Cyber Savvy

Preparing our students to become responsible digital citizens!

October is Bullying Prevention Month and I thought it would be a good idea to focus on Cyber Bullying for this month's newsletter. Bullying is "unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time." (www.stopbullying.gov).

Cyberbullying is "bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites." (www.stopbullying.gov) In both instances the behavior is repeated over time. While bullying in general is a serious issue, cyberbullying is particularly concerning. Using technology is faster and more widespread, and to the perpetrators it is seemingly anonymous. Texts and pictures can be uploaded, shared and spread very quickly, and children don't seem to understand the ramifications of this type of behavior. "Bullying is no longer about the strong picking on the weak in the schoolyard. The physical assault has been replaced by a 24 hour per day, seven days a week online bashing." (https://www.isafe.org/outreach/media/media_cyber_bullying)
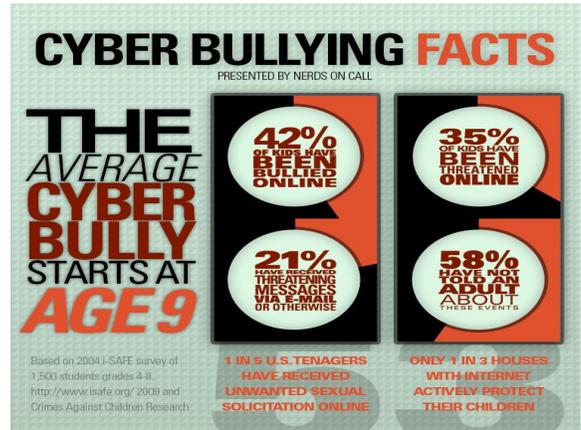
In preparing this month's newsletter I came across a lot of statistics about cyberbullying (42% of students surveyed by iSafe.org reported that they had been cyberbullied at one time or another; 58% of those students had not reported the incident to an adult; the average age that cyberbullying starts is age 9). This got me thinking about what our students

might report with regards to cyberbullying. **I developed a survey and had all Yoder 3rd, 4th and 5th graders complete it (The link is found on my webpage).** While the survey asks about issues other than cyberbullying, for the purpose of this newsletter I will concentrate on the cyberbullying statistics. Of the 120 students who completed the survey, 26 students (21.7%) said they had been cyberbullied. Of those 26 students only 16 said they had reported the cyberbullying. While these numbers may not seem significant, I believe this information serves as a reminder of the need to have discussions with our students.

The internet is a great way to connect to information, resources and people. However it is naive to think that we can makes these connections without being prepared and protected. It is especially important to prepare and protect our children as they navigate this digital world. We should know what our children are accessing online and have conversations with them about being safe when surfing the internet (https://www.commonsensemedia.org/cyberbullying, just click on your child's age and look at the discussion questions). Cyberbullying is real and we should be talking to our children about what it is and how to prevent it (refer to the infogram to the right about Cyber Bullying Tips). We need to encourage them to talk to us about things that they may see on the internet (or through smartphone applications) that makes them feel uncomfortable. I think it is important to teach our children not to be cyber bullies themselves. Using good manners is no longer just about those face-to-face moments. We need to teach our children proper "netiquette" (manners on the internet).

about things they may see on the internet (or through smartphone applications) that makes them uncomfortable. It is also important to teach them not to be cyberbullies themselves. Using good manners is no longer just about the face-to-face moments. We accomplish that by teaching them proper "netiquette" (use of manners on the internet).

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22% of Yoder 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students said they have been cyberbullied.