



Module 4 - How to prevent cyberbullying in the VET classroom

DIAS VET

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Module 4: How to prevent cyberbullying in the VET classroom

Objective of the module

On successful completion of this module, VET teachers will be able to:

- Teach students how to be cyber safe and informed.
- Create digital citizenship.
- Use resources to keep updated on the newest technologies that VET students may use.
- Discuss and explain to VET students the topic of cyberbullying and its negative effects with confidence.
- Use available links, networks and resources to direct both students and parents towards successfully recognizing, objecting to and preventing cyberbullying.
- Encourage and foster proactivity between VET students in developing their positive digital communities and support networks.
- Develop guidelines and rules on acceptable cyber communications between students in the VET classroom.
- Confidently use the teaching time, to incorporate and introduce specific information on cyberbullying.
- Successfully use practical examples and cases of cyberbullying in order to demonstrate the disastrous consequences that abusive behavior can have on a targeted student.
- Create and implement school action plans for the prevention of cyberbullying.
- Involve all stakeholders of the VET school and secure participation of management, staff, students, families and local community.

Description of the module



Content / Activity	Method / Advice / Tips	Training Equipment / Materials / Tools	Timing
4.1 Communicate the individual characteristics of cyberbullying & the role of the educator in prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read all the information provided in the section. -Take some time to decide how you will communicate this info to the VET students, as part of your teaching time -Think of ways to involve students, introduce examples and allow students to share experiences and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Computers -Laptops -Mobile phones 	60 mins
4.2 Practical information on how to implement the different techniques in the VET environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read all the techniques described -Apply all steps -Discuss with VET management and students if they agree with participation and involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Computers -Laptops -Mobile phones -Online and printed tools such as factsheets and surveys 	120 mins
4.3 Practical suggestions and examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read activities -Consider how you can implement these in your VET classroom -Implement as many as you find useful, always with the active participation of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Computers -Laptops -Mobile phones -Online and printed tools such as factsheets and surveys -Projector -Pens, paper, markers, stickers, post it notes. 	240 mins

4.1 The individual characteristics of cyberbullying & the role of the educator in prevention

Bullying is an ever-present problem in our VET schools and with the advent of technology, bullying has a different look, feel and emphasis in today's school culture; however, victimized students are no less affected. By being both an advocate for bullying victims and a school leader for positive change, we can make school a safe, positive and bully-free place to be.

Cyberbullying is defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. In short, it is bullying using technology. (*School Climate 2.0: Preventing Cyberbullying and Sexting One Classroom at a Time*, S. Hindua & J. Patchin)

Cyber bullying occurs when electronic communications such as text messages, emails, instant messages, and social media updates are used to intimidate or humiliate someone. Its consequences can be just as serious as the effects of bullying that occurs in person, yet cyberbullying is unique in many ways.

Differences between cyberbullying and in-physical bullying

- Access to technology and target at any time.
- Feeling of invincibility while online.
- Reduced restraint and increased freedom due to physical distance.
- Extent of victimization quickly spreads far and wide.
- Difficult to recognize the harm that is being inflicted.
- It is often anonymous and unlimited by time and place, so the victim has little respite from the abuse.
- It can reach hundreds or even thousands of people quickly and the anonymity leads students who would not normally participate to do so.

What's my responsibility as a teacher in preventing cyberbullying?

As educators, it's our responsibility to teach students how to use digital media in respectful and safe ways. This includes helping children learn how to identify, respond to, and avoid cyberbullying. Given the demands on teachers to meet school, district, and state goals, it can be a challenge to consider where these lessons might fit into the school day. Fortunately, as technology becomes part of every aspect of our lives, including how we teach and learn, more schools and districts are giving teachers the



time and resources to prioritize these skills. Here are a few methods to approach cyberbullying prevention in the classroom:

4.2 Practical information on how to implement the different techniques in the VET environment

You can take into account the following practical approaches to successfully prevent cyberbullying incidents in your VET classroom:

1. **Foster digital citizens.** Cyberbullying is impersonal in nature. It is important to remind or even teach VET students and trainees that the same rules apply in and out of the digital world.

Teach students how to be cyber safe and informed. Much like rules are taught, digital citizenship can be developed through explicit teaching.

2. **Keep up with technology.** Not being informed on the newest technologies puts VET teachers at a disadvantage. Allocate an hour per week to intentionally educate yourself about what your students are using or indeed, misusing. In doing so you will also have the added benefit of being able to confidently tackle the topic with in your VET classroom.
3. **Initiate Discussions about Bullying.** Awareness is powerful. It changes social perceptions. Put cyberbullying in the spotlight in your VET classroom. Discuss and teach VET students about the psychological and legal ramifications. Explore issues like technology risks, cyber safety and positive online communities. Talk about cases of cyberbullying and their resolution.
4. **Observe and supervise.** Students using computers or other devices in VET schools often have access to the Internet and social networking sites, despite efforts to restrict them through filters and firewalls. Teachers who do not properly supervise their VET students' usage of on-campus computers and personal mobile phones, are effectively allowing them to potentially engage in cyberbullying or fall victim to it. Actively monitor the online activities of VET students and set the tone that students who use technology in a distracting or harassing manner will be disciplined.
5. **Convince students that they should report abuse.** VET students need to know that they must report abuse. Every student should be encouraged to report instances or evidence of cyberbullying to a teacher, counsellor, or any other VET staff member.

