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Inside This Issue

Securing Students in Cyber World
Page 1

In The News
Page 2

School Shootings
Page 3

School Safety
Page 6

Drugs & Alcohol News
Page 9

Local News Briefs
Page 10

Officer Safety - Pen Bomb
Page 12

Pledge Against Gun Violence
Page 13

Youth Gang Awareness - 26ers
Page 14

Indiana School Suspension Data
Page 14

Securing Students - Continued
Page 14

Keeping Our

Communities Safe



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Schools Struggle to Secure Students in Cyber World

From the Tribune Star

TERRE HAUTE, IN | For students, MySpace.com and Facebook.com can be places to have fun and socialize online. But for one Wabash Valley principal, someone else's "fun" came at his personal expense. During the last school year, someone posted a false profile that made it appear it was his Facebook site, complete with his picture and his alleged "comments."

The comments – which he didn't really make – included expletives and other inappropriate language. The authors of the site made it appear as though the principal was giving advice to others. Some students approached him about it and "couldn't believe the language I was using," he said. Initially, some thought it really was his site.

The incident proved upsetting to him and his family, and he had a difficult time contacting Facebook and getting them to take it down. "It took a few weeks of constant e-mailing back and forth until they finally took it off. There was no apology," the principal said. "I was very powerless to do anything" and unable to respond on the site, he said. He was concerned about his reputation and his family.



The principal, who requested not to be identified, didn't have access to "his" site because the account was private. Only invited guests or "friends" could access the profile. He doesn't know who did it, although he has his suspicions.

The principal doesn't have a very high opinion of online social networking sites. "It causes so many issues here at school on a weekly basis," he said. A student will write something on MySpace or Facebook "and bring the issue to school."

A Whole New Territory

From cyberspace threats and bullying to false teacher profiles, social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have opened a new frontier of safety, security, ethical and legal concerns for schools:

- Teachers and administrators might be the victims of false profiles or inappropriate comments.
- Online threats can create school disruptions, even if the authors have no serious intent to carry them out. Also, what starts as an online dispute between students can carry over into the classroom.

Full story continued on page 14...

In The News

Ball State Students Arrested in Party Beating, Bragged on Facebook

Article published in the Indianapolis Star on October 11, 2007

MUNCIE, IN | A group of Ball State University students who used Facebook to talk about assaulting another student at an off-campus party landed in jail Wednesday night, accused of felony battery.



The victim, a 20-year female student at Ivy Tech Community College, suffered a fractured right arm and other injuries after five other women beat her -- grabbing her throat, pushing her down and then kicking and hitting her several times. When the victim tried to get up using her arms, the suspects kicked her arms out from under her, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Police investigator Jami Brown interviewed the victim on Wednesday after her release from the hospital. The woman identified all five suspects, pointing out that they used the Web site to brag about the attack. Three of the suspects -- Kari Streib, 20, Davidson Hall; Rene Rachele Whiteley, 19, and Ashley Rae Kirkman, 20, both of Painter Hall -- were preliminarily charged with battery with intent to commit serious bodily injury, a class C felony.

Streib's Facebook page had a reference to the fight from a witness at the party, police found. "Hey there love. We def hang out some time this weekend. I had so much fun on Saturday even though U girls kicked some other girl's ass. HaHaHa It was fun to watch," the witness wrote to Streib. Brown said the incident started as a verbal argument between the victim and another suspect over another woman's boyfriend, and then turned into an assault. Facebook also had references to the group of women calling themselves the "Bout It Betches," and bragging about the assault.

The victim's parents claimed the attackers also made threats against their daughter online, but Brown said the online chat was more bragging and boasting of the assault.

Full story: <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071011/LOCAL/710110524>

West Lafayette Student Says Facebook Posts Led to Suspension

Article published in the Journal and Courier on October 9, 2007

WEST LAFAYETTE, IN | A West Lafayette High School student says she and several others were punished last week for messages posted on a Facebook group created in support of a student who had been suspended. School officials were keeping quiet Monday about the incidents, saying all behavior issues are confidential.

But sophomore Caitlyn Casseday said she was given in-school suspension Friday for a comment posted on a video that showed two students in the altercation that led to the original suspension. She said Monday that she posted comments on the Facebook site that included calling assistant principal Ron Shriner an obscene name, but she said none of the posts threatened him. "A lot of people who made comments about the video and administration and Mr. Shriner got in trouble," Casseday said.

She said someone printed the comments and gave them to administrators. Unless set otherwise, Facebook groups can be accessed by anyone with an account on the social networking site. After that, she said several students were given punishments. Casseday said she was called into Shriner's office. "I asked him, 'Am I not protected? How can I get in trouble? Don't I have freedom of speech?'" Casseday said.

Casseday's mother, Sophia Wilcox, said she met with principal Larry Allen after her daughter was punished. "I got involved," Wilcox said, "because, though I don't condone the use of vulgar language, my child said, 'This is free speech. I'm doing it from my own computer, on my own time, to a group of my own friends.'"

Allen would not comment on the allegations but said the school's policy is clear. "All we're asking is for kids to cooperate with the school code of conduct and not disrupt school," he said. The code of conduct, which is posted on the school's Web site, does not directly address postings on the Internet. Under grounds for suspension or expulsion, it does include "engaging in speech or conduct ... that is profane, indecent, lewd, vulgar ... or is plainly offensive to school purposes." The code notes that the rules apply when a student is on school grounds, off school grounds at a school activity or traveling to or from school or a school activity.

David Hudson, a scholar at the First Amendment Center who specializes in student expression, said case law has yet to determine how far school authority extends when it comes to the Internet.

"It really is a case-by-case," Hudson said. "I think the problem for school officials is sometimes they just censor it because they don't like it. And disliking student speech is not an acceptable defense. You have to point to specific facts that indicate it will cause a significant disruption."

Full story: <http://www.jconline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071009/NEWS040104/710090333/1152/NEWS>

FBI Offers Reward for Shots Fired Into School

Article published WANE-TV on October 25, 2007

BRAZIL, IN | Authorities say the FBI is offering a \$5,000 reward for information about suspects who fired gunshots at a western Indiana elementary school last week.

Clay County Chief Deputy Rob Gambill says the FBI is offering the reward to encourage people to provide accurate information that will help lead to the identification, arrest and conviction of suspects.

State police say at least three gunshots were fired at Van Buren Elementary School near Brazil in an apparent drive-by shooting last week. One of the bullets went through a cafeteria window, causing flying glass from the shattered window to injure a custodian's eye.

Some witnesses reported a full-size black van driving past the school at the time of the shooting.

