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taken the same proactive approach know their comments, tweets and other social media activities are probably being monitored by teachers and parents, so they're less likely to use inappropriate language or make hurtful remarks about another student.

School leaders can also insist that students be accountable for their actions, whether online or in person. Guilford County's Elliott says she applauds a principal in her district who recently demoted the captain of the school's varsity cheerleading squad for being mean and hurtful to another cheerleader. Her message to the student body? "Mean plus cute does not equal popular," Elliott says.

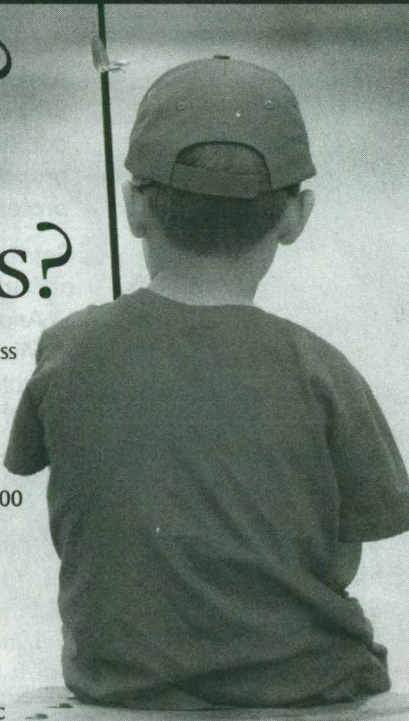
Since students who spread rumors about and harass other kids don't live in a vacuum, parents can do their part to help. "You can set an example by not gossiping or spreading rumors at home," says Crystal Reardon, WCPSS director of counseling.

Reardon advises parents who discover their child is acting inappropriately online to act decisively, even if it means confiscating digital devices. "The statement I always give parents is that until your children are old enough to handle the consequences of their decisions, you need to make decisions for them," she says.

Suzanne M. Wood is a Raleigh-based freelance writer and mother of three.

WAYS TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS SOCIAL MEDIA HARASSMENT


- **Monitor and/or set maximum privacy protections** on your child's social media accounts.
- **Discourage the use of sites like ask.fm**, which are less about communicating than they are about titillating.
- **Warn kids not to allow "friends" or "followers" they don't know.**
- **Explain to kids that disclosing highly personal information** on social media sites could come back to bite them.
- **Make sure your child knows that cyberbullying is against state law** and targeting classmates — even while off-campus — can result in consequences at school.
- **Encourage your child to tell you if he or she is the target** of online rumors or harassment. If the perpetrator is a classmate, contact the principal or another administrator.



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