Set up an anonymous reporting system so that VET students and trainees can inform VET school officials of a problem without fear of repercussion. These systems allow students to report incidents anonymously. Knowing there is a way to report cases may also stop students from engaging in the behavior.

6. **Establish clear policies.** Rules regarding technology need to be explicitly taught, rather than assumed. A VET student should be aware of policies before a problem occurs. Create clear boundaries. Policies serve as a good way to curtail verbal aggression and establish it as an unacceptable behavior.

Policies should also be specific, including any legal implications. VET school management should make sure that all VET students and trainees have been informed and are aware of the school's Policy against cyberbullying.

7. **Encourage Student Participation in Active Decision Making.** Invite the VET class to suggest rules against bullying and involve them in determining that bullying behavior is unacceptable. Students must have a voice at VET school. They are after all in the best position to know what programs, or sites are being used and misused.
8. **Finding the Right Resolutions:** Although there should be consequences for cyberbullying in the VET classroom, many experts say it should not be all about punishment. Those who bully need to understand the impact of their actions, and they can often benefit from counselling. Listen to the students and let the target be part of the solution.

Often, restorative justice techniques, where students talk with each other to understand the impact of the incident are extremely effective.

9. **Know when and how to involve community resources.** There may be situations that require the intervention of greater community resources such as counsellors, administrators, and law enforcement. Cyberbullying needs to be taken seriously and getting the community involved may prevent larger problems. Offer counselling services to both victims and perpetrators. Let students know that it is okay to need to talk to someone.

4.3 Practical suggestions and examples

1. **Promote a positive and safe classroom culture.** Whether or not you have technology in the classroom, setting norms of respectful communication sends a message to your students about what is and isn't acceptable. Find ways to demonstrate that your classroom is a safe, emotionally caring

environment. Provide resources in the classroom to help students identify, respond to, and avoid cyberbullying.

- This could be tips on how to respond to cyberbullying, or
- The phone number for an anonymous report and help line.

Online school tips sheet:

<https://www.common sense.org/education/sites/default/files/tlr-blog/cyberbullying-essentials-tip-sheet-middle-high.pdf>

2. Embrace teachable moments.

Step up when you encounter a teachable moment related to cyberbullying or respectful online communication.

-Encourage students to pay attention to "red flag moments" when something happens on digital media that makes them feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious.

-Explain to students the three ways they can and should respond if they witness cyberbullying:

- a. Be an **Ally**: Support the target of the bullying.
- b. Be an **Upstander**: try to stop the cyberbullying.
- c. Be a **Whistle blower**: Report it, tell a trusted VET teacher.

It may not be part of your lesson plan, and it may set you off course for a short period of time, but every time you reinforce anti-cyberbullying messages, you're doing the critical work of cyberbullying prevention. Be wary of the fact that choosing to ignore teachable moments as opportunities to raise the matter, sends a negative message to your students which will long be remembered

3. Incorporate lessons on cyberbullying into your existing curriculum.

Find connections to the content you're already teaching and make time to address cyberbullying directly. Examples can be:

-Setting norms of online communication.

-Using historical examples of propaganda and hate speech to discussing a bullying situation in a novel you're reading, the possible connections to cyberbullying can be made with little planning.

4. Campaign for a school- or district-wide digital citizenship programme.



The most effective cyberbullying prevention strategy has to involve the whole community. A fully integrated digital citizenship plan:

- Gives VET teachers the time and resources to tackle these topics head-on,
- Offers students consistent and frequent opportunities to build relative skills, and
- Supports families and community as they reinforce the messages at home and in the wider community environment.

Resource: Online example of an integrated digital citizenship programme:

<https://www.common sense.org/education/recognition-program>

5. Actively help students to create healthy online communities.

Stop cyberbullying before it happens by tackling the subject head-on. Focus on helping VET students to:

- Create positive online communities;
- Learn to identify, respond to, and limit the negative impact of cyberbullying; - Recognize their own role in escalating or de-escalating online cruelty.
- Use educational resources for teaching practical lessons on cyber bullying, digital drama and hate speech.

Resource: Interactive lessons and Activities for a Digital Citizenship Curriculum:

<https://www.common sense.org/education/digital-citizenship/curriculum?topic=cyberbullying-digital-drama--hate-speech>

Online lesson: Countering hate speech online

<https://www.common sense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/countering-hate-speech-online>

Online lesson: Online disinhibition and cyberbullying

<https://www.common sense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/online-disinhibition-and-cyberbullying>

On line lesson: The consequences of online hate speech

<https://www.common sense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/the-consequences-of-online-hate-speech>

Test

1. **Upstander** is a person who helps when they know that cyber bullying is occurring in their VET classroom.

True

False

2. In serious cases of cyberbullying, a severe punishment is necessary and usually more effective than restorative justice techniques.

True

False

3. Finding possible cyberbullying connections to the content you're already teaching and making time to address cyberbullying directly, may not be part of the lesson plan, but helps with cyberbullying prevention.

True

False

4. In order to prevent cyberbullying in the VET classroom, it is better to avoid extensive use of digital technology, so not to give the opportunity to the students to develop digital skills and familiarize themselves with being part of digital communities.

True

False

5. When a cyberbullying case is reported, it is better to keep all details out of the VET classroom and not to involve the target and the students in open discussions, in order to avoid escalation and prevent future incidents.

True

False

Sources

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<https://www.teachthought.com/technology/7-ways-to-prevent-cyberbullying/>



STANDUP

Fighting Cyberbullying

Fighting cyberbullying by identifying it in the VET classroom

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