

Bullying enters new dimension

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Students face intimidation and threats through cell phones, Web

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AUDUBON

There was a time when bullying occurred mainly in the school yard, but not anymore.

Today it's taking place over the Internet in the form of e-mails to the victim and other schoolmates, said Ken Hartman of Cherry Hill, academic director for Drexel University's online university.

"You used to maybe fight it out after school and that was it. Today, it can last forever and can keep getting repeated over and over in cyberspace," said Hartman, 46, during a Thursday seminar at the Haviland Avenue School in Audubon.

"There's five major ways that children are bullied in cyberspace: instant messaging, chat rooms, Web sites, Web blogs and cell phones," he said. "This kind of bullying you don't see or hear about and your kids aren't probably going to tell you about."

Sherry Kane, a substitute teacher in the Audubon school district, said she came to the seminar for two reasons.

"The first is that I'm the parent of two teenagers, ages 14 and 17. I want to know what I can do to help them if they are the victim of bullying," she said.

"The second is that as a teacher, I need to know all I can to help any student that may be bullied. I need to be able to recognize any visible symptoms that may exist," she said.

Edward Turner, who has two children in the Audubon school district, ages 12 and 14, said he was concerned because of all the news about bullying and "what's

happened across the country over the past several years."

Said Turner: "It's important to be able to recognize any problems before they get out of hand."

Camden County Prosecutor Vincent P. Sarubbi said the seminar was part of his office's ongoing pro-active program regarding bullying and violence in schools.

"We go to schools with the program," he said. "Our research shows that 20 percent of the students do the bullying. The kids say they see some form of bullying or violence in the schools all the time and most believe that it can't be changed. Our programs give them alternatives."

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

Keep computers in open, common areas rather than in your kids' bedrooms.

Insist that your kids tell you first if they want to meet someone they contacted online.

Tell your kids not to give out personal information in e-mail or in chat rooms.

Encourage them to tell you if they encounter material or messages that make them feel uncomfortable.

Teach them not to use the Internet to spread gossip, bully or make threats against others. Source: www.bewebaware.ca

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