

High hopes for cyber safety message to run and run

Scott Hillman is a keen runner and has participated in plenty of races but none quite like the one he completed last term. The Glenfield Primary School teacher jogged for 36 kilometres around the school grounds to raise awareness for cyber safety, as he explains.

It's critical that our local community is aware of cyber safety and how important it is to keep their children safe online. However, with half our school's students being ESOL learners, together with a general lack of awareness of the dangers of the internet to children – along with a degree of 'it will never happen to my child' – we were concerned that the important messages that we'd been trying to promote were not getting through.

Whether intentionally or not, some of the content students were viewing and the searches they were performing were disturbing. We were also finding that many have social media accounts but without the knowledge and skills to know how to safely use these (and, officially, they're too young to use these services anyway!).

Unsuitable content

We'd even partnered this year with Family Zone to offer our community a free premium account, which gives them a suite of tools to easily monitor and restrict viewing time and unsuitable content across all their personal devices. But only seven families out of a school roll of 307 took up the offer.

So, as the ICT leader of the school, I wanted to come up with a purposeful way we could capture our community and bring this matter to their attention.

Running addiction

I'm a keen ultra-marathon runner and it came to me while on the trails one day that having an event combining physical education with a cultural day in order to get our cyber safety message across could be the answer. The principal thought it was a great idea. She and the staff (as well as some of the parents) are aware of my running addiction and were not surprised to hear of my desire to unite two of my passions. The support was immense, and it was seen as a great opportunity to get our community onsite and involved in a unique event.



MESSAGE BOARDS: STUDENTS' CYBER SAFETY POSTERS



ON THE RUN: TERRI COCHRANE WITH SOME OF HER CLASS

Shoot 'em-ups or sit-ups? Is gaming as good as going to gym? Find out on page 38.



The 'Cyber Awareness Day' was held last term on 2 July. I ran around a 900-metre circuit of the school for a combined total of four hours, covering about 36 kilometres. Originally, I'd planned to run all day but I was sick leading up to the event. However, as it turned out, this enabled more of the staff to be involved, which was beneficial all round.

Activities and stalls

During my run, I tagged in other school staff, who ran and walked with students for up to an hour. About 300 students took part. Each was sponsored, with an amazing \$3,000 being raised for the I AM HOPE charity, which promotes awareness and care for young people's mental health.

Afterwards, the school also organised fun activities and stalls, from 3-5pm, where our community sold cultural food and some classroom performances took place ending with a Kapa Haka performance. During this time, we also encouraged people to sign up for the free account, as well as a Community Connect Cyber Safety evening, which was to be held the following week – and ended up being very well attended.

Maintaining the message

The day was a lot of fun and has proved successful in engaging more of the school community with our cyber safety message and offers of assistance.

The importance and complexity of keeping our students safe online means that this is not to be just a one-off, 'ticked that box' event. Our work is far from done. We are now busy thinking of where we go next with teaching our wider school community about the daily risks that they face, keeping our kids safe online, and how we can all be upstanding digital citizens.

Scott Hillman teaches at Glenfield Primary School in Auckland.



KEEPING GOING: DEREK DALLOW ENCOURAGING CHILDREN DURING MORNING TEA



GETTING READY: PEIYU LI WITH HIS CLASS BEFORE THEIR BIG RUN



RUNNING MAN: SCOTT HILLMAN RUNNING PAST HIS CLASS IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL