopia*. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-community-restorative-circles>

## Adopt Digital Citizenship Instruction to Extend the Teachings of SEL Curricula to Cyberbullying

Administrators at **District B** and **District C** implement digital citizenship instruction to reinforce SEL competencies such as self-management and responsible decision-making in the virtual world. To practice digital citizenship, students must learn how to act appropriately when using digital tools, how to interact with others online, and how to maintain a positive digital footprint over the years.<sup>11</sup> To instruct students in digital citizenship, both districts adopted curricula from a third-party platform called [Common Sense](#). At **District B**, upper elementary schools and middle schools receive at least three lessons related to digital citizenship per year (e.g., plagiarism, privacy, or cyberbullying), and high school students discuss the implications of digital citizenship in the Zoom environment—how to behave appropriately in the current, fully digital world.

The technology department at **District C** offers additional resources on digital citizenship for students and parents on a district website. One of the sections discusses the relationship between digital citizenship and cyberbullying, including different questions for parents to ask their children about their online behavior.

At **District C**, teachers offer positive reinforcement when they notice students practicing digital citizenship in the classroom. Conversely, they provide corrections and/or consequences when they see poor online behavior (e.g., inappropriate chat comments or misbehavior via Google Documents). For instance, students involved may receive an additional lesson on digital citizenship or may need to discuss corrective actions with a school counselor to ensure this behavior does not occur again. In addition, administrative staff and student services coordinators offer support to teachers in specific areas of need (e.g., cyberbullying prevention, digital citizenship), largely repurposed from *Common Sense* resources. Upon request, the team will travel to the site and present on the topic of discussion during that week.

### Direct Staff in Technology Department to Build on Digital Citizenship Elements

The computer teachers at **District D** discuss the importance of digital citizenship with their students. The teachers design and deliver an in-house curriculum that focuses on responsible and proactive online behavior.

## Wraparound Programming

In addition, the SEL team at **District D** organized an evening showing for parents and community members. The SEL team held a Q&A panel afterwards for further discussion on how to support student' emotional and mental health and home and school. Contacts report 50 parents attended the hour and a half long event.

### Leverage Authoritative Experts and Memorable Presentations to Convey the Harms of Cyberbullying During Assemblies

Contacts at all profiled districts coordinate general assemblies to serve as learning opportunities to discuss and illustrate relevant social topics affecting students. To convey the effects of cyberbullying, administrators use these whole-group gatherings as platforms to expose students to keynote speakers and presentations that offer a relevant and relatable perspective. For example, administrators at **District B** host a contracted speaker who specifically talks about digital citizenship and how students can manage their online footprints.

At **District D**, 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> graders watched the documentary "[Screenagers](#)" on the negative relationship between excessive screen time and emotional health and

11) "Digital Citizenship: Elements, Lessons, and Importance." *Schoology Exchange*. <https://www.schoology.com/blog/digital-citizenship-elements-lessons-and-importance-0>

wellbeing. Before each grade attended their individual screening, school counselors met with each class to introduce the topics the documentary would address. After the assembly, students shared their feelings in small groups. Teachers monitored these discussions and notified the school counselors about students who may need additional support.

## Visual Presentation of the Consequences of Cyberbullying at *District C*

### Toothpaste Illustration



#### Activity:

- Teachers challenge student volunteers to squeeze all the toothpaste out of a tube in one minute.
- Then, the teachers challenged the students to put the toothpaste back in the tube using a toothpick in one minute.

#### Lesson:

- This exercise shows students the consequences of their actions when they post something online.
- Once a student posts, the words and/or photos remain online forever.

### ► Explore Cyberbullying Research and Online Programs to Identify Presentations that Align with District's Objectives




Contacts at **District A** report hosting a speaker from the [Cyberbullying Research Center](#) twice at their district for student and staff presentations. Visit the Cyberbullying Research Center for resources, laws, research, and to learn about the various presentations they offer for K12 students and educators, as well as testimonials from principals and teachers.

