FBI Offers Internet Safety Guidelines for Parents

The FBI has produced a guide which can help parents keep their children safe on the Internet. In a cover letter introducing A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety, Louis J. Free, former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), writes, "Unfortunately the same advances in computer and telecommunication technology that allow our children to reach out to new sources of knowledge and cultural experiences are also leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and harm by computer-sex offenders." The guide, prepared by the Cyber Division of the FBI in August 2006 builds upon the knowledge and resources gained during the FBI's investigations. It also includes "lessons learned" from cases where law enforcement officers posed as children.

A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety is intended to be an informative resource for parents to help keep their children safe from sexual predators on the Internet. School administrators and teachers, however, can benefit from the warning signs and teaching points that are offered within the guide. To help keep students safe, teachers can remind students to never:

◆ Arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they meet on- line.

◆ Post pictures of themselves on the Internet or an on-line service.

◆ Share personal information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number.

◆ Download pictures from an unknown source (the pictures could include explicit images).

◆ Respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing.

◆ Presume that everything they read on-line is true.

Measures recommended in the guide include monitoring web sites visited and positioning computers in visible locations. According to the FBI "It is much more difficult for a computer-sex offender to communicate with a child when the computer screen is visible to a parent or adult." The FBI also recommends using controls provided by your network, service provider, firewall, and/or other blocking software.

The FBI guide emphasizes that it is important to allow students to experience the educational benefits of the Internet. The guide specifically addresses the positive potential of the Internet, noting that "While on-line computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they 'hit the road' exploring the information highway."

Parents and educators can help students have a safe on-line experience, however, by teaching them responsible use of the Internet. "There are dangers in every part of our society," notes the guide. "By educating children about these dangers and taking appropriate steps to protect them, they can benefit from the wealth of information now available on-line."

A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety is available on-line at www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/parentsguide.pdf. For information on cybersecurity programs for students, refer to the 2007 *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide*. ◾