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS



Recent School Shooting Violence

Shootings in Ohio and Michigan; California, New York and Pennsylvania Plots Foiled



Ohio School Shooter Gave Many Warnings

Article published by CNN on October 11, 2007

CLEVELAND, OH | Fellow students say they and school authorities didn't take Asa Coon's threats of violence seriously before the 14-year-old's shooting rampage at his Cleveland high school on Wednesday. Coon killed himself after wounding two teachers and two other students at SuccessTech Academy. The youth had a history of violent confrontations and had been suspended after a fistfight on Monday.

A student who said he was friends with Coon said Coon had warned him a month ago that he was going to snap someday. "He said if he did shoot up the school he'd let me and some other dude he knew go and all that, but I didn't think he actually meant that," the friend said. "I thought he was just kidding around."

On CBS' "Early Show" Thursday morning, student Rasheem Smith said the school's principal, Johneita Durant, had not found time to discuss students' concerns about Asa Coon, the AP reported.

Other students said Coon was a "Goth" who usually wore black clothes and a trench coat and strapped an empty gun belt to his leg. He was an atheist and a devoted follower of Goth rocker Marilyn Manson. A schoolmate said Coon had been beaten up Monday after saying "F--- God" during an argument. "He got beat up and he came back today, and I knew something was going to happen," the student said outside the school Wednesday afternoon. "Yesterday I was like, 'I'm not coming to school, man. This dude might come up here and shoot us up.'"



Another student said Coon gave a clear warning. "When he got suspended he said, 'I got something for y'all,'" she said. "I thought he was just playing, because he, like, said that all the time. But I see that he was for real." "I told my friends in the class that he had a gun and stuff," Smith said. "He was talking about doing it last week. I don't know why they didn't say nothing. "We talked to the principal. She would try to get us all in the office, but it would always be too busy for it to happen."

A court magistrate ordered psychological testing and family therapy for Coon after he slapped his mother in 2006, but Coon was not cooperative; he eventually was placed in an interim shelter, where he attempted suicide, The Plain Dealer newspaper reported, citing court and Department of Children and Family Services records.

He wound up in a downtown detention center and then a mental hospital, where staff determined he might be bipolar but suggested further evaluation, according to The Plain Dealer. Eventually he was released to home detention and enrolled in SuccessTech, a small magnet school for gifted and troubled students where Coon frequently clashed with teachers and other students.

"I ain't justifying nothing," a friend told CNN affiliate WOIO. "I ain't saying he did the right thing, but I am saying he got pushed for a long time and asked them people to help, help, help, help, but nobody helped."

Full Story: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/10/11/cleveland.shooting/index.html#cnnSTCText>

Michigan Teen Charged in School Shooting

Article published by WNEM News 5 on October 24, 2007

SAGINAW, MI | A 15-year-old high school student has been charged with attempted murder on accusations that he opened fire at a middle school football game, injuring four people. Two students and two adults were wounded in Wednesday's shooting.

Saginaw County Prosecutor Michael Thomas says the suspect is being charged as a juvenile. Thomas says the case could be upgraded to an adult prosecution soon should he decide that is warranted.



Police said Anthony Green was standing near the media center next to the football field when he shot the first victim at close range. Green then turned the gun on another student standing nearby. The shots from the gun may have then ricocheted to the left, hitting a couple walking near the area.

Green is currently being held at the Saginaw County Juvenile Center. Police also asked the prosecutor's office to consider charging him as an adult.

An Arthur Hill sophomore was shot in the neck and remains hospitalized at Covenant Medical Center in critical condition. Police said he will likely survive but may never walk again. The suspected gunman targeted the sophomore, but the other three people were innocent bystanders, police said. A man and woman, and an Arthur Hill freshman were treated for gunshot wounds to the legs and released, officials said.

Police said they believe the shooting was over a disagreement earlier in the day. The game was wrapping up its third quarter between Central Middle School and South Middle School when shots rang out. About 300 people were nearby when the shooting occurred in the vicinity of football field in broad daylight.

People attending the game recognized the shooter and informed police, officials said. "We heard two small pops and thought they were firecrackers," said witness Dia Patterson. "It's sickening to think that you can't come to a junior high game and be safe."

Full Story: <http://www.wnem.com/news/14416966/detail.html>

Mom Buys Guns for Outcast Son Planning Columbine-Style Attack

Article published by CNN on October 12, 2007

PLYMOUTH, PA | A woman bought guns and bomb-making material to indulge her socially outcast 14-year-old son, a prosecutor said Friday. Michele Cossey, 46, faces charges in connection with her son's alleged plan for a Columbine-like attack on a school. She is accused of buying him a .22-caliber handgun, a .22-caliber rifle, a 9 mm semiautomatic rifle and black powder used to make grenades.



"There's a lot of things at play here," Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce Castor Jr. said. "You have a child who is obviously emotionally disturbed and a social outcast, and no doubt the parents feel sorry for him and are indulging him. "This is not the best parenting I've ever seen, obviously, and she has to be held accountable for that."

Cossey was charged Friday with unlawful transfer of a firearm, possession of a firearm by a minor, corruption of a minor, endangering the welfare of a child and two counts of reckless endangerment. A search of the family's home Wednesday in Plymouth Meeting outside Philadelphia turned up the rifle, about 30 air-powered guns, swords, knives, grenades, a bomb-making book and videos of the Columbine High School attack, Castor said.

Castor said the weapons were plainly visible in the boy's bedroom. "We alleged that she purchased the 9 mm rifle for her son, allowed him to have black powder, gunpowder and the instruments to make the grenades," Castor said. "I don't think she had anything to do with planning this attack, but by virtue of her indulgence she allowed him to get into this position."

A judge ruled authorities could continue to hold the teen during their investigation. The judge also ordered psychiatric and educational achievement evaluations for the youth, who withdrew from school in 2006 and was home-schooled. The teen was charged as a juvenile with solicitation to commit terror and other counts and was being held at a youth facility. If he is found delinquent, he could face long-term detention and counseling.

School officials said police acted on a tip from a Plymouth Whitemarsh High School student and his father. They said they believe the tip was prompted by Wednesday's shooting at a Cleveland, Ohio, school in which a 14-year-old killed himself after wounding two teachers and two other students.

Full Story: http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/10/12/student_arsenal/index.html#cnnSTCText

Alerts Praised After NYC Campus Scare

Article published by USA Today on September 27, 2007

NEW YORK CITY, NY | When a masked freshman came to campus carrying what police said was a loaded rifle sticking out of a bag, St. John's University lost little time warning students. Less than 20 minutes after he was spotted, students across the university's Queens campus were notified and told to stay indoors as officials searched for possible additional suspects.

