

The Louis DeSario School



**A Good Place To
Learn & Grow**

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Dean Scali
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Joseph Bonomi
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June 9, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The following is information sent to us from the District Office and I think it is important for parents and guardians to review.

We all want our young people to act responsibly in the digital community and also not damage themselves by creating a negative digital footprint of themselves, their families, nor others. Particularly with summer coming and a lot more free time, the use of cell phones and digital media to entertain and pass time makes the information below important to know right now. Some excerpts from a recent Education Tech article on social media apps which parents/guardians should absolutely "be in the know" about have been included below. As always your child's safety, health, and welfare are matters which school and home must consistently work toward together; with this in mind, the attached information is passed on to you. I thank you for taking the time to read it and act accordingly.

Respectfully,
Dean Scali, Principal PS56

According to [The Statistics Portal](#) as of March 2017, there are approximately 2.8 million apps in the Android Play Store and there are approximately 2.2 million in the Apple App Store. That's over 5 million apps, not including what is available in the Windows Store, Amazon Prime, the Google Chrome App Store, etc. Please understand that not all apps are created equal; not all apps are genuine; and **that many apps hold secrets that parents need to know**. A simple internet search for "apps parents should know about" will produce a laundry list of apps that are not appropriate for children of any age and often hide serious dangers that we do not want our children to be exposed to. Many times, the minimum age requirements for apps are not followed and younger children end up using the apps. In addition, many apps claim that they are for younger ages, while they end up being child predator hangouts.

Though I cannot list every app and each pitfall, here is a **short list of apps to keep an eye out for:**

- **Afterschool** (minimum age 17) – The Afterschool App was rejected twice from the major app stores due to complaints from parents and educators. It is a well-known app that promotes cyberbullying, sexting, pornography and is filled with references to drugs and alcohol.
- **Blue Whale** (minimum age 10) – **IF YOU FIND THIS APP ON YOUR CHILD'S DEVICE, DELETE IT.** It is a suicide challenge app that attempts to prod children into killing themselves. It builds trust in children while

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challenging them to complete tasks. It is a haven for child predators and it is common for children to be blackmailed and bullied into completing the game where a final task is suicide.

- **BurnBook** (minimum age 18) – **IF YOU FIND THIS APP ON YOUR CHILD’S DEVICE, DELETE IT.** It is a completely anonymous app for posting text, photos, and audio that promote rumors about other people. It is a notorious for cyberbullying and law enforcement has it on its watch lists.
- **Calculator%** (minimum age 4) – **IF YOU FIND THIS APP ON YOUR CHILD’S DEVICE, DELETE IT.** This is one of hundreds of “secret” calculator apps. This app is designed to help students hide photos and videos that they do not want their parents to see. This app looks and functions like a calculator, but students enter a “.”, a 4-digit passcode, and then a “.” again. Once entered, the app owner can take photos with the app or add hidden photos to the photo gallery.
- **KIK** (minimum age 17) – This is a communications app that allows anyone to be contacted by anyone and it 100 percent bypasses the device’s contacts list. It is very difficult to determine who is a predator and who is not with this app. Though very popular, it is something that you may want to remove from your child’s device.
- **Yik Yak** (minimum age 18) – This app is a location-based (most commonly schools) bulletin board app. It works anonymously with anyone pretending to be anyone they want. Many schools across the country have encountered cyberbullying and cyber threats originating from this app. School districts will make every effort to geo-block this app making it 100 percent unusable from any campus location.
- **StreetChat** (minimum age 14) – StreetChat is a photo-sharing board for middle school, high school and college-age students. Members do not need to be a student in the actual school and can impersonate students in schools across the country. It promotes cyberbullying through anonymous posts and private messaging.
- **ooVoo** (minimum age 13) – **IF YOU FIND THIS APP ON YOUR CHILD’S DEVICE, DELETE IT.** ooVoo is one of the largest video and messages app. Parents should be aware that ooVoo is used by predators to contact underage children. The app can allow users to video chat with up to twelve people at one time.
- **Wishbone (girls) & Slingshot (boys)** (minimum age 13) – Both are comparison apps that allow users to create polls, including ones that are not appropriate for children. Many of the users create polls to shame and cyberbully

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other children, plus there are inappropriate apps and videos that users are forced to watch via the app's advertising engine.

Conclusion

The internet is an amazing tool for learning, information seeking and communications. However, it has also become a refuge for predators, inappropriate behavior, cyberbullying and other activity. If knowing is half the battle, then talking about it is the other half. There is no way to know everything about all the dangers lurking on the internet or in apps. There is also no way to know everything our children are doing at all times.