

Internet Safety

Our number one job as parents is to protect our children until they are capable of protecting themselves. By third grade, most of our students have access to and know how to surf the Internet. Because many parents aren't habitual "users" of the Internet themselves, the job of protecting kids on-line can seem overwhelming. The media attention given to internet abuse in the past year alone is enough to drive up the anxiety of even the most laid back parents among us.

However, using common sense and available tools, the on-line risks can be reduced. First of all, remember that the actual percentage of students who get into dangerous situations is very small. With a minimum amount of forethought, most risky situations can be avoided. Here are some tips for helping your daughter navigate the world of the Internet.

First of all, be a presence in their computer use. As in all other aspects of your daughters' lives, parental supervision is a key component to developing good decision-making skills. A child is much less likely to go into an unknown zone with an adult fully present. Checking histories and knowing what websites your daughter has visited is also a way to show your girls you are watching. Your close supervision will lessen the chances that she's giving information that could identify her or her friends to a stranger.

The same rules are true for computer use that are important in real time. You should know with whom your daughter is in contact and who is contacting her, what the general content of their conversations are, and when and where they are taking place (many kids are up in the middle of the night on-line). If you see evidence of girls chatting with strangers, talk to your daughter about the risks involved.

Review regularly with your daughter appropriate rules for computer use, including never sharing passwords, never giving personal information over the internet, telling an adult immediately if something uncomfortable happens and, under no circumstances, meeting in person with anyone their parents have not met. Adherence to these rules will keep girls safe.

Consider using parental control systems either offered by your web browser or sold commercially. Many of these will screen out inappropriate material. They may, however, make it more difficult to access useful content. For information

on these programs, check out the websites recommended by our IT Department in the box below.

Sue Sadler
Director of Middle School

Want more information? Check out these Internet Safety Sites...

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) –

<http://WWW.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>

A Parents Guide to Internet Safety

GetNetWise – <http://kids.getnetwise.org>

A public service brought to you by a wide range of Internet industry corporations and public interest groups

WiredSafety – <http://www.wiredsafety.org/>

The largest online safety, education and help group in the world

Safekids.com – <http://www.safeteens.com>

A guide for teens on safety on the Internet

Surf like a hero – not a zero – <http://www.netsmartz.org/index.htm>

An informative site for teachers, parents and students covering the topics of cyber ethics, and cyber crime in a well done understandable manner