



American Counseling Association

School Counselor Connection

Internet and Social Media Use by Students

Information Professional School Counselors Should Know and Share

In order to be effective in their service to students and parents, school counselors may benefit from the “core” elements that are associated with the issue or problem:

Examples of positive and beneficial experiences:

- Internet resources and tools can facilitate learning, thereby enhancing achievement and creativity.
- Social development can be influenced by the formation of close friendships, casual connections and useful networks online.
- Users can become skilled at expressing themselves and contributing via interactive devices (i.e., email, chat rooms, etc.).
- Portals promote postsecondary education and career exploration and offer assistance in navigating admission and financial aid applications, etc.

Examples of negative and harmful experiences:

- Exposure to violent, pornographic or other inappropriate content.
- Failure to protect identity and practice safety measures that can lead to predatory behaviors by others.
- Vulnerability to cyberbullying, harassment, sexting, etc.
- Addictive uses that might result in emotional, social, and related concerns.
- Reduction in physical activity resulting in growth and development concerns.
- Frustration often brought on by the enormity of the information.
- Temptation to engage in negative behavior (i.e., plagiarism) may arise.
- Multi-tasking skills required of users may conflict with the ability to devote undivided attention to project completion.

Actions school counselors and educators can take:

- Respond via individual and group counseling to student issues and problems emanating from Internet and social media use.
- Assist parents in establishing and monitoring age-appropriate guidelines that ensure Internet and social media experiences are secure and safe, including the utilization of appropriate controls and blocks.
- Promote a form of Internet and social media etiquette that is student-friendly.
- Educate students and parents regarding the physical, social, cognitive and emotional consequences associated with overuse and abuse of Internet and social media use.
- Demonstrate how websites and tools can be used to facilitate college admission, financial aid and other educational transitions.

No list of Internet and social media concerns can ever be considered complete—a fact that constant technological advances make ever more difficult. Keep your eye on the technology and its uses.

— Frank Burnett, Ed.D.