None were found, no injuries were reported, and students and officials praised a new emergency response system that quickly dispatched e-mails, text message and telephone alerts about the incident.

The student, identified as Omesh Hiranman, 22, was arrested on a misdemeanor charge of criminal possession of a loaded weapon, police said early Thursday. Information on his arraignment was not immediately available. His father called the incident Wednesday "a misunderstanding," and Hiranman's lawyer, Anthony Colleluori, told the New York Post his client was "tired, he's confused, and he's scared."



St. John's, a Catholic school of about 20,000, put its new emergency alert system in place after the April 16 shootings at Virginia Tech, where a student killed 32 people and himself. The Blacksburg, Va.-based university's administration sent a mass e-mail to students about two hours after the first victims were shot in a dormitory. The e-mail, which warned students to be cautious and contact police about anything suspicious, went out about 20 minutes before the gunman opened fire again.

At St. John's, the suspect was first captured on security cameras entering the Queens campus at about 2:20 p.m. Five minutes later, public safety officials called 911. Ten minutes later, he was apprehended by a student cadet and unarmed campus security officers. Eight minutes after that, students were notified of the incident. "They were on it," Sophomore Irene Kontoncolaou, 19, who got a text message alert in a business law class, said of the law enforcement response. "They did a really good job."

Source: USA Today

California School Standoff Ends Peacefully

Article published by WNEM News 5 on October 24, 2007

OROVILLE, CA | A student gunman held an Oroville high school drama class hostage Friday, firing several shots into the ceiling and holding three of the students for more than an hour before a police hostage negotiator persuaded him to surrender peacefully, authorities said. No one was hurt. Sheriff's investigators, when asked about a motive, said the 17-year-old was distraught over a breakup with his girlfriend the night before and apparently intended to shoot another boy that he blamed for the relationship troubles.



The gunman, carrying a .22-caliber handgun, initially took about 30 students and a substitute teacher hostage in a band room at Las Plumas High School about 9 a.m. He eventually released all of them except for three girls, said Lt. Al Smith of the Butte County Sheriff's Department.

Turbo Her, an 18-year-old senior who was in the drama class, said other students initially thought it was a joke. "I said, 'Oh no, this is a real gun,'" Her said. "The girls were crying and hysterical. He wanted to scare them, to let them know it's real." Her said the boy told students he did not want to hurt them and just needed to hide out for a bit. At least two students talked with family members by cell phone while they were being held hostage.

Her said that after about 30 minutes, the gunman said that "anyone who's scared can leave," and about 26 students and the teacher left. Sheriff's officials said three remaining hostages did not stay there voluntarily, but they did not know why the gunman chose them to remain.

Smith said the gunman's only demand to deputies during the standoff was that they "back off." Six schools in the Oroville Union High School District were locked down while Deputy Will Brewton, who is stationed at Las Plumas and is a trained hostage negotiator, talked to the hostile student on a cell phone. "We made him realize that the best thing for him and everyone concerned was to release the remaining three hostages," Smith said.

During the incident, a SWAT team evacuated the school's roughly 1,400 students. Parents were directed to Oroville's Church of the Nazarene to be reunited with their children, and cars were backed up for half a mile leading to the church. Deputies took the gunman in for questioning after he gave up "without incident" and placed him in custody at Butte County juvenile hall, where he would remain at least until his first court appearance, authorities said.

Full Story: <http://www.wnem.com/news/14416966/detail.html>

School Safety

When is a School Lockdown Needed?

Article published by the Chicago Tribune on October 29, 2007

BERWYN, IL | A student using a bathroom at Morton West High School thought he saw another student in a stall drop a gun, so he told two other students, and word soon spread across campus at the Berwyn school. Later that Oct. 15 day, the three students were questioned about the incident by Berwyn police in the principal's office. Again, the student recounted witnessing a student drop what looked like a gun in the bathroom before placing it in his waistband and walking out, said police and school officials.

Police suggested locking down the school. But District 201 Supt. Ben Nowakowski decided against it. According to police reports, Nowakowski thought the student's account was unreliable because the student was enrolled in a program for emotionally disturbed students.

As it turned out, a student brought a real gun to school that day. And unbeknownst to police or school officials at the time, he was one of the three being questioned in the principal's office. Three days later, after receiving a tip from a teacher who overheard a conversation, authorities arrested Morton West student Fernando Aguilar, 17, who police say admitted to bringing a semiautomatic handgun to school Oct. 15.

Six months after the Virginia Tech shootings, and just days after a student in Cleveland shot four people in his downtown high school, the incident at Morton West underscores the ongoing debate over campus security and the judgment call that school officials are forced to make following a gun threat.

Nowakowski still defends his decision not to lock down Morton West, which has 3,400 students and no metal detectors. In an interview, he said the witness couldn't confirm whether the gun was real or give a detailed description of the student carrying the weapon. "The details were so sketchy and the story kept changing," he said. "We didn't feel it was a reliable enough account."

But even if a report of a gun on campus can't be confirmed, school officials should err on the side of caution, said Cmdr. Bill Evans, who heads the Cook County Sheriff's Police Hostage and Barricade Team. "Any time a student sees something that even resembles a firearm, the best bet is to go into lockdown," Evans said.



Berwyn Police Chief William Kushner said officers recommended locking down the campus but that it was the school's decision to do so. With few details to go on, Nowakowski said locking down the school would not have helped officials find the gun "and might have made the person with the gun feel cornered and forced to do something. It's better to just allow him to leave."

But Evans said a lockdown could contain a student with a gun to one building and prevent him from moving around campus and firing indiscriminately. "The quicker that you can contain a person like that the better off you'll be at resolving the issue," he said.

Schools in the Chicago area have reacted in different ways in response to gun threats on campus. Last month, Dundee-Crown High School officials chose not to lock down the school after a student was found with an unloaded handgun. On Friday, officials at Prairie Junior High School in Alsip evacuated the school after finding gun ammunition in a bathroom.

At Morton, the witness told police his view from the bathroom was obstructed by a stall, and he chose to tell his friends but not school officials because he was not sure if the gun was real. All three students were enrolled in a special education program at the school, but Nowakowski denied police reports that he rejected their credibility for this reason.

A few days after the incident, a Morton teacher overheard a student say he brought a gun to school, and that led Berwyn police to Aguilar. Authorities recovered a semiautomatic pistol from Aguilar's home. Aguilar was charged with three misdemeanor counts of unlawful possession of a firearm and released on bail.

