POSITION STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Technology Safety

The Tennessee PTA acknowledges the significance of advances in technology, recognizes the importance of children knowing how to use technology safely and effectively, and is concerned with issues including but not limited to content quality, commercialism, marketing exploitation, appropriate school use, accessibility and equity, safety of participants, security, and privacy.

The Tennessee PTA is aware that the new media are being developed without any regulatory restraint and little parent and public accountability. The Tennessee PTA supports the development of a voluntary system identifying content areas that are non-commercial, educational and/or informational, and contain content appropriate for children.

Tennessee PTA believes that technology will be a valuable educational tool if it is a source of (a) high-quality, reliable, non-commercial content for children, and (b) relevant information that can be efficiently found and used for educational purposes. Children should be protected from sexually explicit, violent, racist, hate-filled, and abusive electronic content and predators. Parents, the online industry, technology companies, the FCC, and content providers have a responsibility to monitor and provide quality content for children and youth. Additionally, the Tennessee PTA urges the industry to provide funding to encourage the development of educational and/or informational, non-commercial, and challenging content for children delivered via ever evolving technological means.

Tennessee PTA supports the education of parents regarding the technology, its uses and possible effects upon children, and providing parents with information to ensure the safe, effective use of any technological medium by children and youth. Parents are encouraged to take responsibility for their child’s online experiences by becoming and staying informed regarding a topic that is ever changing, setting and monitoring reasonable rules and guidelines, being involved with their child’s day-to-day online experiences, and discussing the “rules of the road” and experiences with their child on a regular basis. Parents must be involved with and knowledgeable about computer hardware and software and their children’s activities involving technology in all its forms. Tennessee PTA believes that parents have a responsibility to monitor online sites, computer and game software, hardware, and other technological devices, and to communicate with those who sponsor, create, distribute, and support these items to commend good products or voice concern to those that are objectionable in content, hazardous, deceptive, or which coerce or exploit children and youth. Tennessee PTA opposes the practice of collecting, compiling, selling or using children’s personal information without giving parents notification or choice with respect to whether and how their children’s personal information is collected and subsequently used by those sites. The Tennessee PTA opposes the practice of tracking children’s online activity by anyone other than parents or those immediately supervising the child’s online activities. Tennessee PTA opposes the sending of unsolicited e-mail to children unless parents are notified and have granted prior approval of the mailings.
Tennessee PTA supports policies which will bring ALL of the nation's children on the information superhighway providing them with equitable access to advanced telecommunications services. The Tennessee PTA opposes linking any federal requirements that will infringe on schools, libraries, and communities to access content on the world-wide web. In addition, for the Internet to improve student achievement, a "human infrastructure" must be built at the same pace as computers and wiring are being installed.

Tennessee PTA believes

School districts, libraries, and communities, in collaboration with parents, must develop a technology plan. Teacher training in the use of technology and how to integrate that technology with the basic curriculum is a key element at both colleges of teacher education and in-service opportunities at the school site.

Adopted by Convention Delegates 4/30/99

Referred to Family Life & Parent Involvement Committee for Implementation 4/99