

Claremont Unified School District

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July 2008

Subject: INTERNET SAFETY

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The Claremont Unified School District prides itself on providing a safe learning environment for its students. An emerging national concern is the inappropriate use of the Internet by students. This problem has the potential to be harmful, and we ask your support in assisting us with this challenge.

Across the nation, schools have seen an increase in negative student behavior as a result of messages written from home computers and posted to popular "chat room" or "message exchange" Web sites. Such sites as Myspace.com contain instant messaging components that allow students to chat with other students and to post statements that ordinarily would not be said in a face-to-face conversation.

The popularity of these Web sites seems to be growing. Myspace.com, for example, is said to have over 57 million members and has become one of the most popular "message exchange" sites among students nationwide.

Unfortunately, some of these Web sites are being used by child predators, "cyber bullies," and con artists. To our knowledge, there are no adults officially responsible for monitoring the content on such Web sites, and some students use the sites to participate in online bullying or to threaten harm to other students. The so-called "cyber bullies," mostly children between the ages of 9 and 14, use the anonymity of the Web to hurt others without witnessing the consequences. Students who are bullied online sometimes do not report these occurrences for fear that they will be barred from using the Internet.

Outside of our schools, there have been instances of adults posing as youths and gaining access to student chat rooms. In some cases, these contacts have led to tragedy. Some unsuspecting students post enough personal information that predators are able to locate students' home or school addresses, thereby becoming easy targets for predators.

The Claremont Unified School District has blocked the use of Myspace.com and similar Web sites from our school computers. We will continue to block objectionable material as we deem appropriate.

Parents should be aware of what their children are writing on the Internet and what others are posting in reply. Myspace.com, for example, is public domain, and anything posted there can be seen by anyone who has Internet access. Although most of what is written at Myspace.com is not immoral, offensive, or illegal, some of it is. If you choose to do so, you may investigate this site by personally going to <http://www.myspace.com>. The service is free, and users may register using an e-mail address. Once you have registered, you can search by name and e-mail address to see if your child is registered. You can narrow the search results by entering the name of your city. You will be able to

view the kinds of personal information, messages, diaries, and photographs that students post to this Web site.

Helpful Tips and Resources

We encourage you to talk with your son or daughter about the potential danger of the Internet. Ask if they have an account with Myspace.com or similar Web sites. If your child is using such a site with your permission, you may want to review his or her profile to ensure that no personal and identifiable information has been posted.

We also encourage you to establish rules and guidelines to ensure the safety of your child while on the Internet. Some Web sites offer parental or family guidance for Internet safety; for example, SafeKids.com, located online at <http://www.safekids.com>, and Web Wise Kids, located online at <http://www.webwisekids.org>, by telephone at 866-WEB-WISE, or by e-mail at webwisekids2@aol.com.

The Claremont Unified School District will continue to provide Internet security within our schools. It is important that parents also monitor Internet use at home.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in keeping our students safe. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact your student's principal.

Sincerely,



David Cash, Ed.D.
Superintendent