KING CITY SECONDARY SCHOOL

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<u>Sent via email</u>

Dear families of King City Secondary School,

It is important to us that we provide a caring, safe and inclusive environment in our school that supports the academic achievement and well-being of all students. To support this environment in our new online learning setting, we want to share some important information about cyberbullying and the importance of appropriate online behaviour.

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying:

- Involves the use of electronic devices or the Internet to threaten, embarrass, socially exclude and harass.
- Is often repetitive and can have significant socio-emotional implications for the victim and for those who witness the bullying.
- Can occur through various forms of social media, including texting, email, chats, websites, instant messaging, cell phones and through the use of pictures/video clips.
- Is often aggressive behaviour that can be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect.
- May include mockery, insults, threats, racist or homophobic comments, gossip, rumours, group exclusion, humiliation and social rejection.

With the click of a button, a cyberbullying incident can reach a wide audience, resulting in someone feeling victimized and unsafe. The anonymity afforded to those who cyberbully often results in the continuation of this unacceptable behavior.

What we do about cyberbullying

We take incidents of cyberbullying seriously. While we may not be in the school building, it is important that we continue to provide a safe learning environment for students. We will continue to address inappropriate use of technology in all of its forms, including cyberbullying, threats made on-line, incidents of hate and discrimination, hacking, breaches of privacy and personal information, including sharing passwords.

All YRDSB students were expected to sign the Information Technology Acceptable Use Agreement at the beginning of the school year, which includes interacting with Board students and/or staff through technology. Instances of bullying, cyberbullying or intimidation are dealt with under the Board's Caring and Safe Schools policy and procedures, which all students learned about in the school-wide Caring and Safe Schools assemblies held at the beginning of the school year.

What can parents and families do about cyberbullying?

- If you suspect that your child is being cyberbullied or engaging in cyberbullying, please notify your student's teacher or school's administration as soon as possible.

- Contact the police immediately if threats occur.
- If cyberbullying occurs on a social media site, you can also report the occurrence to the social media provider to have it blocked and/or removed.
- Follow your child's online social media accounts, and tell them that you are monitoring their activity to help keep them safe. Discuss this with your child as some children or teens may create a fake second account for their parents to follow.
- Be aware of how your child is feeling. Children who have been cyberbullied may feel unsafe, overwhelmed and depressed.
- If your child is experiencing emotional distress due to cyberbullying, consider contacting your school principal for a consultation with the school psychology or social work professional, or explore support through resources such as Crisis Lines:
    o 310 COPE: 1-855-310-2673
    o Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
    o Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600
    o York Hills Help Line: 905-503-9561
- Avoid taking technology away. Technology is an important tool for most youth. Taking away all forms of technology is a way to further isolate your child from their peers that are able to support during this difficult time.
- **Remind your child:**
    o If you experience cyberbullying online, do not respond and do not retaliate, but rather, report it.
    o If you witness cyberbullying online, if you feel safe, then stop and name it ("that is bullying" or "that is racist"). As upstanders, students play a critical role in stopping incidents of bullying, hate and discrimination and ensuring the well-being of each other.
    o Block the person doing the bullying and tell your teacher, an adult or a family member. If the adult doesn't listen, keep trying with other adults!
    o You also need to know that you can report something without the other student or adult knowing. This includes using the YRDSB Report It Button.

For more information and resources on bullying and cyberbullying, please visit the Board website.

Thank you for helping us create a safe, respectful and inclusive school community. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school's administration.