It is unclear whether the student was carrying the weapon while being interviewed Oct. 15, but Nowakowski said that not searching the three students was a mistake. Nowakowski said, school officials are considering increasing security measures at the school, including metal detectors -- a measure that Nowakowski insisted was unnecessary. "Most students act very responsible every day, and intruding on their personal freedoms becomes a concern," he said. "We don't want to turn the building into a prison for students."

Full Story: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-lockdownoct29,1,4223170.story>

Schools Tightening Security

Article published by the Journal and Courier on September 4, 2007

WEST LAFAYETTE, IN | When Ian Green asks his daughter, Allison, a fifth-grader at Happy Hollow Elementary School, whether she feels safe in school, she doesn't hesitate: "In school? Yes. Walking home? No." Not now anyway, since she learned a stranger approached a few junior high students nearby.



But at school, Green said the teachers and principal help her feel safe. Educators say that feeling of safety is necessary and they're doing everything they can to ensure it. "That's the first concern parents have," said Roger Francis, assistant principal of Jefferson High School and the designated school safety specialist for Lafayette School Corp. "We stress academics, but in reality, unless you have a safe environment, learning is not going to take place."

Safety and security in and around schools continue to grow tighter in response to tragedies and threats that weren't as prevalent a decade ago. Schools require visitor sign-ins and badges, outfit students and staff with IDs and have officers walk the halls on a regular basis.

A new law that went into effect in July requires schools to hold two lockdown drills each school year, just as they would hold severe weather or fire drills. West Lafayette's Happy Hollow and Cumberland elementaries are upgrading their classroom locks. This fall Jeff will expand its video surveillance, with the eventual goal of leaving no site on its campus unrecorded.

"The necessity for this is a sign of the times," Francis said. "Since Columbine, it has increased every year. Our purpose is to try and do everything we can reasonably do" to protect students.

Each district takes basically the same approach to student safety: Communicate. Be proactive. Have a plan.

By law, schools must appoint safety committees to prepare an emergency plan, and districts designate a school safety specialist, who attends conferences, receives literature and helps update emergency plans.

School officials meet regularly with groups ranging from the Tippecanoe Emergency Management Agency and the sheriff's department to the health department to review plans.

"Each administration has a plan," said Christy Fraley, director of administrative services and the specialist for Tippecanoe School Corp. "We have it on file with police and fire. We meet to discuss different scenarios -- what to do, who would be in charge. We plan so if something happened, we would already have some ideas in place."

Those meetings, though, don't just focus on the headline grabbers of shootings or disasters. They also discuss day-to-day problems, such as gangs and bullying, that also affect a student's feeling of safety.

Ron Shriner, assistant principal of West Lafayette Jr./Sr. High School and the district's safety specialist, said children building healthy relationships is vital to prevent problems. Shriner said a 100 percent safe school would be not only impractical and impossible, but it also would change the school's culture.

"You create an environment in school that's as safe as can be," he said. "Create a good safety plan, then back it up every day with vigilance and seeing what kids are doing and who's in the building. That goes so far in preventing things you don't want to happen from happening."

For parent Ian Green, like his daughter, he said he feels safe and thinks schools do enough. He'd rather children not feel needlessly concerned all the time by unnecessary measures. "If it's going to happen, it's going to happen. Nothing will stop it," Green said. "But how far do you want to go?"

Jefferson principal Glade Montgomery said he's often asked by people in the community -- even by his dry cleaner, he said -- why the school doesn't install metal detectors.

What many people don't think about, he said, is there are ways around any security measure. Nothing is fail-safe.

"No place is exempt," Montgomery said. "If this can happen in a one-room Amish schoolhouse -- where violence is definitely not part of the culture -- if it can happen there, it can happen anywhere."

But Montgomery said that's not a reason to be in a constant state of worry. One thing he tells concerned parents is his own children attend the school. "They're here every day unless they're sick," he said. "If I didn't think it was safe here, they certainly wouldn't be here."

Source: The Journal and Courier

Bullying a Critical Issue in Schools

Article published by The Times on October 22, 2007

It is happening again. In the news recently, there have been two incidences of young men, tired of being harassed since grade school, bringing guns to school and randomly shooting. They are the products of continual bullying.

We tend to make light over bullying. As adults we tell our children "I got picked on, too." We minimize their feelings, so they stop asking for our help. Most often the bullying happens at school, making the child fearful of attending. They begin to feel sick in the morning and ask if they could please stay home. Safe.



Sometimes the children try to identify with the aggressors and become a bully to other children. Other times, children with poor social skills become targets for bullies. The bully knows who is an easy person to attack. Often they chose children with low self esteem that won't fight back.

The teasing generally does not happen in the classroom. It is usually done during more unstructured times such as recess, during gym class or in the lunch room. Most teachers are unaware of a student getting picked on.

Children who bully are attempting to gain personal rewards. They may have a "Look at me!" attitude, "I'm better than you" attitude, or my personal favorite, "I was only kidding." It is important for teachers and parents to emphasize that bullying either physical or verbal is never OK to "kid" someone chronically.

There are some children who have poor peer relations because they do inappropriate things, such as picking their nose. This is not to blame the victim, but rather to work with your child on socially acceptable behaviors.

As parents, we are tempted to fight our child's battle. You may want to call the bullies parents. This does not help, in fact, it usually exacerbates the problem. Explain to your child there are times when others will say and do hurtful things, they can only be responsible for their own words and actions.

Role-playing at home may be helpful. With this tool, your child may feel more empowered. One of the main antidotes to bullying is to teach your child to ignore the bully. I know this sounds difficult, but the bully is getting secondary gains from watching your child getting upset. Often, ignoring the teasing will dissuade the bully, and he will move on to his next victim.

On a wide-spread note, there needs to be a public outcry for school and parents to be proactive and stop the bullying now. In this day and age, "All kids get bullied" becomes a weak excuse in the face of students bringing guns to school to stop the bullying on their own. - *Christine Priesol, Licensed Clinical Social Worker*

Source: The Times

Anti-Bullying Message Alive in Crown Point Middle Schools

Article published by The Times on October 12, 2007

CROWN POINT, IN | Students at Taft and Wheeler Middle Schools are taking a stand against bullying and learning that the oppression can come in many different forms. The students are participating in CASS, or Creating a Safe Social Climate -- a program used to combat bullying. The program began at Taft in January 2006 and spread to Wheeler when the school opened this fall.



