

## QR codes to report bullying

...so my two sons, ages 11 and 13, started a new school earlier this fall. It is a good school, and for purposes of this writing, I define 'good' as the school experiencing a very low level of student violence. There are virtually no fist-fights and the teachers are not assaulted. My sons are enjoying their new school and appear to be thriving in the environment. They recently told me about a new school initiative that puzzled me; the school put QR codes, on the walls throughout the hallways, so students could cyber-report bullying.

For those of you readers who do not know what a QR code is, I have provided a picture of one below:



QR is an abbreviation for 'quick response' and it is the trademark for a type of matrix barcode (or a two-dimensional barcode). This barcode is a machine-readable optical label that contains information about the item to which it is attached.

How does this work for a smartphone? There are free applications (app) that can be downloaded; when the app is opened, the phone's camera is activated, and the user navigates it over the QR code to 'capture' it. The code is read to then populate the information it contains. For example: You might have noticed QR codes in print advertisements. Scanning them will result in the product's website populating or a coupon for the product advertised.

My sons' school administration has harnessed QR code capabilities so students can scan them to be directed to a form where they may cyber-report a bullying incident. These reports go to a centralized school database where the data can be analyzed based upon the type of incident, time, location, etc. The data is then to be used much like law enforcement departments use CompStat, a software program where police input incidences, and management analyzes the data to determine where to deploy resources i.e. if a neighborhood experiences a high level of crime between 8 and 10 p.m., then additional patrols are dispatched there to serve as a crime deterrent.

I understand the school's desire to adopt technology to better address a perceived problem, yet there must first be a bullying problem, and there isn't. Parents do not think there is a bullying problem, and neither do the students. The school is in a near crime-free (somewhat) rural area. However, the administration is adamant that there IS a bullying problem, and this has resulted in over-zealous teachers 'finding' bullying where it does not exist.

My oldest son, and one of his friends, were messing around in the hallway as early teens often do. There was no physical contact (no wrestling, hitting, pushing, etc.). They were re-enacting a scene, from a movie they saw together, where two people were face-to-face 'squaring off'...yet they were laughing and joking during their dramatic re-enactment. My sons' friend left to go to class and a teacher approached my son. She asked if he was just bullied; he replied 'no'- and

explained what they were doing and pointed out they were laughing in the process. She said, "Well...it looked like bullying. I am required to report this to the administration." She then speedily pulled out her smart-phone, scanned the QR code on the wall next to them, and began typing away...