



Illinois State Board of Education

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NEWS

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State looks to students to help spread Internet safety message *Attorney General Madigan, State Education Superintendent Koch launch Internet safety contest and ongoing initiatives to keep children safe online*

SPRINGFIELD – State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan joined students at Springfield’s Lincoln Magnet School today to kick off the first statewide Internet safety contest to raise awareness about the dangers of the Internet and prevent the misuse of technology. The contest, open to students in grades first through 12th, encourages students to create either a poster or electronic message addressing Internet safety and specifically this year, cyberbullying.

“Teaching children how to safely navigate the Internet is as important as telling them to look both ways before they cross the street,” said Koch. “The dangers may not be as evident but they are real. This contest, as well as a new requirement to incorporate Internet safety into the curriculum starting in third grade can help raise awareness about good Internet practices to keep children out of harm’s way.”

The Illinois State Board of Education, the Attorney General’s Office, and the Governor’s Office are sponsoring the contest, called the Youth Internet Safety Contest. Students in any public or non-public district can enter the contest by submitting an entry as a poster or in an electronic media format (video, podcast or slideshow). Districts must submit all entries to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) by March 31, 2010. Winners will be announced in May. Winning entries will be shared on participating school and state Web sites and winners will be honored at a State Board of Education meeting.

Contest rules, terms and conditions, can be found online here:
http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/html/internet_safety.htm.

“Internet safety education is now an essential part of our school curriculum here in Illinois and I believe it is an important tool in our arsenal to protect children from potential threats posed by Internet predators,” said Attorney General Madigan. “Many of our children and teens are exposed to dangers online that can be avoided by empowering them with ways to stay safer. This contest is a terrific vehicle for getting them thinking and talking about ways to be safe online.”

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Attorney General Madigan's High Tech Crimes Bureau employs specialized personnel to respond to the complex and technical nature of offenses that are committed using the Internet and computers. The office coordinates the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. The Illinois ICAC task force is one of 62 similar organizations nationwide designed to investigate child exploitation crimes and provide Internet safety education and training programs. Through August 2009, the Illinois ICAC task force provided Internet safety training and education to more than 92,690 parents and students and 8,305 law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

Many schools have taught online safety for years but starting with this school year, 2009-10, school districts are required to incorporate Internet safety at least once each school year beginning in grade 3 under Public Act 095-0869. The full text of the Public Act can be found here: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=095-0869>.

Each local school district can determine how to incorporate the lessons into curriculum but some recommended topics include safe and responsible use of social networking Web sites, chat rooms, bulletin boards and other means of communication on the Internet. It is also recommended that instruction includes information on recognizing, avoiding and reporting online solicitation by sexual predators, recognizing and reporting online harassment and cyberbullying and knowing the risks of transmitting personal information on the Internet.

Lincoln Magnet School eighth grader Emily Britt said cyberbullying is a very real issue for students her age.

"This contest will help raise awareness among teens to recognize and report cyberbullying," Miss Britt said. "My classmates and I use a computer everyday but it's important we know how to avoid danger while surfing the Web."

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