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REPORT SUMMARIES

Schools Need Training to Build a Safe Net

Internet safety teacher training and classroom education is a dangerously low priority. Less than 25 percent of educators feel comfortable teaching students how to protect themselves from online cyber predators, cyber bullies and identity theft, according to a recent study by The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) and Educational Technology, Policy Research and Outreach (ETPRO).

The situation is serious. Consider the IDG October 2008 story "How Spyware Nearly Sent a Teacher to Prison." The substitute teacher had just learned to use email when she accidentally received pornography pop-ups on her classroom computer. She left the room to get help, and faced prison because the class looked at the thumbnails in her absence.

Her lack of knowledge is not unique, and the risks have expanded beyond images. The 2008 National Cyber Ethics, Cyber Safety, Cyber Security (C3) Baseline Study was conducted to explore educational awareness policies, initiatives, curriculum, and practices currently taking place in the U.S. public and private K-12 educational settings. "Across the board," reads the report, "this survey found the state of C3 education to be incomplete. Content is limited, teachers do not feel comfortable with the topics, and standards which set the stage for content coverage only peripherally discuss the issues."

Other Key findings include:

- Less than 5 % of educators said that information on cyber crime (identity theft, predators, bullying, etc.) is included in the state curriculum
- Only 8 % of educators surveyed said that cyber-crime information in included in the Health/Safety Curriculum and just 20% said that Media Specialists provide this information.
- Just more than 2% of educators surveyed said that installing and updating firewalls, anti-virus, and anti-spyware software on a computer this is included in state curriculum.
- Only 22% percent of those surveyed said that these tools are covered by Media Specialists.
- More than 60% don't feel comfortable discussing how to detect and minimize computer viruses.
- Less than 3% of educators said that their state curriculum includes teaching students how to protect themselves on social networking sites and chat rooms
- Less than 9% responded that the health/safety curriculum includes protection on social sites and only 17% percent indicated that students received this information from Media Specialists.
- 75% don't feel comfortable discussing cyber-bullying and less than 32% are comfortable giving guidance on how to be safe in an online environment, including social networking and cyber predators. Only

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- 23% percent feel prepared to teach students how to protect their personal information online.
- More than 50% indicated they do not know how any of the above topics are taught.

"Policies need to be updated regularly and reviewed to ensure that teachers, students and parents understand the basics of cyber security. We must ensure our teachers are given the training necessary for them to inform their students on these topics" said Davina Pruitt-Mentle, PhD, Executive Director and Senior Research Analyst for ETPRO. "However, the burden cannot be placed solely on our education system. From media to corporate America to our federal, state and local governments, a variety of partnerships need to be formed to protect our children."

NCSA also supplies teaching materials at the K-12 section of staysafeonline.org.

Sources: **The 2008 National Cyber Ethics, Cyber Safety, Cyber Security (C3) Baseline Study**; NCSA press release, **Study Finds Both Students and Teachers Lack Basic Cyber Security Education**; IDG, **How Spyware Nearly Sent a Teacher to Prison**

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Beyond the basics, students will need 21st century competencies to survive and thrive in the future. They will have to know how to think critically, apply knowledge to new situations, analyze information, understand new ideas, communicate effectively, collaborate, solve problems, and make decisions. School districts are looking for ways to help students acquire these new skills while they also address NCLB mandates.

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