



# The Atonement Academy

15415 Red Robin Road • San Antonio, Texas 78255  
210-695-2240 • 210-695-9679 fax • [www.AtonementOnline.com](http://www.AtonementOnline.com)

May 7, 2009

## Social Networking on the Internet

As parents we need always to be mindful of the many ways that technology enables virtual socializing for our children. Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are increasing in popularity. Other commonly used forms of communication among children include instant messaging, text messaging, picture mail and video mail. I suppose there may even be a few dinosaurs out there still sending emails or making phone calls.

Currently Facebook is rising in popularity, while MySpace is declining. No doubt some new trend will soon eclipse both. But the lesson for us as parents is that students can be active in multiple venues, or can migrate quickly from one forum to another. How many of us parents are diligently monitoring our children's MySpace, even as the real action has moved, unbeknownst to us, to Facebook? How many children maintain two accounts, one for parent monitoring and another for confidential communications? It's the parents' job to know.

Many academy students have Facebook or MySpace accounts in which they have friended fellow academy students, students from outside the academy, academy alumni, and, in at least one case on Facebook, a former academy faculty member. As parents we must be aware that our children are communicating not just with peers, but with older children and with adults. And we must remember that there are imposters in cyberspace who are not what they appear to be, and in some cases are very sophisticated in the ways they exploit children's vulnerabilities. The internet knows no boundaries, and we should not assume that the operators of websites will take initiative to protect children, or that government will require them to. Cyberspace is a libertarian paradise, with all of the opportunity and risk that extreme liberty provides.

The safety and the innocence of our children are of course the first and the second priorities. But I am writing for three reasons: first, to provide a neighborly, parent-to-parent reminder that there are risks in cyberspace, and that children need to be monitored and protected; second, to remind you that the academy does not police its students' out-of-school internet activities, instead respecting this as the parents' role; and finally, to request that you instruct your children to respect the name and reputation of The Atonement Academy in their communications.

Ralph Johnston  
Academy Administrator

*At The Atonement Academy, we strive for excellence in the physical, intellectual, and spiritual virtues through a challenging course of classical and Catholic education.*