Lenawee Digital Media Camp 2013
Safety Information on Student Blogging

Campers will be sharing some of their writing and reflections through the use of a camp web site including a blog "worklog" page for each team. Access to all blog writing through the class site is protected so that only those who've been given the password will be able to read it. If your camper wishes to share this with other caring friends or family members, with your permission, it will mean much to the writer to have thoughtful and supportive comments and feedback.

Some young writers may be further interested in sharing his/her thoughts online through a blog or other type of web space. Following are some basic guidelines for student safety when writing online as well as some quick tips for parents who want to support their efforts.

Parent Safety Tips on Blogging

Recent studies show that teenagers write roughly half of all blogs today, with two out of three providing their age, three out of five revealing their location and contact information, and one in five revealing their full name.

There are potential risks in sharing this type of detailed personal information. And, as more young peers create more blogs, they tend to compete increasingly with each other for attention. Sometimes this can lead to kids posting inappropriate material such as provocative pictures of themselves or their friends.

A Quick Blogging Primer for Parents

Although keeping a blog offers potential benefits, including improved writing skills and communication, it's important to educate your kids about the Internet and blogging before they begin- much like completing driving school before hitting the road solo. Here are a few suggestions to get started:
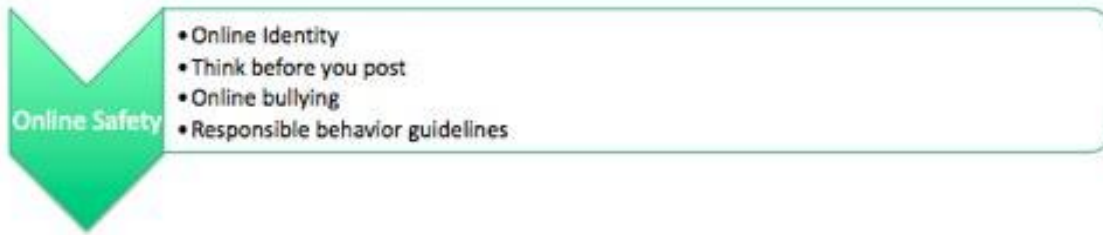
- **Establish rules for online use** with your kids and be diligent.
- **Screen what your kids plan to post before they post it.** Seemingly innocuous information, such as a school mascot and town photo, could be put together to reveal where the author goes to school.
- **Ask yourself (and instruct your kids to do the same) if you are you comfortable showing any of the content to a stranger.** If in doubt, have them take it out.
- **Evaluate the blogging service** and find out if it offers private, password-protected blogs.
- **Save the web address of your child's blog** and review it on a regular basis.
- **Check out other blogs to find positive examples** for your kids to emulate.

For more tips for setting up a young writer's blog, see: Basic http://www.kidslearntoblog.com/basic-steps-to-design-a-blog-for-kids/ (see more links to tips for setting up a blogger site)

For our camp web site we will be using a site called Weebly.com. Your camper should bring home login information so you can view his/her personal space, reflect on the shared writing, and provide positive support at home for following safe Internet practices.

Online Safety: Basic Guidelines for Student Bloggers

The following tips are a good place to start for kids interested in blogging, although by no means comprehensive. It's a good idea for parents to add more guidelines to suit their family's particular needs. Start by telling kids that they should:

- **Never offer any personal information** including your last name, contact information, home address, phone numbers, school's name, email address, last names of friends or relatives, instant messaging names, age, or birth date.
- **Never post provocative pictures** of yourself or anyone else, and be sure any images you provide do not reveal any of the previously mentioned information. Always remember to look at the background of a picture too.
- **Assume what you publish on the web is permanent.** Anyone on the Internet can easily print out a blog or save it to a computer.
- **Use blogging provider sites with clearly stated terms of use,** and make sure they can protect the actual blogs, not just the user accounts, with password protection. (Even so, it's better to assume anyone can see it.)
- **Avoid trying to "outdo"** or compete with other bloggers.
- **Keep blogs positive** and don't use them for slander or to attack others.

For students, there is a BIG online world out there! Even younger students get to be part of it via the computer, a cell phone, AIM, an Xbox, Wii, or on Social networking places like Webkinz, or Club Penguin. Now that they are older, places such as Bebo and Facebook may become part of the online network. The online world gives us an incredible opportunity to search for information, entertain us, communicate with others, and connect with people from other countries and cultures. Wherever you are or however you choose to connect to these places, you always have to play smart and keep yourself and your friends SAFE.

Here are a few more guidelines to keep in mind. If ever in doubt, ALWAYS ask a parent, teacher or other trusted adult how to handle the situation.

- Never publish online the following information:
  - Address
  - Last Name
  - Password
  - Phone Number
  - E-mail address
  - Detailed physical description
  - Detailed location where you can be found on a given day and time
  - Photos of yourself
- Never share your user name or password with anyone besides your teachers and parents. Never log in as someone else.
- Think before you post: Make sure what you write is appropriate to put online.
- Always tell the truth on your posts and comments.

- Be cautious about email messages from anyone, asking you for detailed personal information or attempting to arrange secret meetings. Talk with your teacher and parents immediately if this kind of situation arises.
- Online work is NOT private. Never say anything via email, chat, blogs, or on wikis that you wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board, or in the local newspaper. Make sure you can be proud of your online work and it would not embarrass you if your grandmother or teachers read it.
- Capital letters are regarded as "SHOUTING!" Don't be offensive, and don't ever use bad language.
- Never use a computer to harm other people. Never snoop around in other peoples' files. Never use a computer to steal.

Digital Footprint – Building Your Online Identity

- What do you want others to know about you? What belongs online? What does not?
- Are you proud of ALL your online content (work, writing, comments, images, video, and audio)?
- Would your grandmother, your principle, or your teacher be embarrassed reading or seeing your content? Would you be embarrassed for them to see it?
- Should you create a separate online identity? Avatars? Nicknames?
- What is the difference between protecting your identity and what is lying and being untruthful about information?

Think before you post – Your "Virtual Conscience"

Once you submit content, even if you choose to delete it later, it is online FOREVER. Can you be proud of EVERYTHING you post, upload or contribute online?

To help you quickly decide whether something you are about to do online is a good or a bad idea, try this strategy.

Think of two people:

- someone famous you admire for his or her courage, and
- an adult in your life who is trusted and respected.

Record these two names some place where you will come across them often. As of today, these two people will be your "virtual conscience."   Every time you intend to do something online which you're not sure is right, ask yourself: "What would these two people think about this?

Do You Like To Share Your Writing Online?

Here are links to some other places where young writers might want to share or publish their stories or ideas.

Bookworm http://www.bookworm-mag.com/
Bookworm Magazine publishes the stories, poems, essays and artwork of kids ages six through fifteen.

StoryKit – iPod/iPhone App http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/storykit/id329374595?mt=8
This application puts student work online privately in a format that can viewed by iPhone.

Storybird http://storybird.com/
Use the art on the site to illustrate or inspire student storytelling. Good for elementary students or those writing for them.

Stapleless Book   http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/stapleless/index.html
At this interactive site, students follow the prompts to produce their own books. Students can work with bulleted lists, headlines, and text; they can leave space to add pictures after printing. Everything prints out on one piece of paper. Follow the instructions to fold and cut.

The Write Kids http://writekids.tripod.com/
Want to publish your writing online? Try this site!

Write Me a Story! http://www.kidscom.com/create/write/write_form.html