

Faculty Insider—*Second Life in the Classroom*

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“You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.”

—Clay P. Bedford

Second Life—catchy title for a virtual community. Just as the name implies, it offers online users a chance for a second life—a virtual online one. Online users are identified as “residents” and interact with each other via an on-screen representation of themselves through avatars. One chooses an avatar, and its accompanying personality, so in Second Life, you can be anything or anybody you want. Residents can explore their surroundings in the online community, meet others, socialize, participate in activities, create, trade, and purchase virtual property/services from one another. Second Life is a large community boasting eight million accounts (although many are not active). Second Life isn’t the only “virtual reality community.” Others are Active Worlds, There, and Entropia Universe.

Second Life is age-restricted to adults 18 and over. However, there is a monitored teen Second Life for 13 – 17 year olds. Many teens and adults find the free and open nature of Second Life appealing. They see it as a chance to explore varying aspects of who they are by trying on an alternative identity. This can be both freeing, but dangerous. For example, the very nature of Second Life allows for exploration and sexual freedom. Adult content can be seen and discovered relatively easily on the site. Avatars can even appear nude. Online gambling and other adult situations and language are acceptable elements of Second Life.

So, what does Second Life have to do with you, as an educator? Second Life, and the other virtual-reality communities, is an emerging trend in the world of education. It is allowing major colleges and universities such as Harvard, Pepperdine, Stanford, and more, to conduct virtual classrooms. Part of Second Life’s attraction to educators and students is that it allows them to interact with each other over large distances, allows for enrichment of existing curriculum, and



expansion on current educational goals. Participants can host lectures or conduct projects online. Currently, there are more than 100 Second Life “islands” for educational purposes.

Proponents claim that the Second Life educational sphere is especially beneficial for fostering the social relationships missing in traditional distance learning. Students indicate that once they are familiar with Second Life they like the social-learning activities it enables.

The Second Life platform can also be useful for experiential learning. It allows students to practice new skills and ideas, learning from their mistakes in preparation for real-world experiences. An example would be a Second Life courtroom scenario allowing a student-resident to prosecute a trial. Others are using the virtual environment to mimic real-world problems and issues such as natural catastrophes to provide experience in various situations. The possibilities for creating and running through scenarios are endless.

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NAC Tracks

Does your/school computer have gaming software installed

A: Yes

B: No

Vote here





Second Life in Education continued from page 1

If you are interested in previewing what Second Life offers in the way of education, there are many examples to view. Second Life also offers an education mailing list which offers members alerts to educational opportunities and events on the site. Narrower interests, such as educators working with teens, have further refined mailing lists. To find out more, visit Second Life's page devoted to these interests at: <http://secondlife.com/businesseducation/education.php>.

Second Life also maintains an educational wiki (contributor-compiled encyclopedia) about educational offerings in Second Life. To learn more, go to http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Second_Life_Education_Wiki.


An example of Second Life in action in a school can be seen at Suffern Middle School located in Suffern, NY. Peg Sheehy, Suffern's instructional technology facilitator leads the project. Several virtual private islands were created in the adult grid and then transferred to the teen grid. The project began with students learning the world and quickly catching on. Sheehy has then helped staff at the school setup projects on the islands. One social-studies class studying immigration chose to build a virtual Ellis Island—with a Statue of Liberty and more. A math teacher received a recommendation to build a “geo gallery” of geometry concepts created by students in the 3D

world. Because of the numerous safety provisions in place administrators felt comfortable with the project, which led to its success.

Educational experiences are even easier to find on the adult grid. Explore and examine some of the opportunities available:

<http://slispaceflightmuseum.org/drupal>: An international space flight museum found on the island sim Spaceport Alpha in Second Life. Find anything and everything related to spacecraft, rockets, and space travel.

http://www.simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Campus:Second_Life: Campus Second Life allows educators that are interested in the educational uses of Second Life to use an acre of virtual land for a semester for free rather than investing in a plot.

<http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/outreach/sl>: The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Earth System Research Laboratory's Virtual Education Demonstration in Second Life allows one to experience various weather phenomena such as a tsunami, taking a plane-ride through a hurricane, testing out a weather balloon, and more. 