## Form Extracurricular Programs that Create Opportunities for Peer-to-Peer Trainings on Cyberbullying Prevention

To maximize student understanding and engagement in prevention strategies, administrators at **District A**, **District C**, and **District E** operate extracurricular programs that educate and empower students to combat cyberbullying together. While each program operates differently, all three of their mission statements center around fostering a safe, supportive, and positive school culture where students feel a sense of belonging and part of a community. Contacts at the profiled districts report creating peer-to-peer training programs promotes student leadership and autonomy in curbing cyberbullying and similar social issues affecting students.

## Overview of Cyberbullying Prevention Programs at Three Profiled Districts

The Cyberbullying Research Center featured **District A's** program in an article for their outstanding work in transforming their school environment to prevent bullying.

Mission	Logistics	Program in Action
<b>Program at District A<sup>12</sup></b> 		
<p>At <b>District A</b>, the program initially began to develop the role of an active bystander and empower students to recognize and report bullying.</p> <p>While still a primary component, the program focuses on fostering a positive and inclusive community, with a specific aim at offering new and current students with a heightened sense of belonging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 upperclassmen (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) student leaders and 20-30 program members</li> <li>• Students go through an interview process to apply for a leadership position</li> <li>• Weekly or biweekly leadership meetings to plan and discuss material</li> <li>• Monthly program meetings for 45 minutes after school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program created a referral form for students in need of support (i.e., a new student looking for friends or a current witnessing bullying behavior). The program uses this form to hold students accountable for their actions and gain a better understanding of their school climate.</li> <li>• Program leaders facilitate different discussion topics during meetings. For example, they train fellow members on how to be active bystanders in their communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Program at District C<sup>13</sup></b> 		
<p>At <b>District C</b>, the program, strives to enrich lives and empower students throughout the school and surrounding community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in good academic standing participate in this year-long commitment.</li> <li>• Meet weekly before school to discuss upcoming school and community events</li> <li>• Program provides training and skills development in communication and organization to ensure strong capabilities in practice during school-wide activities.</li> </ul>	<p>The program organizes various activities throughout campus, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative Practices</li> <li>• Community Building Circles</li> <li>• Educational Presentations and Campaigns</li> </ul> <p>For example, program members led a campaign with an emphasis on the role of the bystander in addressing cyberbullying incidents. During the month-long campaign, teachers and students participated in bullying prevention and restorative practice training.</p>
<b>Program at District E<sup>14</sup></b> 		
<p>At <b>District E</b>, the program raises awareness on the effects of bullying and acceptance for positive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily comprising 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, these 10-20 students participate in a two-day training where they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After significant practice, students personalize an anti-bullying presentation to deliver to their peers.</li> </ul>

12) District A's Program Home Page. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

13) District C's Program Advertisement. *District C*. Accessed on February 26, 2021.

14) District E's Program Home Page. *District E*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

practices to prevent bullying incidents from occurring.	learn how to speak up against bullying. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by two or three committed staff members who support the students through the year.</li> </ul>	To ensure effectiveness and positive engagement, the ambassadors tailor the presentation to reflect their school's culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition, students set up meetings at their elementary schools and deliver anti-bullying trainings to elementary students in small groups, teaching them about the ways they can change and curb current bullying climates.</li> </ul>
---------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------




## Provide Online and On-Campus Learning Opportunities to Educate and Engage the Community on Current Cyberbullying Initiatives

To acknowledge the importance of parental involvement and support, administrations must create opportunities in and out of the classroom for community engagement. Involving parents and community members allows for cyberbullying prevention to stretch beyond the classroom walls and educates caring adults on how to support their children and school-wide initiatives. All profiled contacts report administrators, teachers, or school counselors—depending on the staff responsible for hosting—will publish information about a scheduled event online (e.g., on a virtual event calendar) or send flyers home with students. For example, parents and family members may receive an email alert of an upcoming event on cyberbullying prevention that will take place in the next month to invite all school community members to attend. In addition, contacts at **District E**, **District B**, and **District C** offer other opportunities for caring adults to learn how to become anti-bullying advocates for their child's school community.

### Cyberbullying Prevention Community Engagement Overview

*How Profiled Districts Involved the Community in their Lessons and Trainings*

The district SEL team at **District D** focuses on parent outreach. For example, they offer virtual parent events on the five SEL competencies.

