

FCHS students receive advice on how to use new laptops

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The discussion was in the gym but it wasn't one-on-one basketball but one-to-one computers.

Forest City High School students will receive individual laptops this month and several speakers shared some advice on how to use those computers wisely on Thursday night in the high school gym.

Mike Van Oort, the school district's technology coordinator, said students will have access to the Internet which also means access to social networks, games and similar sites.

"In the end, this is the property of Forest City schools and there appropriate uses for them," Van Oort said. "There are consequences if these are not used properly."

Brian Blodgett, of Next Generation Technology, an information technology company in Buffalo City, said one of his company's jobs is to make sure what's placed on a computer never disappears.

When a student makes a post on Facebook or similar social network site, "you need to assume it's there forever," Blodgett said. "One of the things my company does is makes sure things don't go away."

"Think before you post," Blodgett said.

He advised students that if they couldn't say a post in person to another person, they shouldn't post the comment on the Internet.

Companies are using Facebook and other social media sites as part of their background checks on job seekers, he said.

A silly post that seems harmless but involves illegal or questionable behavior is an example of what students do not want to post, Blodgett said.

Mean-spirited comments, gossip comments and the like are hurtful and harmful to those involved, Blodgett said.

"You need to recognize what you post online is the same as the the real world," Blodgett said.

Blodgett used a video clip to reinforce that statements such as calling someone a tramp, or slut or mocking them, "is not funny. Don't do it, it's wrong. It's bullying," he said.

Blodgett said students need to remember that what may seem like a cool post or popular post today may not be so popular in the future.

A post using slang terms or questionable activity may seem popular now but what about when that student is older, even a parent, Blodgett said.

Blodgett said it's also important for students to consider if they really know who they are talking to when they use chat rooms online.

"The internet has a phenomenal ability for anonymity," Blodgett said.

Websites offer users a fake identify, for fee, by which they can chat online, Blodgett said.

A user can pretend to be someone they are not, Blodgett said.

The Internet has websites for credit card scams, for example, they sound legitimate but aren't, Blodgett said.

"Don't give out your (identification)," Blodgett said. That means don't give your name, social security information, your phone number because "do you know who you are talking to?"

A video made by high school student at the time had won a contest sponsored by a cyber security company said users should draw a line and on the plus, or positive side of use and not be influenced to use a computer to for the minus, or negative side, to share hate, gossip or for bad or illegal behavior.

Blodgett said students should ask themselves which side of the line they want to be on.

While Blodgett emphasized personal use issues, Van Oort did share some other practical use advice.

Van Oort said the students should use the provided laptop case and not write or place stickers on the computer. They should not eat or drink while using the computer, he said.

"Keep your laptop safe," Van Oort said. "Don't leave it unattended. Don't leave it in the locker room, lunchroom or with a friend."

The computer should not exposed to extreme temperatures such as overnight in a car during the winter or during the heat of summer, he said.

Van Oort also advised parents to check with their insurance company on insuring the computer.