Computer Crimes via Internet

**Topic:** Effects and impact of the Internet on children and if the Internet has contributed to computer crimes in our youth and schools.

**Product:** A comprehensive report that describes and shows the effects of the Internet and if it relates to more or less computer crimes.

**Method:** I am planning on conducting thorough research at the library while finding other resources using my teacher, finding articles, and conducting personal interviews at a local elementary school.

**Relevance:** This project is relevant to me because even though I am a computer applications major here at UMFK, I have spent my last two years substituting at local elementary schools around the Fort Kent area. I have become familiar with the students at those schools and I am trying to further my knowledge by finding links between computer crimes and when students use the Internet. A career in teaching could be in the near future for me so this project would help me get a better understanding of how to get my kids to shy away from negative effects and uses of the Internet in our schools. I will get a better understanding on what types of computer crimes can and are committed at the schools and find effective tools and skills to help reduce that number and to make the Internet and computers a valuable learning tool for our elementary school kids.

**Deliverables:** 10 page paper & 5-10 minute power point presentation

The effects and uses of the Internet have changed a lot over the generations in our schools systems. Today, students of all ages are learning new things using the Internet and the World Wide Web, skills that aren’t always used for educational purposes. Today, schools are faced with very difficult challenges of watching and monitoring every student’s computer, whether it is their own personal laptop or PDA for fear of their students talking to strangers on a computer network. They could also give out valuable personal information about themselves and their
family in an Internet chat room as well as hacking into computer school systems, whether intentional or not, to invade people’s right to privacy.

So how does the Internet have a major effect on computer crimes in our youth? What is difficult for me to comprehend is that the Web can provide students with so much information that young students can perform amazing things, some of which can be illegal as well. In Boston, Massachusetts, a 16-year-old juvenile boy was faced with federal charges when he disabled a key telephone company computer that services the Worcester Airport. Just by typing in a few commands, vital services to the FAA control tower were disabled for at least six hours. The juvenile not only disabled key services for the tower to land planes and signal take-offs, he also electronically broke into a number of pharmacy chains in the area and copied the records of the patients. Also in Boston, a juvenile was connected with a series of hacking scams into Internet and telephone service providers; stealing personal information and then posting it on the Internet. To go along with that, the juvenile also used his computer skills to send bomb threats to high schools in Massachusetts and even as far as Florida. This all took place using the juvenile’s computer, it all took place over a fifteen month period, and the juvenile estimated cause of damage was a little over a million dollars.

As you can see, very serious computer crimes are occurring all over the United States by young kids between the ages of 13 and 17. Most of the juvenile computer crimes found were hacking and using the Internet to send harassment messages and hate mail. When researching my project, I found that most of the causes of these crimes were because these juveniles were using the Internet to gather information on how to perform these illegal acts. Whether it was intentional or for their very own entertainment, school systems have to be aware that this could be an everlasting problem and that students, even those in our own elementary schools, have the
ability to perform acts such as these, especially with use of the Internet. I have had a close interaction with the students in the elementary schools at M.S.A.D #27. I have substituted as well as coached many of these students for many years. As said earlier, even though I am a computer major, I love kids and I love to teach kids valuable skills they will need to know and use as their growing up. If I am considering teaching integrated computer technology skills at the elementary schools, I decided to conduct interviews with three grammar school kids from St. Francis Elementary School. I chose two eighth grade boys and one seventh grade girl but I chose these three particular students based on different ability levels, interests, as well as academic standing and computer knowledge. Hopefully, these interviews can give me a valuable and better insight as to how the Internet is being applied to our schools. To go along with that, I want to get a clear understanding as to whether or not computer crimes are occurring at our schools even at young ages. The interviews gave me valuable opinions from the kids on if computer crimes are occurring at their schools and whether or not the introduction to the Internet to these students can increase or decrease the likelihood of illegal computer activity.

Interview Questions:

1.) What is your definition of a computer crime? (What do you already know about what a computer crime is?)

2.) How has introducing the Internet impacted your life as a student here at St. Francis Elementary School?

3.) What types of illegal activity occur when using the Internet at school? If so, what crimes do you believe have been committed?

4.) Do you feel the Internet causes more problems for students in the classroom? If so, how and why?
5.) Has the Internet led to more computer crimes being committed in your own school? Why or why not?

6.) How do your parents feel about you having access to the Internet at school? Do they feel it is a good or bad idea and why so?

7.) Has the Internet to proven to be a very effective learning tool for you in school? Why or why not?

8.) What do you usually use the Internet for in schools? Do you feel that computer crimes are being committed because students are not aware that they are doing something illegal?

