



Partnering with Parents

Internet Use, Out of Camp Staff Communication, Cell Phones & Digital Photographs

Internet Use

With the use of the Internet being so prevalent among campers, we need to partner with parents in order to provide the best possible outcome for our campers online use when at home or school. By sharing our experiences and advice with parents we can help to keep your children safe online. The more knowledge we share the better equipped we are to face the challenges technology poses to our camp community. Facebook.com and MySpace.com account for approximately 89% of all social networking sites in the US, and up to 80% of MySpace.com profiles are **public**, meaning anyone can see that profile.

Children today spend a lot of time each week online. While this can be healthy and positive, as an advocate for children and their safety, *we recommend that you as parents be knowledgeable about their online activities.* While your children may balk at your effort to supervise them or see their online profile, we also know children listen to their parent's advice and concern. We've gathered information from many sources and are providing you with a summary of that information as a way of supporting your effort to ensure your child's continued well-being, even outside of camp. We have included some helpful resources for further help or information.

General Tips

- 1) If you aren't already, make it your business to become familiar with your child's computer and the Internet. You can't protect your children unless you know what is out there. If you want further help, contact www.masterteacher.com/index.html
- 2) Try to avoid using the computer as a baby-sitter. Leaving your child online for long periods of time without checking in with them or supervising them may result in activities that are risky, over-stimulating or inappropriate that you may not be aware of. Go online TOGETHER!
- 3) Set rules around the use of the computer and the Internet. You have rules about other aspects of conduct in your home. The computer and the Internet should be no exception. Kids who think their parents "don't care" often take higher risks than children who know their parents are interested, knowledgeable and involved.
- 4) Think about the location of the computer your child generally uses to go online. One significant question online predators ask children and teens is the location of their computer. Predators are emboldened if they sense that the children they are communicating with online are not being supervised by an adult.
- 5) Inform your children of the dangers of the Internet and tell them that you intend to supervise or oversee their online activity. Then follow through on a regular basis! The following three items are specific examples of things you can do.
- 6) Check down-loaded files by checking the directory that programs are downloaded into. This is another way you can see what your child has been up to.
- 7) Ask your child if they have an online social networking profile. (Kids don't call it that, so you may need to say, "You know, like MySpace or Facebook!" If they are being coy, they may be hiding something from you). If they have one, look at it! The pictures and text may tell you a lot about what your child has been up to.

Your Kids, our Staff

Camper and counselor contact at Nashoba North in the summer is well supervised in a supportive environment. Our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and capable young adults we can find – counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is an integral part of our pledge. Our staff work with your children in the context of a visible, well scrutinized environment that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to co-workers and campers. Conversely, we are not aware of all staff actions and activities when they depart camp in August and therefore cannot be responsible for their behavior off-season. While we cannot keep you from allowing your child to visit with one of our staff members, in so doing you take full responsibility. We also know that many children exchange contact information (e.g, email address, profile names, cell #s) with counselors without our or your specific awareness or permission. We assure you this has never been a negative challenge but in today's growing technology we felt it appropriate we develop stronger expectations and policies for everyone associated this summer with Nashoba North. Post season communication may be awkward for some. We recommend that you as the parent supervise your child's online activities just as you do other aspects of their life in your home, and oversee any off-season contact our staff members have with your child.

Nashoba North's official policy is to forbid the exchange of contact information of any kind between campers and staff. With the Internet as it is, however, we know campers can "find" their counselors if they persist. Our office will help facilitate any requests for proper communication with campers and staff. For example: Kyle was a camper in the Dakota cabin and he wants to speak with his former counselor Mark. With Kyle's parents permission the Nashoba office will contact Mark and forward on Kyle's contact information. You of course as a parent, if you like, can authorize your child to exchange information with a staff member which is your right. However, by doing so, you understand you accept the full responsibility for overseeing whatever contact occurs as a result.

Working Together to Keep Your Children Safe

We see many positive, exciting ways for youngsters to enjoy the healthy benefits of the Internet and other technologies. As advocates for children we want to work with you to keep those experiences safe, healthy and positive. That is why we have taken the time to write these policies, include some resources for you and urge you to talk with your children—both about camp and their online activity in general.

