

### STUDENT ONLINE SAFETY PLEDGE

- I will talk with my parents and together we will set up rules for going online. We will decide the time of day and length of time I can be online as well as appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas without their permission.
- I will not respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, threatening or make me feel uncomfortable. Those kinds of messages have nothing to do with me and should not be responded to. I will tell my parents about such messages so that they can contact the online service.
- I will not give out personal information online without my parents' permission. This includes my address, telephone number, parents' work address or telephone number, or the name and location of my school.
- I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents.
- I will never send my picture or anything else to someone online without first checking with my parents.
- I promise to follow these online rules.

*Please tear off and post this Pledge near the computer.*

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# Protecting Your Child on the Information Highway



## ***Plain Local Schools***

**Web Site:** <http://eagle.stark.k12.oh.us>

As most of you are aware, the use of the Internet, World Wide Web resources, and e-mail are rapidly changing the world we live in. In order for our students to be competitive in this world they will inherit, it is important that they gain skill in the use of these valuable online resources. The use of these resources, however, creates some **new risks to our children of which we all must be aware.**

## AT SCHOOL

While your children are in our classrooms during the day, our staff has been cautioned to be vigilant regarding inappropriate use of online resources. We continually try to furnish direction to students by providing meaningful use of online resources to complete an assignment or task.

No amount of vigilance is failsafe, however, so with the cooperation of the Stark County Education Service Center and the Stark/Portage Area Computer Consortium (our Internet service provider) we have implemented a filtering software package that filters out offensive sites from our classroom computers with about 96% success. This software package is updated daily by the online service and screens out sites that are deemed pornographic, violent, or “hackers.” Due to the dynamic design of the Internet, some sites are able to frequently change their addresses. For this reason, some sites that are blocked one day may be not blocked the next until the online service finds them again. It appears that no filtering service or software can be 100% failsafe. We are doing our best to safeguard our classrooms while your children are there.

You must be aware that you share this responsibility with us. While your children are at home they have no protection unless you are monitoring their use or have purchased filtering software. This document is provided as a guide to assist you in protecting your children.

## JUST WHAT IS “ONLINE”?

*(cyberspace or the digital highway)*

Millions of homes and schools are going online with students logging on to commercial services, bulletin boards and the Internet.

- **Online services** are maintained by commercial, self-regulated businesses that may screen their materials.
- **Computer Bulletin Boards** can be operated by anyone. The material presented is usually about hobbies or special interests. Most attempt to limit minors’ access to “adult” information.
- The **Internet**, a global “network of networks” is not governed by any entity therefore has no checks on information accessible to users.
- **Chat Rooms** are areas where users meet to send “real time” messages. These are high risk areas where users normally hide their true identity.

Children get a lot of benefit from being online, but could also be targets of crime or exploitation. That’s why parent involvement is so important. Children need to be taught how to be “street smart” to safeguard themselves against potential problems such as inappropriate material, harrassment, or physical harm.

## PARENTS CAN PROMOTE POSITIVE ONLINE EXPERIENCES

The best way to assure that your children are having positive online experiences is to stay in touch with what they are doing. Have them show you what they do and teach you how to access the services. You might also enroll in one of Plain’s Community Education courses on using the Internet.

Taking responsibility for children’s online computer use, can minimize any potential risks of being online. Talk to your children and other families who are online users, become familiar with literature on these systems, and go online yourself.

## PARENT POINTERS

- Make going online a **family activity**. Consider keeping the computer in a family room rather than a child’s bedroom. Get to know their “online friends” just as you do their other friends.
- Use the **Online Safety Pledge** (on inside flap) to help set rules and guidelines for computer use by your children. Review this Pledge with your children regularly and monitor their compliance. Post the Pledge near the computer to reinforce the importance of these rules.
- If you become aware of the transmission, use, or viewing of child pornography while online, immediately **report** this to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children by calling 1-800-843-5678; and notify your online service.
- Personal computers and online services should not be used as **electronic babysitters**. A child’s excessive use of online services or bulletin boards, especially late at night, may be a clue that there is a potential problem.
- Remember that **people online may not be who they seem**. Because you can’t see or even hear the person it would be easy for someone to misrepresent him/herself. Thus, someone indicating that “she” is a “12-year-old girl” could really be a 40-year-old man.
- Remember that **everything you read online may not be true**. Be very careful about any offers that involve your coming to a meeting or having someone visit your house.
- **Never give out identifying information** and think carefully about revealing any personal information such as age, marital status, or financial information. You might want to consider using a pseudonym or unlisting children’s names if your service allows it.