Event	Description
 <p><b>Community Trainings</b> District E</p>	<p>At <b>District E</b>, student members in the prevention program train parents at PTO meetings and school board members upon request.</p>
 <p><b>Monthly District Committee Meetings</b> District B</p>	<p>All parents and community members at <b>District B</b> may attend monthly district-parent advisory committee meetings. At these meetings, members discuss and input ideas regarding safety and topics such as cyberbullying, bullying, and social-emotional learning.</p>
 <p><b>Online Parent Education Lessons</b> District C</p>	<p>Social workers at <b>District C</b> create and share Google Documents with various links to useful resources and websites on topics such as suicide prevention and substance abuse.</p>

### 3) Addressing Incidents

---

#### Identification

#### Utilize an Anonymous Hotline to Immediately Gather and Respond to Intel on Cyberbullying Incidents

In addition to establishing effective prevention strategies, all profiled districts rely on various reporting systems to gather and monitor cyberbullying incidents. Contacts at **District A**, **District E**, **District B**, and **District C** promote the use of a tipline (i.e., a phone number that community member can call and/or text anonymously) to their students and parents. An anonymous hotline allows any student or adult to send an anonymous tip to report their concern without disclosing their identity, allowing the proper authorities to respond to the treat.<sup>15</sup> Profiled district include a page on their websites' navigation menu with several options to contact the hotline (e.g., downloading a free mobile application, calling the hotline number, or submitting an online tip). Then, district administrators direct specific staff members (e.g., school counselors, student support services, or assistant principals) to appropriately triage and address the submissions.

The Communications and Student Services Departments at **District E** created a 50 second video to show students how to access the tipline. Teachers show the video in their classrooms annually or bi-annually, and school counselors or social workers meet in small groups with grade-level students to address any additional questions.

- For instance, the Communications Department at **District E** controls their anonymous tipline. Communications staff respond within 24 hours of each submission. Students, parents, staff, and community can use this tipline. At **District C**, students carry the number of a crisis hotline on their student ID cards. Students can leave a message or send a text to the number, and the Student Services staff triages the messages, sending intel to the administrators at the school site in question.

At **District A**, contacts report offering two different reporting systems—an external anonymous tipline and an in-house referral system. See below for information on the organization and functions of these two systems.

<sup>15</sup>"Anonymous tip." *The Free Dictionary*.  
[https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/anonymous+tip#:~:text=Anonymous%20tip%20lines%20are%20a,School%20Safety%20Center%20\(NSSC\).](https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/anonymous+tip#:~:text=Anonymous%20tip%20lines%20are%20a,School%20Safety%20Center%20(NSSC).)

## Submitting a Report at *District A*

### State-Funded Initiative

#### What is it?

A state-funded initiative run by the Office of Attorney General.<sup>16</sup> The Office reviews, classifies, and forwards the tip to the appropriate school district.

#### Who uses it?

Students, parents, and community members

#### How do they use it?

To submit a tip, one can download a free mobile application, visit a website, or call a hotline.<sup>18</sup>

### Student Assistance Program (S.A.P)

#### What is it?

Every elementary, middle, and high school has a Student Assistance Program comprised of teachers, counselors, nurses, psychologists, and community contacts from drug/ alcohol and mental health service agencies.<sup>17</sup>

#### Who uses it?

Parents

#### How do they use it?

To access SAP referral forms, navigate to the Student Services link on the school website and find the appropriate form based on child's grade-level.

## At Smaller Districts, Implement Twice-Monthly Check-Ins with Students to Monitor their Mental Health

Administrators at the smallest profiled district, **District D** (1,000-2,000 students), rely on check-ins to monitor and assess student mental health. Contacts report using a Google form asking students to check off whether they feel one of four ways:

- "I feel great."
- "I feel pretty good."
- "I am feeling a little overwhelmed and need to speak to a teacher."
- "I am having a really hard time and need to talk to a counselor."