Safety Tips for Teens Online

- 1) Avoid giving out your last name, phone number, address, name of your school, where you hang out or sports teams you are on.
- 2) Use the privacy features on your service.
- 3) Avoid meeting people in person who you have met on the Net that you don't know. If you do agree to meet someone, let your parents know and take some friends along.
- 4) Be careful of what you post online—pictures and text are open for the world to see. Teens seem to forget this!
- 5) Remember that *anyone can pose as anyone else online!* Unless you are positive of the person's identity, be skeptical.

What to Tell Your Child If They Are Threatened Online

- 1) Don't respond or retaliate. Doing so may only make matters worse or get you into trouble.
- 2) If you can, save the message on your hard drive and print out a copy. Then close the message or program.
- 3) Tell your parent or a trusted adult immediately.
- 4) If it is someone from camp, call the camp office.
- 5) If necessary, call your Internet service provider (e.g., AOL, Yahoo, g-mail, etc.)
- 6) If necessary, call the local police (like in cases of a threat on your life, a sexual advance, etc.)
- 7) Another resource: The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.ncmec.org).

Other Resources

"Keeping It Safe—Nine Important Steps to Internet Safety and Protecting Our Children," www.Westchestergov.com. A handy, helpful pamphlet put out by the District Attorney's Office in Westchester County, New York. E-mail them for a copy.

MySpace Unraveled: A Parent's Guide to Teen Social Networking, Larry Magid and Anne Collier, Peachpit Press, 2006. Extremely helpful, informative and comprehensive, easy-to-read guide for parents. Paperback, about \$15.

www.Wiredsafety.org A set of Internet sites having to do with various online safety issues.

"What Parents Need to Know about MySpace—Your Guide to a Kid's World on the Internet," *U.S. News and World Report*, September 18, 2006. Great, easy to read, all-in-one-place article. You can download it from their website for a small fee.

Camp Policy for Campers and the Internet (Parents to review w/Child)

Dear Nashoba North Camper, we have asked your parents to go over some policies we have developed about the Internet and other important issues so that everyone has the best experience at camp as possible.

- 1) We view e-mail, IM and social networking sites, like Facebook.com and MySpace.com, as positive ways for you to express yourself and keep in touch with your friends. As a camper you have the right to exchange e-mails or IMs with other campers and invite other campers to be on your "friends" list in any way that you *and your parents* see fit.
- 2) When it comes to exchanging contact with anyone on our staff, however, *your parents must take full responsibility for you to do that. This includes giving or getting an e-mail or IM address, cell phone number, social networking profile, weblog or any other Internet contact.* (We tell this to the staff during orientation). It's not that we don't think your relationships with your counselors are important. They are! It's just that, once they leave camp, we can't take responsibility for what happens between you and

them—*only your parents can*. We have enclosed a parent communication permission form *which your parents must sign before a counselor can give you any contact information or take any contact information from you*. We recommend you look it over with them so you aren't surprised by what it says.

- 3) Regarding e-mails, IMs and comments you might make to other campers on their social networking site, we ask you:
 - a) to keep what you say positive and respectful of staff, campers and camp alike;
 - b) not to use obscenities, vulgar or sexual language;
 - c) not to say mean or threatening things to or about other campers or staff;
 - d) not to post pictures online that would embarrass or violate anyone's privacy;
 - e) not to pose as another camper online or spread false information about anyone or say damaging or threatening things to or about anyone;
 - f) not to use a website or blog or e-mail to talk about things that are against camp policy, like using drugs or alcohol or bullying or sexual things.
- 4) Most Internet communication is positive, and that's great! In the rare case where there might be any negative messages to other campers or staff, our policy is to call the parents of campers who send those messages and share the content with them.
- 5) We will use any legal means available, including contacting the police and the FBI, to track the source of any offending or threatening Internet communication if we need to.
- 6) Any camper who violates any of our policies regarding the Internet or other communication might have to leave camp, might not be able to come back to camp and might even have to answer to the police or other law enforcement authorities.
- 7) We want you to be safe on the Internet. ***If you receive a threatening e-mail, IM or message on your personal website—one that is mocking, uses vulgar or harassing language—here is what you should do:***
 - a) Do not respond to the message or retaliate, because it might encourage the sender or get you into trouble.
 - b) If possible, record the message onto your hard drive.
 - c) Print out a copy of the message, then close it but ***do not delete it***.
 - d) Tell your parents about it and have them notify the local police or, if necessary, contact your Internet service provider (like yahoo, aol, earthlink, g-mail, etc.)
 - e) If you suspect that the sender is from camp, call us immediately.
 - f) You or your parents can also contact Pedowatch (www.pedowatch.com) or the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (www.nemec.org).
 - g) Camp is meant to be a fun, safe and happy place for all of us. We need your help to keep the way people from camp communicate with one another positive and in the spirit of camp—a way that makes everyone feel safe.

