



## REACH Parent Meeting November 16th:

# Exploring Our Children's Internet Use and Keeping Them Safe

*Notes shared by Stella Rijeka, Newsletter Committee Member*

Paul Schwebel started the evening by clarifying the internet conundrum I've personally been experiencing, "The internet became a wilderness rather than a highway." Through large and small group discussion, personal experience and the discussions on internet articles, the following tidbits and advice left participants feeling refreshingly armed to venture forth into the wilderness with their children.

General email and internet use/Quotes from the dialogue that hit home for this 'reporter':

There was quite a bit of discussion on the realities of internet usage and the ways it encourages learning and also contributes to the breakdown of communication between people. **Consider and discuss with your child all the aspects and qualities of using, or not, the internet.**

- Assume everything on the internet is basically public.
- "The computer is essentially like having a door. You don't open it for just anyone. You make sure you know who is at the door before you open it. There are people in the world we choose not to interact with. Realize that you need to make choices about who you interact with and what information you'd like to take in."
- Kids are targeting and bullying other kids on email interactions. Talk with your children about who they want to 'open the door for'. They have control over whether or not to read and respond to any given email.

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## Mark Your Calendar

**Mon., Nov. 23**

RPF Meeting, 6:30pm BH Library

**Wed., Nov. 25 - Sun., Nov. 29**

NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Holiday

**Thurs., Dec. 3**

4/5 Field Trip to Marine Mammal Center, 10am-3pm

**Thurs., Dec. 10**

All Band Winter Concert

**Friday, Dec. 11**

REACH Holiday Social 7pm

Kids' Activity Night 6:45pm

**Mon., Dec. 14**

RPF Meeting, 6:30pm BH Library

**Mon., Dec. 21 - Mon., Jan. 3**

NO SCHOOL - Winter Break

**Mon., Jan. 4**

School resumes

**Wed., Jan. 13**

New Parent Info Night

## Email Etiquette

What does my email address say about me? If you are using your email account to send professional email make sure your address conveys a professional tone. Don't use an address that is suggestive, childish, or cute. There is no place for that in work-related email.

**To Be Professional:** Stay away from abbreviations and don't use emoticons (those little smiley faces). Don't

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- “The internet is not a necessity of life. It is not a right. It is a privilege. Children can still go to the library.”
- “It’s all just so porous. It’s like the yellow pages—type in a key word and it will give you the list of everything related to that key word. Once the list comes up, direct your child towards things that are safer, i.e. the .org sites.”
- Talk with your child(ren) about communication in general and quality relationships.
- Remind them how much body language informs of meaning and that there is no body language in emails or in information gleaned from the internet..
- Become familiar with email etiquette and protocols to feel sure you are communicating what you intend to communicate. *(See box beginning on front page)* Realize It can be printed, photocopied and made a permanent physical record. It can be distributed to anyone and everyone. Think of it the same as note passing in class or as snail mail.
- When you see something what does it mean? Is it real? How do you know it is? Partner with your child and work as a team in order to make sure your intentions for their internet use are realized.
- Compare the quality of the relationships they find in chat rooms or with instant messaging with face to face relationships. How are they the same, different, more fulfilling, dangerous, etc.

#### **Overseeing your child’s internet use:**

- The internet can be a wonderful educational tool. If you do not know how to use it, sit down with your child and learn how to use it together.
- When your child is learning to use the internet, sit with your child and teach them what the standard buttons do, and which ones not to push.
- Information literacy—one of the most important ways to help your child wade through the internet is to help them understand what is out there—what is real and what is not.
- We have to stay involved with our kids—no product can really give you internet security. Sit with

them while they search—many parents shared that even being in the same room, or having a ‘public’ computer space is risky because it takes the push of one button for something significantly inappropriate, like porn to pop onto the monitor.

- Keep the computer out in the open. Create a password for logging onto the whole computer so that your child cannot get access to anything unless you have decided it’s okay.
- Let your child know you will have access to their passwords and will monitor their My Space, Facebook, etc pages/accounts.
- Respect their curiosity, while letting them know there are areas in which they do not have the maturity to deal with the issue.
- The internet is not the place to let your child explore, regardless of how much you value the concept of exploring. The computer is not the thing to use for child care.
- Allow your child to communicate only with people you & s/he know. If what’s being communicated doesn’t match what you know—call someone over the phone, talk to parents, ASK—what does this mean? Please clarify.
- Remember if you have a child that is extremely anxious to get into all the unhealthy issues on the site, or anything they don’t have the maturity to deal with, you can purchase games and software your child can use without providing them access to the internet.

