

Queensland students encouraged to stay smart online

The Queensland Academy of Creative Industries (QACI) has celebrated Stay Smart Online week by becoming the latest Brisbane school to achieve eSmart status, and students are urging other Queensland schools to follow their lead.

eSmart – an initiative of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation – provides schools with the tools and resources required to equip the entire school community with the skills and knowledge they need to stay safe online.

An independent evaluation of eSmart has shown the initiative is having a real impact, with more than 90 per cent of principals saying it helped them embed safe and responsible behaviors and more than 80 per cent saying teachers, students and parents' understanding of expected behaviours online had improved as a result of the program.

QACI's Head of Department eLearning, Jennie Jahnke said that with new technology extending the reach of bullying beyond the schoolyard, it is imperative for schools to be proactive in promoting safe and responsible online behaviours, and eSmart provides schools with a simple framework to deal with cybersafety.

"The beauty of eSmart is that it is flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of each school," she said.

"For example at QACI, we felt it was important for the implementation of eSmart to be student-led. We therefore identified fifteen students from across different year levels, who have been working in collaboration with teaching staff on initiatives to promote the importance of staying safe online."

"This approach has been very successful in ensuring input from all sections of the student body and enables our message to be embraced by the whole school community."

Dr Judith Slocombe, CEO of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, congratulated QACI on being the latest school in Brisbane to achieve eSmart status.

"eSmart Schools is having an impact in over 2,000 schools across the country, assisting them to create a school culture that embraces the positives of the ever-changing cyberworld," she said.

"The initiative is about genuine cultural change in a school community – it is a long-term solution, not a quick fix. We congratulate QACI on their achievement and look forward to working with other Queensland schools to ensure students can take advantage of all the wonderful benefits of technology, while minimising the risks of its misuse."

The Queensland State Government has partnered with The Alannah and Madeline Foundation to help deliver eSmart Schools to Queensland government schools. For more information about eSmart Schools or to register your school now, go to www.esmartschools.org.au or contact The Alannah and Madeline Foundation at esmart@amf.org.au.

Along with programs such as eSmart, parents play an important role in helping to keep their kids safe in the online world. Here are four key tips for parents from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

1. Get online and get involved in your child's online world. Show an interest in your child's use of technology and keep the lines of communication open. It's your job to find out as much as you can about what your child is doing online (while respecting their privacy).
2. Have regular conversations as a family about technology, from the latest apps to agreeing on how you all use technology at home. Make sure you initiate this discussion and create an environment where your child feels safe discussing any issues they are having online.
3. Avoid banning technology outright – for children, losing access to technology can be even worse than having bad online experiences, so using bans as a punishment can have the opposite of the intended effect.
4. Ask your local school and local library if they are eSmart and if not, encourage them to sign up. It is a great way to encourage a whole-of-community approach to cybersafety in your local area.

For more information: Contact Hayley McNaughton on 03 9697 0617 or 0424 753 775

Picture opportunity: Students from the eSmart Committee of the Queensland Academy of Creative Industries working in the computer lab to keep students safe online

About The Alannah and Madeline Foundation: The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating impact. The Foundation was established in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged 6 and 3, who were tragically killed with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation cares for children who have experienced or witnessed violence, and runs programs that help to prevent violence in the lives of children. Our vision is that every child will live in a safe and supportive environment. For more information visit: www.amf.org.au or call 1300 720 747.