Interactive Online Community Safety Tips

Keep the computer in an open room of the house where you can monitor your child's actions online.

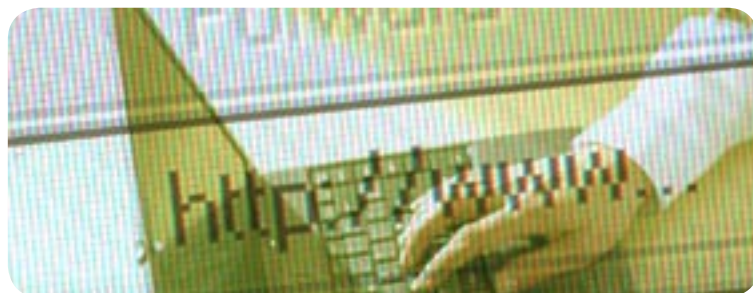
Evaluate the Web site and follow site age restrictions. Read the site's privacy policy and code of conduct. Any site intended for users over 18 pose the most risks for underage users.

Spend time online with your child to learn about the activities and interactions they're having in the online community.

Discuss the dangers of communicating with strangers online – Online friends are strangers, not “real” friends. Remind your children to never reveal personal information online or meet an online friend in person; and, if they are asked to do so, to notify you immediately.


Remind your children that they are never to use credit cards or make purchases online without parental permission and assistance.

Choose appropriate screen names and avatars that do not reveal personal information or potentially invite harassment.



Teach your child how to deal with cyber bullies

- Ignore the cyber bully. Never fight back
- Take a break and come back later
- Block or mute the harasser
- Report offenders to the Web site

Ensure that your child knows how to report inappropriate or dangerous content – Notify the Web site by clicking on the “Report Abuse” link. If there is no link, look for a “Contact Us” link. If you suspect someone is a criminal or predator, print out a copy of the communication and Web site address, and report it to your local law enforcement agency. 

NAC Corner— *Coming Back to Life*



Back-to-school is just around the corner, and these final weeks of summer vacation hold precious moments of last-minute online recreation and amusement before homework and schoolwork take over life again.

These days, some children and teens rarely get outside as they become more engrossed in virtual communities or online communities. These are semi-structured virtual environments where characters can undertake activities for the purpose of personal enjoyment. They can also simply be networks of individuals that trade information via IM, chat, and message boards, etc. While there are great uses for these environments personal time outdoors, or with real-life friends and family can be lost.

Our question is why would someone want to spend hours online and lead a parallel life in addition to one that he or she already has? Statistics from i-SAFE's National Assessment Center (NAC) may put this into perspective.

- 42% of 5-12 graders spend anywhere between 1-4 hours on the Internet. Another 20% spend between 5-9 hours on the Internet per week.

- Internet gaming (13% of all responses) was indicated as the number one activity of children in grades 5-8.

As children spend increasingly long hours on the Internet, more and more activities that were earlier done offline can now be done online (e.g. research, games, mailing, shopping.) It was only a matter of time before the rest of our lives caught on to this Internet migration.

The anonymity of the Internet combined with easy accessibility make the Internet a convenient place for students to hang out with others, without the social stigma they encounter in their real world. According to NAC data,



- 11% of 5-12 graders report feeling lonely "Often" or "Constantly"
- 12% of 5-12 graders report feeling depressed "Often" or "Constantly"

Perhaps, the popularity of virtual communities can be understood by what the musical group "Savage Garden" once said about the telephone:

On the telephone line, I am any height
I am any age I want to be
I could be a caped crusader, or space invader
And, you wouldn't know the difference
Or would you?

NAC Center 5-12 grade pre-assessment query of the 06-07 database on July 9, 2007

Did you know that Verizon customers can now record video with their wireless phones and upload the videos directly to YouTube using an easy to remember number – YTUBE (98823)? Within minutes the new videos can be viewed by YouTube visitors.

