





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## Speaker tells Northeastern parents: Stop cyber bullying before it starts

AMANDA DOLASINSKI *The York Dispatch*

Updated: 10/04/2010

School kids aren't just worried about getting shoved into lockers anymore.

Nowadays, kids worry about being bullied online.

About 30 parents attended an hour-long workshop at Northeastern High School to learn about cyber bullying. School officials said the workshop was proactive and were not in reaction to any specific problems with students.



Deb McCoy of Educational Development Services in Millersville talks to students about legal issues around electronic media. (Bill Kalina Photo)

Deborah McCoy, president of Education Development Services, talked to parents about the problem, asking parents to more closely monitor their child's' media activity.

"As parents, we need to own this world like our kids do and not be afraid of it," she said. "Cell phones have become the primary weapon of choice. Texting is huge among kids."

Because of the technology gap between the generations, McCoy directed parents to websites, such as netlingo.com, to help them decipher graphic text messages or chat room language parents might not understand.

**Some numbers:** About 42 percent of kids in grades four to eight had been bullied online, according to a study completed by a nonprofit foundation dedicated to safety education in 2004.

The group, iSafe Inc., reported one in four of those kids had been bullied more than once and about 58 percent had not told their parents about it.

"Electronic bullying flourishes in middle school, but the average age of onset is age 9 and predominantly among girls," McCoy said.

**In attendance:** Donna Gauker, of Conewago Township, attended the workshop with her 11-year-old son, Matthew. Her son doesn't have a cell phone and she wanted to attend to learn more about the bullying issue before she agrees to give him one.

"We want to catch them before they get phones," she said.

Northeastern Assistant Principal Benjamin Ruby said the school district has offered several bullying workshops for students and parents before. This was the first cyber bullying workshop, he said.

"We're trying to get ahead of the problem before it becomes one," he said. "We wanted parents to be able to speak the same language as kids and not feel intimidated by this cyber world."

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