Cell Phones

As you know we have a “no cell phone” policy at camp. Aside from the fact that cell phones are expensive and can get lost or broken, there is a fundamental problem with campers having cell phones at camp, and that is trust. When children come to camp they—and you—are making a leap of faith, temporarily transferring their primary care from you as their parents to us and their counselors. This is one of the growth-producing, yet challenging aspects of camp. As children learn to trust other caring adults, they grow and learn, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges. We believe this emerging independence is one of the greatest benefits of camp. It is one important way your child develops greater resilience. Persistently contacting you by phone essentially means they have not made this transition. It prevents us from getting to problems that may arise and addressing them quickly. Sending a cell phone to camp is like saying to your child that you as the parent haven’t truly come to peace with the notion of them being away from you and in our care.

We agree to tell you if your child is experiencing a challenge in their adjustment to camp. *You can help* by talking with you child *before they leave for camp* and telling them that there is always someone they can reach out to, whether it be their counselor, a trusted activity leader, the Head Counselor, the Director or camp nurse. We are all here to help, but if *you* don’t trust us, your children certainly won’t! Campers flying to camp may travel with a phone and turn them in to the camp office upon arrival. It will be kept for safe keeping until the last day of camp. Unauthorized cell phones will be sent home express mail at the expensive of the camper. Unauthorized use of a cell phone can mean expulsion from camp.

Digital Photographs & Videos

Nashoba North does not allow the sharing of photographs or taking of videos at camp without the written consent of parents or guardians. Cameras that have video taking capabilities should not be brought to camp. Newly created disposable, up-loadable movie cameras are not permitted.

We take photographs during the summer, which are available for viewing on our secure (password required) website. Please help us maintain a safe environment by explaining this to your child (see our accompanying note on “Policies for Campers.”) You should know that *any camper that takes a compromising photograph of another camper or staff member and uploads it on the Internet or makes it public in any way may be subject to dismissal from camp or may not be allowed to return. If the law is broken, the appropriate authorities will be notified.*

Policy for Parents Regarding Out-of-Camp Contact between Campers & Staff to be signed and returned.

Camp Nashoba North Off Season Camper Staff Contact

At Camp Nashoba North, our pledge is to put your children in the company of the most trustworthy and appropriate young adults we can hire—counselors who are well suited to the task of caring for campers. The effort we put into screening and selecting our staff is part of that pledge.

Our staff works with your child in the context of a visible, well scrutinized community that has many built-in checks and balances. Counselors are supervised by senior staff and are guided by clear, firm policies regarding behavior. Their actions are also visible to a community full of co-workers and campers. In general we discourage our staff from having contact with your children after camp *since we cannot supervise it. We hire our staff for the camp season. We do not take responsibility for their behavior off-season.*

We also recognize that campers and counselors develop close, trusting relationships with one another at camp and that these relationships are healthy, wholesome and beneficial to campers and staff alike. We are aware that many campers will naturally want to keep in touch with their favorite counselors after camp.

Therefore, *our official policy is to forbid the exchange of contact information of any kind between campers and our staff.* With the Internet as it is, however, we know campers can “find” their counselors if they persist. Our recommendation is simply for you as parents to be aware of your child’s online activities and supervise them as you would any other aspect of their life in your home. Likewise, if you as a parent or legal guardian wish your child to exchange such information with a camp staff member, that is, of course, your right. However, by doing so, you understand *you accept full responsibility for overseeing whatever contact occurs as a result. Our office, as outlined in the guidelines to communication, is happy to help facilitate communication between campers, parents and staff.*

By signing this document you acknowledge our policies and have taken the time to review them with your child. We sincerely thank you for your continued support of our community.

Signature of Parent _____

Camper’s Name _____

Date _____

*This can be returned electronically to info@campnashoba.com,
faxed to 978 952 2442 prior to May 31st
faxed to 207 655 4063 after June 1st
or posted to our camp address*

Special thanks to Bob Ditter and the Association of Independent Camps for assisting in the development of policies and resources for everyone.