

During the school year, NNHS distributes a monthly "Healthy Huskies Letter." The goal of the newsletter is to enhance our school's partnership with families, particularly by sharing our knowledge of various topics related to your child's social, emotional, and physical health, and what families and the school can do to promote teen healthiness. Each issue addresses a different health topic and will contain resources for further exploration of that topic. Professional staff at NNHS as well as the School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP), are advisors for these newsletters; we encourage parents and students to suggest topics and resources. Send suggestions to kpobst@naperville203.org.

Healthy Huskies Letter

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In October the city of Naperville and Kids Matter hosted a workshop for parents and teens entitled "Your Digital Footprint." The purpose of the workshop was to share ways for teens, with help from their parents, to avoid entanglement in online problems including cyber-bullying, identity theft, and exploitation. Also, this fall, the NNHS Library produced their annual "Internet Safety Video;" all students were shown this video during a PE class period (<http://vimeo.com/74110292>). This Healthy Huskies letter compiles some of the highlights of these sources of valuable information about healthy internet use. Naperville Police Department's Detective Rich Wistocki provided valuable information for this HH Letter.

Parenting. Nationally, 80% of high school teens have smart phones. They access social networking sites prolifically, and average 100 texts a day (girls average 150). This level of exposure includes the possibility of posting or sending or receiving messages and images that are mean, sexual, defamatory, or dangerously compromise privacy. Parents can exercise control. Smart phones can be set to automatically turn off for certain hours of the day—some parents leave a 'window' open in the evening but shut their child's phone off for sleep, study, and family conversation. Many parents periodically look through the phone their child carries with their son or daughter present and examine texts and social network posts. Many follow this same practice with home computers. In all likelihood the parent, not the child, is paying for the phone. Teens may attempt to lead parents to believe that they are entitled to far more privacy than is reasonable and to portray a conscientious parent as unusually and unreasonably nosey. Don't buy it; be proactive. When we provide a phone and a computer to our son or daughter we have given them a powerful means of communication. With that, we take on a lot of responsibility for what *they* do with these devices.

Your Expectations. Make sure your teen knows what your expectations are for their use of the phone and computer you provide them. Don't assume that they understand what you think reasonable and appropriate use is. Be specific about how much time online or on the phone is reasonable, and what kind of communication is not reasonable. Make the consequences of misuse clear and follow through.

College Jeopardy. Many colleges are checking various social networks when they evaluate applicants. Last year, thirty-five percent of college applications were negatively affected by the applicants' social network postings. Nearly as many applicants lost scholarship opportunities due to what they posted on their social network accounts.

Monitor – Don't Be Shy! Make it your business to know the security and privacy settings on social networking sites used by your teen. While more than 60% of teens set their social networking to "private," 40% do not. Parents can purchase software for home computers that enable parents to monitor and control how the computer is used, including *Shield Genie*, *True Care*, and *Spector Soft*. Teens often show good judgment, but consistent good judgment and resistance to peer pressure is not

their forte. You should know what they are doing with their phones and computers including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Hot or Not, Youtube, My Space, Photo Bucket, Tiny Pic, Vine, Snap Chat, Stickam, et al.

Teach Wise Communication -- *Anger*. When a person is angry, they should not be online. Anger is the chief cause of poor online communication--messaging that is hurtful and that exacerbates conflict rather than reduces it. Serial communication between people who are angry or fearful is often forwarded exposing one-on-one communication to a broad audience unfamiliar with the context. Teach teens that when they are angry that they should walk away from texting or social networking—take a long break until they can gain emotional distance and a more mature perspective.

Teach Wise Communication – *Forwarding*. Often the communication that is the most hurtful and damaging to teen relationships comes as a result of forwarding. Encourage your teen not to forward other teens’ anger, hurt, or frustration. Sometimes it is easy to perceive such communication as clever or entertainingly provocative. However, the further away from the original conversation the words get, the more likely they are to take on a life of their own; others join in and the conversation spirals out of control. In our culture today, much TV and movie “cleverness” is based on meanness or crassness. In the moment teens are easily deceived into thinking “funny” excuses nearly everything. However, when they pause and reflect, teens can be deeply sensitive and perceptive about the difference between good funny and bad funny. Again, coach them to step away, to pause and think. The instantaneousness of the technology is seductive and works against this. Empower your son or daughter by cultivating their value of patience!

