

# Social Media and Your Kids

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I'm quite certain you've all realized how technologically savvy your students are becoming. They're able to master gaming systems, iPods ©, smartphones, emails, and social media sites. All in about the same time it took us to write a letter (yes that archaic method of communication we used to use).

But with this technology comes many potential pitfalls for your children. At the press of a button their information can be sent instantly anywhere and to anyone. They create their own digital footprint, and once created, it's there permanently. This footprint consists of the videos, pictures and comments they make on Facebook © and Twitter © or any other social media site. Just do a Google© Search of your child's name and chances are you will find him/her within seconds and the digital footprint they have created.

This brings up a few questions:

- Are you aware that others can view your students' profiles and that an inappropriate digital footprint may cost your child potential scholarships, internships and even jobs? Universities may even ask to see potential students' social media sites.
  - An example at a local state college: A student lost a continuing scholarship due to illegal and immoral postings and pictures – not on her Facebook© page – but her friends had made these postings. Since her friends' pages were accessible, she violated the terms of the scholarship and it was revoked.
  - Internship denied: Another local state college student was denied an internship here in Garretson because of unethical pictures and posts on their Facebook© page.
- Are you aware that cyberbullying is the most common form of bullying facing middle school and high-school students? Cyberbullying is defined as the use of technology, such as social media sites, e-mail, or text messaging to post derogatory or hateful material about another.
- Are you aware, that according to South Dakota Codified Law, it's a Class 1 misdemeanor for a person to use a telephone or other electronic communication device – which includes a computer, to call or contact another person with intent to terrorize, intimidate, threaten, harass or annoy such person by using obscene or lewd language or by suggesting a lewd or lascivious act; or to call or contact another person with intent to threaten to inflict physical harm or injury to any person or property?

The above questions highlight a few of the areas that create challenges for your middle school or high school students. Almost every student will tell you they have seen examples where one person texts or creates a post that is profane or, perhaps derogatory toward another person. Not only are they being insensitive and mean-spirited – they are potentially committing a crime!

It's also worth noting that postings that are derogatory toward students or school staff are not necessarily protected under First Amendment speech rights, regardless of whether they are created on or off school campuses. If these posts can be shown to create a "substantial disruption" and "posed a foreseeable risk that it would come to the attention of school authorities and materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school", then the school can also implement disciplinary action, regardless to where and when they were created.

Which brings up a final question:

- Do you know what your child has posted on their social media sites?

Obviously, this article is written for a reason. At Garretson Middle School and High School we have seen "ALL OF THE ABOVE"! In a brief review of Garretson High School student Twitter @accounts, over 90% had accounts that were open and viewable to anyone. A majority contained obscenities and or comments that could be deemed offensive. Is this the digital footprint you want your student to have?

The Garretson School District is asking you – the parents - to be the first line of defense in monitoring these posts, text messages, etc. You can prevent the issues from occurring by talking with your children and reinforcing what is acceptable, appropriate and necessary. Let them know your expectations and be swift to act when those are not met. As you know, your children love technology and will do almost anything to keep it at their disposal. Communicate to the appropriate parents if and when your child has received an inappropriate text message, picture or post.

In addition to communicating your expectations – the easiest and most important way you can monitor your child is to create an account for yourself. This way you can quickly access their Facebook@ posts and Twitter@ feeds. You can instantly see what your child is saying and doing. You can even load these applications on your smartphones and monitor anytime and anywhere. Included are some websites that may be helpful dealing with these issues. If you need help creating your account, search the internet, ask your son or daughter or call us – we're happy to have your support and would be glad to help you, help us!

Please keep in mind that, as always we have the best interest of your children at heart. The purpose of this article wasn't to tell you "how to parent" but to provide you with information and insight. It's our sincere hope that pictures and comments that your children post "right now" won't have damaging effects on them "down the road", and we're certain you feel the same way. Thanks for your help and if you have questions, please call 594-3452, Extension 3, Option 1 (Mr. Long) or Extension 3, Option 2 (Mrs. Danielsen).

**This entire article and the links below will be archived on the Garretson School District website ([www.garretson.k12.sd.us](http://www.garretson.k12.sd.us)) under both the High School and Middle School links for reference in the future.**

**WEBSITES:**

CYBERBULLYING: [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)

What is Twitter©: <http://tweeternet.com/>

What is Facebook©: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>

Get mobile Twitter© application: <http://twitter.com/#!/download>

Get mobile Facebook© application: <http://www.facebook.com/mobile/?v=6628568379>