

Internet Safety Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 3 * April 2009*

Brought to you by the FLVS Internet Safety Committee



Safety Savvy Students? FLVS Students Weigh In on their Safety Practices!

Today, many teens use the internet - a lot! It seems like every week there is a new social networking site such as My Space, facebook, Twitter, Yammer, and Flickr. These sites give teens a way to keep in touch with friends, post pictures and videos to share, and make new friends. It's easy, fun and can help us stay connected with each other, but we've all heard stories about the internet being dangerous and that there are precautions we can and should take to keep ourselves safe.

This month we asked FLVS students a few simple questions about how they viewed internet safety. Seventy-seven students, grades 7 - 12 completed the survey. Let's see what they had to say.

When asked if they were concerned about their own safety when they were on the internet, 75% of the students who completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that safety was something to be concerned about.

Our next question asked students if their parents expressed concern about their safety when using the internet. On this one, eighty-two percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed that their parents were worried about them when they were on the internet. (But isn't that their job, to worry?)

Next, we asked students about their use of social networking sites such as MySpace, facebook, or Twitter, where they post information about themselves, their friends, and their families. Specifically, we asked what precautions they took to protect their identity and personal information when posting on these kinds of sites. The responses to this question seemed to fall into a few distinct categories: students who didn't post personal information, students who used settings to only invite their friends, students who used fake information (names, ages, locations), and students who didn't use social networking sites.

The responses included comments such as: "I make sure that nothing personal is on my page and I do not talk to anyone unless I am sure that I know them." "I use fake names, ages, and locations of where I live... and make sure no one gets or knows my password." "I do not put my address, phone number, parent's names, or my full name. Also, I do not give my school or personal email out to anyone."

Finally, we asked what precautions they and their families took to protect themselves from danger involving hackers, inappropriate information, and other possible dangers when using the internet. For the most part, students talked about using spam ware, spyware, pop-up blockers, virus protection, clearing cookies, firewalls, and parental protection settings. They also again expressed the importance of keeping information like passwords private, even from friends.

The responses to our informal survey indicate that students are aware of the basic precautions to take when using social networking sites and the internet. They try to keep information private. Students are aware of basic dangers:

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Students and Parents:
Please join the Internet
Safety Team on May 6
and May 27 at 7pm for an
i-SAFE webinar to help
you play and stay safe
on-line.**

[Click here to attend!](#)

**At the end of the day,
the goals are simple:
safety and security. –
Jodi Rell**

viruses, websites, pop-ups with inappropriate material, hackers, and on-line strangers. They are also aware of the basic steps to take to protect themselves.

Although our students appear to be safety savvy, we would encourage each of them to attend internet safety webinars that will be offered by FLVS soon. You can never know too much about keeping yourself safe from cyber bullying, online enticement, and giving out personal information.

Terri Smouse, Ed.D. - Middle School Science Instructor

Cyberspace – greater need for internet safety

In this Age of Information, the Internet has dramatically changed our world and the way we interact within it. Internet use has grown exponentially since the late 1990s and literally defines how we share information and interact with one another.

Cyberspace is a fascinating global community without boundaries. This exposure and expansive communication brings a wonderful melding of cultures and sharing of ideas but is not without its own set of risks and responsibilities.

Today's youth have grown up with the Internet. It is an integral and very normal part of their lives. According to a recent i-SAFE America survey of over 37,853 students, the average teenager spends about 31 hours per week on-line. That alone is neither surprising nor alarming but what does cause concern is in an earlier survey of 20,000 students; 18% actually feel safer on the Internet than in the real world, and 37% feel less inhibited or restricted.

Risk-taking is a natural part of any child's life and inherently important to growth. But we as educators, parents, and citizens must ensure those risks are calculated; that our young people have the necessary knowledge to make good choices and wise, qualified decisions whether online or on the streets of their neighborhoods.

The Internet has introduced a new litany of issues and concerns. Piracy, plagiarism, identity theft, bullying, citizenship, predators, and intellectual property are all terms that have taken new dimensions within this cyber world and given rise to questions and concerns. Unfortunately, the ease with which students handle computers and their level of expertise is often not matched by parents; 27% of i-SAFE students surveyed described the Internet skills of their parents as weak, or very weak. This imbalance adds another element of risk, placing a greater burden on the educator and creating a greater need for internet safety.

Shannon Hube - FLD Instructor and i-SAFE Trainer