

The end of first quarter has come so quickly! Students have gotten into the rhythm of the school year and many of the changes I implemented at the beginning of the year have now become part of “the way we do things here.” I am really proud of the student body for stepping up to many of the challenges I put before them as we continue to forge a new school identity together.

The most recent change is the one I have initiated for **Collaboration Day**. Originally, Collaboration Day was designed to provide common planning time for departments and teams within departments during the school day as part of the Professional Learning Community at FCHS. Over time, and with the advent of creative master scheduling, the need for Collaboration Day for *teachers* became less of an issue and the need for teacher-student collaboration, outside of the regular class period, became more prevalent. The staff felt strongly that remediation, as well as enrichment opportunities, could fit well into a collaboration model that had planned, structured programs designed with our students in mind. We decided to target students struggling in math for the next five Collaboration Days. Our goal is to broaden collaboration activities over the next month to include science remediation, AP Prep, Freshman Leadership, Sophomore Ethics, and Senior Activities. All students will have extended time during Jag Time on Collaboration Days to catch up on homework, class work, re-take tests, visit the library or computer lab and meet with teachers.

Students aren't happy about giving up their free time (or chance to sleep late) every other Wednesday, but I am confident that this is a better use of time for all of us.

I hope you have visited our **Parent Resource Center** located near the Little Theatre. Our grand opening was held October 8<sup>th</sup> and we were glad to see so many of you. Many community groups offering a wide range of resources were in attendance as well. The mission of the PRC is “Caring for all of our Jaguars, one family at a time.” Our purpose is to provide a center for parents that connects them with their child's teachers, school support personnel and community resources that will assist them with all of their family's needs. I am most excited about the networking opportunities that have emerged – helping families secure child care, transportation, housing and even employment opportunities. **FCHS is only as strong as the families we serve.** Our goal is to make our community school one that is responsive to the needs of our community! If you have not yet visited, please do so! The PRC is open all week during the school day and on Wednesday evenings until 8 p.m. The parent liaisons, Maria Mateus and Mason Howard, are primary points of contact. Please consider volunteering if you are able. Once a month, the PRC will offer a special program of interest for all of our parents. In December, the program will be dedicated to **Internet Safety** for Children, Cyberbullying and What Parents Need to Know About Their Children and Computers.

I have recently learned a lot about this topic. All FCPS personnel were required to complete online training called “I-Safe” which dealt with a broad range of topics related to internet safety. I found the topic so troubling and the data so sobering that I continued researching both to share with you. For example, over 10,000 “hate sites” exist on the Internet, which is a 300% rise in just one year. 80% of youth receive at least one inappropriate (and unsolicited) email each day. One in every five 10-17 year olds have been sexually solicited online (JAMA, 2001) and 89% of these solicitations were made in chat rooms. 42% of 13-17 year olds have been bullied online at least once. “30% of teenage girls polled by the Girl Scout Research Institute said they had been

sexually harassed in a chatroom. Only 7% told their parent because they were worried that their parents would ban them from going online” (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2002). "86% of the girls polled said they could chat online without their parents' knowledge, 57% could read their parents' e-mail, and 54% could conduct a cyber relationship” (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2002). Law enforcement officials estimate that as many as 50,000 sexual predators are online at any given moment (Dateline, 2006). It gets worse: Half of teens ages 13-18 often communicate through the Internet with someone they have not met in person (Polly Klaas Foundation, December 21, 2005).

One-third of youth ages 8-18 have talked about meeting someone they have only met through the Internet (Polly Klaas Foundation, December 21, 2005). Almost one in eight youth ages 8-18 have discovered that someone they were communicating with online was an adult pretending to be much younger (Polly Klaas Foundation, December 21, 2005).

According to The Kaiser Family Foundation report (found at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)), 70% of teenagers (ages 15-17) "have accidentally come across pornography on the Web." Often the pornographic sites are sent as emails and as ProtectKids.com says, "In the case of pornographic spam, children open their e-mail and find direct access links to pornographic sites. Many of these e-mails contain subject lines that are deceptive; for example, 'Please Help Me.'" Children access dangerous sites often unwittingly. The adult porn industry states that 20-30% of the traffic to their online sites comes from children (NRC Report, 2002). As listed by ProtectKids.com, ways children accidentally land on these sites include:

#### *Innocent, imprecise, misdirected searches*

in an effort to increase traffic to their sites, pornographic Web site operators use popular terms. When children key in their favorite search terms, pornographic sites pop up along with the sites the children are seeking. The search engines don't distinguish between an adult's hit and a child's hit.

