



School Safety

9 Tips for Thwarting Cyberbaiting

Cyberbaiting — when students taunt a teacher or bus driver to record their reaction — can lead to embarrassing online exposure. Here’s an overview of the problem and tips to help your staff prevent it.

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by Debbie Rike

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So how widespread is this phenomenon? According to a 2011 Norton Online Family Report, one in five teachers across the globe had personally experienced cyberbaiting or knew someone who had.

Preventing the problem How can our school staff members prevent this from happening to them? For starters, they should not allow students to use iPods or cell phones just because it keeps them quiet. Some school bus drivers underestimate the damage that can be done. A student may record acts of bullying, vulgar/inappropriate behaviors, fights and other harassing or embarrassing images.

Surprisingly, elementary students appear to be just as likely as the older students to engage in cyberbaiting. These days, it seems that everyone has a smartphone.

Consider these tips for school bus driver training:

1. Increase driver awareness of cyberbaiting and its potential harm.
2. Require drivers to enforce the district’s student cell phone policy.
3. Drivers should avoid personal and social networking/communication with students. They are not your friends.
4. Drivers should not take video or photos of students or situations on the bus.
5. Don’t take student behavior personally.
6. If drivers always remain calm and professional, cyberbaiting will never be a problem for them. If you don’t want to be heard using unprofessional language, simply don’t say it.
7. Remember: The eyes of the world are always watching. Respond in all situations as if the media were present.



Debbie Rike recently retired as director of transportation at Shelby County Schools in Arlington, Tenn. Before her work in transportation, she served as a special-education teacher and administrator.

8. Report all violations of cell phone policies, especially if it appears that a student may be recording incidents on the bus.
9. Drivers can ask for the student's phone, but they should not get involved in a power struggle — no one wins.

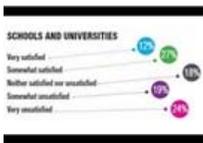
Most of all, school bus drivers and staff members must remember that they are the adult in the situation. They should always act like the professionals they are.

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