CYBER BULLYING

DEFINITION
Cyber bullying is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen, or teen using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, or mobile phones. Cyber bullies can be classmates, online acquaintances, and even anonymous users, but most often they do know their victims.

Research
According to a recent survey, more than one-third of U.S. teens say they have been cyber bullied or know someone who has. Cyber bullying can lead to low self-esteem and other negative emotional responses. Victims may feel scared, frustrated, humiliated, angry, and even depressed. They may become isolated, withdrawn, jumpy, or nervous when receiving a text or instant message, and may even stop going to school. There have been several reported cases in which cyber bullying victims have committed suicide. Both boys and girls sometimes bully online, and just as in face-to-face bullying, tend to do so in different ways. Boys more commonly bully by sending messages of a sexual nature or by threatening to fight or hurt someone. Girls more often bully by spreading rumors and by sending messages that make fun of someone or exclude others. They also tell secrets. Both victims and perpetrators of cyber bulling are twice as likely to be girls.

Examples of Cyber Bullying
1. Sending someone mean or threatening emails, instant messages, or text messages.
2. Excluding someone from an instant messenger buddy list or blocking their email for no reason.
3. Tricking someone into revealing personal or embarrassing information and sending it to others.
4. Breaking into someone's email or instant message account to send cruel or untrue messages while posing as that person.
5. Creating websites to make fun of another person such as a classmate or teacher.
6. Using websites to rate peers as prettiest, ugliest, etc.

HISD's Cyber Bullying Policy
HISD has a **zero-tolerance policy against bullying**, and students caught cyber bullying at school can be disciplined under the *Code of Student Conduct*. If you believe you are being cyber bullied or if you know someone who is, please contact your school's principal or another trusted adult on your campus.

Prevention and Response
HISD has partnered with **Common Sense Media** and the Cyber Bullying Research Center to educate our students, parents, and educators about the dangers of cyber bullying and to provide resources to assist with prevention and to facilitate response to incidents.

Video
"5 Ways to Stop Cyberbullies"
—https://www.commonsensemedia.org/videos/5-ways-to-stop-cyberbullies-0

SEXTING

Research

Sending and receiving text messages via one's cell phone has become extremely popular, especially among adolescents. In addition to sending text-based messages, many cell phones also allow users to send pictures and videos. While there are many positives aspects associated with this ability to connect, communicate, and share instantly, it also creates many potential problems. One major issue of concern that has emerged is referred to as "sexting". A recent survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy found that 22 percent of teen girls and 20 percent of teen boys have sent nude or semi-nude photos over the Internet or their cell phones. Kids "sext" to show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove their commitment. Sending seductive pictures or messages is problematic enough, but the real challenge comes when this inappropriate content is shared broadly. When revealing photos are made public, the subject of them almost always ends up feeling humiliated. Furthermore, sending sexual images to minors is against the law, and some states have begun prosecuting children for child pornography or felony obscenity.

Texas Penal Code

Since Texas Senate Bill 407 passed in 2011, the legal consequences regarding sexting have been expanded in Texas. Therefore, it is extremely important for everyone - especially minors - to become aware of the penalties that can come from being convicted or adjudicated of sexting. If a minor who is not a child is found guilty of the offense of sexting, penalties range from a fine (not to exceed $500) to up to one year in jail. If an individual is convicted of the felony offense of possession or promotion of child pornography, penalties range from 2 to 20 years in prison.

Prevention Tips

1. Parents should speak to their child about the consequences of sexting; do not wait for an incident to happen first.
2. Remind teens that once an image is sent, it can never be retrieved, and they lose control of it. Ask them how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or even the entire school saw the picture.
3. Talk about pressures to send revealing photos. Let teens know that you understand how they can be pushed or dared into sending something. Tell them that no matter how strong the social pressure to sext, the potential social humiliation can be hundreds of times worse.
4. Teach students that the buck stops with them. If someone sends them a photo, they should delete it immediately. It is better to be part of the solution than the problem. Besides, if they do send it on, they're distributing pornography — and that's against the law.

Video

"8 Things You and Your Teen Need to know About Sexting"
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/videos/8-things-you-and-your-teen-need-to-know-about-sexting

DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Teens are living out romantic relationships online – flirting, fighting, breaking up, and making up. Online talk can be a healthy and even powerful way for some teens to get closer to others, but what happens when relationships get rocky? Couples might trade public insults through texts, Facebook status updates, and other social media posts. This situation may even worsen when couples break up, especially if the breakup is nasty or done with an impersonal text or email.

