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A GREAT TIME TO TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY

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They don't call it the World Wide Web for nothing. You -- and your children -- literally can find anything online. Some are wonderful resources. Others are not.

October has been designated National Cyber Security Month, and it is a great time to talk with the young people in your home about online safety. It also doesn't hurt to review security measures for your own personal computers and home networks, such as firewalls and virus protection.

Enid Public Schools takes great measures to ensure we are providing a safe online experience for students, as well as protecting all confidential data. Each year, the district requires students and their parents to sign "user agreements" with the students thereby agreeing to follow all rules and regulations regarding Internet and district network use.

Additionally, the district uses a filtering software, called "Websense," which prohibits users within the district -- both students and adults -- from accessing any inappropriate material while online. If a site that has been blocked is found to have valuable educational information, it can be made accessible by the teacher contacting the EPS Information Technology Department.

These measures, of course, are not substitutes for teacher supervision. Students work online while in the presence of a staff member, using computers that have been placed in locations that allow the screens to be clearly visible.

It is important to have similar measures in place at home. A combined, concerted effort between parents and school employees can best protect students from cyber predators and dangers, both on and off school grounds.

Communication between parent and child is a key component of online safety. Children should know they can discuss with their parents their concerns, questions and fears about the Internet.

Just as we should not let students drive a car on the highway with no preparation, neither should we allow children to navigate the information superhighway without guidance.

Here are a few tips for students to remember:

- When using the Internet, instantly remove yourself from any site that makes you uncomfortable or you know you should not be visiting.
- While online, never give personal information about yourself to a stranger or agree to meet them in person.
- Be wary of get-rich promotion schemes posted online.
- Tell your parents immediately if you receive demeaning, obscene, lewd or harassing messages from someone online.