

Case 01

The Young and The Wired



Background Information

The Net Generation or children who have been born since 1986 are the focus of a study done by a husband and wife team, the Oblingers, how teens learn. Technology has always been a part of the Net Generations life. The fascination with technology is missing it simply represents a tool. They use this tool daily and comfortably to stay connected especially with each other. Because of the presence of digital media in their homes and schools today's students maybe more visually than verbally literate (Johnson, 2005). Studies done by the Oblingers indicate that students prefer learning by doing and working in groups (Johnson, 2005). The student in today's classroom needs the interaction with their teachers and computers do not replace people.

Adolescent Internet Use: What we expect, what teens report are not the same. The last decade has shown teen Internet use to have grown exponentially. Our expectations of teens Internet use predicted: (1) boys use the Internet more than girls and they use it play violent games, (2) girls use the Internet less and mostly to shop or chat, and (3) the use of the Internet by teens will result in social isolation (Gross, 2004). The groups of 10th graders surveyed from a suburban California public school in 2001 have responded with very different conclusions. The findings say boys and girls online activities are very similar, they both use e-mail and instant messages, and spending time with friends offline is also a part of their daily life (Gross, 2004).

A telephone survey was conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project in October and November 2004. The responses to their survey were compared to data collected in 2000 of how teens in America use technology. This extensive report covers 50 typed pages of information. Short Summary of their findings;

- 87% of teens use the Internet (Lenhart, 2005)
- 13% of teenagers who do not use the Internet are almost always from low income homes with limited access to technology and disproportionately African Americans (Lenhart, 2005)
- 32% of all teens IM every day, teens prefer instant messaging over e-mail
- 45% of teens own a cell phone
- 72% of teens who connect from home use a computer that is located in a family room (Lenhart, 2005)

Teens are also busy with friends and extracurricular activities. The average teen keeps in touch with 20 friends per week. They are averaging 10 hours per week in social activities outside of school (Lenhart, 2005). Today's teens 83% are also involved in other offline activities including school sports programs, clubs, band, and recreational programs not associated with school.

Transition Points for the Gender Gap in Computer Enjoyment compares girls and boys from elementary school to high school. The purpose of this study was to determine the gender differences in using computers at school. The study covered 10,000 students in Texas public schools covering the years 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2005. In summary the findings show no differences in the early elementary years, by the 4 and 5th grades girls enjoy computers more than boys (Christensen, 2005). In the 6th grade boys have a more positive feeling towards using computers at school than girls and by the 8th grade boys are significantly more interested in using computers than girls (Christensen, 2005). The good news is that by the end of secondary school the attitudes are similar with little differences.

Nerds and Geeks: Society's Evolving Stereotypes of our Students with Gifts and Talents are finding a much more respected place in today's classrooms among their peers. As our society has moved from the Industrial Age to the Information Age the importance of being technologically competent has provided positive changes for our students labeled talented and gifted (Cross, 2005). In the past the negative terms nerds and geeks were often associated with students achieving academic excellence. The new term "tech geek" has positive associations as being someone who is technologically savvy and this expert is seen as a helper to others (Cross, 2005). With our current students striving to use technology in their personal lives they have discovered knowledge is power and it is cool to be knowledgeable.

Preview

Today's high school and middle school age students have grown up with personal computers in their homes as well as their schools. Many of today's youth were not even born when the first pc's hit the stores. The personal computer has been around more than 20 years. The Apple IIc was introduced in 1984. Teens use all kinds of technology driven gadgets with little or no hesitation. The Pew survey tells us that almost all teens have cell phones, they use the Internet daily, enjoy and prefer instant messaging over e-mail, and online games draw both teenage girls and boys.

The research also tells us that teens prefer to use the Internet at home to communicate with their friends. Many teens spend their evenings talking on their cell phones or "IM-ing" with their friends. They still prefer face- to- face interaction with their friends and the average time spent with friends is about 10 hours per week for both girls and boys. Parents and educators face the challenge of how to provide the training for teens to be **good** citizens while using today's technology to interact with each other which is for the most part not supervised. Youth have always enjoyed pulling pranks and today's teens are armed with some powerful

tools to pull some high tech foolishness that can be very damaging to each other.