9.) Out of 100 students in your school and taken into consideration the students who have not yet been introduced to computers or the Internet, what percentage of students in your school have committed a computer crime, whether unintentional or intentional?

The next section will provide the answers to the interview questions from the three students interviewed. The answers will be presented in a format where the letters A, B, and C will each represent one student. For example, for each interview question, there will be three different sections of answers. Letters A and B will represent the two eighth grade boys and letter C will represent the answers for the 7th grade girl.

1.) A – Searching web sites you are not supposed to, reading other students emails, sending inappropriate emails, and invading people’s privacy over the Internet.

   B – People using computers illegally and for their own benefit.

   C – Sending information from one person to the other that is not acceptable in school such as bad sites or giving out private information about other students.
2.) A – The Internet is fun to use because you can search for so many things and it makes homework easier to finish as well.

B – It has made my resources easier to find because we don’t have to look in Encyclopedias to find our research information. It makes getting information easier so that we can get done our school work quicker. However, if the computer dies or does not work, then it is harder to get my work done.

C – It helps me be more efficient with using the computer and it helps me to develop new computer skills such as finding information and learning new skills.

3.) A – Copying and pasting homework papers (plagiarism) and looking at pornographic sites and sites you are not allowed to in school.

B – Sending inappropriate messages to other classmates and downloading pornographic pictures, pictures on people getting hurt or killed, and talking to complete strangers using chat rooms.

C – Giving your personal information to people you don’t know, looking at illegal websites, sending bad pictures to other students, and downloading software they are not supposed to that causes the computer to not work.

4.) A – I like being able to use the Internet in the classroom, but students who don’t use it correctly causes more chances for problems. It all depends on who the person is; if the student is a good student, he/she will probably not use the Internet in a wrong way but if it’s a student likes to cause trouble, then he/she will cause problems on the computer.

B – There are no problems on the computer if teachers are around to watch the students. The teachers usually show us what we need to do for that day and walk around our computers to make sure that we’re doing things right, around if we need help on anything, and to watch to
make sure everyone is doing the work their supposed to be doing. They are also watching the kids who cause more trouble in the classroom more closely than the other students.

C – I have not seen many problems when going on the Internet because teachers show us what sites we can go on and where we can’t go. The Internet is not a problem because you can just click a button and it will bring you to where you want, but improper pop-ups might appear and the teachers will let that slide most times.

5.) A – Kids are starting to learn more about what the Internet can do from school and just playing around with it at home. I don’t know if it has led to more crimes, but all the stuff you can get off the Internet can lead to students possibly committing crimes, whether they want to do it or not.

B – The Internet gives students more of a chance to commit a crime but if teachers watch and monitor the students, then it shouldn’t be higher because I think teachers realize that students could do bad things on the Internet.

C – If we were using the computer without going on the Internet, then there wouldn’t be more computer crimes because without the Internet, you really can’t do anything else on the computer except to write papers. I feel at school it is safe, but at home parents will think that their kids know how to use the computer and not ask any questions about it. What they learn at home could be used at school and that would cause problems.

6.) A – My parents really don’t ask me questions about what I do on the computers at school. I think they feel that the teachers are doing a good job teaching computers to us so that’s probably why they don’t say anything.

B – They don’t ask me too many questions, only things such as what projects I’m working on or what I did in school today. What I tell them or don’t tell them is what they’ll agree with.
C – My parents don’t ask questions about what I’m doing on the computer. At my house, they only let me go on certain sites and if I don’t, then I lose my computer privileges. They also don’t let me go into any chat rooms and I’m only allowed to go on the Internet for an hour a day, unless I’m looking up articles or information for homework. They actually don’t like me using the computer for things other than school because they want me to use resources outside of the computer (very strict rules).

7.) A – It’s more useful and easier than going to the library to help you finish your homework. At the library, we had to look through so many types of books and articles. Now, you can type in what you want to look for and it gives it to you and that’s all you need.

B – Yes because it gives you more resources to choose from, it is quicker and easier to find and read, and you can find a lot with it if you know what to look for.

C – Yes because you can print out all the information and then read it right off the paper. It can give you many different options to choose from whether you want pictures or stories. You get look up what you want and all the information is provided to you. You don’t have to use all the information but you are exposed to it anyway so you’re learning either way.

8.) A – Chatting (MSN, AOL, used to be ICQ) and we use it help better our typing skills, we use it for keyboarding, to help us find where the letters are on the keyboard, and if crimes are happening, I think that they are unaware of it.

