



Social Media Alert

Dear Crossroads Parents and Guardians,

We are sending this important message to alert you to the rising concerns of online social networks. Lately, there has been a rash of inappropriate messages or photos that have been sent and received by students and others using online social-media accounts.

Currently, the apps that are popular with our middle school students include ***Kik, Ask.fm, Instagram and Snapchat***. The accounts may be on computers, phones, tablets, Kindles, etc. Because these apps offer no real identity control and no monitoring, the users can be anonymous and unrestrained. Users can set up multiple accounts, as well. Essentially, those communicating could be, potentially, **anyone** from students to strangers. And, blocking abusive users, depending on the app, is not always assured.

While we are doing all we can to investigate and protect our students, we felt it necessary to bring this to your attention. Not only are we concerned about these conversations being a disruption to the instructional day, we are also very concerned for the emotional well-being of our students.

Please consider doing the following:

- Sit down with your child and all electronic devices to review all accounts with your child.
- Routinely set up a time to examine your child's connection to these apps.
- We are recommending that all children delete these accounts, specifically if they do not meet the age restriction. (Please see legal age requirements for each app.)
- If your family decides that these accounts are appropriate, please note that you *are agreeing to use a service at your own risk and that these services have no liability to you for content that you may find objectionable, obscene or in poor taste.*
- For further safety information and awareness, please review some of the news articles provided in this message.
- Consider investigating tools, which allow parents to monitor online activity. While this is not an endorsement for any product, we are providing a link of reviews for your convenience:
<http://cell-phone-parental-control-software-review.toptenreviews.com>

Thank you for your support.
Crossroads North Administration

Per the terms of use, children under the age of 13 are not permitted to use Kik, Ask.fm, Instagram and Snapchat accounts: (If links do not work, copy and paste the URL into your Internet browser.)

<https://kikinteractive.zendesk.com/entries/24395188-How-old-does-my-teen-need-to-be-to-use-Kik->

<http://www.chicagonow.com/tween-us/2013/10/facts-about-ask-fm-parents/>

<https://help.instagram.com/154475974694511/>

<https://www.snapchat.com/terms>

Why are age restrictions important:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diana-graber/3-reasons-why-social-media-age-restrictions-matter_b_5935924.html

Articles of relevance:

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/police-warning-on-social-media-messaging-app-kik-20131130-2yimo.html>

<http://fox17online.com/2014/01/14/new-social-media-apps-pose-predator-dangers/>

<http://www.businessinsider.com/askfm-and-teen-suicides-2013-9>