

SUBMISSION No. 37

The Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety
Suite R1-109
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

June 25, 2010

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Submission – Kids and Cyber-Safety

Please find set out below my submission to the Joint Select Committee on Cyber –Safety.

Title: Kids, Cyber-Safety & Respectful Learning Environments

Introduction

In this submission it is argued that Cyber-Bullying is a relatively new vehicle for perpetuating bullying. The origins of bullying are presented as an excellent way to adequately understand Cyber-Bullying. After presenting bullying as both covert and overt, educational game-play is introduced as an outstanding methodology for teaching kids and adults how to develop respectful learning environments, which are also respectful workplaces.

Background

Bullying has been around ever since an imbalance of power existed between two or more people or groups of people or countries. So, on the one hand there is nothing new about bullying & abuse. On the other hand, what appears to be new about bullying & abuse is the increasing awareness of the serious damage it can cause to kids, adults and organizations. Formal and informal victims of bullying suffer unnecessary psychological problems which can significantly reduce their academic performance and workplace productivity. Now it seems there is a desire to remedy this situation.

If it is agreed that schools and educational institutions are also adult workplaces, then it becomes clear that kids and cyber-safety needs to be considered in relation to bullying as both a kids issue and an adult issue. But where and how do kids learn bullying behaviours? Kids can learn bullying behaviours from everyday life where they are exposed adults, entertainment, sport, politics, relationships, media and the internet and related electronic devices.

Definition of Cyber-bullying

American cyberlaw expert Parry Aftab defines Cyber-Bullying in relation to minors. She says:

Cyberbullying is “any cyber-communication or publication posted or sent by a minor online, by instant message, e-mail, website, diary site, online profile, interactive game, handheld device, cell phone, game device, digital camera or video, webcam or use of any interactive device that is intended to frighten, embarrass, harass, hurt, set up, cause harm to, extort, or otherwise target another minor (2010).”

Definition of bullying

Definitions of bullying, also known as hazing and mobbing, abound. But the key elements that make up these definitions can be characterized by:

- Imbalance and misuse of power.
- Repetition

- Deliberate
- Intention to change power status
- Lack of empathy

Bullying involves the following four key character groups:

- Bullies
- Targets
- Victims, and
- Bystanders

However, targets of bullying and abuse need not become victims of bullying and abuse. Rather, they can learn to assert behaviours which can help them remain targets that deflect these unwarranted and unwanted attacks. For example, a customer in the retail store uses toxic behaviors and words with a shop assistant. The shop assistant can choose to agree with the bully and accept the bullying and abuse or decide that the customer is exhibiting inappropriate behavior, deflect the inappropriate behaviors and concentrate on the job of being a professional shop assistant.

Equally important is to recognize the power of bystanders. If bystanders do not give the bullies the recognition they crave, the bullies lose power. Sadly, bystanders suffer many of the same symptoms as the targets due to the fear that they may be the next targets and due to the abusive atmosphere in which the bullying takes place.

Another way of understanding bullying and abuse is by comparing and contrasting school based bullying with workplace bullying. This issue is addressed in the article: "Risk Managing Bullying and Abuse in the Workplace", which can be found on the National Productivity Commission's web site. The URL is: http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/94953/sub017.pdf

Covert and overt bullying

Nevertheless, if we see bullying as both covert and overt, it is easy to see covert bullying through tangible inappropriate behaviours such as verbal and physical abuse. But when we see it as covert bullying such as exclusion, it is almost impossible to see and remedy. To make matters worse bullying and abuse has been embedded and legitimated in our cultures for numerous generations through work practices, gender inequalities, the media, religion, sport, parenting, and leadership styles.

When bullying is likened to an Iceberg, overt bullying would be above the surface and easy to see and remedy. And covert bullying would be below the surface, difficult to see and almost impossible to remedy. And it is below the surface that the bulk of bullying and abuse would be found.

Typical trait of the bully character

There is numerous character traits associated with bullying behaviours. Some of which are:

- Insecure
- Low self esteem
- Victim status (often previously been a victim of bullying)
- Angry
- Disempowered

Proposal

If it is accepted that change and learning are extricable interwoven, meaning you can't have one without the other, then we can see that the major changes require major learning. One way kids and adults deal with anger, anxiety and depression is by projecting it on to others in the form of bullying. If it is accepted that Cyber-Bullying is another vehicle for perpetuating bullying, (just as the range of

communication methods available has expanded so to have the range of bullying vehicles). Then educational solutions are needed to address Cyber-Bullying (possibly the most insidious form of bullying identified to date). However, it is important to note that changes of this nature need to be seen as processes and processes such as these require considerable time and hard work.

