



Cyber Savvy

Preparing our students to become responsible digital citizens!

November/December 2015

School Counselor Highlights: Keeping our kids safe!!

At this time of year many parents think about buying their children an electronic device, such as an iPad or cellphone. After all what a great way to communicate with family and friends. While this is a wonderful idea, we as parents need to be smart and informed about the responsibility involved in using these devices. Are we talking with our children about boundaries? Are we ourselves becoming informed about the latest in technology?

Let's take a look at the applications, "Kik and Instagram", which are seemingly innocent and innocuous but which many of our students are using. While on the surface it may seem that these apps provide for a safe communication outlet, the opposite can often be true. Kik and Instagram both require its users to be at least 13 years old, yet neither of them has a means of verifying the age. Kik is a texting application while Instagram is a photo sharing application with a means for viewers to make comments. When making a comment on Instagram it is public. Kik chats are private. What's happening is kids are giving their Kik usernames on Instagram for others to see. You may see

them say, "Kik me at ..." which is them sharing their Kik username and basically provides for a private conversation to occur on Kik between your child and their "new followers". Once these people have connected on Kik the potential is there for access to inappropriate comments and sites. These "new followers" can then access your child's photos and contacts.

While much concern seems to be around the use of Kik, Instagram can give your children access to graphic and inappropriate photos. This may be a good opportunity to have a discussion about appropriate posts.

Obviously safety of these sites depends on the type of child you have and the type of parent you are. Talk to your kids about these sites; the merits and the pitfalls. Be prepared for the argument of "all my friends are using these apps". Don't be afraid to check your child's phone. Remember, the ultimate goal is to keep our children safe.



If your fifth grader already has an Instagram account, why not try taking the quiz found at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/hollee-becker/instagram-quiz_b_3002229.html

It may prove to be very enlightening.

Other sites to check out:

<http://protectyoungeyes.com/the-quiz/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/risa-ferman/what-are-your-kids-really_b_3007504.html

www.hightechdad.com

There is an ever changing wealth of knowledge out there. Equip yourselves with the knowledge needed to keep your kids safe.

Pamela J. McCallip
EM Yoder School Counselor
336-438-4000 ext 32005