Examples of Fear-Based Internet Safety Messaging

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Embrace Civility in the Digital Age
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Past is Prologue

- Drug abuse concerns led to creation of DARE
  - Law enforcement delivery of fear-based messages on dire effects of drug use

Wildly popular!  Totally ineffective!
Ineffective Approaches

- Misleading statistics
- Fear-based messages
- Simplistic rules against normative behavior
- Fail to distinguish "risk" from "harm"
- One-shot assemblies
- "Plug them in" and quiz them
Examples

- Examples of concerning Internet safety approaches from
  - Law enforcement sites & material
  - USDOJ-funded organizations
  - Private organizations
  - Commercial companies
Cyber Safety

The proliferation of child predators using the Internet to target young victims has become a national crisis. A study shows one in seven children will be solicited for sex online in the next year.

- The study asked about unwanted sexual communications
  - Fewer than 8% from older adults
  - Teens handled incidents effectively
  - Majority were not distressed
The statistics are alarming: 1 in 7 kids is solicited for sex online; 1 in 33 kids receives aggressive online solicitations to meet in person; 1 in 3 kids receives unsolicited sexual content online; and 34% of kids online indicate they communicate with people they don’t know.

• “Solicitation” = unwanted sexual communication
• “Aggressive” = request to meet in person
• “Unsolicited sexual content” = accidental access of porn
• Most situations reportedly not distressing & handled effectively
• Millions of children are safely communicating with “online strangers” on safe kid’s sites
Law enforcement presentation

Well ...

This is who you could be talking to!

Think You Know video

• Study of arrests
  ▪ Deception was rare
  ▪ Teens knew these were adults interested in sex
  ▪ Teens met voluntarily
Law enforcement presentation

- Study of arrests
  - Violence extremely rare
- About meeting in person
  - Some will
  - Generally safe
  - But there are risks
USDOJ-funded Organization
Lesson on Predators

Willing Participant

It’s fun to meet and communicate with people on the Internet. And most of the time online friendships can be great when they stay ONLINE! When you engage in an online friendship with a stranger, you are considered a “willing participant.”

- Majority of sexual abuse is by acquaintances or family members
- Communicating with someone online should never be considered “willing participation” in abuse
USDOJ-funded Organization Lesson on Predators

- Study of arrests
  - Predators are not tracking teens based on personal information they post online
- Most teens post some of this information
  - There are other reasons to be mindful about what you post

**Private Information**

There is certain information you should never reveal on the Internet.

- Address
- Name
- Social Security Number
- School
- Age or Birthdate
- Phone Number
- Family and Friend’s Names
State Attorney General
Teacher Instructional Materials on Internet Safety

- Statistically, students face greater dangers of sexual abuse from school staff
- Consider negative impact on transition to 21st Century Schools
Instruct your children:
  ◦ to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met online;
  ◦ to never upload (post) pictures of themselves onto the Internet or online service to people they do not personally know;
  ◦ to never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number;

- Some will meet
- Most are uploading photos
- Most use their name and identify their school
20% of teens have sexted

Study
- Conducted by a youth market research firm
- Using an “opt-in” online panel
- “Teens” included young adults
- Asked about “semi-nude” photos (bathing suits)
Company

Protecting Students in the 21st Century Curriculum (PS21C)

- Sexting
  - $20\%$ of teens have sexted
  - $81\%$ of teen sexters are under 18
- Cyber-bullying
  - $65\%$ of 8-15 year olds have been involved in cyber bullying
  - $81\%$ of teens think it's easy to get away with cyber bullying and to hide it from adults
- Online Predators
  - $72\%$ of teens have online profiles with personal information

- Inaccurate data
- Fear-mongering
- Negative norms
- Demeans youth

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1. The National Campaign; 2. Nat'l Center for Missing and Exploited Children; 3. Perry Atab
Protecting Students in the 21st Century Solution

• Online, web-based
• Comprehensive: components for students, teachers, and parents
• Topic quizzes assess students along the way
• Addresses all topics required by law
• Covers current technologies & 21st century concerns
• Created by technology safety experts and officers - reviewed by teachers/parents

• Plug them in
• Quiz them
• Done?
Law Enforcement-Funded Video by Company

Message: “Cyberbullying causes suicide, don’t do it”

- Ignores multiple factors
- Could increase possibility of “copy-cats”
- Fosters blame and impairs healing
The Problem

- Won’t reduce risk behavior
- Reinforces negative norms
- Denigrates youth
- Teaches youth they cannot trust adults to understand
- Undermines the ability of schools to expand use of digital technologies