



Berks County Intermediate Unit  
An Educational Service Agency

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
December 3, 2008

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### **BCIU to Host 2008 “Ethics for Students in a Digital World”** *Students Will Present Skits on Technology Ethics via Videoconference*

**READING, PA** – When 65 percent of high school students admit to “unsafe, inappropriate, or illegal activities online,”\* when more than half of all students in grades 4–8 report either having mean things said to them online or saying hurtful things themselves to others online,\*\* area educators know they have work to do regarding teaching Berks County students the ethics of living in a digital world.

With that in mind, the Berks County Intermediate Unit once again will host an “Ethics for Students in a Digital World” mini-conference for gifted junior-high and middle-school students from 9–11 a.m., Wednesday, December 10. The event will be held as a videoconference among schools that have access to the county’s Wide Area Network (WAN).

This isn’t the first such education in the ethics – the dos and don’ts – of online activity for Berks County’s students, of course. Districts countywide have guidelines for technology use and to help prevent cyberbullying. But this possibly could be one of the more fun lessons: Skits are involved.

The mini-conference’s goals are to foster dialogue about ethics in technology use, increase awareness of the topic, and promote student collaboration, according to the BCIU’s Sue Calvin, project administrator, Educational Technology Services.

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“Instead of just talking about these issues, the students will put on short skits about different scenarios that involve technology,” Calvin said. “They’ll perform them on camera and then they’ll ask the other students watching via the videoconference three questions about whether what happened in the skits was ethical, wrong, or somewhere in between.

“The discussions last year became **very** lively,” Calvin continued. “The presentations really got the students thinking and opened their minds to some of the ‘hidden’ issues regarding technology use.”

For example, one of the ethics scenarios students might present involves a student who decides to get revenge on a teacher for a poor grade by creating a fake Facebook account. The student then places unflattering pictures of the teacher on the account and posts nasty comments about the school district in the teacher’s name.

Other scenarios include getting access to a teacher’s computer and changing grades, hacking into a neighbor’s wireless account for free service, spreading rumors via text messaging, finding papers on a history topic online and submitting them as original work, etc.

“Technology is a huge part of students’ lives,” Calvin said. “Our conference will help them see and deal with the ethical issues that could pop up for them as they use these online tools.”

The multi-point videoconference will connect schools using the bridge at Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12 in New Oxford, PA. (A bridge is hardware/software that permits a number of sites to interact via audio/video and share information.) This collaborative event will feature student panels at their district locations and a panel of experts at the BCIU. In addition, Corporal Paul M. Smith of the Pennsylvania State Police’s Computer Crime Unit will be on hand at the BCIU to express his views on the ethics and legality of the decisions students make as they grapple with the ethics of technology.

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This is the second year the mini-conference will be held. Participating districts include Daniel Boone Area, Exeter Township, Governor Mifflin, Hamburg Area, Kutztown Area, Muhlenberg, Oley Valley, Wilson, and Wyomissing Area.

\* Market Wire, November 6, 2006. I-SAFE, Inc., December 12, 2006

\*\* [Cyberbullyalert.com](http://Cyberbullyalert.com)

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