

# CLASSROOM



## Building **tech-savvy** tweens

**During the preteen and teen years, children begin to make stronger connections with friends, tackle more complex learning, develop new interests and forge more grown-up images.**

**So it might not seem all that surprising that your 11-year-old has started clamoring for a cherry Chocolate cell phone or you now have to “take a number” in order check your own e-mail on the family computer.**

Whether children are drawn to technology for scholarly or status reasons, they clearly benefit from learning at an early age to responsibly use the Internet, e-mail and such computer functions as file sharing. These tools (and tomorrow's yet-to-be invented versions) are the way most everyone will learn new things, stay in touch with family and friends, and correspond and collaborate with co-workers in nearly every profession in the adult world.

### **BETTER CYBERSAFE THAN SORRY**

Today's technologies are true innovations, but they also can introduce young and impressionable children to a host of potential threats. However, keeping your children safe from what they're not emotionally or intellectually ready to handle can be a challenge, especially when they naturally want more freedom to explore new ideas and relationships.

Following are some of the technologies most familiar to middle schoolers, along with

some potential hazards parents should be aware of and suggestions families

can use to help ensure that their children safely and responsibly use these tools:

### **The Internet**

✂ **Set up Internet accounts in your name.** Insist that your children's passwords are kept private. Restrict children from giving out their names, addresses and phone numbers or those of your family and friends.

✂ **Set rules about where your kids can go online and what to do if they access inappropriate sites.** At Safekids.com(<http://safekids.com/family-contract-for-online-safety/>), you'll find suggestions for creating a family Internet policy and printable contracts.

✂ **Keep your family computer in a public area of the house.** From time-to-time, check on the sites your children have visited.

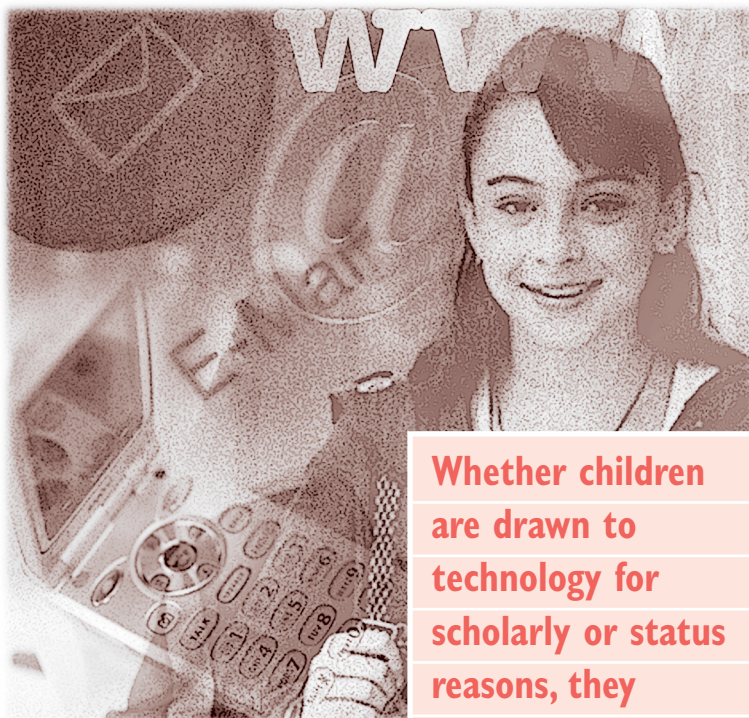
✂ **Install blocking or filtering software.** This will allow you to limit the sites your children can visit.

✂ **Limit when your children can use the Internet.** At GetNetWise ([www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)), you'll find information on time-limiting software that prevents children from going online when you're not around.

✂ **Be aware of other computers your children may be using outside your home.** Make sure this usage is adult supervised.

✂ **If your children have Web pages or post to such social networking sites as MySpace, know what's on the pages.** Make sure your children do not include photos, contact information or other private family details.

✂ **Instruct your children never to meet face-to-face with online acquaintances.**



**Whether children are drawn to technology for scholarly or status reasons, they clearly benefit from learning at an early age to responsibly use the Internet, e-mail and such computer functions as file sharing.**

### **Instant Messaging (IM)**

Much like a phone call, IM is computer communication that is relatively safe if the person your child is messaging is a friend or relative. It can become dangerous if the person they “talk” with is a stranger, possibly someone they met online who is misrepresenting him- or herself. Additionally, many young teens report that friends are inclined to say things to one another in IM and use vulgar language that they'd be uncomfortable saying face-to-face. Often, IM is a vehicle for bullying activity because it occurs without adult oversight.