#### *Stealth sites and misleading URLs*

many children seeking information on the nation's White House, may find themselves on a porn site instead of the official site at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov). Pornographers purchase domain names such as the .com equivalent of a popular .gov or .org website, knowing full well that web surfers are likely to end up on their pornographic site instead of their desired destination.

#### *Innocent word searches*

Innocent word searches on many popular search engines can lead an unsuspecting child to numerous porn sites. Examples include such words as toys, boys, Britney Spears and dogs.

#### *The misuse of brand names*

According to a recent study in England, 26 popular children's characters, such as Pokemon, My Little Pony and Action Man, revealed thousands of links to porn sites. 30% of the sites were hard-core. (Envisional 2000). 25% of porn sites are estimated to misuse popular brand names in search engine magnets, metatags and links. Three of the top ten brand names used are specifically targeted to children - Disney, Barbie, and Nintendo. (Cyveillance Survey, 1999)

#### *Unsolicited e-mail*

unsolicited commercial e-mail messages are referred to as *spam*. Spammers can get e-mail addresses in many ways and they send hundreds of thousands of pieces of junk e-mail every day. They try to boost traffic by advertising pornography for sale and "make-money-fast" schemes.

Of primary concern for all of us are children who are targeted by sexual predators. Stories are in the news all of the time about children who are communicating with someone they believe to be their own age, but who is actually not. "One of the attractions of the Internet is the anonymity of the user, and this is why it can be so dangerous. A child doesn't always know with whom he or she is interacting. Children may *think* they know, but unless it's a school friend or a relative, they really can't be sure. Often we think of pedophiles as having access to children out on the playground and other places, but because of the way the Internet works, children can actually be interacting on their home computers with adults who pretend to be children."

Social networking sites have added another dimension of communication and ultimately, vulnerability for our students. From the school's point of view, we often deal with drama that is initiated on Face Book or similar sites. As one expert writes, "Students can inflict pain without seeing the immediate results. These kinds of internet sites provide for a deeper level of cruelty for this generation."

**What can a parent do? Get involved!** Often, not only your child's safety is compromised, but so is that of your entire family. In a study of 4 million children between the ages of 7 and 17 who use the Internet, 29% indicated they would give out their home address and 14% would give out their email address if asked (NOP Research Group, 2002). 42% of parents do not review the content of what their teenager(s) read and/or type in chat rooms or via instant messaging (The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and NetSmartz, June 2005). Children must be taught to guard their private information. As stated in "Rules of the Road" by Donna Rice Hughes, "Never give out personal information (such as name, age, address, phone number, school, town, password, schedule) or fill out questionnaires or any forms online. Do not tell anyone online where you will be or what you will be doing without Mom and/or Dad's permission."

**Get Smart!** 95% of parents didn't recognize common chat room lingo that teenagers use to let people they're chatting with know that their parents are watching. Those phrases are POS (parent over shoulder), P911 (parent alert), BRB (be right back), LOL (laughing out loud) and A/S/L (age/sex/location) (The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and NetSmartz, June 2005).

Learn who your child is communicating with. According to one study, nearly three out of ten parents don't know if their child talks to strangers online. In that same study, 64% of teenagers say they talk to people or talk about things that they don't want their parents to know or know about.

**Get tough!** Suggestions from *Enough is Enough*, a national parent organization dedicated to protecting children online, are based on the idea that it is imperative to establish safety rules. They suggest that computers be in open rooms where they can be easily monitored by parents to see what their child is doing, that webcams are forbidden, that they purchase software which protect their children as much as possible (NCMEC/Cox5/24/05) and that they have open conversations with their children about the dangers on the Internet. I would state that this is especially true with regards to online profiles and social networking. Parents need to make very

clear their expectations for computer use. They need to view their child's site and determine if the way their child has presented himself or herself is in keeping with the image they wish projected about their child. If not, shut their site down!

There are many good sources of information on the topic. I have cited but a few. The December PRC meeting will go into all of these ideas in greater detail. Until then, the two sites I found most helpful are <http://enough.org/inside.php?id> and [www.protectkids.com/parentsafety/rulesntools.htm](http://www.protectkids.com/parentsafety/rulesntools.htm).

I hope to see you at the December PRC meeting on December 17 and at the upcoming **Touching Bases on November 11 in the morning**. School will begin at 10:30 that day so that you can meet with your child's teachers. Come hungry! The Scholarship Committee will have baked goods and cider, coffee and hot chocolate for sale that morning too.

As always, I am amazed by your children. The promise and potential of all of the students here at FCHS inspire all of us who are lucky enough to work here each and every day. "Jaguar Spirit, Jaguar Pride"