

Guidelines for Safe Student Electronic Communications: Phones and Other Devices in Schools, Cyber-Bullying, Texting, “Sexting”, FaceBook, MySpace, and Things Parents Should Know and Do

As we begin a new school year, we want to provide parents with information intended to help keep our student communications safe, responsible, and legal. First, a reminder that use or display of cell phones, iPods, and other **personal electronic devices are not allowed in school in the Lake Washington School District**. This prevents an array of problems, from theft/loss of property, to plagiarism, class disruption, and distraction. Students may use cell phones before and after the official school day, and should store them silenced and out of sight during the school day, including during lunch period. If parents or students have an emergency message, they may request permission to use an office phone. Devices will be confiscated by school staff if they are seen or heard during the day.

Facts for Parents

1. 95-100% of youth regularly access the internet
2. 90-95% regularly carry cell phones to school
3. 85-90% of parents think they are knowledgeable about their children’s online life
4. 70-75% of youth say parents stop checking at about 14 years old
5. 65-70% say friends sharing private pictures is a problem
6. 60-65% say parents know nothing about what they do online
7. 55-60% do not tell parents when they are bullied online
8. 50-55% say they do not get internet safety instruction at school
9. 40-45% say they knowingly give out personal information online
10. 30-35% have or are willing to meet “online friends” in real life

Cyber-Bullying

- A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself
- **Cyber bullying** is bullying using the internet or other forms of electronic communications to carry out or extend bullying.
- **LWSD** maintains clear rules and policies relating to bullying. Proven anti-bullying programs are in place in all elementary schools (Steps to Respect) and junior high schools (Olweus).

Texting/"Sexting"

Sending text messages, including "Twitters" and attachment photos is a form of digital communication between children and youth that is drawing the attention of schools and police agencies. School-age youth are being found in possession, sending, forwarding, creating inappropriate nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves and others. Where students report that this activity is consensual, it is illegal and mandatory that school personnel report any such activity to police.

Social Networks

Social networks such as FaceBook and MySpace are commonly used by students to communicate with "friends". Students and parents need to be aware that the information they share, including photos, private family and individual information, and information that should be kept private, is accessible to anyone and everyone. Students think they are anonymous; they do not understand or expect the consequences.

Parents Should keep their children safe and legal by:

1. Recognizing that you are a "digital immigrant"; our children are "digital natives" and are generally ahead of us in use and application of technology.
2. Remember that you are an adult.
3. Talk to students, children about their experiences online.
4. Teach Tech safety.
5. Set a good example.
6. Create rules and set parameters for technology use
7. Monitor kids' activity
8. Know their screen names and passwords
9. Set up computers in open spaces
10. Continue to work on your own cyber-literacy; have kids show you how.