

The Professional School Counselor and Student Safety and Technology

(Adopted 2000, revised 2006)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage students to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities, information and resources available through the use of technology. However, due to potential vulnerabilities and risks created by technology, professional school counselors collaborate with students, parents, educators and law enforcement officials to promote student safety related to the use of technology.

The Rationale

Professional school counselors recognize that technology underpins the fastest growing industries and high-wage jobs, provides the tools needed to compete in every business, and drives growth in every industrialized nation. The ability to harness the power and promise of leading-edge technology often determines national prosperity, security, and global influence as well as the standard of living and quality of life for all.

Students need to be proficient in the use of technology in order to be most successful in school and best prepared for post-secondary opportunities. However, student use of technology also introduces significant vulnerabilities and risks.

Technology can pose a threat to students and families in many ways including but not limited to:

- invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- addictions to online shopping, auctions, gambling, and pornography
- use of technology such as inappropriate chat rooms
- easy access to inappropriate media such as Web sites promoting harm to self or others; hate/prejudice; pornographic text, photos, videos and audio; foul language; and illicit drugs (both prescription and nonprescription)
- cheating and piracy such as illegally downloading music, movies and other restricted intellectual property
- cyberbullying/harassment
- stalking and luring of children by sexual predators
- technology-related distractions leading to reduced academic performance such as students using the internet instead of doing homework

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors have a responsibility to protect students from potential dangers and to promote healthy student development. Professional school counselors collaborate with parents and school personnel to advance the responsible and appropriate use of technology to facilitate academic, career and personal/social achievement. Technological devices and activities used for information delivery, communication, collaboration and online learning include:

- cellular phones
- text messaging
- Web sites
- chat rooms and instant messaging
- social network sites
- blogs
- podcasts/vcasts
- electronic bulletin boards
- portable gaming devices
- personal digital assistants
- MP3 players
- televisions

Professional school counselors collaborate with parents and educators to promote awareness of high-tech dangers among students and cultivate personal safety and security skills related to technology usage. Professional school counselors maintain a basic level of technological literacy which, coupled with expertise in human development, allows them to provide

educators and parents with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students. Strategies for minimizing student risks include:

- Establishing clear guidelines for student use of technology
- Following legal and ethical guidelines related to downloading materials
- Using online safeguard programs that include filtering and monitoring capabilities and visiting children's favorite sites
- Never giving out personal information or photographs without parental permission
- Never arranging to meet someone in person that they first met online without parental supervision
- Keeping the computer in the family room or other open areas of the house
- Telling a trusted adult immediately when a student sees or hears something that makes them or other students feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

Summary

Technology provides global opportunities for student learning, exploration, communication, networking, and collaboration. Because of technology's pervasiveness and potential for harm, professional school counselors collaborate with parents and educators to protect students from danger.

References

Accomplishments of the National Science and Technology Council, 1996; available online at http://www.ostp.gov/NSTC/html/1996_Accomplishments.html

Netsmartz Safety Tips available online at <http://www.netsmartz.org/safety/safetytips.htm>