

## Pupils alerted on Net safety

By DANIELA SIMUNAC, SUN MEDIA

Cyber-bullying may be a term many grown-ups have a hard time understanding, but children today, some as young as four years old, are all too familiar with it.

Pupils at Ryerson elementary school learned more about cyber-bullying and also about "netiquette," or computer etiquette, during an anti-cyber-bullying presentation yesterday.

Cyber-bullying is "using computers and other electronic tools to put other people down," the pupils were told.

"Don't put stuff on the Internet you're going to regret later," said 10-year-old Ross Ferguson after the seminar.

"Never put stuff on the Net that you think is a joke," said Andie Sheidow, 9.

Presenter Bruce Langford told the pupils: "Normally, you're saying nice stuff to people (online), but sometimes things can turn nasty."

A former music teacher with the Thames Valley District school board, Langford has made 300 presentations on the topic in 14 different school boards over the past five years.

He began presenting the Internet safety workshops after he saw bullying incidents in his classroom.

"I felt limited because I could only help them in the classroom," Langford said in an interview.

"It's surprising how many of these kids are computer savvy -- even under Grade 3."

The pupils were entertained yesterday with live music, video demonstrations and a short play that illustrated the message that cyberspace can sometimes be "a crazy place."

Internet safety, including keeping passwords and other personal information private, was also discussed.

"Even an innocuous piece of information could be used as a tool for Internet prowlers," said Langford, who used the example of a child telling someone online that their family is planning a vacation.

"They could go away to Disney and the whole house could be cleared out like that."

Keeping the computer in a central place in the home, being honest with parents and unplugging webcams when they're not in use were among the tips Langford passed onto the audience.

He is scheduled to deliver his message at several other London-area schools.

Vice-principal Mary Roes welcomed Langford's presentation and said the need to discuss Internet safety is growing.

"They need to be aware of being safe and not only on the school grounds."

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