

HELPING HAND



Student
Assistance
Program

ROANOKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Keeping Children's Online Behavior at School In Check

The results of a recent nationwide survey released by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) suggest that as a result of teacher supervision and computer restrictions such as blocking software and usage policies, young people are demonstrating more responsible behavior online in school than they do on their home computers.

Of the findings, 51% of all US youth surveyed (ages 8-18) report the rules at school are more restrictive than the rules at home. This may be why kids are most likely to say they have used school computers in the past year to complete activities/ conduct research assigned by their teachers (60%), followed by doing schoolwork on their own (51%) and surfing the web (32%), while they are most likely to say they used their home computer in the past year to play games (77%), followed by checking e-mail (66%) and doing school work on their own (66%).

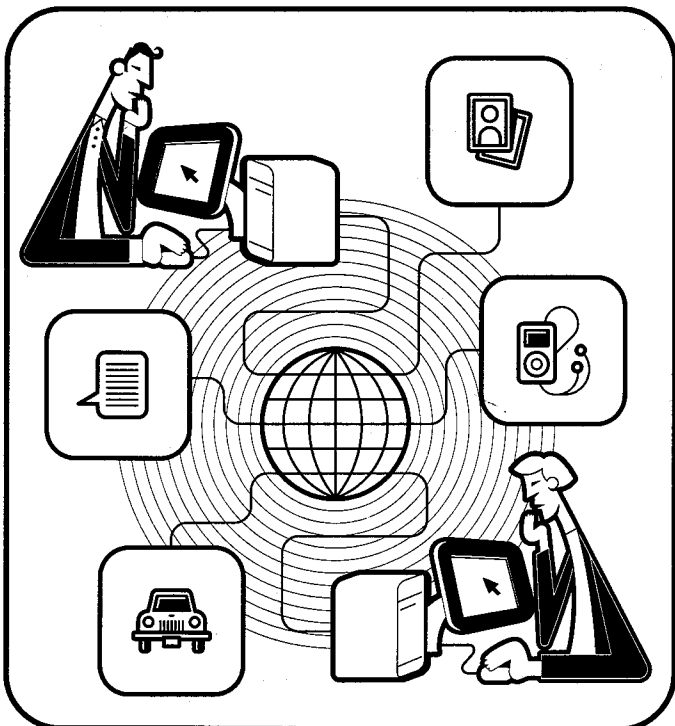
"This study shows that unfortunately students are more likely to engage in risky computer use at home than at school," said Diane Smiroldo, vice president of public affairs for BSA. "Parents and teachers need to take every opportunity to get involved and be observant when it comes to kids spending time on the Internet."

The independent online poll, conducted by Harris Interactive® on behalf of BSA, measured the attitudes and behaviors of 1,556 US youth, ages 8 to 18. Researchers documented kids' computer and Internet use at home and school, as well as their assessments about adult supervision of those activities.

Among the results:

- Nearly nine out of 10 kids (85%) report that their school has Internet-use rules, while two out of three (67%) of the youth polled report their parents have Internet-use rules.
- 78% of all youth surveyed report they are prevented from visiting certain types of websites while at school, because the rules are more restricted than the rules at home.
- 65% say they cannot download anything onto the school computer.
- 69% say their school computers have blocking software to prevent visiting inappropriate sites.
- 49% of all youth surveyed said that their school blocking software does a good job of keeping them from visiting sites they shouldn't go to, while just 26% said the blocking software at home provides the same restrictions.
- 55% say they have had to sign an Internet-use policy at school.
- Other behavior-inducing activities include parents having to sign permission slips for computer usage (50%), parents being told of the school's Internet policies (44%), and posters being hung near the computers telling kids what they can and cannot do online (36%).

