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 \**United States Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School*

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## INTERNET SAFETY

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

The Icahn Charter School prides itself on providing a safe and secure learning environment for our students but we need your help. The communication explosion that has made the world closely connected has not made the world safer. Across the nation, schools have seen an increase in negative student behavior because of messages, photos and videos posted to popular social networking sites. Many sites contain instant messaging components that allow students to chat with other students and to post statements that ordinarily would not be said in a face-to-face conversation or to post photos of themselves or others that would not normally be shared.

Many real-world hazards have migrated to cyberspace, such as bullying, threats, and predators and parents need to be proactively involved in their children's internet world more than ever before. Sites such as Snapchat are extremely popular among students even though the requirements state that children must be 13 years of age to use it.

Unfortunately, some of our students have used social media improperly. Almost all incidents involving inappropriate student behavior while online occur outside of school because of the tight supervision and filtering systems adopted by our network. However, problems that begin on home computers or cellphones can spill over into the school in the form of bad feelings, arguments, and disruption.

Most incidents involving inappropriate use of social media occur without the knowledge or consent of parents, who aren't aware of what their children are doing when they go online either in their own home or at a friend's house. Our children are still learning, still subject to peer pressure, and still subject to poor judgment. They need your guidance to do the right thing.

Technology is part of our children's lives and it is up to you as parents and guardians to help them use this resource wisely. They don't realize that there are real-life consequences for poor online choices. It doesn't occur to them that what they post online can be copied, saved, and forwarded to others and remain long after the original has been deleted. Snapchat photos, although designed to disappear quickly, may be saved by taking a screenshot of the image or simply using another phone to take a picture of the Snapchat post.

Children feel anonymous when they create screen names and online personas that can be totally different than who they are in real life. Children do not understand the many negative ramifications of having an account. They can fall in with a bad crowd, communicate the wrong things, get to know the wrong people, and endanger themselves and those around them.

Parents and guardians need to help children understand the consequences of their actions. There are many resources for you about internet safety that will help you supervise your children's internet use and keep them safe. Here are a few:

- Protecting Kids Online - Federal Trade Commission  
<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/protecting-kids-online>
- Chatting with Kids About Being Online- Federal Trade Commission  
<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0001-netcetera.pdf>
- A Parent's Guide To Snapchat  
<http://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Parent%E2%80%99s-Guide-to-Snapchat.pdf>
- Guideline for Parents of pre-teens  
<http://www.safekids.com/guidelines-for-parents/>
- NYC Department of Education Parent and Family Guide to Student Social Media Guidelines: 12 and Younger  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/62E08AC7-A304-42C0-923C-F49DB197D76E/0/ParentandFamilyGuide12andYounger.pdf>

As always, thank you for your wonderful children.

Very truly yours,

Jeff Litt  
 Superintendent



