

Directed Web Searching

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A few years ago we were asked to make a staff development presentation at a rural school district in Central Illinois. We were asked to focus our presentation on helping teachers to use the Internet as an information-gathering tool for both themselves and their students. As the presentation got underway, we decided to pick a safe topic like "Bears" as a search term for demonstrating how a search engine operates. To our surprise, the search results returned several links to web pages that were highly inappropriate for our audience. This incident led to a discussion with the teachers about the dangers of allowing students to indiscriminately browse the Internet for information. At the time, our advice to the teachers was to combine the use of Internet blocking/filtering software with some careful monitoring of student Internet activities. This advice led to some further discussions about the inadequacy of this approach for protecting students from the "dark side" of the Internet. Some of the teachers with classroom Internet experience related their futile attempts at trying to monitor an entire class, while others told "war stories" of students by passing the blocking/filtering software.