Elizabeth Kennedy, Associate Director of the Cyber-Ethics Education Program at Norwich University, is a young woman with a mission. For the past year, she has been researching how children in our schools are being taught about the ethical uses of computers and networks.

Why should network and systems managers be interested in cyberethics education? Education matters because criminal hackers and the media have been given free reign to teach kids that breaking into your systems is OK – as long as they don’t change anything. The concept of the trusted computing base is utterly unknown to these people (or they are simply ignoring the issue). Unless we in the technical community get involved in teaching kids about what really happens when our systems are attacked, the number of attackers will continue to grow. Reducing the acceptability of criminal hacking is one of the methods we can use to reduce the overall threat to our systems in years to come.

Ms Kennedy has delivered lectures in a number of Vermont schools as well as to Rotary clubs, parent-teacher organization and state-wide teaching conferences since she began working on this project in October of 2000. In her discussions with teachers and principals, she has often been told that there simply is no hacking problem at the particular schools she’s visiting. No, no, say these authorities, no one in our school is involved with that sort of nonsense. Unfortunately, in school after school, the authorities are wrong. Kennedy makes a point of chatting with children about their understanding of hacking; within minutes, she is consistently told about kids who are hackers or who participate in other unethical activities such as false identity, or pretending to be 18 in order to participate in certain chat rooms, view pornographic material or gamble online.

Some of these kids have gotten involved with the hacker groups encouraged by 2600, *The Hacker Quarterly*. Kennedy attended a monthly meeting at a Borders Books store in Burlington Vermont a few months ago; the date and time were posted on the 2600 Web site. She found a number of children under age 18 sitting with people ranging into their 30s. These kids are being socialized into a culture where attacking your systems is perceived as fun. The older teenagers and young adults become role models for the impressionable children, who will perhaps in turn become criminal hackers as they develop their technical – but not ethical – knowledge.

Kennedy has created a Web site at [http://www.norwich.edu/cyberethics](http://www.norwich.edu/cyberethics) that has jargon-free research, articles and activities for parents, educators and kids to learn about the responsible use of technology. Introduced on the site is “E-dog” a technology-age superhero that Kennedy hopes children will recognize and model their ethical computing practices after. Kennedy believe that teaching children responsibly in a “cyber” world is no different than teaching responsibly in the “real” world and that is the message that is conveyed in all of her work be it in a lecture, in an article she writes or on her Web site. Her White Paper on Cyberethics [<http://www.norwich.edu/cyberethics/whitepaper.html>](http://www.norwich.edu/cyberethics/whitepaper.html) has an excellent introduction suitable for
parents and teachers and includes links to many useful cyberethics resources.

In the next part of this two-part series, I will explain how you can support the cyberethics project by voluntarily sending donations as thanks for useful materials we have freely posted on the Web. To contribute to these efforts, make your check out to NORWICH UNIVERSITY CYBERETHICS and address it to Elizabeth Kennedy / Cyber-Ethics Program / Norwich University / 158 Harmon Drive / Northfield, VT 05663-1035. Kennedy’s phone number is 802-485-2250 and her e-mail address is <mailto: ekenedy@norwich.edu>.

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