**PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING**

**An Initiative from the South Western Sydney Student Leadership Team**



**OVERVIEW**

*PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING* is a student-based anti-cyberbullying initiative developed by the South Western Sydney Regional Student Representative Council team.

*Put the Boot into Bullying* aims to provide school students with a simple non-confrontational strategy to intervene and diffuse incidents of cyber bullying on social networking forums.

The strategy invites students to sign up to the *Put the Boot into Bullying* pledge and to promote the initiative in their school and wider community. In living up to their pledge, students are invited to be proactive when witness to events of cyber-bullying and drop in the *Put the Boot into Bullying* link within the forum.



**PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING**

**CONTEXT**

**South Western Sydney Region STUDENT LEADERSHIP**

The NSW Department of Education and Communities acknowledges that addressing cyberbullying is a whole-of-community responsibility, and requires a whole-of-community response.

The South Western Sydney Student Leadership program acknowledges that cyberspace is a challenging realm for all school communities in the context of bullying.

Students are becoming increasingly proficient in the use of information technologies and in particular the use social networking sites. In the realm of social forums, student vulnerabilities and behaviours are difficult to monitor and manage.

In 2011 The South Western Sydney Student Leadership program began discussions on the topic of cyberbullying and identified the need for active student involvement and student voice as a key ingredient to any successful anti-cyberbullying initiative.

The student leadership team noted that cyberbullying is a student based issue – therefore the most effective solutions come from student based and student led approaches. The team acknowledged that students are experts in the field of social media and therefore are well equipped to provide advice on matters of cyberbullying that take place on these forums.

The development of *Put the Boot in to Bullying* was based on the premise that action against cyberbullying needs to take place at the point of conflict online. The approach incorporates the important concepts and effects of Bystander Behaviour.

**Cyber Bullying and Bystander Behaviour**

Cyberbullying is commonly defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support repeated and deliberate hostile behaviour intended to harm others (DEC 2011).

Cyberbullying nearly always takes place with online bystanders present.

The Department reports that when bystanders do act against real life bullying there is a good chance (around 50%) that the bullying will stop. Students who are ‘defended’ are better adjusted and report less peer victimisation one year later. Reconciliation is more likely when bystanders intervene than when teachers intervene (DEC 2011).

Students from South Western Sydney Student Leadership team determined that these real life ‘bystander’ concepts are directly transferable to online situations.

*Put the Boot into Bullying* is a proactive strategy that invites online bystander students to behave in a supportive way to others who are being cyberbullied, to intervene in a non-confrontational way and to report the incident where appropriate.

**PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING**

**PROJECT OUTLINE**

**PROJECT AIM**

* Reduce incidents and impacts of cyberbullying among South Western Sydney public school students

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

* Provide students in the South Western Sydney region with a simple and effective strategy to intervene and diffuse incidents of cyberbullying on social networking forums.
* Provide students in the South Western Sydney region with information and access to support services relating to cyberbullying and social networking sites.
* Provide schools in the South Western Sydney region with a student based and student led approach for addressing cyberbullying in their community.

**PROJECT OUTCOMES**

* A social networking tag or ‘BOOT’ linked to an active Facebook site.
* A *Put the Boot into Bullying* Facebook site linked to a Departmental Student Leadership website.
* A forum for students to sign up to a *Put the Boot into Bullying* cyber-activity pledge.
* A cohesive student based and student led *Put the Boot into Bullying* strategy for all schools to adopt, personalise and promote within their community

**PROJECT SCOPE**

* The *Put the Boot into Bullying* initiative will be initially promoted and made available to all secondary schools in the South Western Sydney region through Inter-School Group (ISG) Student Representative Council meetings. The ISG groups will assist in promoting and developing the initiative with their member schools during quarterly meetings from Term 2, 2012 to Term 4, 2013.

**PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING**

**THE STRATEGY**

*Put the Boot into Bullying* is a multi-faceted strategy incorporating five key elements;

**THE ‘BOOT’ TAG**

Students are able to literally put the *BOOT* into online bullying. The hyperlinked tag or *BOOT* can be inserted by any student into a cyberbullying situation they are witness to.

The Boot is a non-confrontational message appearing as a standard hyperlink connected to the *Put the Boot into Bullying* Facebook page e.g. [BOOT](http://www.facebook.com/PutTheBootIntoBullying) or [Put the Boot into Bullying](http://www.facebook.com/PutTheBootIntoBullying)

Only one bystander need to insert the *BOOT* other students can simply ‘Like’ the tag which adds online social weight to the comment and lets all parties privy to the conversation know how many people are against the comments.

The main idea is for the cyberbully(ies) to see that others are watching and are noting that these actions/comments are not appropriate or acceptable.

**THE FACEBOOK SITE**

The *Put the Boot into Bullying* Facebook page is registered and approved with the Department of Education and Communities.

The Facebook site contains information about the strategy and active links for students to follow when they visit or are directed to the site via the *BOOT* tag. It is a non-interactive site, meaning students will not be able to post messages or make changes to the site.

Victims of bullying will have access to a range of information and links to other bullying support sites including the South Western Sydney Student Leadership website.

Through this site perpetrators of cyberbullying will also have access to information and links to sites that encourage alternative online practices and behaviour.

The administrator is able to monitor and track the use and access of the site via Facebook administration panel.

**THE SWSSL WEBSITE**

The South Western Sydney Region Student Leadership (SWSSL) Website will be linked to the *Put the Boot into Bullying* Facebook page.

The SWSSL site will host a more comprehensive range of anti-bullying resources, information and links for students to access. It will also have a page specifically designated for the *Put the Boot into Bullying* initiative where Schools, staff and students can get further support for planning and promoting the initiative in their community.

**THE PLEDGE**

Located on both the *Put the Boot into Bullying* Facebook Page and the SWSSL Website the student pledge is a critical element to the initiative.

The pledge asks students to make personal promises and commitments regarding their online conduct and behaviour in relation to cyberbullying.

Students are able to make the pledge either through the Facebook page or by signing up physically through their school promotions strategy

THE PUT THE BOOT INTO BULLYING PLEDGE

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ pledge to *Put the Boot into Bullying* by;

not participating in any form of online or cyberbullying,

being proactive when cyberbullying occurs,

putting the BOOT into Bullying link when and where appropriate in situations of cyberbullying,

reporting ongoing situations of cyberbullying,

promoting the *Put the Boot into Bullying* initiative.

**THE PROMOTION**

The *Put the Boot into Bullying* initiative requires school communities, usually through their Student Representative Councils or Leadership Groups, to actively promote and develop their own particular strategy based on the five key elements listed.

Schools and student groups are invited to be as creative as possible in getting as many students signed up to the pledge and then subsequently trained, or made aware, of using the BOOT tag in online social forums.

The school strategy requires no fundraising or external support. It requires students to be empowered to take up their own approaches and develop them into something that they see to be a positive and beneficial mechanism for intervening and diffusing incidents of cyberbullying on social networking forums.

For more information on *Put the Boot into Bullying* please contact:

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