Some Tips on Monitoring Social Networks

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Use technology to fight technology
Go to these websites to download filters and tools to help you monitor the use of your student's social networks. These tools will help prevent inappropriate messages / images from being sent or received. The tools below will be called "all-in-one" as they monitor your student's use of social networks for you and inform you via e-mail alerts. You do not have to individually check your Facebook accounts, email, Twitter, text messages, and so on. The following sites do it all for you (at various levels). You will not even have to physically have your student's tablet or phone. The filters mentioned below will create a "control board" in your personal computer that will allow you to control their use remotely:

www.uknowkids.com - A one-stop service that monitors almost all social networking platforms and informs you via instant emails. This provides a dashboard that allows you to monitor almost everything your student does online.

www.netnanny.com - Another all-in-one service that helps parents monitor online behaviors. This is one of the most powerful Internet filters on the market.

www.trucare.com - Monitors social networks and informs you just like the previous sites; however, does not cover all platforms.

The previous sites have some of the best reputations in the industry. There are many more. Just search Google for social network monitoring tools for parents.

The following sites do not monitor social networks, but they are some of the best sites to get help if your student is being harassed or stalked online:

www.haltabusektd.org - Works with children and teenagers who are suffering online harassment.

www.cyberangles.org - Volunteers working to locate online stalkers.

www.wiredsafety.com - Report cyber abuse; if the situation involves some kind of physical or life threat, parents should inform the local police before Wired Safety gets involved.

Parenting Strategies
Have "the conversation" ... This will be about the dangers of social networks. It is important that your children understand that they can cause serious harm to their own lives through the misuse of social networks. If you do not tell them, who will? Here are the points you should mention in this brief but intense conversation:

1. What you post is permanent, you cannot retrieve it, and it will be there forever. If you send an inappropriate image of yourself on Twitter, you will have to deal with the existence of the image for the rest of your life. If you make an inappropriate comment and send it on social networks, you will have to deal with the consequences for a long time.

2. Inappropriate behavior in social networks is prosecutable. You can be suspended from school and even charged with a crime. If you are convicted of cyberbullying, you will be charged with a

misdemeanor that will be in your juvenile record until you are eighteen. Employers and universities check the background of their candidates. You may not get a job because of something you posted on Instagram. You may not get a college scholarship because you tweeted a racist or threatening comment. Your future could change drastically when you press the button to send or post, please be careful.

3. You can cause a lot of pain with a single message full of hatred. Do you want to be responsible for hurting someone else?

Limit the platforms

If allowed to have their own devices, students will want to be on all platforms: Twitter, text messaging, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, ask.fm and so on. Unless you use one of the most expensive social media monitoring tools, it would be very difficult to monitor everything. And even if you use the best monitoring tool there is, there are none that can control everything because they are always coming out new social networking platforms. What to do? Limit your children to two platforms, plus email, that's it. Of everything that exists, tell your student they can only sign up to two social networking sites and have an email. You will have less to monitor and your student will be less exposed.

There are three platforms I recommend you completely prohibit your children from using: ask.fm, KiK and Yik Yak. Ask.fm has been involved in many suicide cases that have occurred as a result of cyber bullying. It has NO monitoring options, allows you to create anonymous accounts and will not work with any of the social network monitoring tools. Kik and Yik Yak also allow you to create anonymous accounts and have been linked to suicides and kidnappings. These three sites do not have any "control and balancing mechanisms" that parents can use to protect their children.

My daughter just uses Instagram ... that's all. I do not have to spend time monitoring everything because she is not using everything. She does not use everything because we limit her access. We limit access because we are their parents. Remember, you bought the phone / tablet / computer for your student. You have the right to monitor and remove it immediately if this privilege is abused.

Sign a contract with your student

It is important for your student to understand that access to social networks is a privilege and that you have the authority to remove your phone or limit your access to the platforms. Your student has to understand what is and is not appropriate behavior in social networks. What you are allowing them to do online has to be defined. A great way to do this is by using a signed contract. Signing a contract also gives you another opportunity to talk about social networking with your student. You can find a contract for the use of social networks at www.truecare.com.

You can find more parenting strategies in the blog section at www.DontBullyOnline.com.