

Internet Safety

Background:

Slightly over four years ago, I was a parent volunteer and all-subject substitute. I saw a tremendous need for an upgraded technology (the school was Apple IIe based – one lab of 10 computers and 5 in the lower school math lab). Using my business background, I developed a plan to build a 12 workstation, Pentium 100 lab. It was built by leasing computers, cabling, and software and partially funded by leveraging the technology back to the business world. We rented the lab to businesses for training sessions and opened the lab at night for adult computer classes.

Amazingly, in just 3 years and 3 months, we completed my 5-year plan. We had 79 networked computers through out the school (every classroom, three labs, 2 laptops, two projectors, a fiber optic backbone, 2 NT file servers, 100baseT cabling, e-mail for each teacher, color printers, color scanners, digital camera and a multitude of wonderful software.

Even more amazing, the faculty has embraced the technology (some a little more slowly than others): everyday tasks; test generations; tests on the Internet; mail merge of grades to interactive CD's; and integrating the Internet in the learning process. (I call the computer lab, the "Learning Lab.") In the computer lab, I am able to work with all learning styles, the multiple intelligences, individual remedial work, and individual challenge work.

The Problem:

But this wonderful growth and development had a downside. The treasures of the Internet were obscured by the trash of the Internet. Even Acceptable Use Policies and teacher supervision were not enough. We tried blocking software, but it blocked too much. For instance, a student could not research "Breast Cancer" because "breast" is a body part and the blocking software did not allow access. The teachers got frustrated and would turn the blocking software off. The next thing we know, a second grader got on an unprotected computer and typed in www.1X?!.com.

Parents were furious. Teachers were embarrassed. Kids were curious. Not good!

The Solution:

BriteSite.Net is a new national company, headquartered in Louisville, KY. It is *both* an Internet Service Provider (ISP) *and* a filter (all for just the price of Internet access). *Filtered* Internet access is far superior to blocking software.

Over 20,000 websites are added to the Internet **every** day (Chris Sherman, about.com Feb. 12, 1999). Of these it is estimated that that well over half are of an objectionable nature (pornography, gratuitous violence, illegal drugs, etc.). No software can be updated on a daily basis. Most blocking software packages rely on keywords or voluntary ratings. Many objectionable sites do not use the ratings system and avoid the use of keywords that would limit their viewing audience.

BriteSite.Net has over 80 people reviewing over 20,000 websites every day. **People** make the decisions.

St. Francis School now uses BriteSite.Net as our Internet Service Provider. I no longer feel like the Internet Gestapo, constantly checking where everyone had been on the Internet. My time can be put to better use, teaching students and helping faculty.

Additional Benefits:

"You've Got Money" could be the phrase that you hear.

Internet safety at school was only a beginning. Most of our students have computers at home with Internet access. In almost all homes, the students are more comfortable with the computers than their parents. Although we encourage our parents to participate with their children and guide them on the Internet adventures, we must be realistic and understand that only a very small percentage do so.

BriteSite.Net also offers filtered Internet service for home at the same rate (\$21.95/month) as the most common services (AOL, CompuServe, etc.). For each family that signs up to use BriteSite.Net at home, the school receives \$2.00 per month as long as that family uses the service. As you can imagine, over time, that money can become a significant amount. Instead of hearing, "You've got mail," you could be hearing, "You've got money!"

Conclusion:

When traveling on the Information Super Highway, wearing seatbelts is a good idea!

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