

Packetville Press

Newsletter for Parents

Penny's Tips

Signing Up

The Packetville site has been redesigned to make it easier for educators, parents, and advisors to use. Now you'll only need one password and username to access the three sections for adults. This will simplify the process of navigating among different areas of the site.

Activities and Materials

In the **Packet Riders Instructional Materials** section, you'll find an area called *Fun with Crafts*. From there you can link to projects featuring the use of decal paper, fabric, and transfer paper. The instructions will introduce you and your family to a variety of materials that can be put through your printers. Your children will love creating all sorts of wonderful projects using these suggestions.

Encouraging Girls' Interest in Technology

Packetville is designed to appeal to both girls and boys. By introducing girls to exciting careers that feature technology and ways that technology can be used to help others, the games and lessons on Packetville encourage girls to learn more about technology and consider future careers in IT.

Women in Engineering

According to an article in the March 2006 *THE Journal*, women comprise only 9 percent of engineering-related careers.

Penny's Lessons...

Send your children on another Packetville adventure as they take on challenges in the **Penny's Search** game. Lessons and WebQuests featuring the game are available in the **Instructional Materials** sections of Packetville. The lesson *Penny's Search* features computer careers, girls and women in technology, and information about search engines, wireless communications, and file transfers.

The lessons *MP3 Designers* (Packet Riders) and *MP3 Via Satellite* (Hacker Busters) ask your children to invent games that make use of an MP3 file. Although the directions call for children to work in pairs or groups with classmates, the lesson activities can be completed and enjoyed by children working together or alone at home. Worksheets that include instructions for game development and preparation of a final report describing the product are available for downloading. These can be modified as needed to fit your family's needs.

Two WebQuests can also be used to reinforce the content covered in the **Penny's Search** game. One tells the story of a boy who claims that math, science, and technology are nothing but a bore. To counteract this notion, he is sent to Websites that feature math, science, and technology fun.

The other WebQuest addresses online safety. In it 13-year-old Jennifer is enjoying Instant Messaging late at night, when her mother comes in and is not too happy. Things get worse for Jennifer when her mother discovers that she doesn't actually know the person she is chatting with online. Jennifer's punishment is to go on the Internet to gather information about the

dangers of chatting and Instant Messaging, especially with strangers.

The *To Jennifer's Rescue* WebQuest should be useful to you as a parent, for many preteens and teens use the Internet to socialize. If your children are participating in social networking sites such as MySpace or Bebo, or enjoying Instant Messaging, blogging, chatting, or e-mailing, it's a good idea for them to complete this WebQuest.

Career Lesson...

Go Girl: Check Out the Cool Careers is a lesson written to accompany the game **Career Capture**. It's a girls-only lesson, which gives daughters the opportunity to do some serious thinking about their futures. The materials provided for this lesson include a worksheet that helps girls determine if they think like an engineer and another that encourages them to create career paths to the future. Your girls will enjoy exploring their career possibilities.

Sharing with Your Children's School...

Tell the administrators at your children's school about the Packetville site. The content fits neatly into classes where students use the Internet for learning.

On Being a Nerd...

A middle school girl recently said, "People used to think that only the nerds knew how to use computers. It's different now because all the kids I know use computers. So maybe we are all nerds and being a nerd isn't so bad after all. It's probably a compliment." 🧐

Packetville WebQuests....

Visit the **Hacker Busters** or **Packet Riders Instructional Materials** sections to find our WebQuests, which will send your children on informative Internet searches:

- To Jennifer's Rescue – Children discover the importance of Internet safety
- Math, Science, and Technology are Boring! – Children learn how to have fun with these subjects

Positive Attitudes Toward Technology

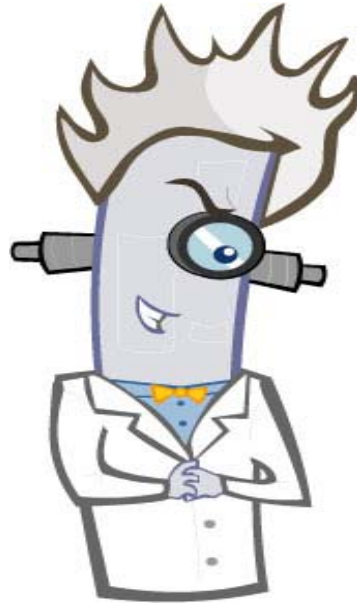
If you watch kids in our elementary classrooms today, you'll see that it's not just the boys who are interested in technology. The girls are also quick to show others how to work with computers. The tech gender gap seems to develop later as girls get the idea that hanging around computers is not exactly cool, or perhaps they find what they consider to be more interesting things to do with their time.

Some say that girls' negative attitudes toward technology develop because of their perception that technology is for the boys. After all, they experience a world filled with the violent digital video games that are usually more attractive to boys than to girls.

Although there are many girls in our schools who meet or exceed the level of the boys when it comes to technology, statistics tell us that out of those taking the Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science exam, only 17 percent are girls and that only 35 percent of those in information technology-related careers are female. (*THE Journal*, March 2006)

There's hope, though, because as technology changes, girls are becoming more interesting. While girls don't seem to be terribly eager to play shoot-'em-up video games, they are excited about using computers for learning, writing, collaborating, completing creative projects, interacting with others, solving problems, and playing some types of video games.

In a number of schools teachers are integrating the use of PDAs such as Palm Pilots or iPods into regular classroom use. Girls, as well as boys, appreciate using these devices for learning. Blogs, e-mail, and Instant Messaging are also finding their way into some classrooms. Schools that use video chat technologies, such as Apple's iChat, to connect their classes with other classes around the world know what a motivating experience it is for all students. Research on the use of video-type games in learning is also promising, and as more games are developed that appeal to all students, these will find increasing acceptance in our schools.



The Van Eck Study

According to the recent report, *Using Games to Promote Girls' Positive Attitudes Toward Technology* (Richard Van Eck, *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, Feb./March 2006), girls in a study of fifth and sixth grade students liked playing adventure games and when asked to develop their own games, enjoyed the challenge. The study suggests that girls' attitudes toward technology and video games would be different if games and computer activities weren't as oriented toward boys as they generally are. In addition, giving girls the opportunity to develop their own game helps to "demystify technology by showing that a great deal of computer game design and programming actually consists of writing, communicating, creating, and collaborating."

The study concluded that boys and girls alike found problem solving and open-ended games appealing and that the students involved in the study held positive attitudes toward technology. Because of findings and the obvious appeal of the computer games, author Van Eck suggests that schools might wish to consider including more game-based learning in their curricula.

Activities for Kids

In the **Hacker Busters** and **Packet Riders** sections, you'll find additional activity suggestions. Some of the latest activities added to the site are comic books for the Packet Riders to complete and a hip-hop rock event for Hacker Busters. 🙌

Send us your suggestions....

If you have ideas for new Packetville content or suggestions to help the Packetville staff improve the site resources, please go to **Ask Peter** and send us a message. **Ask Peter** is provided for educators, club advisors, parents, and school administrators using the site. It is not an area for children to ask questions.

