

Internet Safety 101

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We both recently attended a Saturday school counselor training on internet safety taught by office Lynn Mock of the Gig Harbor Police Department. Although we both have known about the importance of internet safety for our students, this class took our awareness and our concerns to a whole new level.

Most of the presentation was information regarding Myspace accounts and use. If your child has a MySpace or any social networking account, it is very important that you have their page set to "private". It is also of extreme importance not to have a photo of your child as the first photo of their page. For the best prevention, don't allow your child to have any photo of themselves online. Photos can be "Photoshopped" or changed and downloaded and used for negative purposes by perfect strangers. In addition do not allow your child to post their birthday on-line anywhere. Identities can be stolen and credit ruined from a stranger merely having access to one's birthday.

One of the best and most-comprehensive websites we've recently discovered when researching this topic further is <http://www.wiredsafety.org>". In it is a multitude of ideas for internet safety with specific social sites such as YouTube and MySpace. Some of the tips have translations in Spanish as well.

The best advice we can give as your child's school counselors is one we hope is happening in homes on a regular basis: Do not allow your child to have internet access without parent supervision. We must do our best to protect our children from predators and harmful images. It is also our responsibility to teach children the importance of maintaining a positive image. Colleges and Universities and places of employment are known to check the internet to search character issues on individuals.

Once something is in cyberspace, it cannot be taken back. You cannot control what another person does with your photo or information.

Our kids know a great deal more than we do about the net. Ask them questions. Ask them to show you what web sites they go to. Educate yourself regarding chat room and text messaging lingo at a site such as <http://www.cybertipline.org>".

If you own a home computer consider safeguarding options if you have not done so.

Feel free to contact either one of us at (253) 945-3808. We'd be happy to speak further about some things we learned at this recent internet safety class and offer advice if we are able.

Recommended Websites for Internet

- <http://www.wiredsafety.org>
- <http://www.cybertipline.org>
- <http://www.safekids.com>