Accordingly, we propose a change process whereby educational games are utilised as an outstanding methodology to teach kids and adults how to minimise bullying and abuse by working towards respectful learning environments, which are also to respectful workplaces.

Why game-play?

The combination of entertainment and education date back to traditions of oral story telling, that passed on the values and traditions of ancient civilizations from one generation to the next. Board games, like other *Entertainment Education Strategies*, “combine entertainment and education in order to promote pro-social values, beliefs and practices, and achieve educational goals.” (Brown & Phraser 1977).

Counsellors and child psychologists have used board games to diagnose and teach cooperation, good sportsmanship, and other pro-social skills. A new generation of board games has been designed by Franklin Learning Systems to teach specific skills and knowledge that are not easily taught using more traditional methods. These skills are more targeted than skills that can be learned from traditional board games that were designed for entertainment only. For example, Monopoly[®] can be used to teach how to be a gracious winner, a good loser, and the importance of honesty. However, Monopoly[®] and other games designed purely for fun are not effective at teaching anger control or strategies for preventing bullying. Board games, in contrast to computer games, also offer the unique advantage of involving significant interpersonal communication and interaction as well as all human senses.

Games have been used at all levels from kindergarten to graduate schools of business. The military has used “war games” for centuries as learning devices to improve both tactics and strategy. Even organisational change, as a leadership intervention can be explained as a game with its own rules (Kingsley, 1998).

Learning through game-play can be understood using Bandura’s (1976) social learning theory. Similarly:

“each time students master a board game on social-cognitive issues, they gradually develop higher levels of self-efficacy. As players watch others play or observe the choices and consequences of others, the level of self-efficacy, again, is affected (King, 2008).”

Players also observe other players making decisions and the consequences. Players practice (rehearse) positive behaviours and experience the positive results. Both of these processes improve skill level, knowledge, and self-efficacy. Finally, players have the requisite skills to deal effectively with real world challenges. Positive results further reinforce the skills that are learned.

Educational games have important advantages over other educational strategies. These include:

- Active involvement of players and all their senses,
- Reducing the teacher’s role as “judge and jury”,
- Increased attention though the intrinsic interest in the game and the desire to win,
- Less threatening through the utilization of third party characters and scenarios,
- The ability to involve layers with mixed initial skill levels without the problem of boredom for advanced players and confusion for the less advanced players,

- The creation of a very low risk environment where players can try out new pro-social behaviours in a safe setting. There are no fears of negative consequences, since “it is only a game,” and
- Exceptional learning transfer to the real world.

Bully minimization games from The Brainary

The Brainary, www.thebrainary.com distributes a “world leading” range of educational games, which specifically address Cyber-Bullying, bullying and abuse. In addition, they have a large range of games, which address related emotional literacy issues. The bully minimization games can be viewed by clicking on the links below.

Cyber Safe

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=86&cat=0&page=1>

Learn to play Dominos – Cyber Smart

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=3083&cat=0&page=1>

Bullies to Buddies

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=35&cat=0&page=1>

Bully Busters

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=38&cat=0&page=2>

Bully Safe

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=3082&cat=0&page=2>

Play to learn Dominos – Bully Wise

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=629&cat=0&page=2>

Block the Bully cycle

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=35&cat=0&page=1>

The Respectful workplace game

<http://www.thebrainary.com/shop/product.php?productid=1672&cat=0&page=2>

Conclusion

This submission has identified Cyber-Bullying as a form of bullying, which is both a kids and adults issue because schools are also adult workplaces. It has been argued that bullying can be addressed by developing respectful learning environments, which are also respectful workplaces. Like Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S), bullying & abuse can be identified, bench marked, and minimized.

In conclusion, and as a result of identifying Cyber-Bullying and abuse as a vehicle for perpetuating bullying, an opportunity has surfaced as bright as a shining beacon for schools to become respectful learning environments, which are also respectful workplaces. In such environments both kids and adults can thrive and grow with little disruption from the negative behaviours associated with Cyber-Bullying, bullying and abuse.

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