

The School Counselor and Student Safety and the Use of Technology

(Adopted 2000, revised 2006, 2012, 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors encourage students to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities, information and resources available through technology usage. However, because students are vulnerable to the risks technology poses, school counselors, in collaboration with families, educators and law enforcement officials, alert students to these risks and encourage them to use technology responsibly.

The Rationale

School counselors recognize technology underpins the fastest-growing industries and high-wage jobs, provides the tools needed to compete in every business and drives growth in every industrialized nation. The ability to harness the power and promise of leading-edge technology often determines national prosperity, security and global influence as well as the standard of living and quality of life for all (National Science and Technology Council, 1996).

To be successful in school and prepared for postsecondary opportunities, students need to be proficient in the use of technology. However, when students access web-based and mobile technology, they leave a digital footprint that makes them vulnerable to privacy invasion. They are also exposed to negative content and significant risks that compromise their safety, security and reputation. Technology exposes students to behavioral, safety and privacy risks such as:

- addictions (e.g., gaming, social networking)
- invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- inappropriate online communications
- easy access to inappropriate content and media
- cheating and copyright infringement
- cyberbullying/harassment
- sexual predators

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a responsibility to protect students from potential risks and to promote healthy student development. School counselors collaborate with families and school personnel to advance the responsible and appropriate use of technology and software applications to facilitate academic, career and social/emotional achievement. School counselors consider the ethical and legal considerations of technological applications, including confidentiality concerns, security issues, potential limitations and benefits of communication practices in electronic media. School counselors use established and approved means of communication with students, while maintaining appropriate boundaries. In addition, school counselors help educate students about appropriate communication and boundaries (ASCA, 2016). School counselors may take the following actions to promote the safe, responsible use of technology (ASCA and iKeepSafe, 2012):

- help develop school policies
- appropriately respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- assist the community in detecting at-risk behavior and risk-reduction approaches
- address digital citizenship, including technology literacy, privacy, online reputation and social awareness, among students and their families
- develop peer-helper programs encouraging students to help each other understand technological risks, practice responsible use and support other students who are vulnerable
- confront myths surrounding cyberbullying that are perpetuated by media headlines and unsubstantiated public statements like “cyberbullying is occurring at epidemic levels” and “cyberbullying causes suicide” (Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013, p. 2703)

School counselors engage in professional development to improve and maintain digital literacy, which, coupled with expertise in human development, allows them to provide educators and families with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students.

Summary

Technology provides global opportunities for student learning, exploration, communication, networking and collaboration. School counselors promote the responsible use of technology in collaboration with families and educators to increase student safety.

References

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