



SIPS

Safe Internet Practices in School February 2008 - Social Networking 101

Social Networking: A virtual paradise for Posers and Fakesters

Social Networking sites, like MySpace, Facebook, Xanga, and Bebo, are appealing because they are an easy way to increase your circle of friends. The downside to social networking is that people you meet in a virtual environment may not be who they say they are. "Posers" or "Fakesters" could be predators, cyber bullies, identity thieves, or someone who wants to fictionalize his or her life. Unfortunately, there's no way to tell. You never really know who you are talking to unless your online friend is someone that you know from the real world.

Social Networking sites allow people to communicate with one another and share images, ideas and information. They offer an easy way for people to share thoughts and ideas and help friends stay in touch. While it may be appropriate for adults to participate in this type of activity, it is not appropriate for students. Unfortunately, the lure to socialize in a virtual environment is so appealing to young people that they will overlook possible dangers. We use filters to "block" these sites at school, but we can't lock kids out of these sites so our best bet is to educate them to the potential dangers they may encounter.

Social Networking Wisdom

No Page is Personal- even if a social networking site blocks access to strangers, personal information about the page owner is still accessible. People should never post personal information.

You Can't Take it Back - any text or image that is posted on the web is there forever. Even if the information is removed or changed, the original content is still in cyberspace. **NEVER** post anything you wouldn't say or show to a group of strangers you met at the mall. Digital Footprints are Forever.

COFFEE TALK

Can you talk the talk? Here are a few examples of current chat lingo:

IRL - In real life

CD9 - Code 9 parents nearby

EG - evil grin

HAK- Hugs and kisses

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Wiredsafe

<http://www.wiredsafety.org/internet101/blogs.html>

Fraudster's Paradise

<http://www.fool.co.uk/news/your-money/2007/10/12/social-networking-sites-a-fraudsters-paradise.aspx>

A Parent's Guide to Social Networking

<http://onguardonline.gov/socialnetworking.html>