

ST. MATTHEW'S SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY & ADDENDUM

POLICY

The school's policy regarding social networks (as it appears in the Technology Use Agreement) is amended to include the following:

- St. Matthew's **prohibits** students in Grades 6 and below from accessing social networks at any time.
- St. Matthew's **strongly discourages** students in grades 7 and 8 from accessing social networks.
- St. Matthew's reminds all parents and students that the user agreements of many social networks prohibit use by children under the age of 13, even with parental permission.
- St. Matthew's acknowledges that there will nonetheless be some use among our 7th and 8th grade students, and therefore the school will work with parents and students to help our students meet this challenge as productively, safely and considerately as possible and in a manner that prepares them for life after graduation from St. Matthew's.

ADDENDUM

A careful review by our Administration and Board of both our experiences to date and other available information on this matter suggests that:

- A ban on social networks use **by our older students** cannot be successfully enforced in a manner that offers a **net benefit** to our students, hence our policy above.
- Each group within our school community (school, parents and students) must therefore significantly increase its commitment to working together to help our 7th and 8th grade students deal with the challenges presented by social networks.

COMMITMENTS

The School:

- Commits to providing effective leadership, guidance and policies that enable our students and families to deal with our ever-changing and increasingly digital world in as safe and healthy a manner as possible.
- Commits to holding students accountable for violations of the *Community Character Covenant*. The standard for all behavior at St. Matthew's arises from the *Character Covenant*. It lays out the expectations for how students should interact within our community, including online.
- Commits to educating students in this important area. Enhanced curriculum on digital citizenship is already in progress for Middle School students. The curriculum was developed by Common Sense Media and is available on the Parent Portal of the school website.

- Commits to educating parents:
 - DIGITAL LIFE: RESOURCES FOR PARENTS is a tab on the Parent Portal. Here parents can find links to our technology use policies, information and tips from Common Sense Media and other experts, as well as instructions for iDevice management and content filtering in your home. Also included is a link to report issues of concern to Mr. Harlan or Dr. Kelly.
 - In addition, the school will continue to hold parent discussion forums and host guest speaker events where leading experts share their thoughts and expertise on this matter.
- Commits to continuing to work with the Board, the Blended Learning and Technology Committee, and parents to identify ways to provide further assistance.

Parents:

It is critical that **parents engage with this issue and take the time to understand the basics of social networks and how their children are using them.** The Board and Administration strongly recommend that parents adopt the following best practices:

- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with their children about their online activities and use (if any) of social networks and tools.
- Maintain a list of **and an account on each of** the networks (if any) used by their children. The parent account will be connected to the child's account (as a follower etc.)
- Communicate openly with each other and the school regarding issues that arise regarding our students' use of social networks and other digital communication.
- Take the time to access the information and tools provided by the school including mailings, information on parenting in a digital world on the parent portal, and information nights.

Students:

- Commit to adhere to the standards of the *Community Character Covenant*.
- Commit to follow the rules on the appropriate *Technology Use Agreement* including the section on digital citizenship (if included). A portion of the agreement reads,
 - "I will respect the privacy and feelings of others when using digital communication by not spreading gossip or comments known to be inaccurate, using or passing along inappropriate language or images, or taking/sharing photos or videos of others without permission. I understand that all school rules and guidelines about harassment, bullying and civility apply to my online communications and activities with anyone, whether I am accessing the Internet from home, school or any remote location. I will always be mindful that I am a representative of St. Matthew's."