Case study: Lauren’s ordeal—Cyberbullying

Theme

Bullying can take place online and offline. The focus of this activity is cyberbullying and its effects.

Key learning/subject areas

Cross curricula.

Duration

One to two periods.

Objectives

On completion of this activity students will be able to:
• identify some of the potential impacts of cyberbullying
• list their rights and responsibilities in relation to cyberbullying
• apply strategies to protect themselves from cyberbullying.

Depending on available time the outputs of this activity will be:
• a code of conduct for cyberbullying
• a presentation on cyberbullying for younger students
• the creation and presentation of a number of engaging role-plays in class
• an advertisement on cyberbullying.
Resources/links/materials required

CyberNetrix CD-ROM

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Materials required at school

- Case study activity handout.
- Case study transcript handout.
- If desired, computers with internet access to view selected websites and video clips.
- Resources to create a radio, print or television community service announcement if extension activity is selected.

Additional resources

Websites

- ACMA provides information on different aspects of cybersafety.  
  www.netalert.gov.au
- Kids Help Line provides free, confidential and anonymous telephone and online counselling.  
  www.kidshelp.com.au
- The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association provides advice specifically in relation to mobile phones and cyberbullying.  
  www.str8tlk.amta.org.au/default.asp?id=635
• The ‘Bullying No Way’ website provides a range of resources including mobile movies made by Australian students.
  www.bullyingnoway.com.au

• The BBC hosts this site which deals with bullying and cyberbullying for younger children.
  news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/specials/bullying/default.stm

• ‘Bullying.org’ is a Canadian website providing information and advice on cyberbullying.
  www.bullying.org

**Video clips**

Some video clips dealing with cyberbullying are suitable for students—it may be decided to refer students to the following:

• ChildNet is a not-for-profit organisation that works in partnership with others around the world to help make the internet a safe place for children. It has provided the following video clip on cyberbullying:

• Beatbullying is a United Kingdom bullying prevention charity. It is hosted on YouTube and has a number of videos which it may be decided to vet for student use.
  www.youtube.com/user/Beatbullying
Introduction

The focus of this case study is cyberbullying on the internet and mobile phones. Students can undertake this activity by reading the handout and case study transcript, or in conjunction with viewing the video on the CyberNetrix CD-ROM.

Prior learning

Students need to have knowledge of internet safety issues and possible responses to different situations when using the internet and mobile technologies.
Activity description

1. Whole class activity

Introduce the topic by asking the students if they know what cyberbullying involves.

As a class the students can discuss the following questions:

- What is cyberbullying and which technologies can be used to cyberbully?
- Is cyberbullying any different to offline bullying? Do you think it is worse or just different?
- Do the people involved in cyberbullying have to know each other?

Students can view or read ‘Lauren’s Ordeal’.

Students can engage in discussion either by using the handout or some of the following prompts to generate discussion:

- Cyberbullying—is this a problem in our school?
- What are the differences between bullying and cyberbullying?
- The internet is a public place—what should you keep private online e.g. full name, address, age, mobile number, email address and anything which might locate a student such as school or sporting club?
- What are some of the things Lauren could have done to help prevent cyberbullying?
- How responsible is Susan for Lauren’s ordeal?
- Why do you think other people became involved in cyberbullying Lauren—even though they didn’t know her?
- Are people breaking the law when they threaten Lauren?

The Criminal Code 1995 (Commonwealth) makes it an offence to use a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence to others, even if this not your intention.
2. **Pair/small group activity**

Students select one of the two listed activities:

1. Does your school have a policy on cyberbullying? If not, create a code of conduct to guide student behaviour that includes a student’s right to be safe from cyberbullying as well as their responsibilities to others.

2. Develop a brief presentation that can be used with younger students to introduce the topic of cyberbullying. In five to six slides, define cyberbullying, describe some of its potential impacts on victims, provide information on how people can protect themselves and where to get help.

**Extension activities**

1. **Role-play**

   In pairs, ask the students to assume the roles of Susan and a school counsellor and write a dialogue that they can deliver to the rest of the class.

   When Lauren confronts Susan, she says, ‘It was just a bit of fun! I didn’t mean for it to be so serious.’ Explore the extent to which Susan is responsible for Lauren’s ordeal.

   Provide the following role outline to each student.

   **Student A**

   **Susan:** You are quite shocked by how the whole situation gets out of hand. You wanted to pay Lauren back for stealing your boyfriend and thought it was fun to steal her identity and create trouble for her. But you had no idea that the situation would get out of control and you are not sure if you should get all the blame for what happened.

