



LAWRENCE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians

At the local and national levels, there have been many troubling incidents reported in the media regarding students' use of the Internet. In particular, it has come to our attention that social networking sites such as **KIK, Snapchat, Instagram** and **Facebook** have become extremely popular and that it is not uncommon to find underage children, like our students, registered at these sites.

Unfortunately, Lawrence Public Schools, as well as most districts on Long Island, has had our share of cyber bullying incidents related to these and other online sites. Primarily, these occurrences happen at home, after school hours, when children have access to Websites that are normally blocked in school.

We urge you to speak to your children about internet safety. Children don't completely understand that once you hit that send or submit button, the information and images sent no longer belong to just them. Friends, family, colleges, future employers, and strangers all have access to and the right to view and lift any material online. We need to take a united stand as parents, guardians and educators. The peer pressure alone that our children contend with regarding these sites is enormous and frankly unfair.

We understand that it is certainly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children are using new and ever-changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including cell phones, iPads, gaming consoles and other portable wireless high-tech devices. Children as young as elementary students have become very savvy in the use of technology and therefore, it should come as no surprise that the Internet has now become a favored forum for socializing, and is now the preferred method of communication among children and teens. Students communicate with each other on the Web through email, instant messaging services, such as Oovoo, and through blogs, which are online journals that people can read and respond to. The social networking sites in particular are very much like an online diaries, where students can post personal information about themselves including their name, age and photograph, their likes, dislikes, interests and friends. This poses a very serious concern as children are left vulnerable to predators. Interestingly, students would not share this information with a stranger on the street but somehow feel comfortable when sharing it on the Web for everyone to see. These networking sites also provide features such as instant messaging and email so that visitors, and strangers included, can communicate and have a direct conversation with our children. We believe children feel comfortable sharing information because they are physically in a safe and comfortable place communicating through a screen.

Lawrence restricts access to these Websites in school and we recommend that parents actively **limit and monitor** their children's Internet access at home with their safety foremost in mind. We encourage you to learn about Internet safety and to play an active role in discussing the issue with the children. We have provided a chart of websites your child may be using in this letter to assist you in understanding the sites that are available to them.

Lawrence is committed to do our best to provide our students with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behavior and to respond appropriately. It is through the collaborative efforts of home, school and community that we can ensure that all students become responsible cyber citizens.

Very Truly Yours,

Willis Perry

Principal – LMS Broadway Campus

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