

Kids and the Internet: Why We're Really Going to Miss Facebook

By Diane K. Danielson

Life changes quickly online. It's not easy to keep up, but here's the first of a series of articles about what parents need to know about kids and the Internet in 2011.

Facebook

With 500 million users, Facebook is not going away anytime soon. But, remember MySpace? Yeah, kids thought that was cool once, too. Now that parents are flocking to Facebook, the kids are already starting to head elsewhere.

What we will miss most about Facebook when it comes to kids are the privacy controls; the requirement to use real pictures (which prevents anonymous trolling); the ability to block/report people; and that it is basically a closed network.

While some are moving on, most kids will maintain a presence on Facebook. This means we still need to worry about kids cyberbullying, inviting strangers into their networks and posting inappropriate content and pictures. But, for now, it is the safest alternative provided you do the following.

Parental Tasks:

- Find out if your child is on Facebook. Almost all teenagers and nearly 1/3 of children under the age of 13 have profiles (many without their parents' knowledge).

- Have your child "friend" you or a trusted adult on Facebook. You bought the computer and/or smartphone, so you get to make the rules.

- Make sure that they don't block you or put you in a "friend list" from which they can hide information. I personally have a "friend list" called "See Nothing" that I use so certain people can still be my "friend" but literally see nothing that I post. They probably assume I never use Facebook. I also block others so that even if they look for me, they will never find me. Kids know how to do this, too.

- Check the Facebook account on your child's smartphone. Some kids have resorted to creating duplicate accounts. The one on their smartphone is likely the one they use most.

- If they use Facebook on their smartphone, encourage them to password protect their phone. Other kids can grab the phone and send out inappropriate messages from your child's account. Mandate that they tell you the password!

Twitter

Last weekend, as I was searching Twitter with regard to some town politics, I inadvertently discovered that the local high school students have adopted Twitter as a form of communication. Unfortunately, Twitter is much more problematic than Facebook when it comes to kids.

- Twitter can be accessed from a normal cell phone as well as a smartphone and/or a computer. This makes it easier for everyone to use.

- As we've seen, kids send some really bad messages by text: inappropriate photos, messages intent on bullying, and dumb things that would cause a college admissions officer to take pause. Now imagine that your kids are making these texts public to the world; and, that the world can comment, forward them, print them out and even start "following" your child.

- Kids can create accounts with false names and hide behind avatars and icons.

- It's even more public than you think. Google indexes tweets so they end up in Google search results. Facebook does not do this for personal profiles.

Missing Facebook yet? No? Then keep reading.

While doing the town meeting research, I noticed a tweet from a local teen that was offensive enough to question that child's college potential. Yep. Hope it's not your kid. Now in this teen's defense, they had attempted to use Twitter's privacy settings (unlike some of their friends). Unfortunately, due to a glitch that I've been working to sort out with Twitter, that tweet is still publicly viewable on certain search engines.

Even with a protected account that is set up properly, a child's name and picture, where they live as well as the names and pictures of the kids in their network are all public information. A quick Google search of the teen who authored the offensive tweet revealed their age, home address, more pictures, interests and the fact that a sibling has some disturbing URLs registered to the parents' home address.

Parental tasks:

- Find out if your child is on Twitter. Twitter has 100 million

users. Justin Beiber and Lady Gaga have 9 million+ followers each. Sports stars are all over it. Where the celebrities go, the kids will follow.

- Explain that whatever they send out on Twitter can be taken out of context and made public even if they use privacy controls. All it takes is a technical glitch, an easy hack, or, more likely, one angry friend taking a screen capture of a tweet and publishing it to the world.

- Discuss the importance of not putting information with regard to their geographic location. Twitter is not meant to be a closed network. Strangers can see everything.

- Join Twitter and follow them.

While you can and should do all of the above, the best way to approach kids about the Internet is always to talk with your child about using common sense online. This means that you have to educate yourself about what's out there. That's part of your job as a parent. Sure, we all did dumb things as teenagers, but we never wrote it down in public or videotaped it and uploaded it to YouTube. It's time for parents to take back control.

- You bought the computers and phones.
- You pay for the ISPs and wireless services.
- You have the power to limit access and develop boundaries.

Coming up next: How smartphones can lead to dumb moves by even the brightest children and what you can do to prevent it.

Reprinted courtesy of the Cohasset Mariner.