   **Student B**

   **School counsellor:** Susan is referred to you for counselling. At your school, bullies are seen as having a problem and are counselled so they can see that their behaviour is not acceptable.

   Your job is to get Susan to see that she is responsible for Lauren’s ordeal. She needs to understand that stealing someone’s online identity can lead to unforeseen consequences.
2. **Small group/whole class activity**

This activity can be refined to suit the number of lessons allocated.

**Task**

There has been a spate of cyberbullying in your school district. You are the district school officer and you have been given the task of researching the problem and coming up with a community service announcement. This announcement may be on radio, print or television and will inform a defined audience such as students or parents. You need to:

- select your audience
- research relevant Australian and international websites on cyberbullying
- develop an advertising concept
- develop a script for an appropriate community service announcement of 30–90 seconds.

**Process**

1. Break into groups of four.
2. Assign each person a role—two researchers, one scriptwriter, one producer.
3. Researchers use the websites listed on page 5 to find out about cyberbullying. Identify a key definition for the term ‘cyberbullying’, list the signs that someone is being cyberbullied and find out how they can get help. Share these resources with your team. Don’t forget to record the URL addresses for citing your sources.
4. Meet as a team and decide on your audience and what type of advertisement you will be producing. Discuss this with your teacher. Brainstorm your advertisement concept ideas i.e. character, setting, key message.
5. With the writer in charge, develop the script as a team. Remember that the advertisement needs to be short and you need to deliver a message that will capture attention. Include dialogue and characters as well as planned sound effects or background music.
6. If your class decides to develop their scripts further, decide who will play each role and who will record or shoot the advertisement. If your advertisement involves filming, you will need to storyboard your script.
Activity evaluation

Teacher to provide appropriate criteria. This should cover all the tasks including initial research with citations, advertising concept, script and, if proceeding to production, the storyboard and advertisement. In this evaluation, the background work is as important as the output.

Conclusion

Showcase students’ work to the rest of the class or arrange to have it presented to the rest of the year level as appropriate.
Teacher notes

Students will learn about their rights and responsibilities regarding cyberbullying and be introduced to strategies to protect themselves.

It might be useful to contact the school’s welfare coordinator before beginning the activity if it is believed the case study is too close to home for some students. The additional resources section lists websites and video clips to which students can be referred.
Handout

Case study: Lauren’s Ordeal—Cyberbullying

Individually or with a partner, watch the case study video or read the case study transcript and then answer the questions below. Be prepared to talk through your answers with the rest of the class.

1. Lots of people say that the internet has become an invaluable part of their life and they don’t know what they would do without it.
   
   How valuable is the internet to you? Could you do without it? Why? Why not?

2. What a lot of people never realise is that the internet is actually just another public place.
   
   What does this statement mean? What insight does it give you into how people should behave on the internet or the types of precautions you need to take?

Further questions

3. List some of the actions of cyberbullying that hurt Lauren.

4. What did Lauren do to combat the cyberbullying?

5. What lesson did Lauren learn from her cyberbullying experience?

6. People who didn’t know Lauren became involved in bullying her. Why do you think that happened?
Handout

Case study: Lauren's Ordeal—Cyberbullying

Transcript

‘Well, I was best friends with this girl called Susan. We had this huge fight and we stopped being friends. When I went to school the next day, I noticed that people were suddenly avoiding me, and even my group of friends wouldn't talk to me. They just completely ignored me.

I started to notice other people in the school pointing at me and whispering things and laughing amongst themselves. I started to get text messages saying all these awful things that weren’t true, and I couldn’t understand why people were doing this to me. I had no idea what the messages meant. When I arrived home I had a stack of new emails, some from people I didn’t even know, saying all these things about my private life they couldn’t possibly know.

I went onto Messenger and there was hardly anyone online, which was really unusual. All I could think was that people must be blocking me. I logged on to the school’s public message board and was completely shocked to see that someone had posted all these new topics about me, saying all these terrible things that weren’t true at all. When things got that serious I had to tell my parents. They contacted the school and the message board was shut down until they could fix the problem.

The next day someone set up a blog containing my photo and a list of lies and rumours about me, and people started posting comments. This went on for about a week. It was so hard to deal with. I was so stressed.

Then I started getting text messages saying things like, ‘I hate you’ or ‘Why don’t you just die?’ That’s when the police got involved. They traced the numbers from the threatening messages and visited the offenders and they eventually discovered that I had supposedly sent all my friends a message telling them all these secrets about my life, which was a complete lie.

Susan must have logged on with my username and password. You just can't tell what might happen if your details end up in the wrong hands.’