B – We use it for playing educational games, learn how to type, and learn how to search for different educational sites. We also use it for writing papers and doing homework. Not many crimes are going on because teachers will show us what we need to do and be aware of before the assignment and most kids are more worried about getting their assignment done then looking around on other places on the Internet.
C – The teachers show us how to use it to help us write better papers and do better projects. They show us how to find and use different sources on the computer. They tell us to not use chat rooms and if we do then we cannot work on the computer or we have a teacher watching us all the time. Also, our teacher Mrs. Pelletier showed us how to write and use email and she watches us when we write our emails and gives us instructions on what to write and if it’s not written the way she wants it or we use bad language in it, then we get a bad grade. Some kids still don’t do what she says but she just gives them bad grades for it.

9.) A – Probably like 5% commit crimes, but I’m not sure because to some kids, saying something to other students like swearing at them or writing bad emails or saying bad things on chat may not seem like a problem to them so they do it but it is to the teachers so most who do something wrong don’t know they are.

B – 10% - going on sites they are not supposed to go on, downloading pornography, saying bad things on chat, etc. The kids who usually are bad in school will be the ones who get in trouble.

C – Less than 10% because even if they want to do something wrong, teachers will not allow it to happen or they will block off certain sites to us so we can’t do anything wrong.

It is important to note that to these kids, their definition of a computer crime is much different than the definitions of lets say computer experts or college students majoring in computer science and information technology. To us, most of the wrong things that they do such as swearing to each other in chat rooms or looking at porn is not a criminal act, but in our schools, it is a wrongful act where punishment is could exceed suspension or getting kicked out of school. I made sure to explain this to the kids before I interviewed them. I explained that a very serious
crime, such as hacking into computer systems may not occur in St. Francis, but it does occur in other elementary schools in the United States. I made sure that they understood that what I was looking for when they gave me their answers was computer crimes or wrongful acts committed at school using computers and the Internet. I understood that high level computer crimes such as hacking, crashing networks, identity theft, or sex crimes is very unlikely to occur in this area at a small school such as St. Francis. However, I made sure that the interviewees gave me responses to students committing illegal acts that their not supposed to do under M.S.A.D #27 and St. Francis Elementary School policies.

These interviews have given me a better insight as to how to reduce the amount of computer misdemeanors in our schools. I feel the most important way to handle even the toughest kids is to try to educate every single student about a computer’s and the Internet’s capabilities. The Internet allows us to find so many things so we must educate the students on how to use new technology when it is applied to the classroom. By actually showing students what they can or cannot do as well as setting strict consequences for each action, it will set the students straight and will give them a sort of guideline to follow by. I as a teacher already understand that unacceptable actions will occur when students use the Internet in school, especially the ones who are already prone to abuse their privileges in the past. I, personally, would have each student sight their own personal contract, which states what they are not allowed to do whether it is on the computer or the Internet. If this contract is broken, the students will then lose their computer privileges at school.

In order to be aware of illegal activity on computers, teachers and schools need to be aware of what the State of Maine considers as computer crimes. The Internet itself has changed drastically over the years, especially in the way that students use it in their schools. As the
Internet provides increasing amounts of information to the child’s fingertips, adults have begun to question whether or not such information encourages violent, inappropriate, and sexual behavior. Teachers, as well as parents, should help their children steer away from harmful online information by getting involved and supervising their use on the Internet. The interviewees gave me a better understanding that as long as teachers explain to the kids what they are allowed to do as well as monitor their Internet use, then there shouldn’t be any problems. For small schools such as St. Francis, this is not as big of a challenge as oppose too much larger schools with more students. I feel the Internet provides students with the opportunity to gather vast amounts of information to help develop their educational skills and to apply technology in their everyday lives. However, I must be a guide to them to help them realize that the Internet should be their only tool for their work. I feel students still need to read books, become more creative with their assignments, and develop a steady work ethic that they can bring along with them throughout their years in school. I believe that if schools can get together to block out unauthorized sites, ban chat rooms, and regulate the networks, then the chance of students committing crimes over the Internet will be reduced. I have learned so many different things about how the Internet has changed now in schools from when I was growing up. Students now possess tons of knowledge all in the click of a button and if monitored and used effectively, teachers can use the Internet as one of the school’s most versatile teaching methods to help develop the minds of our young students.
REFERENCES:

- http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/juvenileSent.htm
- http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/burns.htm
- http://www.cybercrime.gov/rules
- Library (URSUS)
- Teachers @ St. Francis Elementary School
- http://www.cybercrime.gov/cases.htm
- http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/21st.htm
- http://www.mcctf.org/
- http://www.megalaw.com