Web Publishing Policies: Ethical and Legal Issues

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As a result of the interest exhibited by individuals at SITE 2001 to the information presented in my session 101 Reasons to have a Classroom Webpage, I have continued delving into the legal and ethical issues surrounding the publishing of students' work on the Internet. A questionnaire sent to a random sample of public school districts gathered data on current web publishing policies. The data will be examined during the poster session.

The poster session examines how the Family Right and Privacy Act, which establishes standards for student privacy in public education, impacts the use of Internet activities or projects. What caution must teachers take when publishing work created by children in their classroom? Do they have to be aware of more than simply not identifying students by personal information, such as, their first and last name, and addresses? Is this information addressed in their district web publishing policies? Is it an accurate assumption that all public districts now have web publishing policies?

The participants in the session will also have the opportunity to compare several web publishing policies in place this academic year. There are those that protect the students, teachers, and district without placing a burden on the teachers. Then, there are those web publishing policies that are so stringent that teachers feel it is not worth the effort to showcase their students' work. In some cases, the district's directive stating what can be on a teacher's web page and the policies for publishing students' work are intertwined. In those cases, one must examine the district's criteria for a teacher's web page in conjunction with publishing students' work.

The participants in the poster session will have the opportunity to assist in drafting a model web publishing policy for public school districts.