Did you know that a company named Syntraxis is seeking to change the way we use social-networking sites by promoting more "purposeful communities." These communities are designed, not just for making friends, but for sharing values and aspirations. They promote the concept as "Aspirational Networking" for users to collaborate in learning and knowledge-sharing.

For more information visit www.syntraxis.com.



Miss NJ Motivated to Promote Internet Safety

Amy Polumbo, the newly-crowned Miss New Jersey, joins i-SAFE in a campaign to educate students and parents about online dangers. Amy made “Internet safety” part of her platform for her reign, and ironically soon became a victim herself. In her first weeks as Miss New Jersey, Amy was pressured to give up her crown by someone who lifted photos from her personal webpage, doctored the pictures, and sent them to Pageant officials in a blackmail attempt. Amy says she now knows first hand how easy it is for someone to be taken advantage of on the Internet. “This can happen to anybody at any time. Together with i-SAFE, I hope “to reach tens of thousands of students across New Jersey and nationwide,” she says.

Amy’s year-long Internet safety campaign with i-SAFE will include being featured in Public Service Announcements (PSA) for broadcast on radio and television stations nationwide, classroom visits in New Jersey, conducting i-SAFE i-PARENT Programs and community events, and to represent i-SAFE in regional, state-wide, and national lobbying activities for Internet safety legislation.

“I chose Internet safety as my platform issue because I want to help young people after I saw a relative victimized on the Internet,” Amy says. As a teenager, Amy’s cousin became a victim to cyber bullies after she joined groups on social-networking sites that enticed her into using drugs.

“Amy is a very courageous young woman,” says i-SAFE CEO and Program Director Teri Schroeder. “We are proud to have Amy join us in our effort to reach youth about the



importance of safe and responsible use of the Internet. She can relate to this Internet-using generation with her valuable experience and insight.”

Amy grew up in Howell Township, New Jersey. With a great aptitude for helping others, she was actively involved with her school and community. She also performed in over 50 theatrical shows. She attends Wagner College in New York, where she is pursuing a degree in Musical Theatre with a minor in Psychology.

Keep up with Amy during her busy and meaningful year on our Web site www.isafe.org. 

Today’s Cyber Predator


A different “face” of the cyber predator is emerging, according to research conducted by Professor David Finkelhor at University of New Hampshire’s Crimes Against Children Research Center.

The research indicates a vast majority (80%) of cyber predators go to sexually-oriented chat rooms and are quite explicit about their intentions. They engage in conversations with children and groom victims who are “vulnerable and are looking for romance, adventure, sexual information, and understanding.”

Finkelhor’s research states that in 73% of Internet sex crimes, the children meet with the predator on “multiple occasions and for multiple sexual encounters.” And his

study shows that half of the victims were described as “being in love with or feeling close friendship” with the predator; many ran away from home to be with the person met online.

Guarding personal information may not be enough to avoid these predators.

i-SAFE recommends that children should never talk about sex online with strangers. Better yet, stay out of sexual-oriented sites altogether. Report to law enforcement any sexual advances or requests for risqué photos. And, even if the sexual chat isn’t directed toward them, children should know how to recognize and report attempts to groom others that they see online. 

Government Actions—No Summer Recess


Summertime may be a slow time for schools and school administrators, but this summer Internet safety is a hot topic among legislators and government leaders.

On Capitol Hill July 24th, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation conducted a hearing on the status of Internet safety titled “Protecting Children on the Internet.” The committee heard first-hand about online dangers, and possible legislative solutions to prevent crimes and the victimization of children online. One suggestion was mandatory Internet safety education in school, like i-SAFE’s K-12 curriculum. The committee was told that the Virginia Department of Education has taken the lead, becoming the first state that requires Internet safety to be integrated into all instructional programs. The committee agreed that cyber predators are “a plague upon this country,” and Chairman Daniel Inouye (Alaska) promised that the solution may be a “multi-layered strategy—one that teaches our children about safe and responsible online behavior; one that encourages industry action to develop tools that will aid parents in their efforts to restrict inappropriate material from their children’s access; and one that relies on swift and certain action by law enforcement officials in finding and punishing those who would use the Internet to harm children.”

