How can the digital divide affect cyber bullying?

Technology, Mobile Phone

How Can The Digital Divide Affect Cyber Bullying? By Robert Foster EDU 218-602 Technology For Teachers Today's Technology The Good and The Bad It is no secret that we live in a growing age of technology. Mailing letters and making phone calls on pay phones is a thing of the past. The use of computers, cell phones, mp3 players, and tablets, all with access to the World Wide Web, is the norm now. We are training our children as early as four and five years old about how to use many of these devices so that they are better prepared for their futures. Elementary students are carrying cell phones, and learning how to use the computer, Junior High students are using their own laptops, and High School students are shuffling between their laptop, their cell phone, and their eBook reader. The expansion and use of this technology in our classrooms now brings potentially devastating consequences. Students now have the capability of hurting others without making physical contact. The rise of cyber bullying is rapidly expanding throughout the country, and has made an impact on all of us. The Digital Divide The ' Have's' An estimated ninety percent of all Americans under the age of sixty have used a computer and the internet. Approximately eighty percent of Americans under the age of sixty currently use a computer in their homes and nearly ninety percent of them agree that computers have made their life better. Of these people, only twenty percent of them say that they are unhappy with how it constantly connects them with people and they feel overwhelmed with the information the internet provides. The ' Have Not's' Families in the lower income brackets and those with only High School Education or lower are far less likely to use and own a computer. Only fifty percent of people who fall into this category own a computer, and of this

group, thirty percent of them have access to the internet. The majority comes from lower class, non-white, areas of families whose total income is less than thirty thousand dollars a year. More than half of these are students who have claimed that they have used a computer in school. Benefits vs. Risks Even as far as technology has come along, there is still a divide in who is using technology, who isn't, and who can't. Those who use it know more than those who don't, and now students are using their knowledge against those who do not have the knowledge in the classrooms. So far, however, most teachers and parents believe that the benefits seem to outweigh the risks. Technology has brought a whole new element of learning in today's classrooms. The use of smartboards in lieu of chalkboards and markerboards has become extremely common in schools. Students are now able to work with interactive programs which keep children entertained while learning. Various programs are set up like games that keep the students focused on what they are doing and they end up not even realizing how much they are learning because to them, it's just a game. Students also begin to learn how to type at a younger age which will benefit them in the future job market. Research papers can now be completed more efficiently, which gives teachers opportunities to schedule more work in a given amount of time. Social networks are now being used for discussion boards which allow students that are less likely to participate in open discussion in the classroom to express themselves freely in discussion without the feeling of discomfort. The digital era has had a lot of negative impact on our younger generation. Access to pornography, violent videos, recipes for bombs and drugs, and access to celebrity role models personal lives is starting to reach

the homes of children each year at a younger age. Also, with the use of Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs, and other social media sites, children now have the capability of viewing personal information of their friends and their foes. This access allows children to say whatever they wish to anyone they want and not have to deal with face-to-face consequences. In many smaller cities, technology isn't as easily accessible. Lower income families are less likely to have access to computers and internet, and cell phone service may not always be available. This makes it more difficult for students to complete their assignments effectively and efficiently. Students struggle to look up information, and turn in typed assignments as required. The lack of technology available to these students could have an impact their higher education. The Digital Divide and its Affect on Cyber Bullying A person is considered being bullied when they are victim to offense by one or more persons a repeated number of times with the intent of causing harm. The digital era has made this much easier for one to fall victim to. Before technology, it was always the ' big kid' in school who was the bully, taking the little kids lunch money or beating someone up in the playground after school. Now, one can sit in the comfort of their own home and threaten someone over an email, text message, or a social networking site and size is not an issue because now there are ways to remain anonymous. Rumors and gossip can be spread in minutes now instead of days. Blogs can be created with pictures and dirty gossip of an individual that allows others to participate in the crime by sharing more comments and pictures. The students who are behind in our digital era, having no access to computers or cell phones can easily fall victim. A student could be walking though school

and find that they have no friends and everyone is whispering and laughing, day after day, with no knowledge of what is being spread across campus through emails and texts. Not only can these students not support themselves, but there is a lack of support for these students from their families because they are unaware of what is happening. Conclusion The result of technology in the classroom has been extremely positive, and while more and more families are equipping themselves with computers in their homes, the digital divide still persists. It is no doubt that implementing technology based programs in the classroom enhances student learning, but the educator must be aware of any divide that exists in their classroom. Educators need to be aware of how technology is being used in their classroom, and proper training and monitoring must be used to ensure students are benefiting from the training. If schools are going to teach students with technology, then they also must focus their attention on teaching students proper use of the technology. If we allow students to explore on their own, they will have the whole world at their fingertips, the good, and the bad.