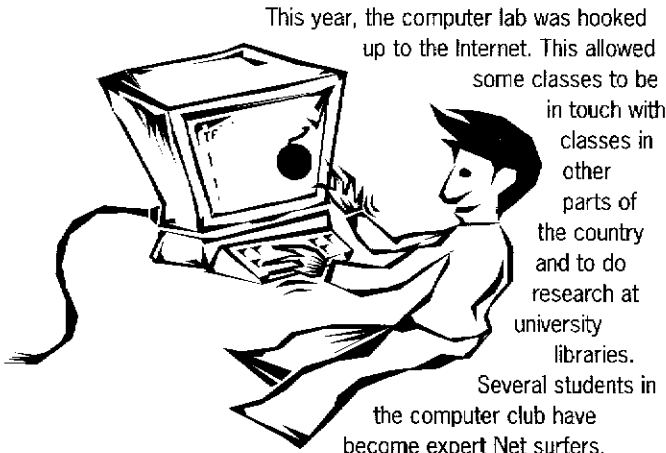


# CASES



## SURF'S UP

The Greenwood High School PTA has been very active in supporting the school. As district funds have decreased, the PTA has raised money for sports, music, computers, and the school library.



This year, the computer lab was hooked up to the Internet. This allowed some classes to be in touch with classes in other parts of the country and to do research at university libraries.

Several students in the computer club have become expert Net surfers.

These students found their way to political extremists' Web sites and downloaded information from groups that advocate terrorism and violence to further their political goals. The material included instructions for making bombs. When the faculty advisor found the materials, the boys were suspended from the club for the semester, but the problem didn't end there.

One boy's father demanded that his son be reinstated. This parent does not object to his son exploring political material. And, since his son wasn't circulating the material, this parent reasoned, there was no offense and his son should be reinstated.

The PTA has another opinion. At the last meeting, the board voted to suspend funding for the computer program until the Internet hookup is properly supervised so that no minors can access this sort of material.

A group of students, led by the editor of the school paper, has challenged the PTA's stand, saying that the decision amounts to censorship and that if the Internet link is removed, they will sue the PTA, the principal, and the school district for violating their First Amendment rights.

Have your students role-play this controversy. One group can play students; another group might repre-

sent school officials; and a third group might represent the parents. Ask each group to develop a position. What freedoms do students have? Do they have a right to access material about bomb making? What legal cases have established these freedoms? What authority does the school district have to censor material? What about the parents? What are their rights in this matter?

After the class argues this case for a while, ask them to discuss who's right and why.

How else might this case be decided? Is there some other authority, besides a court of law, that the parties might accept to resolve the conflict?

If your school has a conflict management or resolution program, you might ask the participating students to role-play this situation as a conflict resolution problem. How successful are they?

*"The Greek word  
for idiot,  
literally translated,  
means one who  
does not participate  
in politics.  
That sums up  
my conviction on  
the subject."*

—Gladys Pyle