That same week in July, the nation’s governors met in Michigan, for a four-day National Governors Conference. During a break-out session on Internet safety, the governors and other state leaders heard that parents and schools need to emphasize Internet safety. Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell was quoted as saying “this (Internet safety) is going to be a hot topic.” And, New Hampshire Attorney General Kelly Ayotte said, “This is an issue that we are not going to arrest our way out of.”



Rhode Island is the latest state moving toward state-wide mandatory Internet safety education in schools. The Rhode Island state legislature worked with i-SAFE to draft legislation that would require the Department of Education to create curriculum that would be used in schools throughout the state. The legislation requires the Department to report back to General Assembly leadership and the Governor before February of 2008.

However, Rhode Island is not all policy and procedure. James McBride, known as “Mr. Deep Positivity,” has created a series of positive rap songs—including one with a positive Internet safety message. James is a former “Rhode Island Big Brother of the Year” and currently takes his musical message to teen centers and youth clubs across the state. 

i-SAFE and NASRO Working Together

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and i-SAFE have formed a partnership that gives NASRO members training, resources and materials to educate and empower students, parents, community members, and law enforcement across the country to be safe online. NASRO personnel will teach i-SAFE’s dynamic K-12 curriculum in the classroom and promote i-SAFE Youth Empowerment and Outreach Campaigns in their communities.

The need for such programs stems from the rapid growth of the Internet, which has become a catalyst for the wide-

spread victimization of children. Consider the latest results from i-SAFE’s National Assessment Center (NAC) of online surveys submitted by 5th - 8th grade students nationwide:

- 87% of students say that they spend at least 1 hour per week on the Internet; 18% spend 10 hours or more on the Internet each week
- 52% of students stated that they use the Internet “usually” or “often” when adults are not in the same room
- 18% of students said that they are most likely to do

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i-SAFE and NASRO Working Together

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something on the Internet that is unsafe, inappropriate or illegal while they are at home

- 14% of students admit that they have visited gambling Web sites 4% of students reported that they have used the Internet to obtain drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes

- 11% of students stated that they have purchased illegally burned CDs from the Internet

NASRO members certified by i-SAFE, teach in the classroom and can be instrumental in raising awareness in the community by positively influencing students' online behavior. i-LEARN Online (<http://ilearn.isafe.org>) certifies NASRO members online through comprehensive video tutorials of Internet safety concepts which outlines i-SAFE curricula for grades K-12, details outreach campaigns for students, parents, and law enforcement, and explains how to implement the i-SAFE Program.

Dr. Dick Caster, NASRO Executive Director says his organization that represents more than 9,000 law enforcement and educators firmly believes in i-SAFE's prevention-oriented Internet safety awareness programs. "They are powerful and an effective resource for teaching students how to use the Internet confidently and safely," Caster says. "Therefore, in keeping with NASRO's mission to create safe and secure learning environments and to provide preventive educational programs that contribute to the wellbeing of students, NASRO seeks to enhance Internet safety education, community outreach and youth empowerment efforts by developing a formal working relationship with i-SAFE."



Get Involved

The next time you are going to a local or regional conference or faculty meeting and are asked to present a workshop, you may consider presenting an Internet safety topic. i-SAFE can help you to be easily prepared by providing the materials for an orientation or PDP.

- 1) Simply login at www.isafe.org
- 2) Click on submit Implementation Plan on the "My Info" page.
- 3) Select "orientation presentation" under the conduct presentation section.

To send comments or contributions to the newsletter staff e-mail news@isafe.org or send "snail mail to:
**i-SAFE Editor, 5900 Pasteur Ct., Ste. 100,
Carlsbad, CA, 92008**

In Your School

Everyday, many i-SAFE Inc. events are going on across the country. We've made it easy for you to get involved and help spread the message of Internet safety to your peers and community. Simply check out our "Calendar of Events," located at http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub_id=3, to find an event near you.



About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower students, parents, seniors, and community members to safely and responsibly take control of their Internet experiences. i-SAFE provides knowledge that will enable them to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful online behavior, and to respond appropriately. This is accomplished through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to students, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. i-SAFE is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org

