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### Survey Finds Basic Cyber Security Education Absent

by Dian Schaffhauser

Only 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 "2008 National Cyberethics, Cybersafety, Cybersecurity (C3) Baseline Study" was conducted to explore educational awareness policies, initiatives, curriculum, and practices currently taking place in American public and private K-12 settings. Participants in the survey, which was administered online, included 1,569 public and private K-12 educators and 94 technology coordinators. Additionally, 219 educators, local and state technology coordinators, and state technology directors participated in focus groups.

In the area of cyber crime, such as protecting, identifying, and responding to identity theft, predators, and bullying, less than five percent of educators said that this information is included in the state curriculum. Only eight percent said it was included in the health/safety curriculum. Twenty percent said that media specialists provide this information at their schools.

On the topic of installing and updating firewalls, anti-virus, anti-spyware, and anti-spam software on a computer, two percent of educators said that this is included in state curriculum; 22 percent of those surveyed said that this is covered by media specialists.

Regarding teaching students how to protect themselves on social networking sites and chat rooms, less three percent of educators said that their state curriculum includes this information. Nine percent responded that the health/safety curriculum includes this information. Seventeen percent indicated that students received this information from media specialists.

The study found that only the Commonwealth of Virginia has education curriculum requirements that include information on how students can protect themselves online. Since completion of the study, several more states including Georgia, Illinois and Tennessee, have passed legislation requiring online safety education in the classroom. Results also showed that 90 percent of educators have received less than six hours of professional development on cyber security in the past year.

"Children are integrating technology into their lives at lightning speed. Our schools need to find ways to introduce cyber security education as a fully integrated part of the K-12 curriculum," said Michael Kaiser, executive director of the NCSA. "We take the time to teach our children how to safely cross the street. Given the amount of time children spend online, the continuously emerging role of the technology

in everyday life, and the risks that young people face, we are obligated to ensure that every child learns about safety, security and responsible use of the Internet; yet we are not yet to the point of teaching children how to 'look both ways' to avoid the 'accidents' that can occur online."

He added, "Schools are not alone. Nonprofit groups, government, the private sector and parents all play critical roles in ensuring children's safety online. However, educators and school systems will need to make the issue a priority if we can expect to see widespread adoption of cyber safety curricula in the classroom."

As part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all students are required to be digitally literate by the 8th grade but half of the survey's respondents said there were no clear methods chosen by their school or school district to convey information on cyber safety and cyber security to students. Despite feeling unprepared or uncomfortable discussing C3 topics with students, more than 60 percent of educators are interested in learning more about C3 issues in general; in many cases the percentage increased on specific topics such as cyber safety, which was rated their highest priority.

The results of the study are available online.

NCSA is a collaborative effort among experts in the security, non-profit, academic, and government fields to teach consumers, small businesses, and members of the education community about Internet security. ETPRO was created to facilitate effective use of instructional technology by educators.

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