

INTERNET SAFETY

The Internet has dramatically changed our world and impacted our lives. We help students keep up with the advances in technology, but what are we doing to help them stay safe online? In the United States, over 48 million children ages 5-17 regularly use the Internet, and by 2005 more than 77 million children will be online. America's children need to be protected from Internet dangers by learning the skills to act responsibly and having the tools to be a better cyber citizen.

Consider this; during a 2003-2004 i-SAFE survey of 20,000 middle school students, it was reported that while online:

- 10% were asked to meet someone face-to-face.
- 16% received mean or threatening messages while on the Internet.
- 40% visited an inappropriate place on the Internet.

One would hope students have the skills to respond appropriately and responsibly in these situations. However, during the same survey, students reported otherwise.

- 24% saw nothing wrong in chatting with a stranger on the Internet and 39% trusted those with whom they chatted.
- 10% met someone from the Internet face-to-face, 4% more than once.
- 52% said hurtful or angry things to another person online.

Additionally, a recent i-SAFE America survey states more than half the parents in this country feel their ability to shelter their children from harmful material online is limited.

Children who are online without Internet safety training are at a high risk of becoming victims of Internet-related crimes. Students must be aware of Internet basics, personal safety issues, hackers, and identity theft. They need to be empowered to be safe and responsible cyber citizens.

To get more information about Internet safety, please go to <http://www.isafe.org>. i-SAFE is a congressionally funded Internet safety programs, including Professional Development, free K-12 Curriculum, and Parent/Outreach materials.