### **Cell phones/text messaging**

Cell phones can be a lifeline for busy families, allowing parents and children to be in touch at all times. Unfortunately, cell phones also let others be in touch, too—with calls that range from distracting to harassing, depending on who has your children's numbers.

To avoid cell phone abuse, consider setting limits on usage including:

- calls only for emergencies or for a ride home
- number not given to anyone other than family or close friends and
- do not send text messages.

You might even consider having children turn in their phones once they get home so they are not up late talking to friends when they should be studying or sleeping.



## Panther Pride has students enthusiastic about being good

RJK Middle School's Panther Pride program is reinforcing positive behavior with an incredible student response. The program, which is the school's P.B.I.S. (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) initiative, has flourished since its beginning in November 2005, as it supports and encourages proper behavior in students by rewarding them for doing the right things.

PBIS coaches Tanya England, Jennifer Coll and Scott Dorn work hard to educate the students about the Panther Pride rules and its 'matrix of expectation' - a set of guidelines that helps students understand the right way of behaving when on school grounds. Some of those guidelines include regulating hallway noise levels and proper classroom and lunchroom behavior.

And if a student manages to not earn any referrals during a marking period, they get to celebrate their good behavior with a fun event. The first and third quarter celebrations include a school-wide activity afternoon when students can participate in arts & crafts, open gym, movies, dancing and science laboratory experiments. For the second and fourth quarters, they get to indulge their sweet-tooth with an ice-cream social.



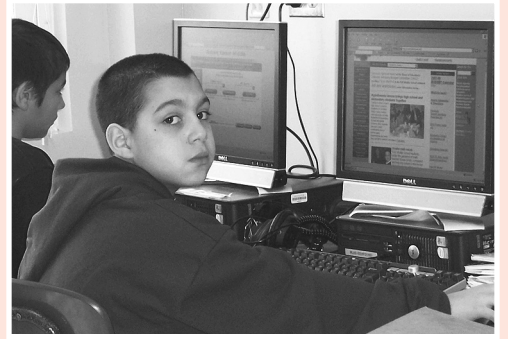
**From left, school counselors Tanya England and Jennifer Coll enjoy working as PBIS coaches. More and more they are finding that students are looking forward to their rewards and to not behaving badly!**



**During February's ice-cream social more than 575 students got to create their own ice-cream sundaes complete with a variety of toppings, while they played games, listened to music and socialized with friends, parents and teachers. The ice cream and toppings were all donated by Stewart's Shops.**

## Keeping our kids cyber-safe

Monticello School District's Technical Services Department is in the early stages of planning a program in conjunction with RJK Middle School and the EPIC Parents Center



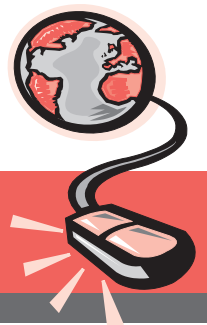
**Middle school students surf the internet during their Computer Lab work time.**

called ISafe. This program will promote the safe use of the internet at home and in school and will include different components aimed to reach everyone who uses the internet.

Middle school students will be chosen to act as i-mentors in an effort to teach other students how to be 'safe' when using the internet. Parents and teachers will be given training to help them identify online cyber safety issues, such as if a web site is free of predators.

For more resources and information, visit the district web site at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net), and click on the ikeep-bookmarks link in the upper right-hand corner. There will be a list of links to other web sites that can help educate parents to educate their children.

Visit us on the web at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net)



### Board of Education

Alyce Van Etten, President

### Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Patrick Michel

### Assistant Superintendent

Ms. Kathleen Pagano-Fuller

### Principal

Deborah G. Wood

### Assistant Principal

Alfred Heins, Jr.

### Assistant Principal

Greg D'Ambrosio

### Phone

(845) 796-3058

### Editor

Renata Gittler

Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service



ROBERT J. KAISER MIDDLE SCHOOL

45 Breakey Avenue ■ Monticello, NY 12701

POSTAL CUSTOMER  
ECRWSS

For the latest information on school programs/activities, visit Monticello's web site!

[www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net)

**April/May 2007: Building tech-savvy tweens**

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Monticello, NY  
Permit No. 1301  
12701