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## **NEW POLL FINDS THAT PARENTS ARE TAKING PROACTIVE STEPS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE AND SMART ON THE WEB**

### **Parenting Moves Online Moms and Dads Balance Internet's Benefits and Dangers**

**Washington, D.C.** – The majority of parents in the United States are taking action to ensure their children are safe and responsible while using the Internet, according to *Parenting Moves Online: Parents' Internet Actions and Attitudes, 2007*, a new Cable in the Classroom/Common Sense Media poll conducted by Harris Interactive®.

In the survey released today, 85 percent of parents and legal guardians of children ages 6 to 18 who go online say they have talked to their child in the past year about how to be safe and smart online, and more than 93 percent say they have taken action to make sure the Web sites their kid visits meets with their approval.

Even though the vast majority (71 percent) of parents reported having experienced one or more Internet-related issues with their child within the past year, an overwhelming majority of parents also believe the Internet is helpful to their kids. Parents agreed that the Internet has helped their child to learn skills and information needed to succeed in school (81 percent), learn about different cultures and ideas (74 percent), access current events and news (68 percent), express him/herself creatively (65 percent), and connect to and collaborate with people with similar interests (53 percent).

“Many observers have expressed the fear that the Internet is a chaotic environment in which children are left to behave in unsupervised fashion. To the contrary, this research shows that today’s parents themselves are online, and their parenting has moved online as well,” said Helen Soulé, Ph.D., executive director of Cable in the Classroom.

The most frequent issues parents reported their children experiencing include: being exposed to advertising or commercialism online (52 percent), spending too much time online (31 percent), spending too little time exercising or being outdoors because of the Internet (26 percent), being exposed to coarse language, or sexual or violent content online (24 percent), being exposed to misleading or bad information online (23 percent), and being distracted from schoolwork because of the Internet (20 percent).

“The poll confirms that parents continue to have issues with their kids’ Web use, but those issues aren’t scaring them away from letting their kids go online,” said Common Sense Media CEO James Steyer. “The results suggest that most parents balance the Web’s dangers and benefits – they talk to their kids about the issues they encounter, and work to make the Web a helpful tool.”

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## ***Parenting Online, Page 2 of 3***

The poll found that parents who had more and different types of Internet-related conversations with their child over the past year were more likely to see the Internet as a helpful tool. For example, 86 percent of highly-engaged parents said that the Internet helps their children learn about different cultures and ideas. Only 58 percent of less-engaged parents said the same. In terms of accessing current events and news, 82 percent of highly-engaged parents said the Internet was beneficial, whereas only 47 of less-engaged said it was helpful.

“It makes perfect sense that parents who are actively engaged in their children’s online life understand the Internet’s overall benefits for their children’s development and learning,” said Dr. Soulé.

**More information about the poll, its findings and other resources can be found online at:**  
[www.common sense media.org/news](http://www.common sense media.org/news) and [www.ciconline.org/poll2007](http://www.ciconline.org/poll2007) .

Based on the poll’s findings, Cable in the Classroom and Common Sense Media emphasize that parents should:

- Talk regularly with their children about their Internet use and seek out high-tech parenting advice from trusted sources,
- Speak with their children about Internet safety and appropriate online behavior *and* about more frequently experienced issues,
- Engage even very young children to set behavioral expectations, and
- Look to teachers and schools as partners in instilling media literacy skills.

“This poll underscores what we at the PTA have advocated for a long time—the vital importance of parents getting involved and engaged in their children’s lives, online and offline,” said Jan Harp Domene, national president of the PTA. She further suggests that parents need simple, specific, and age-appropriate tools and information to help them engage in their kids’ online lives.

“Parents who are engaged in their kids’ online lives find that the Web is a helpful tool for their children,” Steyer said. “But the Web is a dynamic environment, and the biggest online concern for parents today might be replaced by something totally different six months from now. That’s why parents need up-to-date information about what kids are doing online – that’s the kind of information we provide at Common Sense.”

### **Other findings from the poll:**

#### **Moms and Dads view different online activities as appropriate:**

- Moms (or female guardians) are more likely than dads (or male guardians) to feel it is very or somewhat inappropriate for their child to create a searchable online profile or webpage, such as a blog, Neopets, or MySpace. Eighty percent of moms said creating a searchable online profile is somewhat or very inappropriate, compared with 65 percent of dads.
- Dads also are more likely to view online gaming with others as an appropriate activity. Sixty-four percent of dads said playing online games with others was somewhat or very appropriate for their kids, compared with 46 percent of moms.

#### **Parents of Younger Children Are Less Likely to Have Talked to Their Kids About Being Safe and Smart Online**

Despite the fact that younger children are increasingly using the Web, this poll revealed that parents are significantly less likely to have talked to their younger children in the past year about Internet-related topics.

- One in four parents (25 percent) of 6 to 10 year olds report that they have not discussed Internet-related topics with their kids, compared with four percent of parents of 11 to 14 year olds, and five percent of parents of 15 to 18 year olds.

### **Poll Methodology**

Harris Interactive conducted a telephone survey on behalf of Cable in the Classroom and Common Sense Media within the United States between August 16 and August 17 among 2,030 U.S. adults ages 18+, of whom 411 are parents or guardians of children ages 6 to 18 whose children are online. Results were weighted for age, sex, geographic region, and race where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Parents:** For the purposes of this study, “parents” were defined as U.S. adults ages 18+ who are the parent or legal guardian of any children ages 6 – 18.

**Children:** For the purposes of this study, “children” were defined as U.S. children ages 6 – 18.

**Highly-engaged parents:** For the purposes of this study, “highly-engaged parents” were defined as U.S. adults, ages 18+ who are the parent or guardian of any children ages 6 to 18 whose child uses the Internet and who have talked to their child about 5 or more Internet related items presented in the survey.

**Less-engaged parents:** For the purposes of this study, “less-engaged parents” were defined as U.S. adults, ages 18+ who are the parent or guardian of any children ages 6 to 18 whose child uses the Internet and who have talked to their child about 4 or less Internet related items presented in the survey.

**Cable in the Classroom (CIC)**, the cable industry’s education foundation, works to expand and enhance learning opportunities for children and youth. Created in 1989 to help schools take advantage of educational cable programming and technology, CIC has become a leading national advocate for media literacy education and for the use of technology and media for learning, as well as a valuable resource for educational cable content and services for policymakers, educators and industry leaders. For more information about Cable in the Classroom, please visit: [www.ciconline.org](http://www.ciconline.org).

**Common Sense Media** is the nation’s leading nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the impact of media and entertainment on kids and families. Common Sense Media provides trustworthy ratings and reviews of media and entertainment based on child development criteria created by leading national experts. For more information, visit [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org).

**Harris Interactive** is the 13th largest and one of the fastest growing market research firms in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for The Harris Poll, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what it believes to be the world’s largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its North American, European and Asian offices, and through a global network of independent market research firms. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com). To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at [www.harrispollonline.com](http://www.harrispollonline.com).