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# Learning In Burlington

The blogging space of the Burlington Public Schools Assistant Superintendent for Learning

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Thursday, January 24, 2013

## Are You Sure Your Child Isn't Using Social Media?



What Apps Is Your Child Using?

Just because your child does not have a Facebook or Twitter account does not mean they are not using social media resources. I have been hearing rumblings from various communities (including Burlington) about elementary and middle school-aged children making poor choices with social media resources. I am certain that in many cases that the parents of these kids are unaware that their kids are over-sharing personal information, posting and viewing inappropriate pictures, and having inappropriate conversations with friends AND STRANGERS.

The bottom line here is that parents need to check on every app at that their children are adding to their iPod, iPad, iPhone, or other web-enabled device. We have moved so quickly from the days when our biggest web-based concern regarding our children was a desktop computer in a common area of our homes. As we are well aware, many of the gadgets that they carry in their pockets can do so much more than those desktops could ever do. With new social media apps and websites coming onto the scene at a breathtaking pace, it is not surprising that parents can't keep up.

### A Little Advice For Parents

So as I navigate this landscape with my own kids, I want to let you know that just keeping your kids off of Facebook and Twitter is a far cry from keeping them off of social media. **In an effort to promote awareness, I have a few questions for parents...**

1. Do you know what apps are on your child's iPad, iPod, Smartphone, etc.?
2. Do you know which apps are connected to social media resources?
3. Do you monitor the social media accounts that you have allowed your child to create?
4. Have you heard of [snapchat](#)?

If you answered no to at least one of the above questions then you are probably in the majority of parents out there. If you answered yes to most of the above questions then please share your knowledge with the parents you know to help them stay on top of what is happening. The fact of the

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matter is that these sites typically require a user to be at least 13 years of age to register and many kids lie about their age in order to sign up which raises an additional issue.

In regards to Snapchat, you get bonus points if you know that one. Snapchat has become known by many as a tool for sexting [as a recent Mashable post describes](#). The way it works is that an individual may send another individual a picture and the sender decides how long the person receiving the picture can view it (from 1-10 seconds) and then the picture disappears "forever." Of course since lesson number-one in the whole social media game is that anything you say online can follow you "forever," we know this is not true.

From a parent's perspective, it is tough to connect the current experience that our children are having with social media resources to our own experiences growing up. All we really had was a telephone to connect with our friends and have social conversations. In addition, most of us had some time limits in place when it came to these conversations. In my opinion, it would make sense for us all to at least have some idea of how much time are kids are spending online and what they are up to.

### Some Resources For Parents

[Common Sense Media has some great resources for parents](#) to help them set appropriate ground rules for their kids. It also provides parents with great app reviews, like the one below for Snapchat. You can search with the box in the upper right hand corner for a review of most apps and find out some useful information before deciding whether or not it is appropriate for your child.

We will continue to provide workshops for parents to learn about these issues, but in the meantime I encourage parents to check out a few of the following:

[Seven Media-Savvy Skills All Parents Need In 2013](#) - Common Sense Media

[Twins Secret Lives Online](#) - The Wall Street Journal

[Lesson Learned: Kids and Instagram](#) - Alphamom.com

If you feel you are a parent who has a good handle on this issue, then please share some of the practices that you think are working well!! If you are parent who feels lost and needs immediate assistance, please contact me and I would be happy to offer some advice/assistance (larkin@bpsk12.org).

Posted by [Patrick Larkin](#) at 8:43 PM

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**Sheri Watkins** January 25, 2013 at 1:10 PM

Mr. Larkin,

Your district is lucky to have such a forward thinking Assistant Superintendent! You share some great advice and Common Sense Media is a wonderful resource! I especially like the 4 questions you pose to parents to get them thinking about the issues kids are facing when it comes to digital media.

As an advocate of education and social media, one of the things I always tell parents is kids may be tech savvy, but they are not socially savvy or emotionally mature yet. In fact, we just posted a blog entry covering kids and apps and what parents need to consider: <http://haythersocialmedia.com/snap-chat-poke-whats-the-recommended-allowance-for-kids-and-mobile-apps/>

Your tips are real and thoughtful. This is a topic we have been addressing with parents of tweens through our Saving Face program, <http://haythersocialmedia.com/savingface/> We focus on giving parents and tweens a road map for good social media behavior and etiquette. In fact one of the topics we cover is social media manners!

Bottom line: parents and educators should take proactive steps to prepare kids!

Sheri Watkins

PS If you would like more info on how we are working with parents, students, & schools in Michigan please feel free to contact me. [swatkins@haythersocialmedia.com](mailto:swatkins@haythersocialmedia.com)

[Reply](#)



**Patrick Larkin** January 25, 2013 at 1:24 PM

Thanks for the comments and the useful links Sheri!

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Today

Friday, February 1

**Thursday, February 7**

[ISTE Virtual Conference](#)

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**Friday, March 1**

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**Friday, March 8**

[iPad Conference, Manchester, UK](#)

**Friday, March 15**

[Wilmington, DE](#)

**Wednesday, April 10**

[EdTech Teacher iPad Summit in Atla](#)

**Thursday, April 11**

[EdTech Teacher iPad Summit in Atla](#)

**Friday, April 12**

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