



February 9, 2006

TO: Parents and Guardians of Nauset Public School Students

FROM: Kathy Schrock, Administrator for Technology, Nauset Public Schools  
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RE: Social Networking Sites and Teens

Teens and pre-teens are social. They text-message, instant message, e-mail, talk on the phone, and meet at the coffee shop. With the Internet accessible from both home and public places, they are also “meeting” others via online social networking sites. These sites, like MySpace and Friendster, prohibit children under 14 years of age from viewing the site and those under 14 from creating their own homepage, but many pre-teens are lying about their age and posting information.

The idea behind an online social networking site is to locate others who are interested in the same topics as you as well as keeping an online journal. There is an extensive survey that is filled out when a user joins the site, including birth date, current location, physical characteristics, as well as favorite books, movies, and foods. These fields can be searched by any other member of the site to find a “friend” who has the same interests. In addition, these sites allow users to post pictures of themselves and their friends. Without appropriate supervision, these activities could be risky for your children who may have gained access through inappropriate means.

Having a blog, Web page, or MySpace page is not inappropriate for students. However, parents must talk to their children about limiting both the extensive inclusion of information that strangers can see and the posting of pictures of themselves and their friends. Many of these sites allow passworded or private access to an approved list of friends, and this is one way to ensure that only your child’s real friends can view their Web page. Encourage them to do so.

Here is a list of links for more information.

Wired Safety.org Tips for Parents

<http://www.wiredsafety.org/internet101/blogs.html>

Basic Safety Tips for Online Messaging

[http://www.wiredsafety.org/safety/chat\\_safety/im/index.html](http://www.wiredsafety.org/safety/chat_safety/im/index.html)

Risky Spaces

<http://www.courant.com/news/local/northeast/hc-myspace0205.artfeb05,0,1199559,print.story?coll=hc-northeast-top>

The Nauset Public Schools School Safety page includes these links and many more.

<http://nausetschools.org/safety.htm>