

Blog URL:<http://tiffanylgibson.weebly.com/blog>

Blog Post:

“ ‘*Online safety*’ is a term that gets thrown around a lot when dealing with students and the internet. However, it’s often misinterpreted. It would be more beneficial to describe what online safety is not, before we delve into what it truly is.” I came across this statement in an article entitled [How To Keep Students Safe Online](#) on [elearningindustry.com](#). Following this statement was a list of a few common things most people probably think of when the term “online safety” is used. I have to admit, I had some of the same thoughts and preconceived notions about the subject as what was in the list. They listed blocking websites, overbearing internet monitoring, heavy online restrictions, limited internet usage, and the criminalization of social media sites. The statement following this list hit me like a ton of bricks. To summarize they said, too often educators use these means in order to keep their students “safe.” In reality all those educators are doing is causing those students to find a way around and still do what they want to reach the sites they want. This is not safety.

Online safety is knowledge. Blocking websites and putting harsh restrictions really does not help students in the long run, however teaching them how to be safe will enable them to enjoy the internet and all it has to offer safely. [Elearningindustry.com](#) and [districtadministration.com](#) both suggest a great way to students learn internet safety is by involving their parents. Many parents did not grow up in the digital age and therefore they may not understand all of the dangers themselves. Even if they do understand the dangers, they may not feel their child can get to anything that is inappropriate. There are many infographics and other sources that are readily available to parents, teachers and students alike to help teach them about internet safety.

Infographic caption: *Internet Safety: Tips for Kids & Teens* link to <http://elearningindustry.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Internet-Safety.png>

Students need to be encouraged to take the initiative in learning about internet safety; plus they are going to tune out after a few minutes of listening to their parents or teachers go on and on about it. Here are two videos that address internet safety in kid friendly terms that are pretty entertaining for students.

Embed Code for Internet Safety YouTube Video:

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<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/fmdWToVnWkA"
frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>
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Embed code of 2nd video:

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<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/yrln8nyVBLU"
frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>
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To further take the initiative, students can try the [Webonauts Academy](#). Webonauts Academy is a game designed by PBS Kids in which players must navigate throughway topics related to safe and responsible internet usage. This activity would be best suited for a younger class. I did try it myself and it was a fun little game! For older students you could create a scenario that students would have to work through. By encouraging students to figure out the answer, you also empower them to face those situations with and without you.

While it is vital to do each of the things above, there may still be times when you must set some guidelines that all students and parents are aware of. [scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com) suggests some rules for students that students need to be reminded of, not just told once in the article entitled [Taking Charge of the Web in Your Classroom](#). They list do not share personal information online, be cautious in online conversation, do not believe everything you read, cyberbullying is real bullying, and watch out for digital plagiarism. Students need to understand why each of these rules is important and why, not just be able to recite the rule. The internet is a real place with real predators that are looking to take advantage of people. Just as we teach students not to get into cars with strangers, we also need to teach students about internet safety and all the different areas that entails.

My co-teachers and I try to guide our students daily by modeling, demonstrating, and teaching safe and responsible use of the internet. I teach a variety of grade levels including Kindergarten, third grade, and fifth grade. With each grade level, we allow students different access and permissions depending on age. As students get older and they have learned more about the internet and how to be safe while using it, we allow them more freedom with using it in school. Students need to have a guide in this just like in every other aspect of educational pursuits. My district does not have a very strict policy or way to teach about internet safety at this time. There are certain websites that are blocked, and the parents sign an internet agreement at the beginning of the year. Honestly the district as a whole probably should do more. In the classrooms I teach in, we have our own lessons we teach about safety on the internet. Those vary from class to class. One example of a recent lesson I did with my co-taught third grade class was that we had students create a superhero and then make a comic portraying an online rule we had talked about previously. We got this idea from this video on [teachingchannel.org](http://teachingchannel.org).

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<script src='https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/teaching-digital-citizenship/embed.js?width=480' type='text/javascript'></script>
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Our lesson was very similar to this one, however we focused more on the internet safety portion at the beginning of the lesson. The students really enjoyed the lesson and it was clear that they learned about internet safety from their comics they created.

The internet is a truly amazing technology that we have at our fingertips. The students of today can do things that no other generation before them could even fathom. "With great power, comes great responsibility." This is a quote from the movie Spiderman. I feel it is very applicable to the topic of internet safety. Students and teachers have a great resource with great power available to us. However, we have to be responsible with it. We have to teach students to be responsible with it. Students have to understand that once they put something out there, it's there. Forever. As a teacher of a 21st century student, I must prepare students in every aspect including internet safety. What must a teacher do to keep students safe online? They must do just like they do with everything else, teach them, show them, demonstrate for them and then believe when they walk out the door they take with them what has been taught. **They must also understand that they need to have healthy habits when it comes to the internet. Rosen (2013) refers to technology as a double edge sword. One one hand you can access more with technology than you could ever dream of without it. On the other hand, Rosen (2013) also says that research has shown that technology over long periods of time over-stimulate your brain. It is important as teachers to help students keep the balance between when to use and not to use technology. "The bottom line is that we need to start taking care of our children's**

brains -- and our own -- as early as possible. Start when they are little with technology in moderation and opportunities for mind wandering, creative activities and your child will grow up with solid communication and thinking skills" (Rosen, 2013).

### Resources

Rosen, D. (2013, April 24). How Much Technology Should You Let Your Child Use? Retrieved March 25, 2015, from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-larry-rosen/how-much-technology-shoul\\_b\\_3142227.html?](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-larry-rosen/how-much-technology-shoul_b_3142227.html?)

Blog Comment URL:<http://vrhodes.weebly.com/blog/internet-safety#comments>

Blog Comment:

You are absolutely correct with your opening statement. School districts will continue to expand technology initiatives in the classroom. Just as in everything else, as educators we must be prepared to face this with our students and teach them the correct way to interact safely with this great resource.

While I do agree that students do need to have boundaries, the biggest thing I feel we can do is to give students knowledge about the threats on the internet. Students need to be prepared for the real world when they leave the classroom setting. I have found that providing students with instruction on internet safety really helps them learn about internet safety. I also provide students with hypothetical situations, this also helps students see the real dangers while being in a completely safe situation.

Can you share what you currently do with your students to promote internet safety? If this is something you have not addressed with your students, can you give an idea you have gotten after researching this topic?