

Cybertips for teachers

Be Professional

Teachers are professional and expected to model ethical and appropriate cyber conduct. Teachers hold a position of trust with students and will be held accountable if their actions expose students to inappropriate material or communications.

Be Prudent

At work:

- Maintain exemplary professional standards when sending email messages to students, parents, colleagues and administrators.
- Always keep a copy of your email messages.
- Use a teacher voice when communicating with students via email.
- Use Canadian spelling and grammar checks.
- Use a signature that includes your name, assignment title and school name.

But don't:

- Share your password with other colleagues or students.
- Leave your computer on and unattended when students are around.
- Send unnecessary attachments with your emails.
- Write emails using all capital letters – it comes across as shouting.

At home, don't:

- Use your home/personal computer to contact students or parents.
- Permit images of yourself to be taken and posted on any site without appropriate privacy safeguards.
- Post criticism of colleagues, students or administrators on social networking sites.
- Share confidential information about students, colleagues or administrators on social networking sites.
- Post confidential images and information about yourself on social networking sites.

Be prepared

Despite all precautions, if you find yourself the target of cyberbullying:

- Make copies of all questionable messages/web postings/information and other related materials and date, including the URL.
- Demand that the sender stop transmitting or posting the material and state that the conduct is unacceptable and inappropriate.
- Do not engage with the person who is targeting you as this may escalate the situation.
- Advise the administration of your school of the inappropriate communication if the situation requires immediate action and/or if the inappropriate communication continues.
- Access appropriate support/guidance through the school board/district cyberconduct policy or manual.
- Contact the parents of the student who is cyberbullying you.
- Inform and involve your school-based Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- Contact your local teacher organization if the actions taken to address the inappropriate communication are ineffective and/or if you need further support/advice.

Remember – Nothing is truly private when you use digital communication. When you are using Board equipment and communication links, the Board can access all your messages and online sites visited if any of this communication went through Board servers or has been accessed using Board equipment.

Forms of cyberbullying which are considered criminal acts:

- Communicating repeatedly with someone if the communication causes someone to fear for their own or others' safety.
- Publishing a defamatory libel – something that is designed to insult a person or likely to hurt a person's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.
- Spreading hate or discrimination based on race national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability may be a violation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and/or provincial/territorial human rights legislation.
- If there is a question as to whether the inappropriate communication is criminal or not, call the police. At this point it may also be necessary to involve Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Telecommunication Service Providers in addressing the inappropriate communication to the point of deleting the offending material from temporary/permanent sites and archives.

Know your rights, know your responsibilities

Activities that can result in disciplinary action against a teacher:

- Visiting inappropriate websites (i.e. adult content, racist, pornographic).
- Sending or forwarding offensive jokes and pictures via email.
- Online gambling using school board equipment.
- Downloading audio, video or text-based material in violation of copyright laws.
- Using Board/Employer equipment to engage in activities related to a second occupation.
- Constant text messaging, instant messaging and or emailing during school time.
- Posting pictures of yourself and sharing them over the net, especially if they are suggestive or inappropriate.
- Posting comments about students, parents, fellow colleagues or administrators online.
- Engaging in personal email exchange with students.
- Engaging in inappropriate conversations about fellow colleagues through emails or social networking sites.
- Criticizing principals, superintendents, school trustees or school boards, personally or professionally, online.
- Sharing confidential Board information through the Board email system or a social networking site.

Want to know more?

www.media-awareness.ca

Media Awareness Network and its web awareness program features lesson plans, classroom activities, background articles and Canadian resources for media education. It also offers practical tips for helping parents managed media in the home.

www.cyberbullying.ca

This is a great resource site for teachers, parents and students (only available in English).

www.ctf-fce.ca

For more information on this issue, please visit the Canadian Teachers' Federation website.

Source: *Professional Development Perspectives*, Winter-Spring 2008. Canadian Teachers' Federation.

Cyberbullying of teachers

If as a teacher, you find yourself the victim of cyberbullying or the inappropriate use of technology, the following advice is provided.

Despite all precautions, if you find yourself the target of cyberbullying:

- Contact your local union officer to get advice as to how to proceed;
- Make copies of all questionable messages/web postings/information and other related materials and data, including the URL.
- Demand that the sender stop transmitting or posting the material and state that the conduct is unacceptable and inappropriate.
- Do not engage with the person who is targeting you as this may escalate the situation.
- Advise the administration of your school of the inappropriate communication if the situation requires immediate action and/or if the inappropriate communication continues.
- Access appropriate support/guidance through the school board/district cyberconduct policy or manual.
- Inform your school-based Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- Contact your local teacher organization again if the actions taken to address the inappropriate communication are ineffective and/or if you need further support/advice.

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Some danger signs

This is not a definitive list, nor does each of these behaviours apply to all teachers in every context or situation.

- frequent private conversations with the student
- discussions about the student or teacher's private life
- socializing with the student as a friend
- comments or discussions on or about sexual matters
- compliments or comments on the student's physical appearance
- personal notes to the student
- verbal or written expressions of affection
- exchanging gifts
- off-duty visits with the student
- visits to the student's home
- hugs and touching
- secrecy surrounding the relationship
- excessive attention to the student relative to the rest of the class and/or other activities outside the boundaries of a traditional student-teacher relationship
- electronic mail conversations
- social networking and publishing of web documents
- accessing the employer computer network for personal use