



Illinois State Board of Education

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Jesse H. Ruiz
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education



NEWS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Illinois State Board of Education Contacts:

Mary Fergus
(312) 814-1614

Matt Vanover
(217) 782-4648

Illinois Attorney General Contact:

Robyn Ziegler
(312) 814-3118

State looks to students to help spread digital safety message

*State Education Superintendent Koch, Attorney General Madigan and
Lt. Governor Simon focus on teaching children safe choices in 'digital world'*

SPRINGFIELD –The Illinois State Board of Education, Attorney General Lisa Madigan’s office and the Illinois Lieutenant Governor’s Office today launched the second statewide Illinois Youth Digital Safety Contest to raise awareness about making safe and respectful choices through digital communications.

The contest, open to students in grades kindergarten through 12th, encourages students to create a poster or electronic message addressing this year’s theme on “Digital Citizenship,” defined as someone with the ability to think critically about the ethical opportunities and challenges of the “digital world.”

“Students, like all of us, have an ever-expanding means of communicating that brings both great benefits and challenges,” said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. “This contest can serve as one way of discussing those challenges and educating students about safe and responsible choices in the digital age.”

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 have all entries mailed to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and postmarked by April 15, 2011. Representatives from all three sponsoring government agencies will judge submissions.

Winners will be announced later in the spring and will be honored at a State Board of Education meeting and at an award ceremony at the Governor’s Mansion. Winning entries will be shared on participating school and state websites. More about this year’s contest rules, terms and conditions, can be found at http://www.isbe.net/curriculum/html/internet_safety.htm.

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"We are asking students to use technology in a safe, fun and productive way and to set an example for their peers and adults alike," said Lt. Governor Sheila Simon.

Under state law, school districts are required to incorporate Internet safety at least once each school year beginning in third grade. Each local school district determines how to include Internet safety lessons into the classroom beginning in grade 3. Some recommended topics include the safe and responsible use of social networking websites, 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.

Attorney General Madigan's Office has created age-specific Internet Safety Training Modules for educators that meet state law requirements. The Attorney General's Internet Safety Training Modules can be found on her website at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov, or on ISBE's website at www.isbe.net.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan emphasized that while technology opens opportunities, it also creates risks. Cyberbullying and online harassment are now the most common online risks to children. One in three teens reports having been harassed online, according to the Pew Research Center.

"This Digital Safety contest provides a creative way for getting students thinking and talking about being safe and civil in the cyber world and how to respond to negative behavior," said Attorney General Madigan.

Attorney General Madigan's Office has provided Internet safety training and education to more than 164,000 parents, teachers, and students, and more than 12,500 law enforcement officers since 2006. Madigan also hosts a website to help children, teens, parents and educators learn about the dangers of cyberbullying. The "Stop Cyberbullying" website (www.ebully411.com) includes the latest news and statistics, frequently asked questions and a quiz to test online users' knowledge about cyberbullying. It also features an E-Info Hotline to assist victims and teach bullies to understand the impact of their actions. More information is available by calling the Hotline at 1-888-414-7678 or by e-mailing e-info@atg.state.il.us.

Seven students who earned first place in the first competition, called the Internet Safety Contest, were honored in Springfield last spring. In all, 35 students were recognized for their work in last year's contest which focused on online safety and, specifically, cyberbullying.

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