Taft kicked off CASS programs Thursday with a presentation by author Brad Tassell, who wrote "Don't Feed the Bullies" and entertained youngsters by playing his ukulele and recounting personal experiences. As an eighth-grader, Tassell said he was small -- about 70 pounds and 4 feet 7 inches tall. He said he decided not to run from bullies and to stand up to them. He also said he was willing to tell teachers, his parents or any other adults if he was being bullied.

"There was a case where some girls were beating up another girl on the bus, and do you know where those girls are at now? In prison, adult prison," he said.

Taft seventh-graders Adam Kahn and Chris Dietrich were impressed with the presentation. "I liked the stories better than the songs," Dietrich said. "I've seen bullying, but sometimes they are just goofing around." As part of the CASS program, each school had a lunch in which students interacted with children with whom they normally don't socialize. Each school also had a CASS celebration dance.

Source: The Times

Drugs & Alcohol

SACS Drug Testing Discourages Students From Using

Article published by WANE-TV on October 2, 2007

FORT WAYNE, IN| Officials in one Allen County school district say random testing is helping to cut down on students using drugs. Every week during the school year 55 students from Southwest Allen County middle and high schools are randomly called on, not to answer a question, but to take a drug test. The district begins the random drug testing program in sixth grade to deter children from starting a habit when they get older.



"We do it to get them use to saying no to drugs. Studies show middle schools is where they are first exposed to drugs," said SACS Social Worker Anita Gross. At a school board meeting Gross told school board members that, so far, the program is working. "We're seeing a low percentage of students test positive, which is what we want," she explained.

The program's been in place for two years. In the first year, almost two percent of students tested positive. Last year there was a drop with less than one percent testing positive. "It's not the middle schoolers or freshman testing positive. It's the upper classmen, which is consistent with them being exposed to more drugs," said Gross.

Gross believes it's more than a threat of a random test that keeps students from using. The school's drug sniffing dog, Hunter, also encourages kids to stay clean.

Only students in extra-curricular activities or who drive to school are randomly tested for drugs. If any student is found positive, they have a choice between taking a drug education program, being suspended from their after school activity or having their parking privileges revoked.

Source: WANE-TV

Carmel Testing Students for Alcohol at Athletic Events

Article published by the Indianapolis Star on September 21, 2007

CARMEL, IN| Carmel High School administrators will decide today whether to continue testing students for alcohol at football games. For the first time, CHS students attending the Sept. 14 football game against Lawrence North were given an alcohol breath test before they were allowed to enter.

Students also will be tested at the homecoming football game Sept. 28, Principal John Williams said Thursday. But he emphasized that the school isn't expanding its alcohol testing to football games because of an increase in underage drinking. "The thing that has driven this decision is technology," Williams said. "It's not driven by anything we've noticed, including drinking. This isn't because these kids are doing more than other kids did. Alcohol has been in our society for a long time. "What's different is technology -- hand-held Breathalyzers. We have a responsibility to use the technology we have to help kids make good decisions."

Students have been tested before proms and homecoming dances for the past three years, but it was the first time for an athletic event, said Superintendent Barbara Underwood. "The good news is nobody got sent home," Underwood said. "We just don't want kids coming to the game if they've been drinking. Our goal is not to catch them. It's to prevent them from doing it." The students learned about the testing during school announcements prior to Friday's game.

Administrators will meet today to discuss whether to begin testing students at every football game, said Amy Skeens-Benton, dean of students and activities. "It's such a large event, and because there is tailgating going on, there is the opportunity for kids to drink, so we want to provide as many deterrents as we can so everybody can be safe," she said.

All Carmel High School students who attended last week's game -- about 500 -- received an alcohol breath test before walking in, Skeens-Benton said. The school-administered test only detects the presence of alcohol. "That (Friday's game) was the trial period to see if logistically we could do it," she said. "It worked out just fine. It was a lot easier than we thought." The district bought 12 Breathalyzers for \$200 each two years ago, Williams said. There are no other costs for administering the tests.

Carmel police officer Phil Hobson said there have been incidents in the past of students drinking at school events, but nothing widespread. He believes only one student has been arrested at CHS this year for underage drinking.

continued...

"Normal procedure is the student is placed under arrest," Hobson said. "Juvenile probation is called, and (students) are at times released to the custody of a parent."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana suggested Carmel's practice may be an unreasonable search. "It raises a Fourth Amendment issue because it involves the police," said Ken Falk, the ACLU's legal director. He said a student's decision to attend a football game doesn't create the "reasonable suspicion" of wrongdoing required for a criminal search.

Carmel may have skirted the issue by having school officials instead of police conduct the initial breath tests. If alcohol is detected and the school notifies police, a police officer conducts another breath test, Skeens-Benton said. The breath tests don't come as a surprise to students because administrators remind them before school events.

At school dances, students from other schools who attend with a Carmel student are tested, too, Skeens-Benton said. Students from Lawrence North who attended the football game were not tested if they showed a school ID as they entered. "If there was someone at the game that we felt was intoxicated, no matter who they are, they could be arrested for public intoxication," Skeens-Benton said. "We discourage anyone from drinking at any high school event, whether they are a student or not." "No alcohol is allowed on school grounds."

Full Story: <http://www.thestarpress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070921/NEWS06/70921002/-1/bb>

Local News Briefs

Seven North Central High Students Face Gang Charges After Fight - *Indianapolis, Indiana*

Article published by the Indianapolis Star on September 9, 2007

Seven North Central High School students face gang-related charges after a fight in the school cafeteria resulted in their arrests Thursday. According to police reports, Special Deputy Thaddeus Jones of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department noticed two large groups of males yelling "north side" and "east side" and throwing gang signs near the school cafeteria at 7:20 a.m.



Jones and Assistant Principal Will Tyler attempted to separate the students when a 16-year-old student tackled a 17-year-old student, igniting a brawl that spilled into the cafeteria. The two who started the fight stopped only after Jones threatened them with pepper spray.

See the full story - <http://educationwonk.blogspot.com/2007/09/our-troubled-high-schools-gang-banging.html>

Warren High Student Arrested After Loaded Gun Found In School - *Indianapolis, Indiana*

Article published by the Indianapolis Star on October 4, 2007

A senior at Warren Central High School was arrested after an administrator found a loaded handgun in his locker at school. Calvin L. Lawson, 17, has been charged with carrying a handgun without a license and dangerous possession of a firearm.



According to a police report, teachers were told that Lawson was carrying the gun at school Tuesday. When an assistant principal checked a locker in the boys locker room, the gun was found inside. Police said the gun was a .380-caliber semi-automatic pistol. Warren Township school policy calls for suspension and expulsion of students found with firearms on school property.

