



# Cyber Savvy

Preparing our students to become responsible digital citizens!

January/February 2016

## School Counselor Highlights: Keeping our kids safe!!

### Gaming and its challenges

So we've gotten through the holidays and lots of kids are working on mastering their new computer games. Games today are not like the "PacMan" of yesteryear. We have online games that allow players to interact with other players, thus potentially posing some dangers if we as parents aren't diligent in our efforts to keep our children safe.

While researching the potential hazards of some online games, I found that some of these games can be an appealing environments for predators. These people befriend children and teens and then lure them into unwanted scenarios or situations. One article <http://www.internetsafety101.org/gamingsafety.htm> offers suggestions for parents with regards to these games. It offers tips for parents such as **making sure you know the type of game your child is playing; making sure it is age appropriate; making sure the gaming user name is appropriate; being aware of and making your child aware of voice masking technology; being aware of how much time your child is spending playing online games and setting limits.**

Another article states, "With the age of cyber savvy kids on the rise, internet safety is just as important a part of education. Parents can play a prime role as educators." <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/6-internet-safety-games-kids-cyber-smart/> The site goes on to ask, "When it comes to parental controls and keeping your kids safe, education is the first course. **Have you tried to educate your children on the manners for safe browsing and internet safety?**" Where are you on this course? I think it is important that we talk with our children about internet safety and not assume they will be ok "just playing a game".

In addition to the threat of predators with regards to online gaming, there is a new threat of addiction to the amount of time spent playing these games.

"Medical professionals are beginning to recognize online gaming as a real addiction just like gambling, alcohol, and drugs. Gaming addiction can perpetrate a host of physical and mental issues that can be difficult to reverse, as well as expose your child inappropriate subject matter and potential predators"

<http://www.spamlaws.com/dangers-online-gaming.html>.

#### Warning signs parents need to be mindful of when it comes to our kids and their computer usage:

##### ◆ Non-Stop Talking:

When you try to talk to your child they will constantly talk about their success with online gaming. They become obsessed with strategies for winning and will always make it the center of conversation.

##### ◆ Decline in Personal Hygiene:

You may notice a decline in your child's personal hygiene because they do not want to spend one minute away from the game to attend to personal hygiene.

##### ◆ Child Becomes Violent:

A significant part of the content in online games is violence. If your child spends a lot of time viewing this type of content they may begin to see violence as an acceptable act. If you try to discontinue them from playing games they resort to violence.

##### ◆ Loss of Interest:

Your child may begin to lose interest in the daily activities they once enjoyed including friendships, school, and extracurricular activities. In addition to this, you may notice that their school grades are beginning to suffer and they are becoming more reclusive.

##### ◆ Sacrifices:

If your child is addicted to online games he/she will sacrifice everything to spend time in front of a game. This includes skipping school, not sleeping, and sacrificing food in exchange for online gaming.

<http://www.spamlaws.com/dangers-online-gamin.html>

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