Responding to Cyberbullying – Top Ten Tips for Educators

1. Throughly investigate all incidents so that you can direct resources and, if necessary, discipline to students who require it.

2. Enlist the support of a school liaison officer or another member of law enforcement to help, especially when it involves a possible threat to the safety of your students or staff.

3. Once you identify the offending party, develop a response that is commensurate with the harm done and the disruption that occurred.

4. Work with parents to convey to the students that cyberbullying behaviours are taken seriously and will not be tolerated at your school.

5. Instruct parents to contact a legal advisor. Some instances of cyberbullying just don't fall under the remit of the school. In these cases parents may want to pursue other avenues for redress. Parties may sue others in civil court for harassment, intentional infliction of emotional distress etc.

6. Contact cell phone providers if threats or explicit content are transmitted via these devices. These companies keep data that may service as evidence on their servers for a limited period of time before deleting it.

7. Keep all evidence of cyberbullying. Keep a file with screen shots, message logs, or any other evidence so that you can demonstrate the seriousness of the behaviours and its impact on the school. This is especially critical if you intend to formally punish students (e.g. suspension, expulsion)

8. Contact and work with MySpace, Facebook or any other web environment where the bullying occurred. By now they are used to working through cyberbullying cases and can be a resource to assist you in removing offending content, gathering evidence, or put you in touch with someone who can help.

9. Seek advice from neighbouring schools about incidents they may have dealt with in the past.

10. Use creative informal response strategies, particularly for relatively minor forms of cyberbullying that do not result in significant harm. For example, students may be required to create anti-cyberbullying posters to be displayed throughout the school. Older students might be required to give a brief presentation to younger students about the importance of responsibility using technology. It is important to condemn the behaviour while sending a message to the rest of the school community that bullying in any form is wrong.