See the full story - <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071004/LOCAL/310040006>

P-H-M School District Expels Boy with BB Gun - *Mishawaka, Indiana*

Article published by the South Bend Tribune on October 25, 2007

Trustees of the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corp. on Monday night voted to uphold an expulsion for a fifth-grade boy who brought an inoperable BB gun to Meadow's Edge Elementary School last month.



The board upheld the expulsion despite the family's appealing the decision to formally expel the student for a calendar year starting Sept. 28, Carroll said. According to Indiana law, a student who brings a firearm or deadly weapon to school must be expelled for at least one calendar year, Carroll said.

See the full story - <http://www.southbendtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071025/News01/71025009/1130/Sports01>

Plymouth Gun Rumor Began with Cap Pistol - *Plymouth, Indiana*

Article published by the South Bend Tribune on October 25, 2007

Plymouth school officials dealt with another gun rumor Tuesday morning, the second in two days at the local schools. This time, a Menominee Elementary School bus driver was told students saw a boy with a gun in his book bag at a bus stop. The driver reported it to Menominee Principal Michael Dunn to confirm, Dunn said Tuesday.



Dunn said that a plastic, orange cap gun was found with the student. The boy was merely playing with the cap gun at the bus stop, Dunn said, and was not using it to threaten anyone. Dunn said he and Plymouth police officers met with the student. A letter also was to be sent home to students' parents today concerning the incident. Dunn took the cap gun, he said.

On Monday, school officials dealt publicly with a rumor that began last Thursday after a female student at Plymouth High School allegedly threatened to take a gun to school and shoot three other students, all male, if they didn't stop harassing her in class. Jim Condon, high school principal, said the female student's comment about shooting the other students was made in anger. School officials contacted all four students' parents, he said, and school officials, local, county and Indiana State police met to quell the rumor.

See the full story - www.southbendtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071025/News01/710250385/1130/Sports01

High School Questions Teen Following Threats - *Knox, Indiana*

Article published by the Post Tribune on October 3, 2007



Knox High School student is under investigation for alleged threats to another student at a pep session Friday. On Friday, teachers learned a student may have threatened another student after a pep rally because he believed he was being picked on.

Knox Superintendent Kim Knott said administrators were approached after the pep rally by two students, who told a high school staff member that the male youth "might do some harm to someone." School personnel, according to Knott, kept the student after school and talked to him, also contacting his guardians.

See the full story - <http://www.post-trib.com/news/584948,knoxthreat.article>

Administrators, Cops Probe Student's Writings - *Griffith, Indiana*

Article published by the Times on October 27, 2007



A Griffith High School student is temporarily being withheld from classes while school administrators and police investigate the content of a story the student allegedly wrote. Griffith School Superintendent Peter Morikis said high school administrators learned the student had written a fictional story that included names of students and some high school staff. He said he could not discuss the content of the student's work because of the ongoing investigation.

Because people were named in the work, police were contacted, Morikis said. And because the document is lengthy, it may take some time to review, he added. "The student in question has been removed from the high school and there was no immediate or direct threat to anyone at the school," Morikis said. He said the student will likely remain out of class until the investigation is completed.

Source: *The Times*

Teens Arrested for Bomb Threat in Vermillion County - *Clinton, Indiana*

Article published by the Journal and Courier on October 26, 2007

State police arrested two teenage girls accused of threatening to bomb a high school in western Indiana. The girls, ages 15 and 16, scrawled the threat in pencil onto the wall of a restroom stall at the South Vermillion High School in Clinton, Indiana State Police Sgt. Joe Watts said. A female student found the note and reported it to school officials at about 12:52 p.m.



The girls were held Thursday night at the Southwest Regional Youth Village in Vincennes on juvenile charges of false informing, Watts said. "Threats intended to disrupt our schools will not be tolerated and law enforcement will use every investigative resource possible to apprehend those responsible for such criminal acts," Vermillion County Sheriff Bob Spence said in a written statement.

See the full story - <http://www.jconline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071026/NEWS09/71026006>

Gary Schools Pay Student \$209,359 - Gary, Indiana

Article published the Associated Press on August 30, 2007



City schools must pay \$209,359 to a student who says he was beaten at a school because of inadequate supervision. A jury granted the amount to Dionte Jones, now a senior at West Side High School. In March 2003, Jones was a 13-year-old student at Chase Alternative School, part of the Gary Community School Corp. He was in the gym getting things from his locker when the bell rang. A crowd of students began beating up another student who managed to escape, court records state. The crowd then turned on Jones, evidence showed.

No security officer or principal was around, said Jones' attorney, Charles H. Graddick. "He still has a scar on his right elbow," Graddick said. "His arm was severely bent. Being hit with a steel chair — he could have suffered far worse. There are things he can no longer do — like contact sports."

See the full story - <http://www.heraldtimesonline.com/chalk/?p=152>

South Bend Man Arrested on Alleged Indecent Exposure Incident - South Bend, Indiana

Article published by WNDU News 16 on August 28, 2007

Last week a student at Dickinson Intermediate Center approached a South Bend Police Department School Resource Officer. The student reported an incident that occurred near a bus stop on Wilber Street. The student said a Male Latino was hiding in an alley and exposing himself to her when he felt no one else could see him.

The resource officer, Sergeant David Herron, immediately started an investigation. Over the next few days, Sgt. Herron went to the area and conducted surveillance. On the morning of August 24th, Sgt. Herron spotted a suspicious pick-up truck parked in the alleyway and a suspect that matched the description of the offender.

Police say the offender turned his attention to the bus stop where the incident happened earlier in the week. Sgt. Herron summoned a uniform patrol unit to the area and confronted the suspect. The man was taken to the St. Joseph county Special Victims Unit where he was interviewed. The man, 26-year-old Luis Tinoco of South Bend, was then arrested and booked in the St. Joseph County Jail for three counts of Indecent Exposure.

Source: WNDU News 16

Officer Safety

Student Uses Pen, Gun Powder to Make Pipe Bomb - Clermont, Florida

Article published by WFTV News 9 on October 19, 2007

A student at a Seminole County high school was arrested for allegedly making a pipe bomb out of a pen and investigators also say he made threats against his school.

If a teacher saw a Sharpie marker, she probably would think nothing of it. But this particular one had been filled with gunpowder and a fuse was attached. If it weren't for a text message the student sent, deputies may not have known about the very dangerous plot.



