Tips for
Internet
Safety

TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 211

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

Why this brochure?

This brochure has been prepared as a resource for parents, students, and community members about Internet safety. The Internet connects the world, both good and bad, to any networked computer. Connecting to this world can be a wonderful experience as long as certain steps are taken to ensure safety. One can compare Internet access much like a walk down a random street in an unfamiliar area. In both situations, the user needs to be aware and cautious.

Students often are the technology experts in the home. They can type a research paper, listen to music, and instant message, all at the same time. Many parents do not know how their children are using the Internet and are often unaware of current dangers.

It can be difficult for parents to become more technology savvy than their children. However, parents can teach their children some ways to protect themselves and provide a realistic understanding of how their behavior on the Internet can hurt others and/or themselves.

Millions of people are actively using social networking web sites where they create web pages with pictures, phone numbers, and home addresses. Instant messaging connects individuals throughout the world, as users communicate by using text messages. Some individuals will misrepresent themselves and could cause harm to unexpecting Internet users.

The Internet is making the world smaller by providing on-line connections to computer users. This brochure includes tips to help promote Internet safety in your home, and help your child be a more cautious Internet participant.

Talk to your child about his or her Internet activity

Ask your child about his or her Internet use. Does your child have a personal web site? Does he or she have an email address or an instant message screen name?

Review your child's web site

Is your child's name used, or can you determine an age or location from the web site. Review it from the perspective of a future employer, college admissions officer, or even from the point of view of a sex offender. Information provided on the web site should not include a name, address, telephone number, or school name.

Talk to your child about instant messaging

Does your child personally know the person with whom he or she is communicating? Is your child's screen name appropriate? It should not provide any information regarding gender, age, or location. Your child should never communicate through instant messaging with an individual that he or she does not know personally.

Talk to your child about email safety

Any email message can be printed and become a permanent record of an electronic dialogue. Email addresses should not provide information about age, gender, or location.

Monitor your child's computer usage

Move the location of your computer to a room where you can easily monitor its use. An Internet-connected computer has the ability for information to be obtained and displayed. This provides an open portal to your child's bedroom, if the computer is located there. Filtering software can be purchased to block unwanted web site access or limit the time your child is on the Internet. There are many products available and reviews of these products can be found by searching the Internet for "reviews of filtering software."

Teach your child how to protect himself or herself from predators

Communicate the importance of never providing a telephone number, picture, address, name, school name, or age to anyone your child does not personally know or without parent approval. Never meet someone from the Internet "face to face," and never get into a stranger's car.

Check on your child's Internet usage

There are many software packages available that can be used to check on-line activity, and the Internet is a great resource.

Talk to your child about "CyberBullying"

The anonymity the Internet offers makes it easy to bully or abuse others. Recommend that your child ignore this type of behavior and remove himself or herself from this kind of hurtful dialogue.

Become the administrator of your home computer

Do not let your child be the computer "administrator." Instead, he or she should be set up at the "users" level and parents need to be set up at the "administrator" level. Administrators can easily monitor "user-level" activity.

Beware of sexual predators who may live nearby

The family watchdog agency provides the following link to locate convicted sexual predators in your neighborhood: *www.familywatchdog.us.*

For additional information and up-to-date links to organizations that promote Internet safety, log-on to: *www.d211.org/internet_safety.shtml.*

For more information ...

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