

I really can't imagine how challenging it must be to be raising children in the Internet age. When my children were growing up and had a question about something I sent them to look it up in the World Book Encyclopedia. Since their father has worked in the computer industry since the days of mainframes and punch cards, we always had some kind of computer in our home, but nothing that they were ever allowed to use and certainly not one that gave them access to as much information as children nowadays can get their hands on. At Lafayette we have learned that sometimes we are only a step ahead of our students. The DC public schools has blocking software on its systems so that students cannot go to locations they shouldn't but we've discovered over the years that really savvy kids can somehow figure out ways to get around those blocks. One year we were pretty sure we had software that when you typed in specific words it would block a child's access to specific sites. Well we had forgotten about Google pictures and all you had to do was type those words in their search engine and you got a whole array of illustrations to look at. Mostly mild peeks at physical kinds of things. Kind of like looking at certain pages in the Sears Roebuck catalog or National Geographic magazine. Each and every year the computers get more powerful, the devices get smaller, and it seems that immature brains can get into a lot of trouble on the Internet.

This Thursday night, June 4, the Home and School Association is sponsoring a speaker on Internet safety. This is a repeat of the program we held last year which received rave reviews from the parents who were present. The program is going to teach you how to help your child be a pro on the Internet. I'm sure if this year is anything like last year, many of you are going to be surprised at just how much computer use children engage in especially as they move on to middle and high school. How posting items on Facebook causes people not to lose a job but never to get invited for an interview in the first place or lose a college scholarship. How students really have trouble understanding that copying information off of websites is not their own work.

I hope many of you will be able to attend. I've been asked this year several times about programs on Internet safety and was very excited to hear that we were able to invite this program back again this year. Even if you have a child in the primary grades, I'm starting to think it's never too early to start teaching them about these new online and mobile devices. All I have to do is sit and watch a kindergarten play performance with younger brothers and sisters in the audience. There they are swiping away on some kind of screen while their big brothers and sisters around the stage. Many afternoons, while children are waiting for a meeting to end or an activity to finish, there in the Great Hall they are with some kind of computer gizmo. And I read lots of news stories where unsavory characters are connecting with young people on the Internet leading to bad endings.

I know I'm turning into a fossil when I talk about learning to type. I was in the fourth grade classes last week demonstrating a Braille machine and when the carriage got to the end of the line and made the little ding the children were so surprised. That used to be an incredibly common sound in my life. Most of you talk about learning to keyboard. Well I'm writing this Tuesday Bulletin without using any keyboarding or typing skills at all. I'm sitting here just talking away using Dragon Speak Naturally. Probably the way your children are going to enter their information in the next few years. It's really amazing how accurate this software is.

So join us Thursday night to learn a little bit more about how you can explain what the Internet is to your children and how to keep them safe when they go surfing. The presentation will begin around seven o'clock in the cafeteria. There will be a short Home and School Association meeting at 6:30 dealing with next year's HSA budget. There will be pizza available in the school kitchen along with babysitters to watch your children. But if you can't make it, here is a great website for you to get some resources for you to use at home. [www.iKeepSafe.org](http://www.iKeepSafe.org)