Teach Wise Communication -- *Stop the Bullying*. Just as we teach students to be responsible bystanders who intervene to stop bullying when they see it, teens ought to take clear steps to stop bullying when they or others are targeted. Half of high school age teens report being cyber-bullied in the last year. Nearly the same number report having been a source of cyber-bullying in the last year! Not all mean communication is “bullying.” Bullying is harassment--repeated, relentless, and genuinely humiliating. Experts on cyber-bullying recommend that the best first steps for victims and bystanders is to stop communicating with the bully (as opposed to striking back), and to block their messaging to you. They also recommend involving an adult. Bystanders must make sure that adults are aware of the harassment because adults have more power to intervene—to bring authorities into the situation. The most sophisticated cyber-bullying is not the simple sending of mean messages or the spreading of rumors. At the most dangerous level, cyber-bullying involves fake personas, fake social network sites, and fake email accounts. This sort of cyber-bullying is against the law and you will need assistance to stop it. In Naperville, bystanders and victims should report to Detective Rich Wistocki at wistockiR@Naperville.il.us or call 630-305-5384. The police can advise you how best to gather the evidence necessary to find the bully.

Texting. Teen texting is habit-forming. In excess it involves the communication of minutiae or nonsense; it becomes a major means of procrastination. Monitoring your son’s or daughter’s daily volume, though an unpopular move, is a technique used by many parents. Simple monitoring sends the message that self-control should be exercised. It also allows you to monitor when studying is actually taking place. You may be told that your son or daughter is capable of “multi-tasking,” and they may even give the appearance of being able to do Geometry and sustain a texting conversation. It is an illusion. Meaningful studying is not compatible with texting or social networking. Thumbs down!

Texting While Driving. One of the more logical campaigns is *It Can Wait*. It can. But teens tend toward impulsiveness and the belief that “it won’t happen to me.” Detective Wistocki recommends a product called Phoneguard. When loaded on your phone, no texting can take place while the car the phone is in is in motion.

Sexting. Nearly half of all high school teens received a sexually inappropriate photograph of a peer last year and 39% admitted to sending or forwarding such an image. Each year we spend time with students and their families rebuilding the destruction that the creation and distribution of such photos and videos cause. Have you had a conversation with your son or daughter about creating, soliciting, or forwarding these kinds of images? Most parents have not; they assume that “common sense” will win; often titillation wins out over common sense. Make it clear to your child what you expect. Most pictures reside on phones, but some originate or are saved on home computers. You can search the home computer for videos and images by locating all material on the computer with suffixes of .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .bmp, .gif, or .avi, .mpg, .mpeg, .mov. You can monitor what videos your teen is posting. One method is www.BeSureConsulting.com.

The Law. The most egregious abuse of internet and phone communication is against the law. We referred above to the illegality of cyber-bullying. But other uses of the internet are also illegal—sexual grooming (solicitation), false impersonation, and cyber-stalking. Again, it is usually best not to try to investigate or address these more serious behaviors on your own. Contact the local police for assistance.

Links

[Digital Citizenship](#) - helps teachers, technology leaders and parents understand what students/children/technology users should know in order to use technology appropriately.

[Family Online Safety Institute](#) - works to make the online world safer for kids and their families by identifying and promoting best practices, tools and methods in the field of online safety that also respect free expression.

[Illinois Attorney General's Stop Cyberbullying](#) - helps victims and teaches bullies to understand the impact of their online actions in the real world.

[Naperville Police Department](#) - materials for parents, guardians and teachers about how to safeguard children online.

[Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids About Being Online](#) - a guide from the Federal Trade Commission to help parents protect their kids and talk to them about living their lives online. (PDF, 25 MB)

[NetSmartz](#) - an interactive, educational program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and offline.

Please, consider Naperville North High School to be your partner in keeping our teens healthy.