

# **WARNING-OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE**

TO: Parents and guardians

FROM: Melanie P. Semore, director of secondary education

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I am writing to make you aware of a website called MySpace.com. We are concerned because many Harding students have posted their photographs and personal information on this site. We are also concerned because the site allows for vulgar language, sexually explicit talk, inappropriate photographs, flippant references to drug and alcohol use, and more.

I feel that it's important for you to see what is actually on this website. You will find many passages that are graphic and, frankly, disturbing. I am embarrassed to say that many were written by Harding students.

When a student posts to this site, he connects with every other person who has posted. Some of these others we know; some we do not. Some may not be other students at all but could easily be adult predators masquerading as students. Even if your child has not written one inappropriate thing in his own post, he is undoubtedly connected to others whose posts are inappropriate. He has no control over what others post to his site.

You would do well as parents to go to this site. Plan to spend a good bit of time there and delve deeply. Look not only for your child but for your child's friends. Don't assume that if your child is not pictured on the first nine pages, he is not there. Each picture you click on leads you to another person, and another. Here's how:

1. Go to [www.MySpace.com](http://www.MySpace.com).
2. Click on Search.
3. Under "Find Your Classmates," type in the school name (Harding), the country (United States), and state (Tennessee).
4. Click on "Find."
5. On the next screen, click on Harding Academy of Memphis.
6. Scroll through the pages (there are about 9 pages with about 84 entries).
7. If you click on a student's picture, you'll be taken to other students' sites and pictures. There are many layers of student entries.
8. At the bottom of each page is "Next."

[You can also search by name, but many students do not use their real names.]

Naturally, we are dismayed, discouraged, and concerned about what we've seen. I suspect that many of you are, as well. I encourage you to monitor closely any computer to which your child has access.

The next page gives you more information about MySpace.

# What Exactly Is MySpace And Should I Let My Child Use It?

*Ken Colburn*

One of the prime objectives in the early days of the Internet was to create a sense of community.

[MySpace.com](http://www.myspace.com) is a recent social-networking phenomenon and a testament to how easy the Internet makes it to become part of a virtual community.

MySpace is part blog (Weblog or online journal), part forum, part instant messenger, part e-mail, part newsgroup, and part photo journal.

What started out as a small community of people that “networked” with each other has become one of the top 20 trafficked Web sites on the entire Internet.

Its popularity has become so big that NewsCorp (FOX) recently purchased the parent company of MySpace (InternMix Media) for a reported \$580 million.

Why would a media company want to buy a community-based Web property? Simple. Advertising! MySpace has caught the attention of the teenage world and has advertisers lined up to gain access to it.

It is rare to find a teen who does not have his or her own “shrine” to himself or herself on MySpace, and that is where some of the concern begins.

As a parent of a “screenager,” I have long been exposed to this fanatical world and have some words of warning for parents.

First of all, this site is rated PG-16 by the creators, and much of the content posted by other teens is vulgar, sexually suggestive, and much of the advertising is aimed at an older set. You must be at least 16 years old to participate in the community according to the terms and conditions of the site, but there is nothing to stop anyone of any age from joining.

If you are going to let your child participate in MySpace, there are many areas that you must address. The first is what your child is permitted to post on his or her site.

Make sure you review your child’s profile regularly (which is viewable by anyone in the community) to ensure that no personally identifiable information is listed.

Another big area of concern is what they share with others, specifically when it comes to copyrighted material. Teenagers have no concept of copyright laws and think that everything they own is within their rights to share with their friends on MySpace (especially music).

The amount of time spent on the site is another area that you must address, or things will get out of hand quickly.

You can monitor and or control all of these areas with various parental control programs, but the bottom line is you must set ground rules with your child and then stay involved.

Parents have no choice but to take the time to learn what their kids are doing or suffer the consequences.

[http://channels.lockergnome.com/windows/archives/20050916\\_what\\_exactly\\_is\\_myspace\\_and\\_should\\_i\\_let\\_my\\_child\\_use\\_it.phtml](http://channels.lockergnome.com/windows/archives/20050916_what_exactly_is_myspace_and_should_i_let_my_child_use_it.phtml)