

JENNIFER CONNELLAN : FUTURE FOCUS

One Law Driving Parents Crazy

There is a relatively new law in California that parents are definitely struggling to enforce.

It is the new provisional driver's license law. For teens today, driving around with friends is not an option. As of January 1, 2006, new drivers are issued a provisional driver license. With the provisional driver license, teens must be accompanied and supervised by a licensed parent, guardian or other licensed driver 25 years of age or older, or by a licensed or certified driving instructor when they transport passengers under 20 years of age at any time, for the first twelve months or until they turn 18, whichever comes first. They also may not drive at all without an adult between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. for the first year.

What does this mean? It means that for an entire year after kids get their licenses they should only be in the car alone or with a parent. Since most kids get their licenses during their junior year, it means that they



are not able to give their friends or siblings a ride to school, or practice, or anywhere until their senior year in high school. It means that if new drivers are hanging out together at someone's house and decide that they want to go to the movies, they must drive separately, or be driven by an adult.

If you know teenagers, you understand how difficult this law can be to enforce. Teens are pining for freedom, and this law often times creates big hitches in their nightly plans. Kids are telling me that, "Most kids don't pay attention to that rule at all. All of my friends drive other kids around. Most parents are cool about it, but even if they're not, we still sneak around it."

This creates a huge dilemma for parents.

You know your teens want to drive with their friends more than anything, and realistically it is probably going to happen whether you like it or not. But it is still against the law. So what do you do? Many

parents start making small exceptions "just this once" or "only if you are going less than five miles." Even parents who are typically sticklers on laws and rules have told me they are struggling to enforce this one consistently. The rules are bent a few times, and conflict with the teen is avoided. But after a few more small exceptions and times when you look the other way, it is as if the law did not exist in the first place.

Although I completely understand how this vicious cycle begins, we have to remember that this law was put in place for one very important reason: Safety.

Teen drivers are the most dangerous drivers on the road, both to themselves and to others. According to the National

Transportation Safety Board, "motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for young people 15 to 20 years of age." They are more likely to be in a car crash than older drivers, being "involved in 14 percent of all traffic fatalities" although they just make up only 7 percent of the population.

Teens NEED those 12 months to gain experience and maturity as drivers without the distraction of having their friends in the car with them. 65 percent of teen passenger deaths occur when another teenager is driving. With statistics like these, it is easier to see the importance of helping our kids enforce the law.

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CHUCK McCULLY, INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT: CUSD

Keeping Up with Technology

Software programs that grade essays. Video-editing in the elementary classroom.

Checking a child's grades online. Pod-casting. Taking attendance with a keyboard. Classroom presentations via Power Point. Listservs from the principal. Wireless laptop carts. Internet learning.

This month's column takes a look at another of Capistrano Unified's

Major District Objectives for the 2006-07 school year: the Improvement of Technological Productivity.

Only a few years ago educators saw technology as a way to enhance the instructional program, but today we view it as fundamental to our schools' operations. What were once the novelty gadgets of cutting-edge teachers are now common instructional tools used effectively in classrooms across the school district. Parents, teachers, and administrators have come to expect that children will have access to the latest technology to help them learn. Teachers, administrators and staff now employ comprehensive software programs to create curriculum, manage budgets and testing data, track student and personnel records, and communicate with parents.

Today Capistrano Unified has over 14,000 computers in classrooms, labs and offices, and over 300 servers storing data and supporting Internet access. Invisible



systems of routers, switches, printers, scanners, and other peripherals support technological functions at schools.

The task of purchasing, installing, repairing, and updating equipment is daunting. Training teachers, administrators, clerical staff and technical support staff is an ongoing challenge. Therefore, the CUSD Board of Trustees has chosen technology as a

major objective because the need for state-of-the-art classroom and management tools is exploding.

CUSD's goal is an integrated system of technology that is reliable, efficient, and cost-effective. To that end we have established these goals:

- **Increase the speed of our Internet connection.** Until recently, CUSD's connection was 1.5 megabits per second (MBS), which is slower than the speed that most families have in their homes. Through an agreement with Cox Communications, CUSD's connection is now six times faster than it was (10 MBS) and will soon be upgraded to a minimum of 100 MBS. Faster speed will increase the efficiency of student Internet research, student information systems, file sharing, and a multitude of functions that involve the transmittal of large amounts of data.

- **Centralize servers and service.** Twenty-one technicians race across the 195 square

miles of CUSD each day to update and repair computers and servers at 56 schools. A faster connection will make it possible to bring all servers to the technology hub at the education center. Fewer, faster, and more efficient servers can be maintained on-site by highly trained technical support specialists. The purchase of state-of-the-art software management tools will make it possible for staff to upgrade and repair desktop computers throughout the district remotely and, sometimes, automatically. These improvements will decrease the need for support personnel to spend several hours each day driving from one school site to another and decrease the "downtime" of computers needing servicing, increasing reliability and cost efficiency.

- **Plan for the replacement of old and**

obsolete technology. Wise investments in the correct technology results in cost savings. Computers become less reliable with age and obsolete as technology advances. Desktop computers are efficient for approximately five years, and many thousands of our computers are more than five years old. Computer purchases are often viewed as one-time expenses, but schools must plan for the purchase of new technology as ongoing budget expenses.

Blackberries. Bluetooth. Wi-Fi. PDA's. Virtual Reality. You Tubes. Wikipedia.

The world that our students are inheriting has a vocabulary and an imagination that has yet to be determined. We must prepare them today with the tools to be successful and competitive tomorrow.



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