



Rand Park High School

Integrity and Commitment

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COUNSELLING NEWSLETTER

Social Media & Online Safety

14 June 2018

Dear Parents, Guardians & Learners

We recently hosted one of our parent empowerment talks on the much debated and important topic of social media and online safety.

Jeanette Chambers, a Dale Carnegie presenter and activist for Internet safety, gave a very insightful talk and encouraged parents to have the crucial conversation with their children about their online activity and being safe in a digital world.

I would like to elaborate on this and provide some guidance and advice to parents who may not have been able to attend the talk.

In order to be able to guide and protect our children (sometimes even from themselves), we as parents and educators need to be aware of the dangers and risks involved in engaging with technology, especially via the Internet and various social media platforms. We must be knowledgeable about how to manage these tools, channels and resources more effectively in our homes and with our children. We are often concerned about protecting our children physically and in day-to-day situations, however, it is just as important to protect our children from the very real and present threats that exist in the cyberworld.

I think most parents of teenagers feel that social media and technology have taken over their children and their households and may want to ban technological devices for good. Social media and instant messaging have become extremely popular tools for communication and connecting

with friends, acquaintances and even strangers all over the world. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and WhatsApp are among the most popular social media channels at the moment.



This online interaction in the cyber community often serves as a measure for how socially acceptable and valued teenagers or children are, as they view themselves based on the acknowledgement and attention they receive on these platforms. Unfortunately, where it can boost the popularity for one person, it may break down another person's self-esteem completely as it is often used as a tool to publicly ridicule, humiliate and bully others.

Then, of course, there is the very real danger of countless paedophiles and criminals scouting social media sites in search of naïve and vulnerable youngsters to take advantage of. Children and teenagers don't realise that when they post something on social media, the audience is limitless and it is almost impossible to control who will be able to view it and have access to information about their personal lives. We need to make our children and teenagers aware of these dangers and risks and equip them to be able to protect themselves and act more responsibly online.

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Social Media & Online Safety (continued)

Guidelines for you as parent:

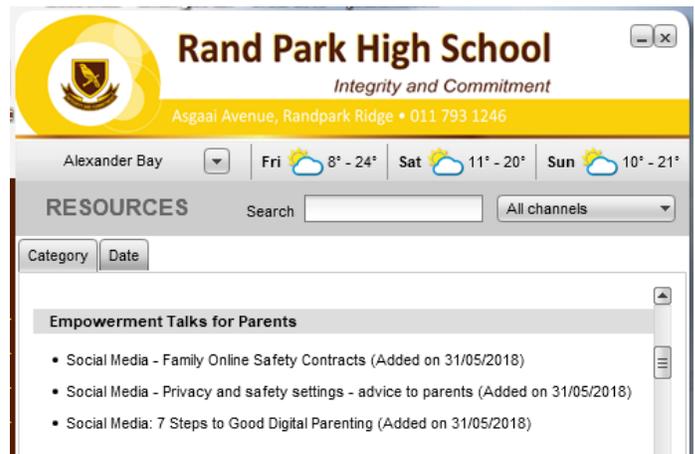
- It is your responsibility and duty as a parent to instill good values in your child and to guide him/her to make responsible decisions. It is so important to spend time creating a relationship with your child so that the channels of communication are always open.
- Restrict usage of TV, the Internet, gaming and social media. Don't hesitate to confiscate gaming or similar devices when the child is using them irresponsibly or excessively.
- **OurPact** is a free service for setting time-based restrictions on iOS and Android devices. Parents can install it on a child's device and control the settings remotely from their device or from a website. The App allows parents to set device bedtimes, schedules, and block or grant access to Apps. See <https://ourpact.com/>.
- Set rules and determine clear and definite boundaries for the use of technology. For example: mobile phones and interacting on social media should only be allowed during a specific time of the day and for a limited period of time once all homework has been completed. Another example is that cell phones may not be used at the dinner table or at bedtime. Request that all phones be placed on charge in the parents' bedroom for the evening until the next morning. This prevents endless chatting on social media during the night instead of getting a good night's rest.

Be consistent with enforcing social media rules and the consequences of disobeying them

- Encourage personal face-to-face social interaction with friends and family as well as involvement in sports and extra-murals in order to minimise time spent on the Internet and social media.
- Monitor your child's social media and cyber activity and insist on being "friends" or "following" them on social media platforms. This is the best way to keep track of what is going on in your child's social and digital world. Respect boundaries and do not comment on all their posts, but be observant of their online activity.
- Help and guide your child with setting their privacy settings on social media. Teach them to be selective of the information they post online in order to protect their reputation.

- Encourage your child to tell you about it when they are being bullied on social media or when they are aware of someone else being bullied. Being a bystander and allowing it to continue makes them as guilty as the bully. Remind your child to never delete messages when cyberbullying takes place, but to rather keep them and report it to you or to a teacher at school.

I would like to refer you to some resources on Internet safety that have been posted on Rand Park's **D6 Communicator**. These are resources and tools that Jeanette Chambers kindly made available to us after her presentation at our school. Please take a look at these resources as they will help you to manage social media in your household.



The screenshot shows the Rand Park High School website. At the top, there is a yellow header with the school's name, logo, and motto 'Integrity and Commitment'. Below the header, there is a navigation bar with the location 'Alexander Bay' and weather information for Friday (8° - 24°), Saturday (11° - 20°), and Sunday (10° - 21°). The main content area is titled 'RESOURCES' and features a search bar and a dropdown menu for 'All channels'. Below this, there is a section titled 'Empowerment Talks for Parents' with a list of three items: 'Social Media - Family Online Safety Contracts (Added on 31/05/2018)', 'Social Media - Privacy and safety settings - advice to parents (Added on 31/05/2018)', and 'Social Media: 7 Steps to Good Digital Parenting (Added on 31/05/2018)'.

We need to remember that social media is here to stay. Parental control and implementation of boundaries and rules are key to assisting your children to use these resources wisely. As parents, educators and caregivers, we need to play an active role in guiding, monitoring and protecting our youth in the digital world.

Yours sincerely

L KLEINGELD
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

**School closes on
Friday, 22 June directly after the
examination and re-opens on
Tuesday, 17 July.**