#### **Searching & Security:**

- Filter is the ‘magic’ word to use when searching menus and tools to learn your software and security systems in order to screen images, videos, and language out of your child’s usage.
- Teach your child that dialoguing about what they find on the net is an integral part of learning. What is it? Is it real? Is it kind? Is it a part of our values?
- Google image search does have a filter in advanced search. Learn how to use it.
- You Tube can instantaneously land at an inappro-

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priate site, word or video without any notice. Learn more about safely using You Tube at:

[http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/request.py?contact\\_type=abuse&hl=en-US](http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/request.py?contact_type=abuse&hl=en-US)

- Wikipedia is pretty thorough about what it lets in or not with filters set-up.
- Sebastopol Police Officer Dennis Colthurst provided the information presented about child predators on the net, and tween and teen usage. He is available as a resource to you at [denniscolthurst@sebpd.com](mailto:denniscolthurst@sebpd.com).
- Chat rooms are extremely dangerous. Do not allow your child to give out their age, location, city of residence, or photograph on the net. City location with age and photo is all predators need to find your child. The predator has time to sit and watch all the schools until they find the child they met on the internet.
- Do not communicate with anyone you do not know because we cannot control how much information gets on the net.
- A child can get in the position of being compromised or misunderstood without understanding how it happened.
- Child sexual predators need only 5 minutes to find a 12 year old on the net. The predator is looking for location right off the bat. It is the key piece to making physical contact with your child.
- Over half the children in a given presentation raised their hands when asked, “How many of you represent yourself as someone other than yourself, older than yourself when on the internet?” Trying to grow up and be someone they’re not has been a part of adolescent development. A person can (anonymously/deceptively) be whoever s/he wants on the internet. It’s like the new drug for our kids....

**Finally, Please Note:**

- Children can learn plenty about their computer without having access to the internet.
- .org is the abbreviated tag for anything that is a non-profit status.
- It’s your right as a parent to know your children’s passwords to all sites, and to check the history of what they have been searching for.

*Email Etiquette, continued*

use a cute or suggestive email address for business communications.

**Mind Your Manners:** Think of the basic rules you learned growing up, like saying please and thank you. Address people you don’t know as Mr., Ms., or Dr. Only address someone by first name if they imply it’s okay to do so.

**Have I used the appropriate tone?** Merriam-Webster defines tone as an “accent or inflection expressive of a mood or emotion.” It is very difficult to express tone in writing. You want to come across as respectful, friendly, and approachable. You don’t want to sound curt or demanding. Make sure your tone is polite and friendly, but gets across your intended meaning.

**Is my email too wordy (or is it not wordy enough)?** Get to the point of your email as quickly as possible, but don’t leave out important details that will help your recipient answer your query.

**Use Correct Spelling and Proper Grammar:** Use a dictionary or a spell checker — whichever works better for you. While you can write in a conversational tone (contractions are okay), pay attention to basic rules of grammar.

**Have I proof-read my message?** Make sure your spelling and grammar are correct. Errors will make you

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*Email Etiquette, continued*

look careless.

Email is increasingly becoming the primary way many of us communicate with one another. Often, people never meet their colleagues or clients face-to-face or even talk to them on the telephone. The only impression others have of us may be the one they get when they read our email messages. That is why it is so important to take great care in composing those messages. Before you hit the send button, ask yourself these questions.

**Have I attached unsolicited attachments?** Many people won't, and shouldn't, open attachments they aren't expecting because computer viruses are often transmitted in them. Get permission from the recipient before attaching a file to your message. In addition, many people won't open attachments unless they know the sender. Even that can be a mistake because many viruses come disguised in email messages from someone you know. Before sending an attachment, ask the recipient if you may do so.

**Are the name and email address in the "TO:" field correct?** Many email programs fill in the "TO:" field for you when you type in the first few letters of an email address or a recipient's name. Make sure the right name is there. You want to make sure your message reaches its intended destination, or that it doesn't reach an unintended one.

**Wait to Fill in the "TO" Email Address:** Career Planning Site visitor Larry Batchelor says, "I never fill in the 'TO' email address until I am completely through proofing my email and I am sure that it is exactly the way that I want it. This will keep you from accidentally sending an email prematurely. In the past, I have accidentally clicked on the send icon, when I really meant to click on the attachment icon."

**Write for your audience.** Use simple language. You don't want the reader to need a dictionary to decipher what you are trying to say. You should not try to impress your reader with your huge vocabulary. Chances are you will frustrate your reader instead. Stay away from jargon your reader may not understand. If your work is very technical, but the person you are writing to is not well versed in that field, stick to words that person will understand.

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