Imagine Newsletter

A School Climate Approach to Bullying Prevention

Information for School Staff

Safe Use of the Internet

This newsletter is a review of the use of the Internet and associated safety concerns. Students using computers opens another avenue of learning that is positive, yet challenging.
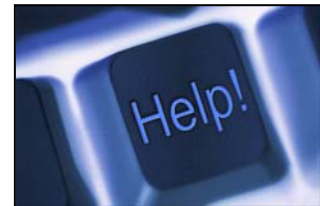
The Internet can be used to provide learning and development of communication skills for students. It allows them to the opportunity to:

- develop research skills with access to a wide range of subjects
- examine the content of website and determine similarities and differences
- develop skills that will identify what is fact versus fiction or opinion
- initiate and improve personal communication skills with others, building on their language skills
- learn how to access resources or create new ones

However, use of this technology comes with some concerns. The anonymity of being online allows for no face-to-face contact and some people take advantage of this. Many children fall prey to cyber-bullying when others:

- send insults, threats or start rumours
- steal personal information to make fake ID
- create voting booths to put others down
- post negative or unfavourable pictures taken with cell phones
- stalk others (e.g. sexual predators)

As a role model, it is important that you:

- learn everything you can about the Internet by taking courses (e.g. MNet's Web Awareness Workshop)
- talk to your students about their surfing habits; have a discussion on where, how often, and length of time they go online
- have computers arranged so you can see all the screens
- let parents know that the students are using the Internet and the issues you will be addressing with them; send handouts home
- be familiar with your board's policy. Students are asking for information to help them decide if information on the net is right or wrong

- design a classroom agreement with student input that lists the types of sites they can visit and which activities and sites are off-limits
- reinforce the importance of not giving out personal information online (i.e. you wouldn't give it to a stranger on the street – don't post self pictures online)
- have students discuss how to converse with others online
- talk about reporting anything that is hateful, harassing, cyber-stalking, makes physical threats or attempts to lure students to off line meetings or participation in dangerous activities

The information in this newsletter has been adapted from Media Awareness Network Canada. For information and student activities, visit the media-awareness.ca website.

Did you know…

- A Canadian study shows that 68% of grade 4 students prefer the Internet over the library.
- Young people who report being bullied and sexually harassed in the past school year also report the most visits to offensive websites.
- Students in a Canadian study feel "anonymous" on the net, a majority of them (59%) have assumed a different identity.
- Students are asking for information to help them decide if information on the net is right or wrong.

Resources Available

Teaching Kit
Cyber Bullies (for Gr. 7 and up) in DVD format – call the Public Health Resource Centre at 519-883-2256 to book

Websites for Educators
www.cyberbullying.ca
www.bewebaware.ca
www.netsmartz.org
www.wiredkids.org
http://media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/wa_teachers/index.cfm