Michael Drnek, 16, is now facing felony charges for turning the Sharpie marker into a small bomb. "It contained a large amount of gun powder and a fuse," explained an investigator. Deputies found the explosive pen inside Drnek's bedroom at his Clermont home on Thursday. It was locked in a little black safe, along with several smoke bombs. Drnek's father gave detectives a container of gunpowder he caught his son with days ago.



Investigators said Drnek sent another student at PACE-Brantley Hall School in Longwood a text message and picture of the device with the warning he was going to attack the school. "The child who received the text message, his mother was looking at the text. She intercepted the message and then notified the Seminole County Sheriff's Office," Sgt. John Herrell, Lake County Sheriff's Office.

"Last person I would think of," said next door neighbor Judy Brown, who hired Drnek to do yard work and never imagined he'd be accused of bomb making. "He's a nice boy, never had any trouble with him. He's very polite."

PACE-Brantley Hall is a school for students with learning differences. Friday, officials gave each parent picking up their kids a letter describing what happened. Drnek is being held in the juvenile detention center in Ocala. He's charged with possession of a destructive device with intent to do harm.



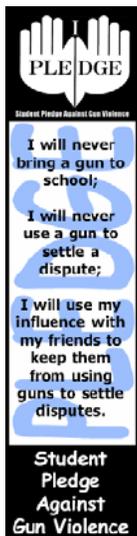
Full Story and More Photos - <http://www.wftv.com/news/14378044/detail.html>

In the Community

Over 32,000 Students Take a Stand Against Gun Violence!

October 24, 2007

The Student Pledge Against Gun Violence was a huge success again this year! The event took place on October 24, 2007 all over country. The U.S. Attorney's Office distributed pledge information to law enforcement and prosecutor offices throughout the Northern District of Indiana. This year the cities of East Chicago, Goshen, Indianapolis, Kouts, Lowell, Mishawaka, South Bend and the Tippecanoe County Sheriff's Department partnered with schools to have children make a pledge against gun violence.



This was part of a national program where schools ask students to make a pledge to resist gun violence. The pledges are slightly different for elementary students compared to middle or high school students, but convey the message that guns should not be used to settle arguments or be handled by children. This pledge was signed by students and enforced by parents, teachers and other students who are aware of the signed pledge. By giving students a common pledge and the choice to sign it in the company of their peers, while knowing that students across the country are doing the same, collectively helps young people understand that they too can make a difference in the reduction of gun violence in their area and across their community.

Nationally, gun violence is intolerably high and poses a serious threat to America's young people. According to a recent report by the National Ad Council, a teenager in this country is more likely to die from a gunshot wound than from all other natural causes of death combined. In 2002, 81% of all murder victims between the ages of 13 and 24 were killed with a gun. Furthermore, almost 1 in 20 high-school students say they have carried a gun in the past month.

Throughout the Northern District of Indiana, the U.S. Attorney's Office has made a commitment to the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Initiative to reduce gun violence through outreach and enforcement efforts. More information on PSN and other District-wide strategies can be found on our website @ www.keepingourcommunitiesafe.us.

Student Pledge Spotlight - Navarre Elementary in South Bend

A South Bend school is doing it is best to keep the peace it is teaching students that violence is not an option.

On October 24, 2007, Navarre elementary students signed a pledge against gun violence.

They agreed not to bring guns to school or use guns to solve their problems.

The school held a special assembly where special guests like Mayor Steve Luecke, Prosecutor Michael Dvorak, South Bend Police Chief Thomas Fautz and Assistant U.S Attorney Barbara Brook participated in the pledge.



"Students can be part of a bigger picture, and what we want them to do is be aware that they are part of the solution, not part of a problem but part of the solution," says Christine Pochert a Supervisor for SBCSC.

More than eleven million students have participated in the National Day of Concern against Gun Violence since the program began in 1996.



Youth Gang Awareness - Two Six Nation

Two-Sixers

Gang Make Up: Hispanic, White
Gang Colors: Black and Tan (Beige)
Monikers/Graffiti: A Bunny with a Bent Right Ear
Three dots or Three Earrings on Bunny
Six-Point Star
Dice with Two and Six Spots
Heart, Club or Spade
The Initials "TS" or "TSN"
Other Folk Identifiers



Basic Gang History: The Gangster Two Six Nation name was derived from the street on which they first operated during the mid 1960s, 26th Street near Pulaski. Initially comprised of Caucasian and Hispanic members, the gang rapidly expanded, and today, is one of the largest predominately Mexican gangs in Chicago. When the Two Six nation ventured into narcotics sales along 26th Street, they battled the Latin Kings, who remain their main enemies.

Structure and Criminal Activities: Although their reputed leader through the 1970s, David Ayala, has been serving a life term in federal prison since 1981 for murdering several Latin Kings, the gang is viewed as possessing well-structured leadership and has quickly developed into one of the most violent street gangs in Chicago. They expanded and maintained turf throughout Chicago's outlying suburbs, and then into neighboring states like Indiana and Wisconsin. Primary criminal activities include drug sales, murder, drive-by shootings, thefts, robberies and assault.



A Closer Look - School Suspensions

Indiana School Suspension Rates

Available on the Indianapolis Star Website



The Indianapolis Star has a data repository of all Indiana school suspensions for the 2005-06 school year. The data includes elementary, middle and high school suspensions throughout the state. The search features allows the user to research individual school districts, counties or all Indiana schools. The site also classifies the

reasons behind the suspensions. The data is available free of charge and can be located at www.indystar.com/data/education/suspension_rates.shtml?appSession=87053757213446

Schools Struggle to Secure Students in Cyber World - *Continued from Page 1*

Special Feature ★

"It's worrisome" said Ray Azar, Vigo County School Corp. director of Student Services. "It's a whole new territory." The Internet offers much that is good, but at the same time, "There's so much out there [students] can get in trouble with," he said.

The district has become aware of instances of false profiling and other cases involving inappropriate comments about staff members. When that happens, school district security officers will contact MySpace administrators and ask them to review the site and take it down if it's inappropriate. "They don't want illegal activity," said Franklin Fennell, school district supervisor of security and support services.

MySpace has provided a telephone number that law enforcement officers can call if there are security concerns, inappropriate postings or false profiles, Azar said. MySpace has become more cooperative, he said. "A few years ago, you had to go through a lot of hoops to get anything done and they didn't want to share any information because of confidentiality," Azar said. "But now, if a school corp. is working with law enforcement, they've made it pretty easy to determine if something is inappropriate and to take it down, we find we can do that pretty easily."

Other social networking sites aren't as easy to work with, he said. Just because someone posts inappropriate or false comments about a teacher or administrator doesn't mean it's illegal. It may come down to victims deciding if they want to pursue civil action and whether it's worth the effort, Azar said.

