

Counselor's Corner

The buzz this week in Mrs. Mottram's office has been Internet safety. Just a few of the issues that have come up are inappropriate emails and Facebook statuses, so I thought now would be a great time to dispense some tips. These are especially helpful for those parents whose children are just beginning to use technology independently, but they are also a fantastic resource for parents of our older middle school students who may be using technology every day on their own. Below the tips, I've listed some superb websites that provide information for children and parents on using the Internet safely. In the coming weeks, I will be providing information and resources to help parents with that most harrowing of technological devices- the cell phone! Stay tuned!

*** Top Ten Internet Tips for Parents:**

1. Monitor your child's Internet use consistently. This is not a violation of your child's privacy; this is a safeguarding measure and part of your responsibility as a parent.
2. If your child belongs to a social networking site (e.g., Facebook), look closely at what information he/she has posted in his/her member profile, including photos and videos. Bullying, profanity, and threats often occur in these types of sites. **Also, remember that it is a violation of Facebook's Terms of Service to allow any child under the age of 13 to have a profile.**
4. Talk to your child about your Internet safety concerns in a positive way and give them the opportunity to make safety resolutions that you can both live with. (Example: How much time can be spent online? Are chat rooms permitted?)
5. Explain to your child that he/she should: **NEVER** give out personal information (name, address, phone, school name), **NEVER** meet anyone from online without your permission, **NEVER** open emails from unknown senders, and **NEVER** share their photo with strangers over the Internet.
6. Encourage your children to bring anything strange or upsetting to your attention and do not overreact when they do. Fear of losing Internet privileges is why children do not tell parents about problems – and why they may start surfing the web somewhere else.
7. Stay in touch with your child's online activities. Know who his/her online friends are and who is on his/her buddy list, just as you would his/her other friends.
8. Learn how filtering and monitoring software can assist you in protecting your children. Check with your Internet service provider to find out if filtering or monitoring is available for free with your provider. Do not, however, rely completely on software to protect your children. **Education and parental involvement are the primary methods of prevention.**

9. Internet accounts should always be in a parent's name. **A parent should maintain the primary email account and be in charge of all passwords and parental controls.** Children should never share their passwords with anyone other than their parents.

10. Do not think of the Internet as a babysitter. Children using the Internet need adult supervision. Keep the computer in a public area of the house.

(* Tips were modified from a list provided by WebWiseKids: www.webwisekids.org)

Resources for Internet Safety:

- **Connect Safely:** www.connectsafely.org
- **Cyberbully 411:** www.cyberbully411.org
- **Internet Keep Safe Coalition:** www.iKeepSafe.org