

Have kids chat less? LOL (lots of luck)

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Mike Nichols

SUP?

If you are reading this in a newspaper rather than online, are over the age of 25 or have never in your long and productive life instant-messaged anyone, chances are you have no idea what that means.

According to the dictionary of Internet terms available at www.netlingo.com, it means, "What's up?"

Or, as you sometimes hear it verbalized, "Whasssup?"

Whasssup in Port Washington nowadays - and just about everywhere else in America, we can assume by extension - is that kids are starting to confuse "Internet English," the little codes and abbreviations and hieroglyphics, with English of the more traditional variety.

You might not know whassup, as a result, but you can guess what is down: test scores.

Arlan Galarowicz, the principal of Thomas Jefferson Middle School, says that 75% of eighth-graders perform "very, very, very well" on standardized tests, but about a quarter are using unacceptable shortcuts and at least some of that stems from rampant computer usage.

"Parents have to be aware of what these kids are writing and how they are writing it," said Galarowicz.

To which computer-savvy kids undoubtedly respond: GOI.

(Get over it.)

This is an age-old dilemma writ large - or, at least, typed large - for modern times.

We need to cajole our children into spending more time studying and less time online, but we aren't even sure how to communicate with them.

We, quite literally, use different languages.

We are parents, after all, not Republican congressmen.

At first, I thought the key was learning some of their lingo.

- "^^URS," for example, means "Up yours."

- "AYTMTB" means, "And you're telling me this *because*?"
- "L8R" means, "Later."
- "FOFL" means, "falling on the floor laughing."
- And "AAF" means, "as a friend."

Well, AAF, and as a parent, let me fill you in on something. Kids don't just use abbreviations to make things quicker, they use them to make things more secretive.

- "P911" means, "parent alert."
- "PAL" means, "parents are listening."
- "PAW" means, "parents are watching."
- "KPC" means, "keeping parents clueless."
- And "PIR" means, "parent in room."

There's even an abbreviation for "parent over shoulder;" "POS."

And now that we parents looking over the shoulder know what that acronym means, there will undoubtedly be another. For every abbreviation we decipher, in fact, two more are likely to pop up in its place.

We're never going to fully understand their language. They don't want us to. Maybe, though, there's a way to help them understand ours.

- TYFSIYCA. CYHAESOH: "Thank you for sending in your college application. Clearly, you have an excellent sense of humor."
- ITAROAJ: "Is that a résumé or a joke?"
- YAJFJHB: "You're applying for a job here *because*?"

E-mail mnichols@journalssentinel.com or call (262)376-4374.