Some teenage relationships can become manipulative and controlling, especially when teens use digital devices at their disposal to act out. A few texts a day can turn into a few hundred. Relentless and unreasonable demands escalate. The abuser presses for things like the other person's passwords (so they can check up on them), request sexy photos, and forces their significant other to unfriend people they don't like. Parents and educators can support and protect teens against such digital drama and abuse by providing guidance on how to establish appropriate boundaries for relationships and by encouraging them to take steps to protect their digital domain while they are in a relationship.

Defending Your Digital Domain
1. Keep your personal information private and your passwords on lockdown.
2. Trust your instincts. If you don't like or feel threatened by something in a text, IM, or anywhere online, tell an adult and report threats to site administrators.
3. Don't settle and accept relationships or friendships that don't give you any breathing room. If your inboxes are overflowing with unwanted messages, take control. Delete, de-friend, and defend your domain.
4. Be a wingman. If one of your friends is dealing with harassment from a classmate, stranger, or crush, show your friend that you are someone to depend on.
5. Be part of the solution. No matter how large or small, every action you take to increase awareness of this issue is an important step.

Video
"Beeping"— https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJbYCYAVTjQ

ONLINE SECURITY

Just as in real life, it is important that students know whom they can trust with their information on the Internet. ***If kids don't protect their personal information and understand digital security risks, their devices can be damaged, they can fall prey to scams, and they can increase their risk of identity theft. For instance, one child might ask another child for his computer password to play a game, and then access their private email account. Or a student might use a file-sharing program that passes along a virus to his or her computer.*** Students also need to understand that when they're online, companies are watching and tracking their behavior, and scam artists might try to trick them into giving out personal information such as their phone number, address, date of birth, and even their Social Security number.

What can you do?

1. **Create strong passwords.** A powerful password does wonders to protect accounts. A password should be hard to guess, be a combination of letters, numbers and symbols, and never include private identity information such as birthdays or addresses. Students should be encouraged to never share their passwords with friends.

2. **Think twice before downloading.** Content that students download from non-secure sources can plague a computer with problems. Free games and videos often come with spyware and viruses. Encourage students to download only from secure sites.

3. **Be careful when sharing information.** Students should be careful when sharing information such as full name, address, and account numbers. Messages that ask them to share private information are red flags for scams. If teens suspect a scam, they should not reply to it and not click on links in the message.

4. **Identify and deal with spam.** Teach students that spam is Internet junk mail that should not be opened, because if they do, they will just receive more of it. The best strategy is not to open email from any addresses you don't recognize.

Consider limiting data collection. Help students take control over their own information.

1. **Disabling** Internet "cookies" so companies cannot track online behavior,
2. **Limiting** clicking on ads, and
3. **Examining** a website's privacy policy before revealing any information on it.

Video
"5 Surefire Ways to Protect Your Online Privacy"
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/video/advice/privacy-and-internet-safety

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

DEFINITION
Digital Footprint: A word used to describe the trail, traces, or "footprints" that people leave online

Research
Digital life is both public and permanent. Everything we do online creates digital footprints that migrate and persist. Something that happens on the spur of the moment - a funny picture, an angry post - can resurface years later. And if we aren't careful, our reputations can be harmed. In addition, a bad digital footprint can affect our future livelihood. Colleges now are checking the social media postings of potential students, and employers are doing the same for applicants. That's why it is crucial that HISD and parents work together to ensure that our students are good digital citizens.

DEFINITION
Digital Citizen: A person who use the Internet regularly and effectively

Research
A good digital citizen is one who knows what is right and wrong, exhibits intelligent technology behavior, and makes good choices when using technology. Much as we want our kids to be good citizens in the real world, we want the same in the digital world.

Characteristics of a good digital citizen include
1. Being confident and capable of using information communication technologies.
2. Using technology to participate in educational, cultural, and economic activities.
3. Developing and using critical thinking skills in cyberspace.
4. Using technology to relate to others in positive, meaningful ways.
5. Respecting the concepts of privacy and freedom of speech in a digital world.
6. Contributing to and actively promoting the values of digital citizenship.

Ensuring students understand the importance of good digital citizenship and the potential impact of a negative footprint requires the work of parents and educators. Here are some tips that both children and adults can **use to maintain their digital footprint**:

1. Think long term. What seems fun today could have long-term consequences.
2. Keep personal information private.
3. Use privacy settings on your social network pages. Don't use public posting.
4. Protect your friends' privacy as well as yours.
5. Use the Golden Rule online - treat others the way you want to be treated.

Video
"Two Kinds of Stupid"
http://www.netsmartz.org/RealLifeStories/TwoKindsOfStupid