Kindergarten through second grade teachers fill out the Google form for their students as they enter class. Third through eighth graders fill out and submit the form on their own. Teachers then evaluate their own class's results to identify how each student measures his/her emotions and compares this to the behavior they see in class. The school counselor intervenes and provides support if needed based on recommendations from the teachers. In practice, if a student becomes the target of a cyberbullying incident, the student may begin to indicate feeling unhappy or overwhelmed in the check-ins. By monitoring students' behavior trends, teachers can identify the student directly, step in, and prevent the situation from worsening. Contacts specifically report administering student check-ins sparingly (i.e., every two weeks) at the secondary level to ensure the responses accurately capture students' feelings. If administered too closely together (i.e., weekly), students may report the same neutral response and the process thus becomes repetitive and ineffective. Further, if a cyberbullying incident occurs that affects multiple students in one grade-level, teachers and school counselors can implement a corrective intervention (e.g., classroom lesson on digital citizenship or small group meetings with the school counselor) to address and remediate the incident.

<sup>16</sup>Website for State-Funded Initiative [for District A]. Accessed February 26, 2021.

<sup>17</sup>District A's Student Assistance Program. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

<sup>18</sup>District A's State-Funded Initiative Reporting Process. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.



## Install Software to Monitor Online Behavior and Identify Harmful Communication Patterns

Supplement cyberbullying identification practices by using software to check for inappropriate language or actions online (e.g., cyberbullying). Contacts at **District B** use **Bark** to monitor the school's Google Suites system. When students use certain trigger words within the district's realm, administrators at **District B** receive an alert. If the incident requires additional attention, specific school sites get a notification regarding the situation; moreover, if the incident requires discipline, the principal or assistant principal intervenes to determine the next appropriate actions. Administrators at **District C** also intend to use software to monitor student language.

## Multi-Tiered Remediation

### Prioritize Addressing the Root Cause to Effectively Respond to Cyberbullying Incidents

Administrators should largely refrain from overly punitive or from exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension). Contacts at **District B**, **District C**, **District D**, and **District E** report suspension or expulsion of the student(s) who cyberbullied remains as the last resort for responding to an incident. Instead, their administrators and teachers respond to cyberbullying incidents with remediation strategies (i.e., practices that promote student accountability and relationship building) for both the target(s) and aggressor(s) to uncover the underlying intent behind the actions, address the emotional and mental impact, and prevent repetition. For example, administrators at **District D** encourage mindfulness strategies to address the aggressor(s) potential anger issues and uncover underlying intent. To foster community building, administrators at **District C** train peer advocates at their high schools how to use restorative circles to facilitate conversations on conflict resolution among peers.



#### Develop a Scope of Consequences with Variations of Discipline Practices to Issue Based on the Severity of the Incident and Grade-Levels of Students Involved

The scope of consequences at **District D** allows administrators to employ a consequence that offers students an opportunity to learn from their misbehavior instead of directly punishing them for their actions. Severity of the incident—not grade level—primarily determines consequences. However, consequences do vary somewhat by grade due to the different circumstances of each grade. For example, an elementary school student may receive a recess detention, whereas a seventh-grade student would meet with the school counselor because seventh-grade schedules do not include recess.

To effectively regulate responses per cyberbullying incidents, administrators may consider a multi-tiered approach. Research on multi-tiered systems of support (**MTSS**) describes three tiers (e.g., Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3), each offering a different level of intervention to address the situation and provide the appropriate support. Contacts at both **District C** and **District D** report using a multi-tiered approach to determine a remediation strategy that corresponds to the severity of the cyberbullying incident. At **District C**, contacts report implementing school wide PBIS

(Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), an example of a MTSS centered on social behavior. PBIS enables teachers and staff to provide the appropriate intervention to ensure students feel emotional and socially supported in their learning environments. Results of the effects of this implementation include students improving in social emotional competence and reduction in bullying behavior.<sup>19</sup>

In practice, to determine the appropriate tiered response when an incident arises, administrators at **District D** assess both student considerations (e.g., degree or harm and incidences of past or continuing behavior) and school considerations (e.g., student-staff relationships and school culture).<sup>20</sup> Upon evaluating the severity of the incident, administrators determine the next actionable steps for both the aggressor(s) (i.e., the student(s) who cyberbullied) and target(s) (i.e., the student(s) affected by cyberbullying). Using tailored examples of cyberbullying incidents from [iPredator](#), observe the different remediation strategies **District D** may administer to address the target(s) and aggressor(s). Note the nature of the infraction, the age and grade level of the students involved, if a history of previous incidents exists, and other related factors<sup>21</sup> play into account of the administrator’s decision.

