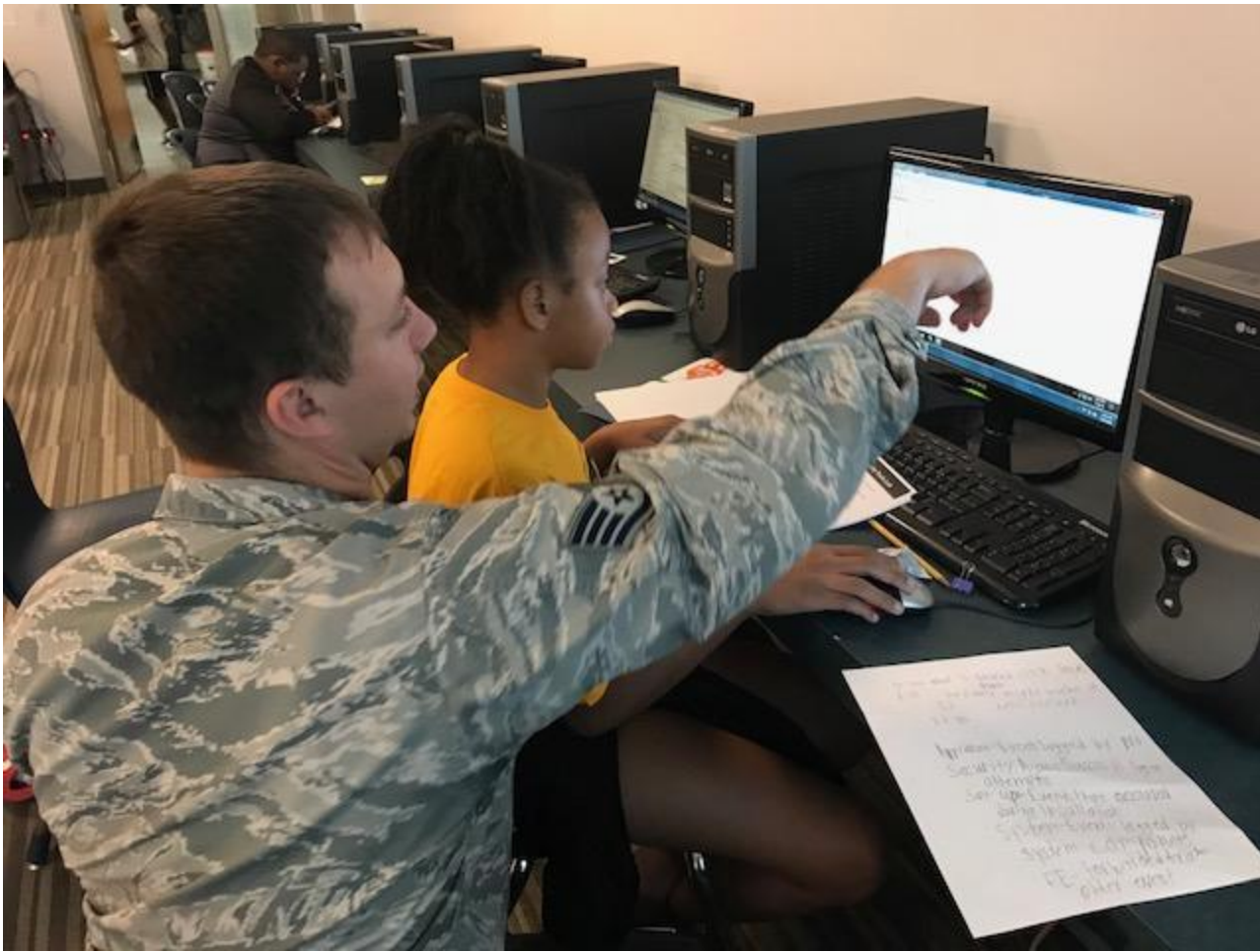# Middle school students inspired and educated at Summer Cybercamp

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EAST ST. LOUIS – Surfing the internet these days is as much of a part of growing up for kids as riding bikes and playing sports.

So, East St. Louis District 189 teamed up with the Air Force Association (AFA) and the Midwest Cyber Center to offer some of its students the opportunity not only to learn about how to be safer online – but also to possibly inspire them to pursue a career in the rapidly-expanding and evolving field of internet security – at the AFA Cyber Patriot CyberCamp.

During camp, participants learn how serious cyber crimes can be and how they directly affect their lives. "We live in a technologically-dependent environment, the AFA Cyber Patriot CyberCamp is such a unique opportunity for our students to advance skills and be responsible digital citizens," said Karmilia Prude, Technology Integration Specialist with East St. Louis District 189. "We launched our 1:1 technology initiative rollout last year in the school district, and students are constantly surrounded by digital devices. It's exciting to know that the students attending this camp receive hands-on experience and learn how to protect computers, programs, and data."

Students also learned that there are growing workforce opportunities in the field of cybersecurity. A team of volunteers from Scott Airforce Base dedicated their expertise to serve as field mentors throughout the week. "Our volunteers really made a difference in helping students realize how there is a growing need to defend the U.S. against persistent cyber threats." Prude added, "We are grateful for educational opportunities like these that leverage the experienced workforce in our local community to provide increased career opportunities and exposure for our youth."

This is the second CyberCamp conducted by the three partners. Last year's session was made available to high school students. "This year, we really wanted to prioritize reaching students at a younger age to teach them about cyber safety, cyber ethics and critical network security skills and tools," noted Prude. The five-day-long sessions ran July 16-20. Participants completed 20 hours of work during that time. On the last day of the program, students faced off against each other in a competition that challenges them to apply what they learned. "Campers take on the role of an IT administrator and are tasked with finding and addressing cybersecurity vulnerabilities in simulated network environments. The students love this cyber defense competition!"

The CyberPatriot National Youth Cyber Education Program was created by the Air Force Association in 2009 to attract students to cybersecurity and other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines critical to our nation's future. In addition to the annual National Youth Cyber Defense Competition and the new AFA CyberCamp program, CyberPatriot has three other programs for various age groups. The Elementary School Cyber Education Initiative (ESCEI) was designed to introduce young students to online safety. The Cyber Education Literature Series was created to teach younger children about cyber safety with the debut of the illustrated Children's book: Sarah the Cyber Hero. The newest program for CyberPatriot is CyberGenerations: a senior citizens guide to cyber safety that will premiere in late spring 2018. To learn more about CyberPatriot, visit www.usycyberpatriot.org.

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