

## Young kids use social media

Written by Austin Benson

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### Parents need to make sure it's applied properly

Kids 12 years old or younger can access an Internet-friendly device to like someone's comment or picture or request.

They can also ask people to be Internet friends without knowing much about them.

Students at Dudley Elementary are using social media and their parents should be aware of this, according to three educators who presented "Creating a Positive Digital Reputation" Thursday night at the school.

The statistics are frightening.

One of five children are sexually solicited over social media. One of 17 kids are harassed and one of 33 youngsters are asked to meet someone older than them.

That's why Dudley Elementary principal James Widdifield, media teacher Angie Richeson and high ability learning instructor Amy Harrison attended an Educational Service Unit 10 conference in December.

There, they learned about changes in technology and what parents can do to make sure their children are using social media in a positive way.

"The number of applications that kids have access to was most surprising," Widdifield said. "We thought we knew things about applications and devices, and we do, but our knowledge was a little off."

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If the educators didn't know some of these things, Widdifield said possibly parents don't either.

Social media does impact elementary-aged students, Widdifield said, noting that the presentation was to raise awareness for parents whose child may not be using websites properly.

Statistics shared include:

Of the 456 students at Dudley Elementary, 375 have access to a computer at home, 217 have an iPod while 238 have an iPad or tablet that allows them Internet access.

There are also 151 students with cell phones of which 83 could use the Internet.

Dudley students using social media at school show that 64 kids in the elementary have a Facebook account and 21 tweet.

Tweeting is using social media to broadcast daily short burst messages to the world.

Dudley students who text, or use mobile devices to write messages, number 243.

Although only a few parents showed up for two sessions in the elementary computer lab, Widdifield plans to offer another presentation to the public.

"This information is applicable to all grades and ages," he said.

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