Internet Safety Tips for Parents

- Clear, simple, easy-to-read house rules should be posted on or near the monitor. Create your own computer rules or have your student sign an Internet safety pledge (see example on reverse).
- Keep the computer in the family room or another open area of your home.
- Know that your child may also access the internet via mobile devices and cell phones.
- Look into safeguarding programs or monitoring and filtering options your online service provider might offer. Educating your child is a key part of prevention, so do not rely on filters alone. Talk to your child.
- Internet accounts should be in the parent's name with parents having the primary screen-name, controlling passwords, and access to blocking and/or filtering devices.
- Always read a website’s privacy policy before giving any personal information. Also make sure that a website offers a secure connection before giving credit card information. The address of a secure connection looks like: https://
- Websites for children are not permitted to request personal information without a parent's permission. Talk to children about what personal information is and why you should never give it to people online.
- If children use chat or e-mail, talk to them about never meeting in person with anyone they first "met" online.
- Talk to children about netiquette = having and using manners on the internet.
- Report offensive e-mail, scams, and suspicious communications to local law enforcement. Do not delete the offensive e-mail; it may be used in a court of law.
- Encourage children to show you what they can do online, and know what their favorite sites are.
- Have children use links on school and local library websites when completing homework, and use simple filters such as the Google Safe Search option when using big name search engines. You can change your safe search settings for Google at: http://www.google.com/preferences
- Know who children are exchanging e-mail with, and be sure to supervise only let them use chat areas when you can supervise.
- Students need to be 13 before signing up for a Facebook account or Gmail account.
- Talk to children about what to do if they see something that makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. Show them how to turn off the monitor and emphasize that it's not their fault if they see something upsetting. Remind children to tell a trusted adult if they see something that bothers them online.
- If you suspect online "stalking" or sexual exploitation of a child, report it to your local law-enforcement agency. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has a system for identifying online predators and child pornographers and contributing to law-enforcement investigations. It’s called the CyberTipline (www.cybertipline.com). Leads forwarded to the site will be acknowledged and shared with the appropriate law-enforcement agency for investigation.

NetSmartz has some great tip sheets on gaming, social networking, cyberbullying and more; be sure to check it out: http://www.netsmartz.org/TipSheets

Also visit these further resources at:
Family Online Safety Institute www.fosi.org
Internet Education Foundation http://neted.org
i-Safe: www.isafe.org