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## Internet abuses by kids common

### Expert's survey in local schools finds bullying, other misconduct

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Staff writer

A Rochester Institute of Technology expert who has studied computer crime for more than a decade is deeply concerned about what local children are doing online.

"I didn't realize the extent to which they are committing harm and exposed to harm at such young ages," said Sam McQuade, who surveyed 13,778 students in kindergarten through 12th grade from five school systems.

For example, 13 percent of surveyed students in grades 10 through 12 have invited an online stranger to meet them in person and 13 percent have accepted such an invitation, according to the study.

The survey, done in May and June, looked at the online habits of students in schools of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester and the Fairport, Brighton, East Irondequoit and Newark public school districts.

McQuade will discuss his research and recommendations at a conference on cyber bullying today at Monroe Community College. A related forum is scheduled for 7 p.m. at Greece Olympia High School.

The research, which he presented to the U.S. Department of Justice in July but has never before been made public, shows that:

- Cyber bullying starts in second grade.
- Eight percent of second- and third-graders said they had been asked private things about their bodies and had been told or shown private things about someone else's body.
- Illegal downloading starts in fourth grade.
- Among seventh- through ninth-graders, 21 percent have lied about their age online and 23 percent have downloaded music illegally.
- In grades 10 through 12, 58 percent of students have illegally downloaded music, 27 percent have illegally downloaded movies and 22 percent have illegally downloaded software.

"It's a wake-up call, because our country depends on computerization for everything it does, and it's incumbent on us to assure that everyone is safe online and that our kids, as part of their growing up and their education, become aware of all the ways in which they are vulnerable and how they need to protect themselves, their systems and their data when they're on the Internet," said McQuade. He is a former Justice Department program manager in computer crime and a former National Academy of Sciences study director.

Brighton schools Superintendent Christopher B. Manaseri said the findings are not a big surprise to educators familiar with the topic, although "I think that's the kind of thing that most parents are relatively oblivious to.

"As a parent, I know I have had to intervene with my son's presentation of himself on Facebook because I'm personally in a position as a public employee where I had to remind him, 'You're representing more than just yourself you're reflecting our family, my profession and my professional position,'" Manaseri said.

"And he never thought about that, as most kids wouldn't," he said.

McQuade is now surveying 75,000 additional students at nine more school districts in Monroe County. Those findings are expected to be available in January.

Previously, McQuade conducted similar surveys of college students at RIT and the State University College at Brockport. That work revealed offensive online behavior and victimization and raised the question of how pervasive the problem is among students in primary and secondary schools.

At the summit, McQuade plans to explain that cyber bullying is just one form of Internet misconduct experienced by young people.

"There are many forms of cyber crime that kids are involved in today. Cyber bullying happens to be among the most prominent forms," he said.

He'll explain some of his findings, discuss the significance and recommend solutions. But he won't call for new regulations or laws. McQuade said cyber safety must become part of the educational curriculum and workplace training.

"We have spent enough time for now on enforcement and regulation strategies for compliance. We need to focus on education and early interventions to prevent the offending," he said.

He likened the current approach to letting adults and children drive automobiles without driver education or standardized rules of the road or signs.

"We've introduced this computerization into our classrooms as a way of learning, but we haven't systematically introduced these concepts of Internet safety, information security and cyber ethics, and that's the problem. So why are we surprised when second-graders are mean to each other online and by the time they're in middle school they're experiencing all forms of known cyber offending?" he asked.

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**If you go**

**What:** Forum on cyber bullying.

**When:** 7 p.m. today.

**Where:** Greece Olympia High School,  
1139 Maiden Lane, Greece.

**Speaker:** Nancy Willard, executive  
director of the Center for Safe and  
Responsible Internet Use.

**Call:** To register, call (585) 753-3753.

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