

Parent FORUM



Incarnate Word Academy is proud to introduce the Parent FORUM Series—Forming Our Response, Unified in Mission. This is an opportunity for continuing the partnership between home and school, addressing our ongoing response to the needs of our students and families.

Series Kicks Off

Subject: Digital Citizenship –

It is more about TALKING than Technology

Since beginning his tenure, one primary goal of Incarnate Word Academy President Charles D. Imbergamo has been to strengthen communications between educators and parents. “Through surveys as well as formal and informal feedback,” says President Imbergamo, “I have heard about improving communication, coordinating efforts, and expanding our partnership with parents; hence, our decision to inaugurate this new initiative. It will be the first step in Forming our Response—parents and educators; Unified in Mission—serving our students and assisting them to foster the fullness of life to which they have been called.”

The first session of the series, held on March 1, 2012, addressed the topic of “Digital Citizenship: It’s more about TALKING than Technology.” This session in the series began the conversation with parents about methods to help children develop appropriate technological habits and oversight for 21st century technology.

“The question of digital citizenship and online safety for children is daunting for both parents and educators,” says President Imbergamo. “While there may be no easy answers, or one-size-fits-all steps that adults can take to protect and guide children in their virtual lives, parents and educators will have greater success by working together. We thought this would be a timely and much-needed topic to kick off the Parent FORUM Series.”

The session included guest speaker Detective Robert McFarland of the Corpus Christi Internet Crimes division. He brought the subject close to home, giving insight to the current issues affecting the Corpus Christi area. He shed light on actual, current and recent crimes in the Coastal Bend which occurred directly through the use of digital technology. The majority of the cases surrounded online predators of children and cyber bullying.

Priscilla Ramos, Incarnate Word Academy Director of Technology and Communications, conducted the second segment of the session addressing steps parents and educators can take to guide young people to safe, productive behavior online. “Kids today spend more time with media than they do in school or with their parents because they have unlimited access through cell phones, tablets, game systems, and now televisions provide internet access,” says Mrs. Ramos. “Parents need help sifting through the information about media use, and they often turn to their child’s school for advice. Through this topic of the Parent FORUM Series offered by IWA, we will help build a bridge between parents and schools to help them nurture media-smart children.”



Guest speaker Detective Robert McFarland of the Corpus Christi Internet Crimes division spoke regarding the issues affecting the Corpus Christi community that are directly related to the misuse of digital technology.



Priscilla Ramos, Incarnate Word Academy Director of Technology and Communications, discussed plagiarism and the online resources that IWA provides through Angel eBRARY, which teaches students how to properly site their papers and prepare students for college level work.



IWA Parents, Stephanie Bottom and Patti Flood, as well as other parents and faculty are introduced to methods and resources, assisting them in nurturing good digital citizens.

"I think the Parent FORUM Series is a great idea," shared Incarnate Word Academy parent Mary Kuffel. "If schools and parents are at least working toward being on the same page, our efforts with our kids will be more effective." Mrs. Kuffel has three children attending IWA—two high school and one elementary level student. She attended this session of the FORUM Series as a parent aware that her children are very savvy users of digital media. "The bottom line that I took away from this session was to keep talking to my children, keeping them aware that their online actions can have a greater impact than what they may intend. Also, for me, to follow up and follow through on keeping tabs on what they are doing online."

Parents and educators are responsible to equip students with the 21st century skills they need to thrive and maintain focus in this digital world. Many adults consider children's online, mobile, and technological activities as "digital life," but, to them, it's just life. Their world is as much about creating media as it is about consuming it. We want our kids to make wise decisions so they can take advantage of the powerful technology that fills their lives. But in order to make good choices, children must know how the digital world works. The very nature of their constantly-connected culture means young people must understand the concept of privacy so that what they post and create won't hurt or embarrass them at some point down the line.

This digital world changes very quickly. Both the number of new tools and the ways digital technologies are becoming part of our lives are growing at an incredible pace. Many of parents feel like they can't keep up. Thinking of their children exploring on their own in this complex digital world certainly gives adults their share

of anxiety. The reality is that abuses such as on-line predators, cyber bullying, sexting, digital harassment, and plagiarism exist and are part of the technological experience. Additionally, parents cannot realistically prevent their children from taking part—unless we want to put them at a severe disadvantage moving forward to higher education and careers.

So how can we arm children with the tools and ethical base to navigate this new world? How can we foster good digital citizens? By empowering parents and educators with guidance and tips on raising children who use media and technology safely and responsibly, we achieve a collective response—unified in our mission.

Our goal with this session of the Parent FORUM Series was to build awareness and start the conversation of digital citizenship. Incarnate Word Academy is committed to helping children thrive in this digital world, and through our partnership with parents, faculty, staff, and administrators can assist young people to successfully and productively use digital technology in a safe, responsible, and respectful manner. To reinforce steps that parents take at home, IWA is also incorporating digital citizenship topics into the curriculum and planning online safety sessions for students.

For more informative videos, parent tips and resource material go to iwacc.org/publications for our link dedicated to online safety and digital citizenship. ■

Additional topics discussed included:

- 📱 Talk to your kids—when and how
- 📱 Socializing and Communicating Online
- 📱 Mobile Phones
- 📱 Protect Computers
- 📱 Parental Controls
- 📱 Resources