

FROM THE DESK OF AMBER ARCHER BOSCO

SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS

January 25, 2016

Dear Parents,

We have seen an increase in incidences involving the inappropriate use of social media, including various applications such as Yik Yak and After School, which are being used to anonymously intimidate and harass students. While we have taken necessary precautions to block/restrict these types of apps on our network, students can access them through their data plans during the school day. Use after school hours still creates a major distraction to the learning process and can lead to very serious repercussions for all involved parties. We are sharing this information with parents in order to open a dialogue between parents and teens about their digital lives and so that we – school and parents – can work as a team to teach our students about appropriate social media use.

App	What it looks like...	How it's advertised...	How it's really used...
After School	 or 	Connects students from the same high school to create a safe space for students to share without using their names.	Students anonymously post gossip and other mean things about people at KWHS. They use names, post pictures, and can torture someone without owning what they post.
Yik Yak		Works like an anonymous bulletin board, displaying messages from people in a user's area that can be voted 'up' or 'down'.	Anyone using Yik Yak can turn a school into a virtual chat room where everyone can post his or her comments, anonymously. Untruthful, mean, character-assassinating short messages are immediately seen by all users in a specific geographic area.
Ask.fm	 or 	#1 Q&A app where you find out more about your friends from answers to questions you send their way.	Students anonymously ask mean questions about people who are not their friends. Anyone can post anything.
Snap Chat		Users send a picture that disappears after a few seconds to everyone on their snap chat list. Students are more likely to send inappropriate pictures because they think it will disappear.	Students who receive the picture screenshot the snap and then send it out via text or post to the above forums.

Vault Apps			Allows students to hide pictures, texts, internet use, and browsing history.
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What Can You Do?

The first thing is to have an honest discussion with your children about the dangers these apps pose. Whether it be sending an inappropriate image or simply possessing one, there are some real world consequences for both. Also, discuss the role of their phone in their life in general – is it helpful or hurtful? What adjustments can be made to make the phone a more positive tool? More self-discipline is needed now than ever before in regards to phone use. Teens need their parents to set boundaries for use because they won't on their own.

Parents can also enable parental controls on both iPhones and Android devices. From the iPhone side, parents can choose to approve every app that a child wants to download. For example, the "Ask to Buy" feature on iPhones will send a notification to the parent's phone looking for parental approval before the app can be downloaded. Android doesn't have that feature, but it does have parental controls that can help lock the devices down.

Common Sense Media is a tremendous free resource for information that parents can use for support.

There is also a free 6-week online course offered on iTunes called "Digital Parenting 101". Topics include social media, internet filters, device restrictions, and helping your child make a positive digital footprint.

Stay up to date on research and articles that are posted as Parent Service Announcements (PSA) on Key West High Athletics and Student Activities Facebook page.

Attend our Parent Tech Talk where we will continue the conversation between school and parent as to how we can support each other in raising digitally responsible teens! More information to come...

Thank you for taking the time to review this information, discussing it with your child, and for your continued support of Key West High School.

Sincerely,

Amber Archer Bosco