



# Social Media Fact Sheet

## Elmore County Public Schools



Students are actively Tweeting, posting, liking, and commenting all across social media and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight. Social media can be an effective communication tool for parents, teachers, and students. It is our collective responsibility to help our students be good "digital citizens" by teaching them appropriate, responsible technology use.

State laws and the Elmore County Student Handbook and Code of Conduct reflect the expectations for proper use as well as the consequences for inappropriate use of electronic devices.

### Did you know....?

#### **Cyberbullying is AGAINST THE LAW**

The Alabama legislature has enacted an extensive set of laws called the **Student Harassment Prevention Act**, which prohibits cyberbullying in public schools and details what schools must do to protect students. And, **some acts of cyberbullying are crimes in the state.**

The *Alabama Student Harassment Prevention Act* ("the Act") refers to all types of student-on-student bullying as harassment. And, the Act is restricted to conduct between students in public schools. (Ala. Code §16-28B-2.) Bullying under Alabama law includes harassing acts committed via electronic devices or communications, including texts, social networking site posts, Instagrams, Tumblr feeds, blogs, email, or any other electronic or social media. This is often called "**cyberbullying.**"

#### **Examples of Cyberbullying**

- Sending someone mean texts
- Photoshopping or altering a picture to embarrass someone
- Creating a fake profile to post defamatory information or images
- Posting fight videos online to embarrass the person who "lost"
- Spreading rumors and gossip online
- Posting pictures intended to embarrass someone
- Sending threatening or harassing comments

**ALL OF THE ABOVE are chargeable offenses under the Code of Alabama.**

#### **How to Report Bullying/Cyberbullying**

Incidents of bullying in any form should be reported to an adult staff member **immediately**. Bullying/cyberbullying may also be reported by the student or parent(s) on the school system website at [www.elmoreco.com](http://www.elmoreco.com) or on a bullying report form at the school.

#### **Consequences at School**

Consequences for misuse of electronic devices may range from detention to Elmore County Alternative Program (ECAP) placement for up to 90 days, depending on the nature/seriousness of the offense.

#### **Cyberbullying as a CRIME**

Harassment, including cyberbullying conducted via electronic means, is a **Class C misdemeanor** crime in Alabama. (Ala. Code §13A-11-8.) A person convicted of the misdemeanor of harassment faces not more than three months in prison, a fine of not more than \$500, or both. (Ala. Code § §13A-5-7, 13A-5-12.)

#### **Tips to STOP Cyberbullying**

##### **PARENTS**

- Keep your home computer in a busy area of your house.
- Learn how various social networking websites work. Become familiar with Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, etc. Ask your children to show you their profile pages.
- Talk regularly and specifically with your children about online issues.
- Tell your children not to respond to any cyberbullying threats or comments online.
- Don't *overreact* by blaming your children. If they are being bullied, be supportive and understanding.
- Don't *underreact* by telling your children to "shrug it off" or just deal with the bullying. Don't tease them about it or respond with a "kids will be kids" attitude.
- Talk to your school's guidance counselor.
- If there are threats of physical violence or the bullying continues to escalate, get law enforcement involved.

##### **STUDENTS**

- Don't respond to any online or text messages sent by cyberbullies.
- Don't be an accomplice by forwarding any of the messages to other kids.
- Save and print out all the messages as proof and evidence of cyberbullying.
- If you are being bullied, tell an adult immediately to get help solving the problem.