



the Policy Page

A special publication for Virginia School Boards Association's Policy Services subscribers

Number 123, January 2010

School board members are very familiar with the fact that the U.S. Department of Education plays a critical role in the life of every student in this country. We sometimes forget that other federal agencies also have a huge impact on education matters. This edition of the Policy Page highlights three items from federal agencies which involve the issues raised by the use of technology by students. One is a guidebook to help educators, parents, and communities. The others describe inquiries recently undertaken to get information to the federal government to help shape its positions and publications on the use and development of technology. The results of those inquiries will undoubtedly be seen in governmental initiatives, publications, or perhaps even statutes, in the near future.

Online Safety Guidebook for Parents

The Secretary of Education, the Federal Trade Commission chairman, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chairman have jointly announced the publication of an online safety guidebook for parents. The publication is entitled Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids About Being Online. The guidebook is designed to help parents teach children about navigating the Internet safely. It addresses many topics that children should be aware of in using the Internet, including the safe use of social networking websites, dealing with cyberbullying, and how to protect computers from viruses and spyware. The guidebook includes practical suggestions for children of all ages and also includes a helpful glossary of terms. The guidebook is available to download for free on OnGuardOnline.gov, which is the federal government's online safety website. The direct link to the publication is <http://www.onguardonline.gov/pdf/tec04.pdf>.

Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Media Landscape

The (FCC) recently sought comment on how to empower parents to help their children take advantage of evolving media technologies while at the same time protecting their children from the potential risks involved in using these technologies. The FCC sought comments about numerous issues, including

- the extent to which children are using various forms of electronic media,
- the benefits and risks of the electronic technologies used by children,
- the ways in which parents, teachers, and children can maximize the benefits while minimizing the risks,
- the role media literacy plays,

- how the FCC can assist with media literacy efforts,
- the effectiveness of media literacy efforts and
- how the Commission can assist with efforts being made by other Federal agencies that are addressing similar issues.

The FCC's goal in gathering this data and recommendations from experts, industry, and parents is to identify actions that all stakeholders can take to enable parents and children to navigate the electronic media landscape safely and successfully.

Broadband Needs in Education

The (FCC) also recently sought public comment on issues related to broadband access in educational settings. The FCC is charged under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) with creating a national broadband plan and establishing steps for implementation by February 17, 2010. As part of this effort, the FCC sought public comment on whether, and how, increasing broadband access in schools can promote the adoption of broadband in the wider community. It also sought comment on modifications to the E-rate program to improve broadband deployment and whether this program can be a model to promote the adoption of broadband in communities. The FCC was interested in data from primary through graduate schools working with broadband connectivity, with a particular focus on information related to implementation strategies, budget, financing strategies, and measured outcomes. The FCC will use the information its gathers to help develop a national broadband plan.

NSBA follows the work of federal agencies, and the information in this edition of Policy Page originally appeared in the NSBA publication, Federal Regulations and Resources.

The VSBA attorney provides legal information to School Board Members and Superintendents.