For the BSA-Harris report, please visit www.bsa.org/usa/press/newsreleases/upload/BSA-YouthQuery-Report.ppt



What to Tell Students If a Shooting Occurs Nearby

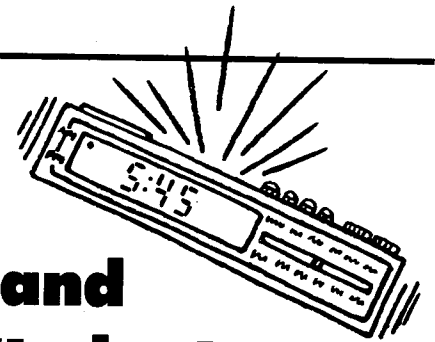
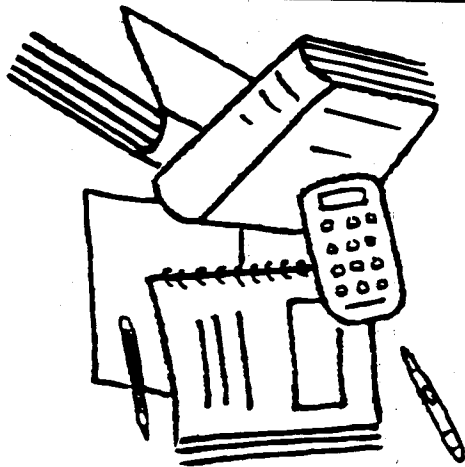
As we all struggle to understand the unending streak of school violence, many children are experiencing intense sadness, anger, fear — and perhaps guilt.

Psychologist and author Dr. Ken Druck, an authority on school violence, says, "Make yourself available. Talk about it." He recommends the following five Dos and Don'ts following a violent occurrence at school or near school:

1. **DON'T** panic. The child is already upset. Avoid saying or doing anything that will make him or her more upset or scared.
DO be up front with children. Address his or her questions and concerns truthfully but sensitively.
2. **DON'T** expect you'll have all the answers. The best way to talk is to listen first. Try to understand what the child is going through.
DO act as a sounding board. Allow students to ask unanswerable questions. Even more than answers, s/he

needs to struggle with the "whys" that accompany tragedies like this.

3. **DON'T** present yourself as the all-knowing adult. There are no quick fixes or easy answers.
DO learn and understand all the facts before you make judgments about what happened.
4. **DON'T** make blanket assurances like "This will never happen again." Kids don't buy them. If s/he tells you about being frightened and is dismissed, s/he won't bring it up again.
DO send the message that it's OK to feel the way s/he feels. Tell him or her that feeling frightened, angry and sad are normal reactions.
5. **DON'T** force your students to talk about the incident. They'll talk when they are ready to.
DO talk about the incident when students begin to open up. Make it clear that you will work to make school a safer place.



Less Sleep, More Struggles for Elementary and Middle School Students

Elementary and middle school students have more learning and attention problems when they sleep eight hours or less at night, according to Brown Medical School and Bradley Hospital researchers.

Their study — the first to ask teachers to report on sleep restriction effects — points to the importance of sleep when assessing the causes of, and treatments for, learning difficulties in children.

Reducing the amount of sleep students get at night has a direct impact on their performance at school during the day. According to classroom teachers, elementary and middle school students who stay up late exhibit more learning and attention problems, Brown Medical School and Bradley Hospital research shows.

In the study, teachers were not told the amount of sleep students received when completing weekly performance reports. Yet they rated students who'd received eight hours or less as having the most trouble recalling old material, learning new lessons, and completing high-quality work. Teachers also reported that these students had more difficulty paying attention.

The experiment is the first to ask teachers to report on the effects of sleep restriction in children.

"Just staying up late can cause increased academic difficulty and attention problems for otherwise healthy, well-functioning kids," said Gahan Fallone, the study's lead author. "So the results provide professionals and parents with a clear message: When a child is having learning and attention problems, the issue of sleep has to be on the radar screen."

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Recent Tragedies Can Take a Toll on Mental Health

The American Counseling Association, its 19 divisions and 56 branches are concerned about the emotional and psychological impacts of the war in Iraq and other sudden trauma-inducing events such as the tsunami disaster, hurricanes and more on people of all ages. To help individuals cope with these uncertain times, they offer the following information, which is equally helpful for individuals facing other emotional crises in their lives.

The American Counseling Association recommends five ways that you can cope after a crisis situation:

- Recognize your own feelings about the situation and talk to others about your fears. Know that these feelings are a normal response to an abnormal situation.
- Be willing to listen to family and friends who have been affected and encourage them to seek counseling if necessary.
- Be patient with people; fuses are short when dealing with crises, and others may be feeling as much stress as you.
- Recognize normal crises reactions, such as sleep disturbances and nightmares, withdrawal, reverting to childhood behaviors and trouble focusing on work or school.
- Take time with your children, spouse, life partner, friends and coworkers to do something you enjoy.

Founded in 1952, the American Counseling Association is the world's largest private, nonprofit organization for professional counselors.

Teens Do Hear Prevention Messages



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released data showing that youth who reported seeing or hearing media messages on preventing drug and alcohol use are significantly less likely to report substance use.

While 10.3% of youths who reported seeing or hearing prevention messages through the media in the past year reported binge alcohol use in the past month, 12.5% of youth who were not exposed to prevention messages engaged in binge drinking. Similarly, 10.8% of youth who saw or heard prevention messages through the media reported past month illicit drug use compared to 13.7% who received no messages.

"Teenagers exposed to prevention messages through the media are less likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs," SAMHSA administrator Charles Curie said. "Clearly, the media is one of the many avenues we must use to communicate with young people that drinking and drug use are dangerous and wrong."

The data also shows that youth who reported talking to at least one parent about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol or drug use in the past year were significantly less likely to report past-month binge alcohol use, 10%, compared to 11.6% who did not talk to a parent. For illicit drug use, 10% of teens that talked to a parent used drugs in the past month compared to 13% who did not talk to a parent.

So, if you are promoting prevention messages, keep up the good work!

Many Children Spend After-School Hours Home Alone or Just "Hanging Out"



According to a recent poll of 603 youths by JA Worldwide (Junior Achievement) and Harris Interactive, 32% of 8- to 12-year-olds are either "home alone" or "hanging out with friends" after school, with 17% saying they participate in an after-school program other than sports.

The poll is being issued in support of *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide event that recognizes the critical importance of quality after-school programs in the lives of children, their families and their communities.

Poll respondents gave various reasons for not participating in after-school programs, with nearly one in five saying they were not interested in existing programs (17%). However, 63% of 8- to 12-year-olds said he or she would be "somewhat interested" or "very interested" in after-school programs that showed them how to run a business or how to work with money.



Name Games

Purpose: What's in a name? Many famous people have taken on new names. Have students match the following famous names with its owner's original name:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| ___ Sojourner Truth | a. Theodore Geisel |
| ___ Dr. Seuss | b. Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu |
| ___ Babyface | c. Esther Friedman |
| ___ Mother Teresa | d. Isabella van Wagener |
| ___ Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf | e. Kenneth Edmonds |
| ___ Ann Landers | f. Chris Jackson |

Identify each person and speculate as to why he or she adopted a new name. What other life events might prompt a name change (examples: marriage, adoption, witness protection program)? If students could choose any new name for themselves, what would it be? Have students explain their selections.

Naming practices vary widely among cultures. For example, Puerto Ricans often have many names, while Mongolians customarily have only one. Children in many Jewish families are not named after living relatives, but Icelanders often are. Many African-American parents create unique names for their children at birth, while some Native Americans "earn" their names later in life. Research a cultural naming practice and report it to the class.

Names often signify character traits — for example, the Spanish Fidel (Faithful), the Yoruba Nilaja (Brings Peace), and the Hebrew Isaac (Laughter). With a partner, use the letters of your names to create colorful acrostics that display qualities of your character. For example, Tina might choose "Trustful Imaginative Nurturing Artistic." (Use specific rather than generic descriptors, such as "Easygoing" instead of "Excellent.") As a class, identify the traits cited most frequently, those shared by a few students, and those that stand alone.

(Source: Teaching Tolerance at www.tolerance.org)

For more information contact the Student Assistance Program Coordinator in your area:

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