### **District D’s Multi-Tiered Remediation Strategies for the Target(s) and Aggressor(s)<sup>22</sup>**

Tier	Example Incident	Remediation for Target(s)	Remediation for Aggressor(s)
1	<i>Student A excludes Student B from a group activity. Student B later learns Student A sent a hurtful text about Student B to the others at the group activity.</i>	Ask student to log behaviors in the future (e.g., in weekly or twice monthly check-ins) so teachers can monitor their responses and address the situation early on	School counselor provides a series of in-class lessons on conflict resolution and digital citizenship to reinforce appropriate and positive online behavior
2	<i>Student A comments a hurtful statement on Student B’s image post on social media about her appearance (i.e., body shaming.)<sup>23</sup></i>	Develop a plan to ensure the student’s emotional and physical safety at school. For example, meet with school counselor twice a week to discuss improvements or continued discomfort in class.	Meet with school counselor to discuss the long-term negative consequences of harassment, intimidation, and bullying on all involved.
3	<i>Student A covertly takes and shares an unflattering image of Student B with a hurtful caption.</i>	Have the student meet with the school counselor or social worker to ensure he or she does not feel responsible for the bullying behavior.	Administrators might consider in-school or out-of-school suspension, but only as a last resort Instead, administrators use a remediation strategy plus a discipline policy (i.e., lunch detention) that allows students to learn from their actions instead of only receive punishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide social skill training such as impulse control, anger management, developing empathy, and problem solving.</li> </ul>

19) PBIS at District C. *District C*. Accessed February 26, 2021

20) District D’s Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policies. *District D*. Accessed February 26, 2021.

21) Ibid.

22) Ibid.

23) “Examples of Cyberbullying.” *iPredator*. <https://www.ipredator.co/examples-of-cyberbullying>

## Implement Restorative Practices to Remediate Cyberbullying Incidents and Build Stronger School Communities

Administrators at **District E**, **District B**, **District D**, and **District C** use restorative practices as a remediation strategy to correct behavior. Contacts report embracing restorative practices (i.e., strategies that focus on relationship building rather than punishment)<sup>24</sup> as a key component of their response framework (e.g., conflict resolution). For example, administrators at **District B** and **District D** incorporate restorative practices into all components of their response to cyberbullying incidents, including incidents severe enough to necessitate Tier 3 response. These practices create productive citizens who understand how to listen and treat others respectfully, hold each other accountable for their actions, and ensure neither engages nor falls victim to a cyberbullying incident again.

Administrators at these four profiled districts also use restorative practices to promote constructive and open communication between the students involved and caring adults. For example, administrators at **District E** use the practice of restorative circles as the main element of their response and remediation strategy. Administrators require the aggressor(s) and target(s) to come together and process the incident, encouraging students to recognize the problem, describe the incident, and provide an opportunity for healing by sharing emotions with each other. Contacts report three key components that account for the success of this practice in supporting students involved in cyberbullying incidents and fostering a positive school community.

### Recommendations for Restorative Circles at *District E*

**Encourage Students to Bring Emotional Support**



Both the target and aggressor may bring a person or thing to feel more comfortable and at ease within the circle.

**Empower Students to Share and Mend Feelings**



Students receive instruction in emotional literacy, which allows them to converse, express themselves, and heal openly and together.

**Establish Circles Expediently**



Administrators schedule circles soon after the incident. Prolonged time without openly addressing the incident with others inhibits the ability for students to properly heal, therefore distracting them from the responsibilities in their daily routines.

## Direct Mental Health Resources through a Multi-Tiered Approach to Ensure Students Receive the Appropriate Level of Support per Cyberbullying Incident

Contacts at all profiled districts provide substantial behavioral and mental health support for both aggressor(s) and target(s) of cyberbullying incidents. Multi-tiered systems ensure the aggressor(s) receives the tools and instruction needed to regulate

<sup>24</sup> "What Teachers Need to Know About Restorative Justice." *We Are Teachers*. <https://www.weareteachers.com/restorative-justice/>

Contacts at **District C** built a wellness website with information regarding K12 SEL instruction at **District C**. Consider creating a webpage with additional mental health support and resources for students and their families to access on-demand.

their behavior and emotions, and the target(s) feels safe and supported within their school community once again. Administrators at **District C** divide mental health services into three separate tiers to ensure all students receive accurate and targeted assistance.

