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Monday, May 20, 2013

Do You Have Any Idea What Your Kids Are Posting Online?



I have spent a fair amount of time lately checking out the activity of some students and what they are posting online. I am interested in the behavior of my kids online and the kids that they associate with. I have also spent time checking out the social media behaviors of a few other middle and high school aged relatives as well as some students in Burlington. As I read these Twitter posts (aka Tweets), Instagram posts, and Facebook posts I am certain that the parents of these kids are not aware of the conversations that their children are having online.

Before I cite the negative uses of social media I am seeing, I want to say that most of the communication I see online from students is appropriate. However, I have seen examples of elementary students poking fun at classmates and using profanity, I have seen middle school students using inappropriate language, and I have seen high school students make posts using sexually suggestive language and also use a great deal of profanity.

I have a few areas of concern when it comes to this "over-sharing" that is happening online. What I mean by "over-sharing" is that these young people are sharing too much information online. Either they do not know that the things that they post are accessible to anyone on the internet and can be copied with a quick screen shot or they don't care. My experience tells me that it is a bit of both with younger students being a bit clueless to how things work and the older students being a bit more carefree about it (although many are also clueless).

Of course the simplest solution is for our kids to understand that the boundaries for responsible communication do not change whether you are face-to-face, on the phone, texting, tweeting, posting, etc. But while we continue to promote respectful behavior, how can we get parents more in the loop? Our kids have a lot more avenues for communication than we did as parents and that is not all bad. However, I think we have an obligation to get to know all of the places that are students spend time whether they are physical spaces or online spaces.

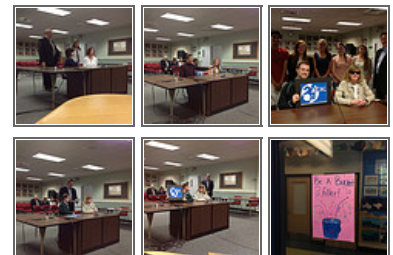
One of the most popular social media resources with my own kids and a lot of their friends right now is Instagram. I know that it is also popular in Burlington and we have students at every grade level using it. As we plan for our final Parent Technology Night in June, I want to share some resources below that provide a great overview of Instagram for parents.

[Andrea Tomkins from Media Smarts did a great overview of Instagram back at the beginning of May.](#)

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Check out a couple of the key excerpts below:

Here's what parents need to know:

- *Users officially need to be 13 and older to start an Instagram account. I do recommend enforcing this rule at home because I'm not entirely convinced that younger kids are mature enough to use these kinds of social media applications.*
- *Lay down some ground rules, and stress that if the rules are broken it is cause for immediate account deletion.*

Our rules are:

1. *Only follow people you know personally. (This might be tricky, because user names are sometimes "TeddyBear456".)*
2. *Never share any personal information about yourself, where you live and go to school.*
3. *Don't use geolocation services near personal landmarks, namely, home and school. In other words, turn off the option that allows others to know the exact location from where you're publishing your photo.*
4. *Never publish anything you wouldn't want your parents, teachers, and grandparents to see. Photos can be shared widely, with anyone, in a matter of seconds.*
5. *Practice the golden rule and treat others as you would like to be treated when you're using Instagram. T.H.I.N.K. before you comment on a friend's photo: is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind?*
6. *Do not upload or tag photos of other people without their permission. If you snap a photo of your friends, always ask them before sharing it on Instagram.*

It's also good idea to make your child's account private, otherwise anyone signed into Instagram can view photos on a public user's profile (which is easily accessed at www.instagram.com/username).

As a parent, my job is to:

- *Follow my daughter on Instagram.*
- *Peek at her photos and leave comments on the ones I really like to encourage those creative efforts and keep the juices flowing.*
- *Check the comments on her photos every once in awhile and see who's following who.*
- *Chat about the activity on her account every once in awhile together. e.g. "Did you see that great photo that your friend TeddyBear456 posted?"*

That subtly lets her know that I'm in the loop, and a pretty hip mama to boot! (Ha ha.) Are you on Instagram? Are your kids? Do you have guidelines at home?

Related articles

- [Middle school warns parents about Instagram](http://fox4kc.com) (fox4kc.com)
- [Do you like me? | Is Social Media Creating Approval Addicts?](http://pinkballoons4lunch.com) (pinkballoons4lunch.com)



Posted by [Patrick Larkin](#) at 1:43 PM

+9 Recommend this on Google

Labels: [Instagram](#), [Parent](#), [Social media](#), [Student](#)

2 comments:



Tim White May 20, 2013 at 4:06 PM

You hit the nail right on the head. Many parents have no clue about the dangers/possibilities of social media that can be accessed via smartphone. A cell phone is so much more now than something you need use to make phone calls with. We did a unit and the networks/apps/etc that were mentioned were foreign to me. I guess I also wonder: how do parents not know this is happening? Do they not look at their students phone from time to time. As long as I pay the bill I get to be in control of the phone. You only borrow it from me... Is that too harsh? Would it help?

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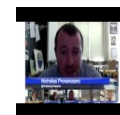
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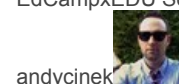


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May 28, 2013
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andycinek

**Patrick Larkin** May 20, 2013 at 4:41 PM

Thanks Tim. That is a great message for parents. I do not think it is too harsh.

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