Implementing Delete Day

Thank you for facilitating and supporting your students' participation in Delete Day! Today's youth are connected to others via various devices and spend time expressing themselves to a broad audience through websites, games, social media and text/video chat.   With their online presence, youth need to think critically about and reflect on their online friends, followers and posts. While we can never be sure online content will be completely removed from the Internet, students should take this day as an opportunity to "clean up" online accounts to promote safety and respect.

How Do I Implement Delete Day at My School?

Within the classroom, we suggest the completion of the appropriate Delete Day classroom worksheet, which will guide students in determining what they should delete. Separate Delete Day classroom worksheets have been created specifically for elementary, middle school and high school levels. The following online resources can also be used to complement the lesson:

- http://cyberbullying.us/resources/educators/
- http://www.webwise.ie/category/teachers/
- http://www.netsmartz.org/Cyberbullying
- https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/topics/cyberbullying

The actual "clean up" of accounts should serve as a homework assignment for students, as social media and other sites and apps may not be accessible at school.

To promote the activity throughout your school community, we encourage you to print and display Delete Day Posters, which you can find at our website: http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/cyberbullying/for_educators.html.

How Can I Gauge the Success of Delete Day?

The effectiveness of Delete Day will be reflected through short- and long-term student enthusiasm, participation and positive behaviors. Follow-up conversations with students in the classroom and at home can continue to encourage positive online and offline behaviors, as well as assist in connecting positive outcomes with the "clean up" of their online accounts.

Why Implement a Delete Day?

To understand how youth are using technology, the Office of the Attorney General conducted an anonymous survey of Illinois students in grades 3-8 during the Spring of 2014. In the survey, students shared how new technologies, including gaming devices and apps, are shaping their lives and their interactions with parents, peers and strangers.   From this information, we learned that youth seek a positive online experience, yet still encounter negative interactions.

Illinois youth want a positive online experience. Students report feeling underlined uncomfortable with online exclusion (71%), teasing (85%) and rumor spreading (86%). *Unfortunately, many youth have had negative online experiences.* These experiences may be the result of impulsive or inappropriate posts, and may have the following reported effects:

- 45% have had an experience on technology that resulted in an argument with someone
- 24% have had an experience on technology that ended a friendship or relationship with someone
- 17% have had an experience on technology that caused a problem with their parents/guardians
- 18% have felt threatened online
- 18% have gotten into a fight (physical or verbal) because of something that happened online
- 22% have not wanted to check their online accounts

Despite negative experiences, youth say they believe they can improve these situations by reporting, unfriending and blocking users online. Likewise, 87% of students believe a trusted adult should be notified if someone is being mistreated online. Therefore, adults (including teachers, parents and mentors) must initiate ongoing open discussions with youth and prepare themselves to offer assistance should difficult situations arise.

It is our hope that through ongoing digital safety discussions and activities such as Delete Day, students, parents and community members will become and remain more aware of how our online behavior impacts our relationships and environment.