

Counseling Corner

Whiteford Elementary School

Staying Safe Online

Accessing the internet and logging onto social media has become a daily routine for many individuals, including elementary school students. While not all young students have their own social media accounts or use social media on a daily basis, the accessibility of the internet through devices like computers, tablets, iPads, phones, and even smart TVs emphasizes the importance of teaching children about internet and social media safety. Despite the positive aspects of social media, such as educational opportunities and staying connected with friends and family, there are also risks associated with its misuse, especially for younger users. Research shows that platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram are consistently the most popular among elementary-aged children. By being proactive, we can establish a safer online environment for children to learn, explore, and connect.

Be Internet Awesome

Check out Google's "Be Internet Awesome" website to discover ways to promote safe online exploration and play for children. Keep reading for a quick preview of The Internet Code of Awesome: The Fundamentals!



Be Internet Smart

Share with care and communicate responsibly.

Be Internet Alert

Know the signs of internet scams, and don't fall for the fakes.

Be Internet Strong

Protect your privacy, create strong passwords, and keep your location services turned off.

Be Internet Kind

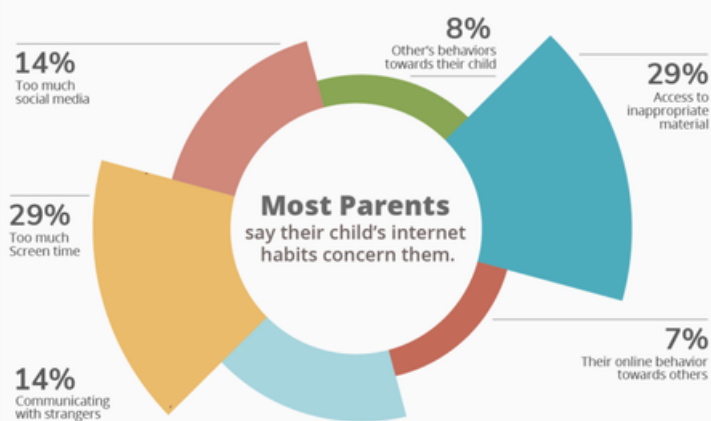
Set a positive example for others, spread positivity, and take action when you encounter inappropriate or hurtful behaviors by others.

Be Internet Brave

"When in doubt, talk it out!" Encourage kids to ask questions, practice open communication, and be clear about rules and expectations around social media, the internet, and technology.

For more information on internet and social media laws and safety, please visit my **Counseling Corner Newsletters and Resources** section within my **Resources** tab in my Schoology group.

What's most concerning to parents?



So... What Can Caregivers Do?

Have conversations with your child about keeping personal information safe.

Personal information includes phone numbers, addresses, passwords, school or town names, birthdate, and more. Additionally, remind your child not to accept friend requests from anyone they don't know. An unsettling part of the internet and social media is that you never know who is trying to learn more about you and why.

Maintain privacy by keeping your location private and turning off location services.

Teach your child the importance of not sharing their location with strangers, and ensure they understand the reasons behind this safety measure.

Follow the "WWGS" rule.

The What Would Grandma Say? rule may sound silly, but it's a great way to teach children (and adults!) to be mindful of what they are posting and sharing online. Teach your child not to post anything they wouldn't want their teachers, principal, parents, future college admissions officers, future employers, and of course, grandma, to see. Additionally, keep in mind that once something is posted, it may not be completely erased. Even if you delete something, there's the possibility that it can still exist somewhere (e.g., someone could have taken a screenshot or saved the post).

Consider not allowing your child to have their own social media accounts until they are at least 13 years old.

Social media platforms have specific age restrictions (at least 13 years old) for a purpose. For more information on why this matters, please visit the Resources tab in my Schoology group.