Social Networking

My name is Kristen and I am addicted to Facebook! I admit it! Facebook is a fantastic way of social networking. So great in fact that Florida Virtual School has a group. While Facebook and other social networking sites are an amazing new way to communicate with friends, not everyone has the best of intentions.

Before you set up your new account on one of the many social networking websites please consider some of the tips below….

With a parent, research the different social networks and what they have to offer. They should have settings for privacy. It is fun to see how many friends you get, but NEVER add someone you don't know. Consider restricting your friends to school, clubs, neighborhoods, teams, and family.

Keep your information private. Don't post your full name (includes your screen name), Social Security number, address, phone number, or bank and credit card account numbers — and don't post other people's information, either. Be careful about posting information that could be used to identify you or locate you offline, such as the name of your school, sports team, clubs, and where you work or hang out.

Remember that once you post information online, you can't take it back. Even if you delete the information from a site, older versions exist on other people's computers.

Do not post your photo. It can be altered and sent in ways you may not be happy about. If you do post one, make sure it is one you would share with your grandmother.

Some people lie about who they really are and you never really know who you're dealing with.   Only communicate online with people you know.

Lastly, trust your gut! If you feel uncomfortable there is a reason. Tell an adult immediately.

Your safety is important to us on and off line.

Parent and student contracts

Rules are important to our society. Rules are just as important in your household, especially when it is pertaining to the internet. Parents and children should have a clear understanding of the boundaries and freedoms they have. A great way to begin talking about the internet is to develop an online safety contract for parents and kids. These contracts would each have tips and criteria for each and be agreed to by both parties. Print and sign them and keep them close to your computer. For a sample you can visit
www.safekids.com/family-contract-for-online-safe/