While typically students use MySpace on a home computer, comments and threats can trickle over into the school setting. Last year, some Terre Haute South Vigo High School parents became concerned about a MySpace posting that involved threatening comments toward black students. School officials and police investigated. "We look really seriously at threats and anything that can cause a disruption in school," Azar said. Students might also say things about themselves online that are "really incriminating. We try to inform parents," he said.

Because accounts are private, the school district won't necessarily have direct access to what is on MySpace or other social networking sites. If parents become aware of something inappropriate or threatening, they should make a printout, if possible, so school officials and law enforcement can more easily investigate, Azar said. The district doesn't "go out and search" the sites, he added, but it does act on complaints.

MySpace and free speech

School officials can be limited in their response when it comes to students' off-school use of MySpace, Azar said. "One of the things we have to tread lightly on is the issue of free speech. We don't want to infringe on someone's free speech. But it's a fine line sometimes," Azar said. "You have to determine what laws have been broken and what school rules have been broken. In some cases, it's just distasteful, but it's nothing we can really do anything about" except ask MySpace or other sites to remove the offensive material, he said.

Under the Constitution, a school cannot discipline a student for exercising protected speech. That First Amendment protection does not extend to speech that is criminal or defamatory, or speech that causes a substantial disruption.

Indiana law takes things a step further. A state law says that for a school to apply its disciplinary policies to off-school conduct — including off-school computer use — the incident must be unlawful and interfere with school purposes, said Dave Emmert, attorney with the Indiana School Boards Association.



The issue of false profiles raises another question, Emmert said. What did the General Assembly mean by "unlawful" in a statute that dates back to the 1990s — the pre-MySpace era? The Legislature didn't clearly define "unlawful," Emmert said. He believes that if a student clearly defames a teacher or administrator online and makes false statements, that would be civilly unlawful and would interfere with school purposes, particularly if it led to an investigation of that individual. In his opinion, a school could discipline a student for such online, defamatory remarks, even if those comments are made off school property.

The issues are complicated and often require school officials to consult attorneys about what they can and cannot do, Emmert said, something Azar acknowledged. "It gets pretty complicated, and we deal a lot with lawyers," Azar said. The district will seek a legal opinion about whether a certain course of action is appropriate. "We don't want to subject the corporation to any kind of legal liabilities," he said.

Student use and misuse of MySpace has prompted lawsuits and counter-lawsuits across the nation — including Indiana. Earlier this year, the Indiana Court of Appeals ruled that a Putnam County judge violated a middle school student's free-speech rights when he placed her on probation for posting an expletive-laden entry on a MySpace page.

The entry criticized a Greencastle Middle School principal over school policy on body piercings. The girl's comments were posted on a page created by another student who falsely claimed it belonged to the principal, Shawn Gobert. The three-judge panel ordered Putnam Circuit Court to set aside its penalty against the girl. She had been named in a juvenile petition, found to be delinquent and placed on nine months probation.

The Court of Appeals found that the comments were protected and that the juvenile court had unconstitutionally restricted her right of free expression, according to an Associated Press report. The court determined the student's comments were protected political speech relating to government [school district] policy on body piercings. "While we have little regard for [the student's] use of vulgar epithets, we conclude that her overall message constitutes political speech," the court opinion states.

Problems associated with MySpace have prompted one private school in Michigan to take a get-tough approach. A Catholic K-8 school in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. — St. Hugo of the Hills — went so far as adopting a rule forbidding its students from having MySpace Web pages or pages on similar sites — a rule that applies to out-of-school use.

Personal safety

MySpace and related sites also pose safety issues that involve adolescents and teens being solicited online by sexual predators. While it's not directly a school issue, the district has taken a proactive, educational approach and purchased a program for middle schools titled, "Be Safe in MySpace: Keeping students safe in the world of online social networking." Middle school counselors can use the program with students and parents. The student presentation offers safety tips for MySpace users and comes with accompanying activities, including one on blog safety. The parent PowerPoint provides basic information about MySpace and steps parents can take to help their children use the site safely.

Yvonne Tresner, a counselor at Honey Creek Middle School, believes the program will be helpful, particularly for parents. School counselors will meet with Azar to learn more about how to implement it. Throughout the last school year, she regularly dealt with issues related to student use of MySpace and other networking sites, instant messaging and cell phone text messaging. "That's how these kids communicate," she said. It can be a new way for kids to bully someone else. Instead of word-of-mouth, they use MySpace and other technology. "It's a whole new area we have to deal with," Tresner said.



Often, there is a thin line between what represents a home issue versus what is a school issue. Something may be typed on a home computer, but the impact can carry over into school, she said. She deals with the issue from a counseling standpoint, getting the parties face-to-face to talk through problems or conflicts. Disciplinary matters would be handled through the dean's office.

Tresner admits she's still in a learning mode when it comes to MySpace and other technology. "We're having to deal with new types of disciplinary and counseling issues we haven't had to deal with," she said. While parents may try to monitor what their children are doing, many of them "don't understand it, either. Kids know it so much better than we do," Tresner said.

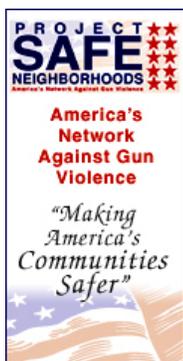
Some authorities suggest parents insist on becoming one of the "friends" on a child's My Space profile. If the student refused to go along, the parent could stop paying for Internet services, Azar said.

There can be consequences

While some speech is protected, students who cross the line face potential consequences. Whether the medium is Internet or cell phone, "Anytime you communicate a threat to anyone, it could be a criminal violation or a school violation," Azar said.

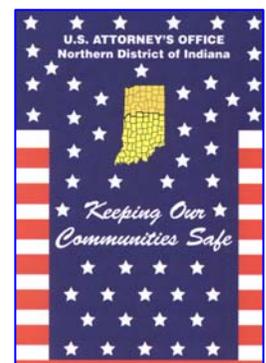
Threats and disruption of school can potentially carry school penalties that include suspension and expulsion. "If they are using a school computer, it becomes a real school issue for us. We can definitely become involved," Azar said. MySpace is not accessible by students on school computers. School security staff have discussed MySpace-related issues during administrative inservices. "It's a learning experience to a lot of people," Azar said. "Through training, we hope our staff know the procedures to follow."

- Authored by Sue Loughlin, *The Tribune Star Online* @ www.tribstar.com/news/local_story_244185916.html



Please send your comments and suggestions on the "The Monitor" Newsletter to:

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