Episode 7: Responsible Use Policies to Engage in Cyber Safety

#REMSontheAir Podcast Intro (Recorded): [00:00:00] Welcome to the *#REMSontheAir* Podcast, hosted by your partners at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools and its Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. If you're an old friend, you know us as the REMS TA Center, your national school safety center.

Join us as we chat about key topics in school and campus safety, security, and emergency management with experts and partners from the field.

Janelle Hughes: Hello and welcome back. We are excited to host another *#REMSontheAir* Podcast. My name is Janelle Hughes. For those of you who may have missed the first few podcast segments, I serve as the Project Director with the REMS TA Center. Today, I'm joined by my colleague, Amanda Everett, who serves as the REMS TA Center's Training Manager. [00:01:00] Hi, Amanda!

Amanda Everett: Hi, Janelle! I am looking forward to today's conversation. Before we get to our conversation, let's share some key information on cyber safety, digital citizenship, and responsible use policies and how it ties into all settings and all times, including school at home, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The onset of COVID-19 dramatically increased the usage of digital learning formats by education agencies across the nation and shifted the learning environment to school at home. Since students are online more and will likely continue to be, whether learning virtually or in person, they're vulnerable to more threats.

Such threats may include an increase in cyberbullying, inappropriate content, sexting, sextortion, and/or ransomware, oversharing, and online predation. Phishing emails, text messages, and scams with COVID-19 themes have been trending across sectors. Schools are [00:02:00] not alone, and their community partners can serve as key sources of information and support as school safety planning teams create and enhance emergency operations plans to address cyber safety.

Janelle Hughes: You know, as we know, Amanda, cyber safety is a shared responsibility of students, parents, and school and district personnel. Schools should incorporate cyber safety in their continuity of learning and learning planning for any emergency. Not only does cyber safety help to maintain a safe school in all settings and all times, including school at home and school at a community or faith-based hub providing Wi-Fi services, but it also helps create a culture of preparedness. Youth, parents, teachers, and school personnel all play an important role, as we know, in cyber safety, from organizing cyber safety training opportunities at school or to having discussions [00:03:00] with children at home and/or in the school setting about online behavior.

Amanda Everett: Yes, one strategy that schools and school districts can employ is to develop a responsible use policy, also known as an acceptable use policy, before students are allowed to access the Internet at school via a school device or the student's personal device. Similar to student codes of conduct and student handbooks used in traditional teaching and learning settings, which are designed to provide guidance to students on behaviors and actions that are considered acceptable and unacceptable in the school setting, responsible use policies are written agreements that contain simple and accessible language and outline the terms of responsible use and consequences for misuse. They teach students what it means to be a responsible digital citizen, also known as someone who uses appropriate responsible behavior and engage with technology within the school [00:04:00] community in the community and world at large.

Families are usually expected to acknowledge that their children will follow basic guidelines, and students agree to the standards laid out in the policy. Responsible use policies can cover issues such as expectations for online behavior, where resources can be accessed, personal and academic integrity when using technology, and how student data and information will be used by the school.

Janelle Hughes: At the REMS TA Center, we recommend that schools and school districts can use responsible use policies to teach students what it means to be a responsible digital citizen as part of the broader strategy of promoting a positive school climate. A digital citizenship curriculum can include topics such as privacy and security, relationships and communication, cyberbullying and digital drama, digital footprints and reputation, self-image and identity, [00:05:00] information literacy—I mean, there are so many, even thinking about creative credit and copyright.

Amanda Everett: Yes, that is such a good point. Many state and local education agencies are employing similar models. For example, the New York City Department of Education's Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy provides a summary of the policy, including a hyperlink to an easy-to-read description for parents, guardians, teachers, and students—and principles for use, such as monitoring, privacy, prohibited uses of the Internet systems, and filtering, among many others.

A digital citizenship curriculum used by the K-12 school community the Jurupa Unified School District educates students in Internet safety, privacy, relationships, cyberbullying, self-image, copyright rules, and other topics. Lessons are age appropriate, and discussions change depending on the latest digital trends and include topics such [00:06:00] as the importance of making only constructive comments online.

Janelle Hughes: Thanks for sharing those resources from state and local partners. You know, when thinking about our state and local partners, they really have the wealth of knowledge on

this topic, and there are so many great examples to look at from the field. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development worked in collaboration with various partners to sponsor Alaska Digital Citizenship Week in October 2020.

The goal was to reinforce the importance of teaching students how to make safe, smart, and ethical decisions in this digital world that they live in. They shared lesson plans for teachers, family engagement resources for families and caregivers, and what they referred to as a School Leader Implementation Plan.

I really appreciated that resource in particular because it outlined action steps school leaders can take to engage the whole school community in efforts to [00:07:00] cultivate responsible digital citizenship.

Amanda Everett: Thank you for sharing that, Janelle. The REMS TA Center recognizes the importance of cyber safety in all settings and all times, including during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and has created some resources for you to check out after today's podcast. Download and read our fact sheet on cyber safety considerations for K-12 schools and school districts to learn more about preparing for online threats to students, and our technical assistance snapshot on cyber safety quick links for protecting youth to access key practical steps and quick links to free cyber safety resources, tools, and training.

Janelle Hughes: It's always an opportunity during this podcast and after to share resources. And we're so happy to do that for you. Please take a look at our podcast landing page, where you can find access to [00:08:00] resources that Amanda shared as well as others. And thank you also for tuning in today. Remember to follow us on social media and to bookmark the *#REMSontheAir* hashtag to get information on Twitter chats that we will host around this topic and others. You can also tweet us using the *#REMSontheAir* hashtag if you are addressing similar topics. And if you have any questions about the things we talked about today or just want to learn more, send us your questions via email or call us at 1-855-781-7367.

Don't forget that you can email us at any time. Or join our mailing list where you'll get up-to-date information on webinars, Web chats, and other virtual opportunities to learn and share. And remember, access additional *#REMSontheAir* Podcast episodes, plus share this one with your colleagues by visiting the REMS TA Center's podcast page and clicking the share [00:09:00] tabs that appear along the left side of your screen.

Our podcast page also provides access to typical resources on the topics we covered today, including those mentioned during today's episode and more resources on other key school and campus safety, security, emergency management, and preparedness topics. Thank you again for joining us.