### Tiers of Support at *District C*

**Tier 1** Targets the broader student population through teaching classroom lessons, printing crisis hotline numbers on student ID cards, and providing staff development on suicide prevention and health.

**Tier 2** Addresses targeted students and at-risk groups through additional social emotional resources for counselors and connecting students and families to external counseling services.

**Tier 3** Supports the most serious cases through behavior contracts to connect students to mental health supports and individualized case management by social workers.<sup>25</sup>

District administrators at **District A**, **District B**, and **District D** partner with local behavioral and mental health nonprofits, facilities, and/ or agencies to offer Tier 2 and Tier 3 services to students and their families whose situations require outside services.

<sup>25</sup>News Article about Mental Health at District C. Accessed February 26, 2021.

## 5) Research Methodology

---

### Project Challenges

Leadership at a partner district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do contact districts define cyberbullying?
- How do contact districts introduce and discuss the impacts of cyberbullying to/with students?
- What are the main components of contact districts' approaches to cyberbullying prevention?
- What kind of professional development do contact districts deliver for teachers on how to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?
- How do contact districts communicate their cyberbullying initiatives and policies to the district community?
- How do teachers and staff at contact districts identify cyberbullying?
- How do the following stakeholder groups at contact districts report cyberbullying?
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Teachers/Staff
- How do administrators/teachers discipline students who cyberbully others? Do these discipline practices vary by grade?
- How do contact districts provide support to students identified as victims of cyberbullying?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- "Anonymous tip." *The Free Dictionary*.  
[https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/anonymous+tip#:~:text=Anonymous%20tip%20lines%20are%20a,School%20Safety%20Center%20\(NSSC\).](https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/anonymous+tip#:~:text=Anonymous%20tip%20lines%20are%20a,School%20Safety%20Center%20(NSSC).)
- "Building Community with Restorative Circles." *Edutopia*.  
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-community-restorative-circles>
- Bullying Prevention at District C. *District C*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- "Defining Restorative- 5.2 Circles." *IRRP Graduate School*.  
<https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative/5-2-circles>
- "Digital Citizenship: Elements, Lessons, and Importance." *Schoology Exchange*.  
<https://www.schoology.com/blog/digital-citizenship-elements-lessons-and-importance-0>
- District A's Board of School Directors Active Policies. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District A's Program Home Page. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District A's State-Funded Initiative Reporting Process. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District A's Student Assistance Program. *District A*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District C's Program Advertisement. *District C*. Accessed on February 26, 2021.

- District D’s Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policies. *District D*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District D’s Reporting and Investigation Timeline. *District D*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District D’s Archived SEL Lessons Plans. *District D*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District E’s Bullying Policies. *District E*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- District E’s Program Home Page. *District E*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- “Examples of Cyberbullying.” *iPredator*. <https://www.ipredator.co/examples-of-cyberbullying>
- “Increasing emotional literacy improves behaviors.” *The Center for Child Development*. <https://thecenterforchilddevelopment.com/emotional-literacy-its-important-and-can-be-learned/#:~:text=Emotional%20literacy%20is%20the%20ability,or%20often%20mislabel%20their%20feelings>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). <http://nces.ed.gov/>
- News Article about Mental Health at District C. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- PBIS at District C. *District C*. Accessed February 26, 2021
- “Preventing and Addressing Cyberbullying through Equitable State and Local Policies.” *Intercultural Development Research Association*. <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/preventing-addressing-cyberbullying-equitable-state-local-policies/>
- State School Board of Education. *Bullying*. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- Website for State-Funded Initiative [for District A]. Accessed February 26, 2021.
- “What Is Cyberbullying?” stopcyberbullying.com. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>
- What Teachers Need to Know About Restorative Justice.” *We Are Teachers*. <https://www.weareteachers.com/restorative-justice/>

## Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed district administrators at districts with comprehensive cyberbullying prevention initiatives.

### A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Enrollment
District A	Mid-Atlantic	9,000-10,000
District B	Pacific West	17,000-18,000
District C	Pacific West	14,000-15,000
District D	Mid-Atlantic	1,000-2,000
District E	Midwest	21,000-22,000