

Join the national conversation!



Focus Words

anonymous | underlying | capacity | adequately | harassment

Weekly Passage

Sixteen-year-old Megan Meier was thrilled when she started chatting with Josh Evans on Facebook. Before she had been sad and lonely, but Josh was good-looking and very kind to her. He even told her that she was his “number one.” However, one day Josh’s messages suddenly turned from nice to cruel. Megan was devastated. She was so hurt and upset by the way he treated her that she committed suicide. Later, Megan’s parents learned that Josh Evans was not a real person. Neighbors had created the false profile to harass Megan.

Whereas bullying has existed in schools for years, cyberbullying is a new method that bullies use to harm their victims. Cyberbullies use text messages, instant messages, email, or sites like Facebook to send harmful messages. Cyberbullying also includes spreading rumors and manipulating photographs online.

Cyberbullying is especially common among middle school students. An estimated 42% of middle school students are involved in cyberbullying either as a bully or as a victim. When a child is having problems in school, cyberbullying can be an underlying cause. Students who are bullied online may be afraid to come to school, participate in class, talk to their peers, or go to recess. When people are afraid, they are less able to learn.

Perhaps schools should get involved to help stop cyberbullying. Some say school police officers should investigate cyberbullying as a crime of harassment. Others say teachers should talk with students about cyberbullying. Class discussions could address how to stay safe on the internet, how to handle cyberbullies, and where to get help if you are hurt by cyberbullies.

Some people say schools should only be concerned with what happens at school, not with what happens out of school. They point out that schools have limited resources and do not have the capacity to adequately address cyberbullying. Since many of the harmful comments come from anonymous sources, teachers and principals do not have time to investigate who the cyberbullies are. Besides, some people say parents are the only people responsible for keeping teens safe on the internet. Do you think schools should protect kids from cyberbullying?

TEACHER: Discussion Questions

- ▶ How is cyberbullying different from face-to-face bullying?
- ▶ Does your school have the capacity to address cyberbullying using the methods suggested in the passage?
- ▶ According to the passage, what happens when schools ignore cyberbullying?
- ▶ Why is cyberbullying an important issue?
- ▶ If you could have talked to Megan, what would you have said?



Unit 3.16 - Should schools protect kids from cyberbullying?

Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
underlying	(adj.) - involved but not revealed or expressed	underlie underlies underlay underlain	lie (v.)		overlying
capacity	(n.) - ability	capacities		capacious	capable capability capacitance capacitate
adequately	(adv.) - something done well enough		adequate	inadequate adequateness	equate equal
anonymous	(adj.) - not named or identified			anonymously anonymouslyness anonym	homonymous synonymous
harassment	(n.) - the act of verbally or physically harming or annoying someone	harasses harassing harassed	harass (v.)	harasser	

Unit 3.16 - Should schools protect kids from cyberbullying?

Problem of the Week



Option 1: In 2009, Phoebe Prince was a 15-year-old freshman at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts. Her bright smile hid **underlying** pain. She was **harassed** by her classmates, both online and in school. Online, bullying can get out of hand because bullies can be **anonymous**. This anonymity gives bullies even greater **capacity** to be cruel. Their cruelty makes their victims feel **inadequate** and alone. In January of 2010, Phoebe committed suicide.

The average life expectancy for an American woman is 80 years. What fraction of Phoebe's life still lay ahead of her?

- A) $\frac{3}{4}$
- B) $\frac{4}{5}$
- C) $\frac{17}{20}$
- ☒ D) $\frac{13}{20}$

Option 2: When Phoebe Prince committed suicide after months of online **harassment**, several of her classmates were brought up on criminal charges. In high profile cases like this one, courtrooms often fill to **capacity** with families of both the accused and the victim. While many students harassed Phoebe, prosecutors only had **adequate** evidence to prosecute a few. Many of her bullies will remain **anonymous**. Even so, they may carry **underlying** feelings of guilt for the rest of their lives.

Say that for every 10 students who bullied Phoebe Prince, only one was brought up on charges. Say that b = the number of bullies and c = the number of students brought up on charges. Which equation is true?

- A) $10b = c$
- ☒ B) $c = b/10$
- C) $.1c = b$
- D) none of the above

Math Discussion Question: The internet offers new ways for people to engage in bullying and **harassment**. People who are usually kind may discover an **underlying capacity** for meanness when they are online, where they feel **anonymous**. Some people suggest rules to help others to remember to be kind. For example, "Don't say something online that you wouldn't say in person." Is this rule **adequate**? What are some other good rules for online interactions?

Eckholm, E. and Zezima, K. (2010, March 29). Six teenagers are charged after classmate's suicide. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on May 19, 2010 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/30/us/30bully.html>

Should schools protect kids from cyberbullying?

Debating the Issue



GO!

I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Schools should only be concerned with student learning. If they are responsible for disciplining cyberbullies, teachers and principals may not have time to do their job of helping students learn.

B Even though cyberbullying might not happen at school, it affects the students. Students need help from schools to address out-of-school problems that may affect their learning.

C Parents are the only people who can actually stop cyberbullying. They need to limit their children's computer time and monitor their messages.

D Schools should not discipline cyberbullies, the police should. Cyberbullying should be a crime. Cyberbullying is serious and cyberbullies should face serious consequences.

E _____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

TEACHER

Whatever debate format you use in your class, ask students to use academically productive talk in arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should also be encouraged to take their own positions on the issue at hand.

Unit 3.16 - Should schools protect kids from cyberbullying?

Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Lexie Kahn and Professor Paul E. Seemy suspect that teens are more likely to **harass** their classmates online than face to face because the internet gives bullies the **capacity** to be **anonymous**. Teens who bully this way cannot see their victim's reaction to their hurtful words. Some people think that without seeing the victim's reaction, bullies don't get **adequate** feedback about when they should stop bullying.

The following experiment aims to explore the **underlying** causes of persistent cyberbullying.

Question:

Are people more likely to hurt others when they cannot see the victim?

Hypothesis:

People are more likely to hurt others when they cannot see the victim.

Materials:

- ▶ Fake electric shock device
- ▶ Actor
- ▶ 2 rooms
- ▶ Subject (person who is being experimented upon)

The premise of this study is based on an actual and highly controversial experiment described in Stanley Milgram's *Obedience to Authority*. (1974, Harper & Row). See also:

<http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7article/article35.htm>

Procedure:

Unseen victim

1. Bring subject into a room containing a fake shock device. Tell the subject this device is connected to a person in another room.
2. Instruct the subject to give a shock to the other person.
3. When the subject presses the button, the actor will scream to pretend he is in pain.
4. Instruct the subject to increase the intensity of the shock. Do this until the subject has given five shocks altogether or until he refuses to give any more. With each shock the actor will scream louder.
5. Record the number of shocks the subject agrees to give.

Visible victim

Repeat the steps above with the actor in the room with the subject. The subject will be able to see the actor's face.

Data:

Unseen Victim	
Shocker	# of shocks given
A	5
B	5
C	4
D	5
E	5

Visible Victim	
Shocker	# of shocks given
A	2
B	1
C	3
D	5
E	4

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Four out of five subjects gave fewer shocks when they could see the victim's face. Only one subject (D) gave an equal number of shocks to both victims.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Writing Prompt

Should schools protect kids from cyberbullying?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

anonymous | underlying | capacity |
adequately | harassment

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

» American Association of School Administrators. (n.d.) Cyberbullying. Retrieved December 24, 2009, from <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=6508&terms=cyberbullying>

» Primetime. (2006, September 12). What parents need to know about cyberbullying: Teens are often far ahead of parents when it comes to technology. Retrieved June 30, 2008 from <http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/story?id=2425023>

» Time for Kids article on cyberbullying. Very accessible. Could be a good supplemental activity or homework reading. Winchester, E. (2007, April 6). High-tech bullies. Time for Kids, 12,(23). Retrieved December 24, 2008 from <http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/teachers/wr/article/0,27972,1605948,00.html>

» Website created by cyberbullying researchers; has advice, statistics, and general information: Cyberbullying Research Center. Retrieved Dec 24, 2009, <http://www.cyberbullying.us/research.php>

» What is cyberbullying? (Good summary of the issue) Sony Creative Software and the Ad Council. (2007). Cyberbullying: A discussion with Justin Patchin, Ph.D. Retrieved December 24, 2009, from http://www.uwec.edu/patchinj/sony_video.wmv

» News Report on Megan Meier's death CNN. (2007, November 16). Megan Meier story. Retrieved December 24, 2009 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFsfDLCKfQU>

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