

# I Don't Play

After a school has rules, processes, and committees in place to deal with Internet abuse, it is time to proceed with an educational program that puts together what the students know and what the adults understand. The program I advocate uses the acronym "I DON'T PLAY." This program is designed to keep students out of trouble in social networking sites and instant messages.<sup>1</sup>

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I

Identify the sender, if a student has another student's identification, it is possible for them to pose as that student online. Students using someone else's identification can really hurt other students. Students should have ways they can identify a sender, such as asking them questions only the sender can answer.

D

Do not respond to or retaliate for hurtful statements that are directed toward yourself or others. Agreeing with people who make nasty statements about others has a way of getting back to the victims. Retaliating statements are often shared and made public. Words in print are difficult to deny or take back.

O

Openly communicate with someone in authority or your parents when you receive a damaging message.

N'

Never share your password. When I ask students whether anyone knows their password they will say no. Unfortunately, when I pursue the matter further, the students admit that they have told only their best friend or a couple of people they trust. Friendship fluctuation is quite common at this age--an old friend can become a new enemy, and then the students' identification is in bad hands.

T

Think carefully before sending messages. Once messages are sent, they cannot be called back.

P

Print out messages that are threatening. A paper trail will help the authorities stop the harassment.

L

Let the provider know about inappropriate conduct.

A

Actively change passwords and screen names on a regular basis. This is easy to do and will help keep students' identification out of the hands of other people.

Y

Yearn to know more about the Internet and how it can be used. Implement processes and procedures with due diligence, using in-house resources and a team composed of students and faculty members to teach students about the potential of the Internet. Bring in outside speakers and presenters for help when necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by permission: Sutton, S. School Solutions for Cyberbullying. Principal Leadership (Middle School Ed.) v. 9 no. 6 (February 2009) p. 38-40, 42