



News Release

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1
780-447-9487

November 14, 2008

Alberta Schools Have a New Tool to Combat Cyberbullying

Alberta teachers and school administrators who are concerned about online bullying among students can now book a half-day cyberbullying workshop developed by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities (SACSC). The workshop, called *Addressing Bullying Behaviour: Focus on Cyberbullying*, provides an overview of online bullying and examines ways this issue can be addressed within schools. "Cyberbullying has become an area of major concern for teachers and parents," says Colleen Soetaert, the Education Coordinator at SACSC, "and our goal is to help schools deal with this growing problem."

The workshop is designed to raise awareness among teachers and parents of the various internet sites and electronic communication tools being used by youth, and to teach proper protocol and safety. The workshop also examines how the perceived anonymity of the Internet is a major cause of cyberbullying. "Some youth feel free to say cruel things online that they would never say face-to-face," Colleen says. "Unfortunately, cyberbullying can be as devastating as any other personal attack and can lead to depression, academic problems, and even suicide."

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, writing something "that is designed to insult a person or likely injure a person's reputation by exposing them to contempt or ridicule" is considered a criminal act. "Students need to be aware of the seriousness of cyberbullying, and realize that their online activities can have a big impact on their lives offline," says Colleen. "With so many young people now online, it's vital that we start asking youth, 'Who are you when you're not being watched?'"

In addition to examining the issue of online anonymity, the SACSC workshop covers topics such as Internet addiction and dangerous online behaviours. It also provides information to help teachers and school staff identify students who are at risk of Internet addiction or cyberbullying, and provides strategies to help teachers discuss these topics with their students.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour: Focus on Cyberbullying was developed through a partnership between SACSC and TELUS. During the past 12 years, SACSC has developed numerous programs to help schools and communities prevent bullying and reinforce socially-responsible behaviour in youth. In addition to its cyberbullying workshop, current SACSC programs include student-led Youth Action projects in schools, and community workshops designed to teach adults to model behaviours that help build resiliency in children and youth. For more information please contact the SACSC office at 780-447-9487.

-30-

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Donna Blundell
Executive Director
The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities
Phone: 780-447-9449
E-mail: dblundell@sacsc.ca

Colleen Soetaert
Education Coordinator
The Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities
Phone: 780-447-9484
E-mail: csoetaert@sacsc.ca