

Cyberbullying in Schools: An Educator's Equitable Choice

Scenario: Below are two social media threads. The one on the left is the initial post by user **Ruzzy18**, before the first day of school. On the right are subsequent responses from **Ruzzy18's** classmates.

After sitting alone at lunch, **Ruzzy18** approaches a teacher, showing them the online posts and reposts from fellow students.



@Ruzzy18

Ready for school vibes **#bffs**
#wesocute **@jojo18**



3:45pm | Aug 18, 2022

5 11

@othermeangirlz5 and 10 likes 5 comments



Bff5 **@bff5** | Aug 18, 2022

Replying to **@ruzzy18**

...so cute! Have a good first day!

1



MelZip5 **@melzip5** | Aug 18, 2022

Replying to **@ruzzy18**

@ruzzy18 **@jojo18** You all are the cutest! Luv u.

1



Meangirlz5 Aug 19, 2022

@othermeangirlz5

Me personally, your friend looks a little sus...

@jojo18 **@ruzzy18**

25 13



Othermeangirlz7 Aug 19, 2022

Replying to **@othermeangirlz5**

We can't wear hoodies, why she can wear that. Uh, can you say, unfair?!

1



Meangirlz5 Aug 19, 2022

@othermeangirlz5

Replying to **@othermeangirlz7** FACTS.

1



Meangirlz5 Aug 19, 2022

@othermeangirlz5

Replying to **@othermeangirlz7**

Let's not sit with her at lunch...

10 17



1 Reposted | 5h

Chez4Prez **@chez4prez**

Replying to **@othermeangirlz7**

Let's not sit with her at lunch...

96 133

Educator Response 1

The educator frowns at how mean students can be and says, "**Ruzzy18**, remember, phones are not allowed. If you didn't have the phone, this wouldn't be a problem."

Educator Response 2

"**Ruzzy18**, I will investigate these posts. Now go back to class and don't let this bother you."

Educator Response 3

"I'm so sorry you had to experience this. Those messages reflect negative stereotypes and create an unsafe environment for you. This is a discipline issue, and I will be following up with the student and administration, and any other administrators as is necessary. I want you to know that I am taking this situation very seriously. Again, I'm so sorry."

Educator Response 1

The educator frowns at how mean students can be and says, “**Ruzzy18**, remember, phones are not allowed. If you didn’t have the phone, this wouldn’t be a problem.”

Intent:

- The educator wants to diminish attention to the post.
- The educator means to follow school policy, which doesn’t give teachers the authority to discipline students’ behavior unrelated to school matters.
- The educator believes the behavior is ordinary teenage teasing and/or conflict, therefore they want students to work out the conflict on their own without adult interference.

Impact:

- The victim experiences this as reinforcement of the bully’s actions.
- The victim may become anxious and withdrawn.
- [Teen Suicide Hotline](#)

Critical Reflection towards Becoming an Equitable Educator Against Cyberbullying

When a student/child reports an instance of bullying, how should educators respond?



Educator Response 2

“**Ruzzy18**, I will investigate these posts. Now go back to class and don’t let this bother you.”

Intent:

- The educator wishes to determine if an investigation is necessary to qualify whether the bullying is harassment.
- The educator wants to protect the school from liability.

Impact:

- The victim is frustrated that no one has helped stop the bullying, and thus is further alienated from their peers.
- The victim feels isolated in the educational environment—where they are supposed to feel safe.

Critical Reflection towards Becoming an Equitable Educator Against Cyberbullying

When does cyberbullying violate civil rights laws? (Ali, 2009)



Educator Response 3

“I’m so sorry you had to experience this. Those messages reflect negative stereotypes and create an unsafe environment for you. This is a discipline issue, and I will be following up with the student and administration, and any other administrators as is necessary. I want you to know that I am taking this situation very seriously. Again, I’m so sorry.”

Intent:

- The educator actively supports the victim by being empathetic and immediately addressing the behaviors.
- The educator prioritizes the well-being of students by providing immediate intervention strategies for protecting the victim (Cornell & Limber, 2015).

Impact:

- The educator promotes empathy for victims of bullying (Hasse et al., 2019).
- The educator provides a safe and inclusive environment.

How to Prevent/Intervene in Cyberbullying (Hasse et al., 2019):

- Holistic approaches- address at the individual, class, school, and community levels
- Validate the victim by reinforcing their perspective
- Help develop socio-emotional skills like self-efficacy and self-esteem in students
- Develop a positive school climate and culture (Hinduju & Patchin, 2018)
- Model inclusive behavior (Ragozzino & O’Brien, 2009)
- Find creative ways to condemn stereotypes like creating anti-bullying posters or PSAs (Hinduja, 2019)
- Leverage community resources to promote appreciation and empathy for different religions and cultures (Hinduja, 2019)
- Educate the community about digital citizenship (Hinduju & Patchin, 2022; Stopbullying, 2018)
- Consequences in school: review harassment and discipline policies (Hasse et al., 2019)
- Implement restorative justice practices.



Meet the Authors

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