Focus Questions

As you study the following case, keep these questions in mind: (1) Should Internet activity that occurs at home be the concern of schools? (2) What should schools be teaching teenagers concerning being good “cyber-citizens”? (3) Do students understand the potential problems associated with giving or sharing personal login information?

The Case

Hijacked*

The second period Computer Applications Class at Highland Park High School is filled with mostly ninth graders. This class is an equal mix of boys and girls all trying to fulfill their high school computer requirement. The instructor, Ms. Leigh Ellen Powell, has given the class an Internet research assignment. Each student has been assigned a U. S. President to research and design a web page with links to more information about the life and career of their President. The atmosphere in this classroom is relaxed with the students chatting casually and quietly to each other.

While Ms. Powell is walking around assisting each student, she overhears some girls talking about the upcoming Sadie Hawkins Dance. This traditional February event is where the girls ask the boys. Claire, Katie, and Megan are discussing who their dream date would be for the dance. Each girl wants the attention of a new student, Will, but is too shy to talk to him. Katie mentions that she will ask her potential date to the Sadie Hawkins dance via instant messaging or IM. It is much easier than face-to-face and compares it to passing a note. Claire and Megan agree that they will also ask their date at home on their computer via instant messaging.

Claire, Katie, and Megan like so many of today’s teens, are using the Internet from home to communicate with their friends from the time they get home until bedtime. The teens today are fabulous at *multitasking*. The girls can be working on their homework on the family pc, “talking” to several friends at a time on IM, listening to their mp3 player, taking a digital picture, and composing a text message on their cell phone all in the comforts of their family room. The research tells us that today’s teens use a variety of gadgets proficiently. For example, Megan took a digital photo of her outfit for the dance, downloaded the image to her computer, and attached it to an e-mail to Claire and Katie for their opinion of her clothes. This activity is common for most teens but the divide where teens are not using technology as much comes in the form of economics. Our low income families are struggling to provide broadband Internet connections and without high speed connection teens are not as interested in using the web.

At school the next day, the girls confess they had not asked anyone to the dance and all were feeling a little shy. Claire, Katie, and Megan decided to spend the night at Megan's house and ask the boys while together on Megan's computer. Megan logged on to IM and walked into the kitchen for snacks. Claire decided to pretend to be Megan and ask Will to the dance. The "conversation" took on a very mature tone and was nothing like what Megan would say. Will was shocked and declined her invitation to the dance. Claire logged off before Megan returned and decided not to tell her.

In computer class Ms. Powell overheard Claire and Katie discussing what they had done. The girls thought it was very funny and decided to do it again and maybe post an unflattering picture of Megan. Ms. Powell felt very uneasy knowing what the girls had done and were going to do. She wondered, as a teacher, what is *her* responsibility in this situation?

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the teacher's role concerning student Internet activities at home? She wondered how to incorporate being a good citizen even in cyberspace?
2. How important is keeping your login information secure?
3. Why should students get into the habit of logging off when they are away from your computer?

*Hijacked is the term used when someone poses as someone else and is using someone else's password or personal log in information.

Links

Teens and Technology: Youth are Leading the Transition to a Fully Wired and Mobile Nation http://www.pewinternet.org/report_display.asp?r=162

Instant Messaging – Collaborative Tool or Educator's nightmare!
<http://www.unb.ca/naweb/proceedings/2003/PaperFarmer.html>

International Society for Technology in Education <http://www.iste.org/>

Study Shows Teens' Technology Use Is Surging
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA631243.html>

Teens and Technology: An MIT study explores the beliefs of U.S. teenagers and adults about the future of technology.

http://www.technologyreview.com/TR/wtr_16148,323,p1.html

Resources

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- Cross, T. (2005). Nerds and geeks: society's evolving stereotypes of our students with gifts and talents. *Gifted Child Today, 28(4)*, 26-27.
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- Johnson, D. (2005). Vision for the net generation media center. *Learning & Leading with Technology, 33(2)*, 25-26.
- Lenhart, A. (2005). Teens and technology. Retrieved Feb. 13, 2006, from www.pewinternet.org.

