

Family Insider — Social Media

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*“One generation plants the trees;
another gets the shade.”*

~ Chinese Proverb

We live in a technological world where students are ‘always on’ and ‘connected.’ Multimedia and technology saturate their lives and are changing the way they learn and socialize.

Web sites like YouTube and MySpace are infiltrating the daily activities of our teens. Social media gives Internet users an opportunity to become active participants in a worldwide community of over 6 billion users. However, social media is not just about socializing. Educators are now taking a look at how they can incorporate these popular tools that are so often used by students for social and entertaining purposes, into their learning environments. Families should also take a look at how they too can benefit from social media.

So, just what are we defining as social media? There is a whole range of online “products” designed these days to facilitate online socialization and interaction. Here is a quick rundown on a few of them. Blogs are online journals in a sense. They can also take video format known as vlogs. Podcasts are audio broadcasts in a format which facilitates downloading for playback on a computer or digital musical player. Video webcasts are live or streaming video sent over the Web. Wikis are online sites that allow users to add and edit content collectively. These are just a few of the new ways students are interacting online.

Social media allows us to interact, learn and communicate not only with those in our own neighborhoods, but also those around the world. Parents now have a worldwide peer group to discuss parenting issues, health and safety concerns, and personal interests and hobbies. Blogs, vlogs, podcasts, video webcasts and wikis all provide platforms for learning and sharing information. Blogs and video blogs offer a means for



students, educators and even families to share opinions on topics, document projects and plan activities such as family reunions. Blogs and photo/video journals are also ways for families to share their daily lives and connect with family members around the world. Podcasts are allowing educators to supplement classroom lessons, or provide lessons for students who are either

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NAC Tracks

Are you aware that many popular viral video Web sites (like YouTube) contain videos that are inappropriate for children and that there are often no controls that prevent children from accessing this material?

A: Yes

B: No

Vote here




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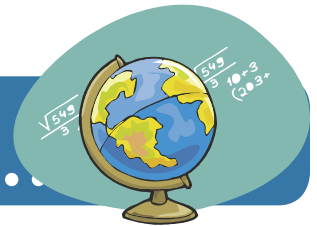
unable to attend class or just need a review of classroom lectures. Wikis allow multiple participants to create, manage or update content in a collaborative environment.

Query your favorite search engine to find social media that fits your topical interests, or create a family blog to connect with family and friends. Just remember to keep it smart and think about Internet safety! Safety tips for using online media follow the same rules as those for using other Internet tools. Download the i-SAFE Social Networking Tip Sheet and make sure that everyone in the family knows the rules http://ilearn.isafe.org/iparent/docs/od/social_networking.pdf.

Most importantly, we need to ensure that students connect what they are doing *online* with real life. Too many people don't consider the consequences of their actions before doing something that could be potentially dangerous or demeaning. Forethought and education can help ensure the technology is used in a positive manner.


Embrace technology! Take the initiative to learn how you can safely utilize it to enhance the ways that you and your family learn and socialize. 

NAC Corner—*Dangerous Images*



Children have always enjoyed goofing around in front of cameras and video recorders. And why not, there's no harm, right? Unfortunately, current technology has given individuals less control over their own image and where that image ends up. Camera phones are particularly popular and just one way to upload images to the Internet. According to a 2005-2006 i-SAFE National Assessment Center (NAC) survey, from a pool of almost 15,000 students in grades 5-12, 53% have their own cell phone and 28% have cell phones that can take pictures. 10% of students admitted that they have taken pictures of someone with their phone without the other person's knowledge. In a slightly different vein, so far this current academic year, 6% of students nationwide (351 respondents) have reported that they have uploaded inappropriate pictures of themselves to the Internet.

What happens when photos are uploaded to the Internet without the person's knowledge? What identifying information might accompany that photo? Or, what could happen when children upload inappropriate pictures of themselves? The individual whose photo has been surreptitiously taken, unfortunately, has no control over who sees those photos once they land on the Internet. And, the children who upload their own

photos may not be aware of the danger in doing so. Discuss with your children not only the possible danger of uploading their own pictures, but also the responsibility of how they use photos they take of friends and other people. Taking a picture of their best friend with their cell phone to show grandma is probably okay. Taking a picture of someone they know (or don't!) and uploading it to the Internet could pose a risk for that person. Remind your students to be a good friend and protect each other. Be safe! 



Library Elf

Do you love using the library but hate paying those overdue library book fees? We could all use a little help remembering important dates, and the Library Elf is here to help. The Library Elf is like a personal assistant for busy families; managing your library book loans so you never have to pay overdue book fees again! Users receive e-mail or text notices when books are coming due, overdue or when holds are ready for pickup. Check it out at www.libraryelf.com.



Donny the Downloader Goes to Broadway



Donny the Downloader on Broadway. Well, not exactly. More like off, off, off Broadway. The new Donny the Downloader assembly premiered in New York in late March, and played to a packed house in the Bronx and Long Island.

You remember Donny the Downloader. He is a cartoon character who tries to impress everyone with his access to music, without bothering to pay for it. Students learn an anti-piracy message through the mis-adventures of the animated 14 year old character; and through a series of videos that show a budding high school-age singer/songwriter named Sonya trying to make it in the real-life world of music. The assembly is truly multi-media. Along with the cartoon and videos, the middle-school student audience enjoys music and a live skit performed by fellow classmates.

That brings us back to the New York assemblies. The skit calls for one of the student/actors to dress up and play the part of Donny the Downloader. However, that's rather difficult at St. Raymond School. It's an all-girls school!


No problem, the Donny poser dressed the part – including wearing the signature blond Donny wig and baseball cap, She received rave reviews, as well as waves of laughter from all of her friends and classmates in the audience. No doubt, the Donny the Downloader Experience was a hit with students.

But, how would the assembly be received by a – well, er, um – more mature group? ASCAP Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Phil Crosland, along with 3 members of the New York-based PR firm, Cooper Katz, were special guests at St. Raymond School.

“The assembly was just as I'd imagined—only better,” Phil said afterward.

ASCAP raised Donny from a cel; and the performance-rights organization is partnered with i-SAFE to bring the assembly experience to students across the country.

i-SAFE estimates that the Donny the Downloader Experience will reach millions of students nationwide this year.

If you would like to conduct the assembly at your school, choose The Donny the Downloader Experience when filling out your implementation plan, or order it through the i-SAFE store at <http://auth.isafe.org/store/digital.php>. 


Internet Safety Tip—Protecting your Computer

Is your computer running slower than usual? Are you getting random pop-up ads when online? Unfortunately spyware/adware could be the problem. Have you run a spyware check on your computer lately?

Spyware is software that monitors and gathers user information without their knowledge and then transmits it over the Internet to a parent company. Spyware can gather basic information like what web pages you view, shopping habits, etc. It can also be used to gather e-mail addresses, passwords, and even credit card numbers. In addition, it can slow down your computer and your Internet connection as it transmits information.

So how do you keep your computer secure? You should run a spyware check and removal at least once a month to eliminate these programs—or whenever you think something is slowing down your computer and Internet connection (or you get frequent ad pop-ups from a company).

You will need to download a spyware removal program unless your anti-virus software also includes a spyware component. To find spyware removal software to run—utilize a search engine using the terms “free spyware removal software.” Once you have downloaded spyware removal software, install and run the program according to directions.

Does your computer have spyware? Why not find out now? 



Legislating Internet Safety




Congress is certainly compelled to protect the children of America, it just won't be doing it with the 1998 COPA act anytime soon. A federal judge recently threw out the law that was designed to protect children by forcing Web sites to take measures that would prevent young people from accessing sexually explicit material. Protecting the right of free speech and privacy was central to the ruling.

There have been several bills introduced recently to address the issue of Internet safety. Many of the bills, however, are receiving similar criticism. The COPA ruling was largely

based on the concept of the least restrictive application of a law. Many, including the judge, felt that the law was too broad and would have too great of an unintended impact.

Among the laws being discussed in the U.S. Congress, the SAFER NET Act sponsored by Reps. Melissa Bean of Illinois and Baron Hill of Indiana, is proving to be the most widely favored of the bills. This bill seeks to create a public awareness campaign and relies less on filtering and more on education and awareness. It recognizes that education is the best way to equip young people and consumers with the skills they need to be safe online. Rep. Bean, Rep. Hill and the fifty co-sponsors should be commended for not taking away rights while trying to protect America's citizens.


Education and involvement are the best methods when preventing our young people from accessing illicit information and images on the Web. With so many Web sites offering streaming video and other content that may seem harmless, it might seem impossible to prevent access to this type of information. The best way to ensure safe and responsible decisions online is to become educated on how to avoid and detect risky behavior. i-SAFE offers a wealth of information on Internet safety and soon the government will be doing more to assist in these efforts. 

Brain Biology and Online Behavior

Neuroscience, the study of brain function, is helping us to understand how and why students engage in risky or inappropriate behaviors online.

In face-to-face communications, the orbitofrontal cortex of the brain which controls the center for empathy is constantly evaluating emotional and physical cues from the parties involved. Brain science studies show that the frontal lobes responsible for controlling emotions and impulses are not developed enough in youth to allow rational thought processes and that behavioral decision making is impaired. To compensate for the underdevelopment of the frontal lobes, adolescents rely on another area of the brain to determine behavior—the amygdala. The primary use of the amygdala results in emotional, impulsive decision-making. It should then come as no surprise that a lack of face-to-face interaction online and immature brain development increase the likelihood that students will be more likely to engage in risky or inappropriate behaviors online.

Research also tells us that discussion and active partici-

pation help children to build frontal lobe function resulting in better decision making skills. Help your students build positive online skills. Discuss appropriate Internet communication and safety and encourage them to watch the i-MENTOR Training videos and participate in mentor activities to reinforce safe Internet practices. 



Get Involved—Conducting an i-PARENT Program

In the i-PARENT Times March issue, you created a buzz in your community about your upcoming event by notifying the media. The time has now come to conduct the event to raise awareness and teach others about Internet safety issues. Here is a step-by-step guide to conducting your event.

Pre-Event

- Set up audio/visual equipment and test videos, etc.
- Clearly identify the entrance to the meeting and ensure that people know what to do when they get inside.
- Prepare an information table where people can pick up materials, including tip sheets, the agenda and background information. (Materials are on your i-PARENT CD.)
- Welcome guests and answer inevitable questions (i.e., where to sit and restroom locations). Greeters may be asked to direct participants to a specific table, such as for the hearing impaired or those who need wheelchair access. Remind them to register their attendance on the sign-in sheet at the info table.

Meeting

Introductions

- Welcome from the i-PARENT Board Director and an introduction of members present.
- Identification of the purpose and protocol.
- Recognition of organizations and elected representatives present.

*Note: If you have not submitted your Implementation Plan (IP) for the Parent Program, please go to the i-SAFE Web site, www.isafe.org, log in with your username and password and submit and IP for a "Parent Program". Please allow 3 weeks for material delivery.

Presentation

- Watch the "Start Here" training video to inform members of the need for Internet safety and what they can do to get involved. Follow up with the topical videos to focus on specific issues. Discuss the Internet Safety Tip Sheets.
- Q&A
- Discuss the opportunities that i-PARENT Board members have to get involved.

Recruit New Members

- Invite guests to become part of the i-PARENT Board and encourage members to invite others to become part of the i-PARENT Board. They can indicate their desire to be part of the i-PARENT Board by checking the box on the sign-in sheet.

Conclusion

- Remind attendees to register their attendance on the sign-in sheets before leaving.

Post Event

- Fax or mail the sign-in sheets to i-SAFE.

Fax # : 760-603-8382

Address: i-SAFE Inc.

5900 Pasteur Ct., Suite 100

Carlsbad, CA 92008-7337

- Follow up with new i-PARENT Board members.

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

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 youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. The goal is to educate students on how to avoid dangerous, inappropriate, or unlawful online behavior. i-SAFE accomplishes this through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. It is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org

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