

NCAB 4th Biennial Conference 2010, Navigating the Maze: cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools

Outcomes of conference

Bullying affects everybody and, therefore, there is need for a national commitment to increase cybersafety and reduce bullying across the community.

As a result of the conference, NCAB is calling for the following.

1. Early intervention

- Need to identify early (at pre-school and early primary school) those who may have peer relationship issues, and implement appropriate programs.
- Additional focus is needed on pre-school education to prevent bullying and promote wellbeing.
- Need to raise awareness among schools and parents of the emerging evidence that children are using social networking sites at a young age.

2. Training teachers

- Need for pre-service teacher education programs to include a mandatory component, which addresses awareness and skills for preventing and managing bullying situations.
- Teachers must have ongoing access to training to develop the skills needed to respond effectively to bullying situations.
- Need for general education programs for teachers, students and parents as to the possible effects of the criminal and civil law on the use of communications technologies.

3. An appropriate legal framework

- Need to legally define the rights and responsibilities of schools in responding to bullying and cyberbullying situations, and cyber-defamation.
- Legal remedies in themselves are not a solution to bullying, but are a necessary part of the solution. Need to clarify the role of the criminal and civil law in relation to cyberbullying and bullying.

4. Increased focus on school transition

- Bullying peaks at times of transition between pre-school and primary school, and primary school and high school, therefore, education institutions need to increase their focus on bullying, including cyberbullying at these times.

5. A whole-school approach

- Schools need to use evidence-informed strategies and include teachers, parents, students and the wider community to enhance cybersafety and wellbeing, and reduce bullying.
- Funding is required to ensure every school has the required welfare personnel to support students.

6. A whole-community approach

- Solutions need to go beyond the school gate, given that bullying in schools is often a reflection on community behaviours and attitudes to violence.
- There is also a need to address all forms of bullying as a health problem. Health professionals need to undergo appropriate training and be involved in developing solutions.

7. Young people to be part of the solution

- Young people are essential to the solution and must be involved in policy development, parent education and development of multi-media education materials.

8. Technology to be part of the solution

- Adults, including parents and teachers, need to break down the digital divide by becoming savvy about technology.
- We all must recognise the creative use of technology as a powerful teaching and socialising tool.
- The focus needs to be on behaviours and positive relationships; and it is counterproductive to ban access to technology.

9. Support for ongoing research in Australia

- Research into cybersafety and wellbeing, including effective strategies for engaging parents, keeping up-to-date with changes in technology, appropriate interventions in schools etc.

10. Federal funding

- Sufficient Federal funding for an Australia-wide system to implement these cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools.