

March 2004

VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



Connecting to the Global Village

Blogs, Wikis and Publishing on the Web

Have you seen the [Xerox commercial](#) where a cynical professor who tells his students that they will probably never be published is challenged by a young man who describes a world of on-demand publishing? The crowd cheers because now everyone can publish. Of course, with so much being published out there, it's your chances of actually being READ that are pretty slim. But for educators looking for authentic writing experiences for their students, the web offers a potentially world-wide audience for their work. Two new technologies—blogs and wikis—help make web publishing easy.

We've talked about blogs in the VITALNews before. These online journals are easy to set up and require very little knowledge of web page coding or publishing. A site like [blogger.com](#) will take you through the steps of setting up an account, and you can be publishing within minutes. Teachers can create team blogs that allow all the students in the class to publish in a central location, or each student can have a personal blog to use as a reflective journal or learning log. Will Richardson is the guru of weblogs in education so if you're interested, his website [Weblogg-ed](#) is worth a visit.

Blogs are also a great way for teachers and schools to update their websites. Teachers can quickly post homework assignments and link to web resources. Schools can easily publish

the weekly menu or announcements. [A recent article in The Christian Science Monitor](#) discussed how "wired schools" are helping parents support their children in school.

Besides helping with writing, blogs can also become part of the reading program. The blogosphere is made up of bloggers commenting on each others' blogs, and students can become part of that dialog

The second place where students can publish to the web is at a Wiki. A Wiki is a community created knowledge database that allows anyone to publish information. Perhaps the most famous is Wikipedia, a collaborative encyclopedia where readers are also editors. Students can publish original articles or edit and update already published material. The [Wikipedia homepage](#) contains news headlines, "today in history" links, and featured articles, all hyperlinked to encyclopedia articles. While there are lots of Wikis out there, many are very technical. However, you might want to check out the [WikiQuote](#), a collection of quotes or the [Wiktionary](#), an open source dictionary.

So the guy in the Xerox commercial is right: with tools like Blogs and Wikis, anyone can publish!

Happy Surfing, Karen

Newsletter Contact: Karen Work Richardson ,
karen@ivyrun.com

Cyber Safety for Students: A Guide to Safe Surfing

By Chris O'Neal

Students are online more and more both during the school day and at home. Internet surfing at school is typically limited to instructionally-focused, supervised searches that are being run through district or school-based filtering mechanisms. Unfortunately, Internet surfing at home sometimes goes unsupervised simply because older children are either home alone, or parents are unaware of some of the "seedier" sides of the 'net and how easily accessible they are.

In a study* by the University of New Hampshire's "Crimes against Children Research Center," about one in five teenagers surveyed said that they had received a sexual solicitation online from a stranger while in a chat room or discussion board. One in thirty-three received an aggressive sexual solicitation, one in four had an unwanted exposure to nudity/inappropriate photos, and one in seventeen was threatened or harassed.

These statistics prove that, although the Internet has brought a wealth of rich resources to our students, there is also a need for all of us to become more aware of how to guide our students through the web, with some "street smarts" for keeping the experience positive.

Teaching online security and "cyber safety" should be a component of every K-12 curriculum in one way or another. Younger children should learn about what the Internet is, and how it works, which gives them a sense of where they fit, and how they are connected to the Internet world. Providing learning opportunities about personal safety is a great way to set the stage for responsible and fun online experiences, while helping to keep them out of harm's way. Upper elementary and middle school learners are ready to delve into topics dealing with cyber security, personal online safety, good cyber ethics

and appropriate online behavior. Topics such as ethics, plagiarism, copyright, intellectual property, and the "business" of the Internet are very intriguing and important issues for students to explore.

There are a number of websites devoted to teaching children, parents, and educators about how to avoid the "dark side" of the net, and instead make our overall online experiences as positive as possible. Some of those include:

Net Smartz - <http://www.netsmartz.org>

I-Safe - <http://www.isafe.org>

Get Net Wise -

<http://www.getnetwise.org/>

PBS Kids -

<http://pbskids.org/bts/license/index.html>

*2002 - Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire

Quick Picks

Newsday Project Encourages Writing

Newsday, a project sponsored by Global SchoolNet, offers students the chance to create a newspaper to share with others throughout the world.

The project is held twice a year, in the fall and spring. While it's too late to get involved this school year, now is the time to be thinking about registering for the fall session.

As part of Newsday, students research and write news stories of local interest which they then post to the Newsday wire for others to read. Students choose articles from the wire to include in their own newspapers. Final versions are shared with all participating schools, and this year, a \$250 prize was offered to the best newspaper that addressed the theme.

If you want to learn more, visit the [Newsday project site](#).