MEMORANDUM

To: Verona Area High School Athletic Director

Cc: Verona Area High School Principal

In the lives of our students, the use of technology to communicate has increased dramatically in recent years. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say students spend more time communicating by texting, or using email, Twitter, and Facebook, than they do face-to-face or talking on the phone. As these forms of communication have become more pervasive, the number of incidences of cyberbullying has also increased. According to the [Cyberbullying Research Center,](http://www.cyberbullying.us/research.php" \t "_blank) approximately 20% of the students report experiencing cyberbullying in their lifetimes. For many people, it is easier to type something mean or hurtful into a computer than it is to say something to another person’s face. We do not condone in-person bullying – why should cyberbullying be any different?

The Verona Area School District Acceptable Use Policy for technology addresses cyberbullying to a degree – it is considered an offense if cyberbullying which occurs outside of the school day leads to a disruption of learning for students at school. There is nothing in the high school Code-of-Conduct for participation in extra-curricular activities addressing the issue of cyberbullying. I would like to recommend that documented cases of cyberbullying be considered a code-of-conduct violation, resulting in suspension from athletic contests, and ineligibility from participation on Prom Court, Homecoming Court, and National Society. With these penalties in place, students might think twice about what they text or post.

At Verona Area High School, we strive to have all student-athletes display good sportsmanship at all times. This should include eliminating derogatory posts and trash-talking texts about opponents before the “big game”, as well as any cyberbullying of classmates or teammates at VAHS. Fortunately, we have not experienced any students at VAHS committing suicide in my 15 years teaching here, but there have been cases at other schools directly attributed to cyberbullying. Let’s be proactive and send our students the message that bullying of any form is unacceptable both at school and at home, so we can prevent a tragedy from happening.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Wuerger  
Mathematics Teacher  
Head Boys Swim Coach