Diane K. Danielson is a new media marketing consultant who specializes in helping companies build social media strategies into their business plans. For more about Diane visit <http://dkdnewmedia.com>.

PUBLIC SAFETY CONTACT INFORMATION

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IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 911 FIRST

COLUMBIA 911

COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

Dispatch 503-397-1521 or 800-696-7795

OTHER DISPATCH CENTERS

BOEC (Multnomah Co.) 503-760-6911

Clatsop Co. 503-325-4411

Clackamas Co. 503-655-8211

Cowlitz Co. (Longview) 360-577-3098

Tillamook Co. 503-815-1911

WCCCA (Washington Co.) 503-629-0111

WSP (Wash State Patrol) 360-449-7950

OSP (Oregon State Police) 503-397-3131

COUNTY AGENCIES

Animal Control 503-397-3935

CENT (Narcotics Team) 503-397-1167

or 866-397-1167

Colum. Co. Emerg. Mngmt 503-366-3905

Colum. Co. Road Dept. 503-397-5090

DMV - St. Helens 503-397-3515

Colum. Co. Juvenile Dept. 503-397-0275

Colum. Co. Mental Health 503-397-2511

or 800-294-5211

Colum. Co. Parole & Prob. 503-397-6253

Colum. Co. Public Health 503-397-4651

Women's Resource Center 503-397-6161

SCF (Serv.to Child & Fam) 503-397-3292

COURTS

Colum. Co. Circuit Court 503-397-0157

Colum. Co. District Court 503-397-2327x316

Clatskanie Justice Court 503-728-3011

Columbia City Muni Court 503-397-4010

Rainier Muni Court 503-556-3200

St. Helens Muni Court 503-397-6272

Scappoose Muni Court 503-543-7146 x225

Vernonia Justice Court 503-429-2441

POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Clatskanie PD 503-728-2145

Columbia City PD 503-397-4010

OSP 503-397-3131

Rainier PD 503-556-3644

Scappoose PD 503-543-3114

St. Helens PD 503-397-3333

Vernonia PD 503-429-7335

Columbia Co. Sheriff 503-366-4611

Columbia Co. Jail 503-366-4630 ext. 0

FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Clatskanie Fire 503-728-2025

Columbia River Fire 503-397-2990

Mist Birkenfeld Fire 503-755-2710

Oregon Dept. of Forestry 503-397-2636

Scappoose Fire 503-543-5026

Vernonia Fire 503-429-8252

Vernonia EMS 503-429-4600

UTILITIES

Clatskanie PUD 503-728-2163

Columbia River PUD 503-397-1844

NW Natural Gas 800-544-1795

West Oregon Electric 800-777-1276

503-429-3021

HOSPITALS

Emanuel 503-413-2200

Good Samaritan 503-413-7711

Kaiser Sunnyside 503-652-2880

OHSU 503-494-8311

Poison Control 800-452-7165

Portland Adventist 503-251-6155

Providence 503-215-1111

St. Johns - Longview 360-636-4818

St. Vincent 503-216-1234

Tuality - Forest Grove 503-357-2173

Tuality - Hillsboro 503-681-1111

VA Hospital 503-220-8262

OTHER MEDICAL RESOURCES

Legacy Clinic - St. Helens 503-397-0471

OHSU - Scappoose Ofc. 503-543-3181

Urgent Care - St. Helens 503-397-7119

PUBLIC WORKS

Clatskanie Public Works 503-728-2622

Columbia City Public Works 503-366-0454

Scappoose Public Works 503-543-7184

St. Helens Public Works 503-397-3532

Rainier Public Works 503-556-9144

Vernonia Public Works 503-429-6921

OTHER

National Weather Service 503-261-9246

ODOT 877-877-4866 dispatch

P&W Railroad 800-800-2203 malfunctions

Red Cross 503-284-1234

Child Abuse Hotline 800-302-0077

Humane Society 503-397-4353

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503-588-2941 outside OR

Washington 800-695-7623

From a Cell Phone: 511

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Four Vernonia Girls Selected for State Softball Tournament

Four Vernonia girls have been selected to play on a girls 12 and under state tournament softball team based out of St. Helens. The girls went through a try out on May 21 in St. Helens and were chosen to be on the team, along with 9 girls from St. Helens. The girls are Pearl Cook, Paige and Sarah Smith, and Cassidy Whitton. The state tournament is set for June 24 through June 26 in Albany.

Vernonia's Voice is published twice each month on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday. Look for our next issue June 28th.