

## **Garden Grove Unified School District**

### **A Message to Parents and Guardians About Internet Safety**

The Garden Grove Unified School District takes pride in providing a safe on-line environment for students. To help maintain Internet safety, the district employs filtering technology that blocks access from any school computer to known chat rooms, popular social networking websites including *MySpace.com* and *Xanga.com*, web logs – commonly known as “blogs,” and other Internet-based communication networks which may contain objectionable content.

It is important for parents and guardians to know about the potential risks teens and pre-teens assume when they access the Internet. Many popular websites most appealing to children and adolescents are also frequented by Internet predators and online bullies, and serve as worldwide electronic bulletin boards for posting threatening messages and offensive comments about schoolmates and school employees. Students found responsible for posting threatening messages on the Internet are subject to possible school disciplinary actions and intervention by law enforcement. Students who post defamatory comments expose their parents to possible civil liability for monetary damages.

Chat rooms and social networking websites such as *MySpace.com* are often anonymous and open to anyone on the Internet, and enable strangers of any age to contact your child without your knowledge. Young users can post an online journal with detailed personal information including their pictures, the location of where they live, and the name of their school. To examine this site, go to *MySpace.com*, click “search,” scroll down to “Find Friends,” and type in your child’s name.

We encourage parents to become “web aware,” know what your children are doing online, and with whom they are speaking and sharing information. We also urge parents to require their children not to share any personal information online. Below are some guiding thoughts for parents:

- Learn about the Internet and what your children do on it
- Create a family agreement on Internet use
- Accompany children online as they learn to navigate
- Teach your children not to share personal information
- Encourage an open dialogue regarding Internet conduct
- Put your computer in a well-used area of your home
- Explore tools that filter content and control access
- Know how to view history and content that your child accesses on the Internet

We ask that you be mindful of your child’s Internet activities and communicate with them about the appropriateness and risks involved with the information displayed on websites. In addition, we are concerned about the impact on learning at school, given the number of hours children are spending communicating on these forums after school. We encourage you to begin the process of addressing this issue so that we can work collaboratively with you and your student to develop awareness and understanding of the problems related to these rapidly changing technologies.