Cyber Bullying

"Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Usually, it is repeated over time. Traditionally, bullying has involved actions such as hitting or punching (physical bullying), teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying), or intimidation through gestures or social exclusion. In recent years, technology has given children and youth a new means of bullying each other.

Cyber bullying, which is sometimes referred to as online social cruelty or electronic bullying, can involve sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and intentionally excluding someone from an online group (Willard, 2005). Children and youth can cyber bully each other through emails, instant messaging, text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones, web pages, web logs (blogs), chat rooms or discussion groups, and other information communication technologies." Resource: www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov

Parents can help their children by developing a relationship with their child that fosters communication and trust. Educate kids to make better choices when they are utilizing technology. There are educational cyber-bullying videos available online to watch with your children, including www.NetSmartz.org and www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov. Communicate that trust and emphasize the defensive use of technology. Parents should also share their own online experiences. Ask questions to stimulate a two-way conversation. When students share information with parents, parents should not exhibit a shocked reaction. Be supportive of the victims.

Parents can also be proactive at home by installing extra security on their computers such as blocking, filtering, and key logging software including CYBERsitter, Net Nanny, CyberPatrol, SurfControl, or PC Tattletale. In addition, parents can become educated in technology, understand the Internet, talk with other parents and educators, visit online tutorials, get their own myspace.com account, and know the computer lingo.

Consider having a safer cell phone plan for children (TicTalk, Firefly, or Disney) as well as having a safer way of logging into the email accounts (logging in together, having all incoming email forwarded to the account of the guardian, and using filtering and other safety features of the online web mail accounts). Make sure that children know the rules of using the computer and that no personal or private information should be given online – Accounts should be set up as private accounts. Be proactive by having the computers and game box systems located in a centralized and visual location in the home like the kitchen or family room. Children should also be taught to have proper etiquette when they are communicating with technology.

If parents have concerns regarding shared online information about their child, parents can investigate through Google using their child's user identification or with other similar information (parents may want to Google their child's friends too). "Consider contacting an attorney in cases of serious cyber bullying. In some circumstances, civil law permits victims to sue a bully or his or her parents in order to recover damages. If you are uncertain if cyber bullying violates your jurisdiction's criminal laws, contact your local police, who will advise you. Please contact the police if your child has threats of violence; extortion; obscene or harassing phone calls or text messages; harassment, stalking, or hate crimes; or child pornography."

Please feel free to contact our PCMS School Counselors, who can provide additional support:
Mrs. Nicole Gerth, School Counselor (Grade 6/Grade 8: Alliance/Pride)
Telephone: (920) 822-6510
Email: njgerth@pulaski.k12.wi.us

Ms. Kristine Kuhn, School Counselor (Grade 7/Grade 8: Courage)
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Resource:
www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov,
(Resource of the US Department of Health and Human Services – Health Resources and Services Administration)