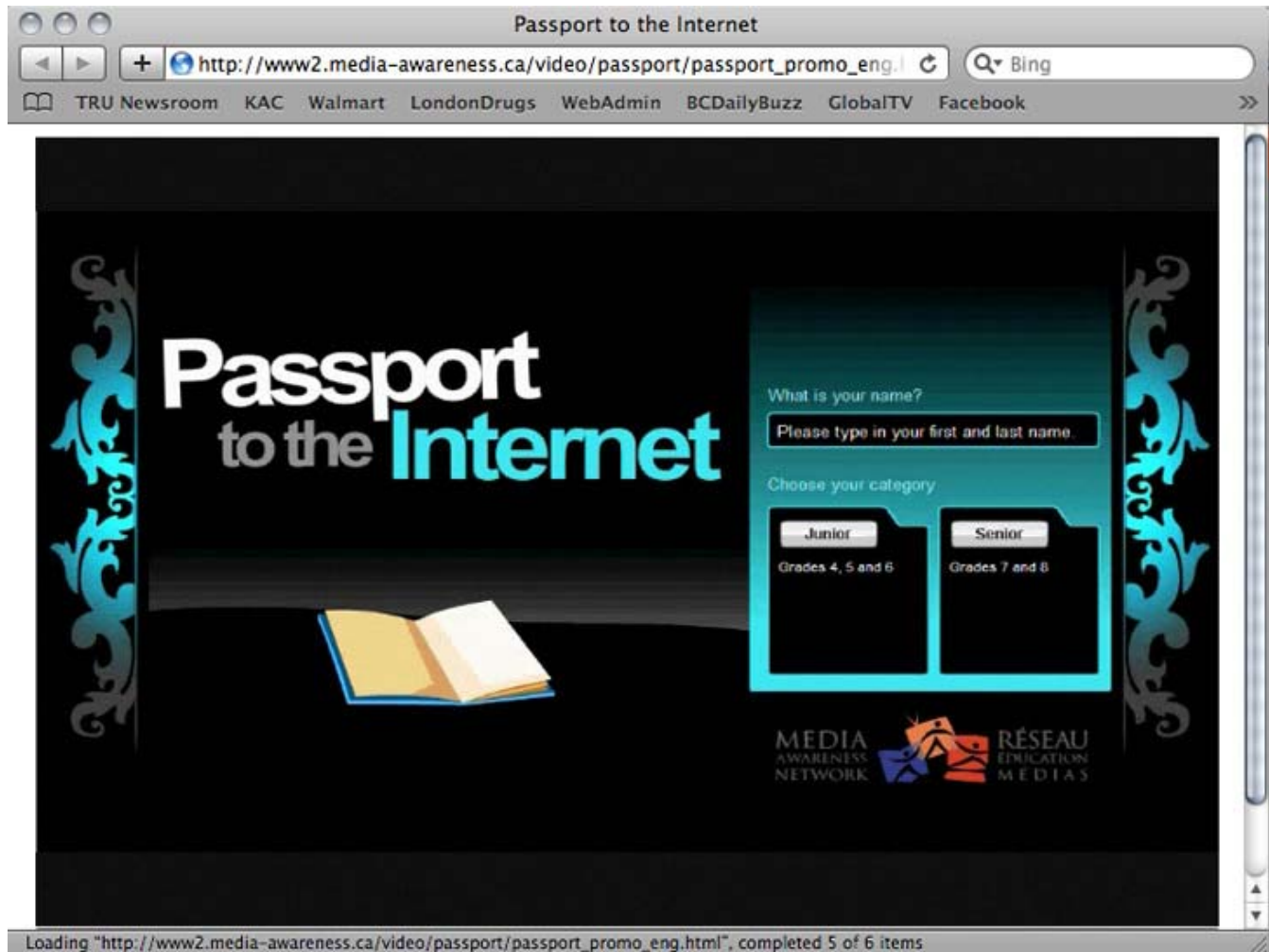




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SD73 kids learning the cyber-ropes



By [Tim Petruk - Kamloops This Week](#)

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An innovative software program is helping Kamloops students learn the cyber-ropes at a young age in an effort to help them stay safe online in the future.

Passport to the Internet, a program developed by the Media Awareness Network, is available to all schools in the Kamloops-Thompson School District.

Nowhere is its use more prominent, however, than at Bert Edwards Science and Technology School.

“Basically, it’s a series of modules to help the students understand different aspects of the Internet,” said Bert Edwards principal Jake Schmidt.

Passport to the Internet focuses on four components — social networking, online advertising, online searching and instant messaging.

It teaches students to be safe online, authenticate online information, recognize online marketing ploys, protect their privacy, manage their online relationships and deal with cyber-bullying.

In the program, students create an avatar and move through a fake cyber world — nothing they do is ever actually saved or made public — where they set up social-networking profiles, browse websites, use online search engines and instant message.

The software has a cartoonish look which, Schmidt said, has been helpful in getting kids to pay attention.

“The kids here have been really good about it,” he said.

“It kind of looks like a game and it’s really subtle in its approach, so the kids like it.”

Schmidt said social networking is a reality in student life, even at the elementary level.

“They are [active on social-networking sites],” he said.

“You’ll see different things. Usually, it’s our Grade 6 and Grade 7s and, usually, it’s Facebook.

“You can block the sites on the computers at school, but you still get a lot of it.

“They can still access it on their smartphones.”

Passport to the Internet is available district-wide, but its use is up to individual schools.

“The big thing is it’s a good starting point for conversation,” Schmidt said.

“I think the best thing we can do is to educate.”

• ANTI-BULLYING WEBINAR

Passport to the Internet isn’t the only online tool Bert Edwards is making use of to ensure its

students can find their way around the web safely. Next month, the school will take part in an online video

conference with the McMillen Center for Health Education, based in Fort Wayne, Ind. Schmidt said it’s just another tool to help students remain safe.

“It’s another thing we’re trying to add on,” he said. “You look at it and say, ‘OK, we’re doing Passport to the Internet, but what else

can we do?’”

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