

Social Media

Social media has grown into an entrenched part of many middle school students' daily lives. While the explosion of social media apps has many positive outcomes that increase communication and provide a mechanism for both young and old to feel connected, it has also negatively increased venues for teasing, ridicule and bullying to occur. Recently, we have noticed and heard from both students and parents that they are observing a higher level than usual of mean behavior occurring on social media. Student Council members have reported that mean comments tend to go in cycles usually linked to an issue or even that occurred outside of school.

We wanted to share with parents what occurs here at school to educate our students and to address issues as they arise or impact the school learning environment. The topic of digital citizenship is taught in multiple courses. Social media is specifically covered in our health curriculum. Additionally, we began the year with a presentation from a representative, Miracruz Lora, from the Essex County District Attorney Kevin Burke's office; in January the Tri-Town Council presented the film *Screenagers* followed by a panel discussion by local school and community members. Our 7th grade students also had an opportunity to view the movie and discuss the impacts of it in health class.

We encourage any adult that views a mean situation occurring on their child's social media to take a screen shot and report it to Mr. Monagle, our Assistant Principal. We can't view much of what takes place on social media, so any evidence that allows us to view the comments is helpful to an investigation. We encourage all parents/guardians to be aware of social media apps and to review their child's use of these sites on a regular basis. Attached you will find a list, with descriptions, of the most popular and frequently used apps, as well as, a tips page for parents.

While most posts and comments are not made at school, if the ramifications that occur from those comments negatively impact the learning environment, we may investigate and consequences may occur. Please refer to page 42 A. Prohibited Behaviors (2) of the student handbook. We will aggressively pursue and intervene on behalf of any student that feels a situation occurring through social media creates a hostile environment or infringes on their right to a safe learning environment.

Social media plays an essential role in our students' existence and will continue to grow and morph on a yearly basis. We need to partner together to ensure that we help students navigate these wonderful tools but remain safe and appropriate digital citizens.

Social Media Apps every parent should know about...

Source: <https://www.familyeducation.com/fun/mobile-apps/safety-beyond-facebook-12-social-media-apps-every-parent-should-know-about>



Yik Yak is pretty loosey-goosey. The producers of this app call it "the anonymous social wall for anything and everything." All users are anonymous (registration requires no personal information, other than a user's location), and their posts are called "Yaks" and show up in a live feed for other users — or "Yakkers" — in their area. The app's content-generation and moderation is entirely in the hands of its users (who can "vote" posts up or down in the news feed; after two "down" votes, a Yak disappears). The app is rated ages 17+ and targets college students, who can use it to spread the word about parties and events or share their thoughts. But younger users are easily getting their hands on the app and [using it to post hurtful comments and rumors](#) about their peers.



Tinder's developers describe the app as "the fun way to connect with new and interesting people around you." But it's mainly used as a dating tool or an anonymous hook-up (read: one-night stand) locator by 20-somethings, college students, and even younger teens and tweens. (Yikes!) The app is rated ages 17+ but Tinder's privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (the app connects with Facebook — which is also technically for ages 13+ — to pull in photos for users' Tinder profiles). Tinder helps people find others in their geographic location and allows users to view each others' photos and start instant messaging once both people have "liked" one another. The geo-location features and anonymous nature of the app put kids at risk for [catfishing](#), sexual harassment, stalking, and worse



Ask.fm app allows users to interact in a question-and-answer format — with friends, peers, and anonymous users alike. The app is rated ages 13+ and is most popular in Europe but is catching on in the U.S. Some kids have used the app for hurtful [cyberbullying that has been linked to suicides](#), including [the death of 12-year-old Rebecca Sedwick of Florida](#).



Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends at high speed and with more of a "face-to-face feel" than regular texting (users' profile pictures appear in a little bubble next to their text, and they can quickly text photos, sketches, or even pre-designed greeting cards to individuals or groups). The app is rated ages 17+, but there is no age verification so anyone can download it. Like some other instant messenger apps, Kik allows your teen to connect with others using just a username (rather than texting from her phone number). But it begs the question: Should teens be texting with people beyond their phone contacts? Reviews in the App Store and Google Play store reveal that many people [use Kik to meet strangers for sexting](#).



Voxer is a walkie-talkie PTT (push-to-talk) app that allows users to quickly exchange short voice messages. They can have chats going on with multiple people at a time and just have to tap the play button to hear any messages they receive. Although it largely has an adult following, including some people who use it for their job, it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy its hybrid style of texting and talking. Hurtful messages from cyberbullies can be even more biting when they're spoken and can be played repeatedly. Surprisingly, the app is rated ages 4+ in the App Store.



Snapchat is an app that allows users to send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds after they're received. It's rated ages 12+. Some kids are using the app to send racy pics because they believe the images can't be saved and circulated. But it turns out that [Snapchat pics don't completely disappear from a device](#), and users can take a screenshot before an image vanishes in the app. And while recent studies revealed that "sexting" (sending sexual messages and images, usually via text message) is [not as popular as parents had feared](#), "disappearing photo" apps like Snapchat might embolden kids to send more explicit photos and texts than they would have before through traditional texting.



Poke is Facebook's app that, similar to Snapchat, promises that photos sent will "self-destruct" within seconds after they're received. While [Poke isn't nearly as popular as Snapchat](#), it is still gaining young users who can use it for sexting. Also like Snapchat, the images sent via Poke can be saved or viewed with certain workarounds. The App store rates it ages 4+ (but it is connected to Facebook, which is a 13+ site).



Vine is Twitter's mobile app that allows users to shoot and share short loops of video (6 seconds or less). It's rated 17+, but children and teens are still downloading it. As with any multimedia app, the content on Vine runs the gamut from naughty to nice. "With the most basic creative searching, kids can find nudity, sex, drug use, offensive language, hardcore sexuality, and more," [Common Sense Media says](#) in its review of the app. "While there are plenty of cute, fun videos, even adults might be shocked at some of the things they find."



Whisper's 17+ app's motto is: "Share Secrets, Express Yourself, Meet New People." It has a similar feel to the now-defunct PostSecret app, which was discontinued shortly after its release because it [filled up with abusive content](#). Whisper lets users set up anonymous accounts to make their messages or confessions overlap an image or graphic (similar to e-postcards), which other users can then "like," share, or comment on. While it allows for creative expression, it can also take overly personal content viral. The app also shows a user's location. Although the app is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are finding their way to it. A 12-year-old girl in Washington was reportedly raped by a 21-year-old man [who met her on Whisper](#).



Tumblr Many children and young teens are also active on this 17+ photo-sharing app. It can also be used for sharing videos and chatting. [Common Sense Media says](#) Tumblr is "too raunchy for tykes" because users can easily access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. Common Sense also notes that users need to jump through hoops to set up privacy settings — and until then, all of a user's photo and content is public for all to see. Mental health experts say that [Tumblr can be damaging to adolescents' mental health](#) because it tends to glorify self-harm and eating disorders.



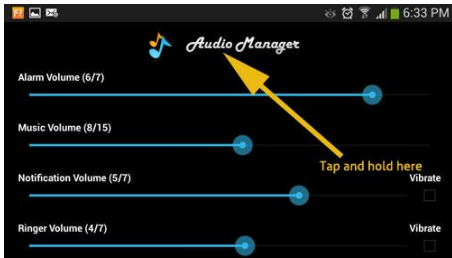
Instagram is a hugely popular photo-sharing site owned by Facebook, so you may be more familiar with it than with other photo-sharing apps. Users can add cool filters or create collages of their photos and share them across Facebook and other social media platforms. The app is rated 13+ and may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content and comments throughout the app (there is a way to flag inappropriate content for review). "Trolls" — or people making vicious, usually anonymous comments — are common. A user can change the settings to block their location or certain followers, but many users are casual about their settings, connecting with people they don't know well or at all.



Shots of Me is a 12+ "[selfie-only](#)" photo-sharing app and has an "anti-trolling" aspect; it does not have a comment section under photos posted on the app. Instead of a public comment area, the app has a direct-messaging feature where users can only send private messages to one another. The anti-trolling feature might also help ward off cyberbullying among teens who like to put meanness on display (but teens could still be nasty via private message). The app does show a user's location and how long ago a photo was added unless those features are managed in the app's settings. Shots of Me is currently available only for Apple devices.

Apps that hide other apps

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-12-apps-that-every-parent-of-a-teen-should-know-about_us_56c34e49e4b0c3c55052a6ba



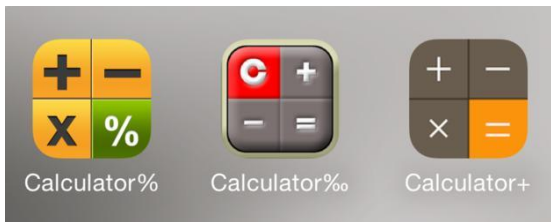
Audio Manager

Sometimes when it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it's really *not* a duck. Such is the case with Audio Manager, an app that has nothing to do with managing your teen's music files or controlling the volume on his smartphone and everything to do with him hiding things like nude photos from you. It's one of the top apps for hiding other apps.

Yes, there are such things. Kids can hide any app they don't want you to see, [Teen Safe says](#). When you press and hold the Audio Manager app, a lock screen is revealed — behind which users can hide messages, photos, videos, and other apps.

Calculator%

Same deal, but this time with a calculator icon posing as something it isn't. Sedgrid Lewis, [online safety expert](#), notes that these apps look like a normal calculator app but when teens push a button within the app they can hide all inappropriate pictures. "It's a key way teens are hiding their nude pictures from their parents," said Lewis. Lewis says the best way to solve this situation is for parents to add their teen to their iCloud account. That way, whenever a new app is downloaded by the teen, it will automatically download to the parent's phone as well.



Vaulty

Vaulty will not only store photos and videos away from parental spying eyes, but it also will snap a photo of anyone who tries to access the "vault" with the wrong password. Parents who find it on their teens' phones can conclude just one thing: Your kid is hiding things from you.

Next steps for Parents: Help your kids stay safe online

Source: <https://www.familyeducation.com/fun/mobile-apps/safety-beyond-facebook-12-social-media-apps-every-parent-should-know-about?slide=14>

- ✓ Sit down with your child and find out which apps she's using, how they work, and whether she has experienced any issues on them, such as [cyberbullying](#) or contact from strangers. Look into [apps that help you monitor your child online](#). And keep these tips in mind: You can set up age limits on your child's device. The 2013 Pew Research Center survey found that nearly 40 percent of teens say that they have lied about their age to gain access to a site or create an account, so [restricting kids' access to apps by age rating](#) is a wise move.
- ✓ You can't join every site or app and monitor your child's every move online; teens will always find a new platform that their parents don't know about yet. Rather than hovering or completely barring your child from downloading every social media app, sit down and go over some [general rules to keep him smart and safe online](#). Here's a good one from [Common Sense Media](#): "If you wouldn't share it with your family, don't share it online."
- ✓ Tell your child to let you know if someone is hurting her or making her feel uncomfortable online, even if the person is acting anonymously. Use the Cyberbullying Research Center's "[Questions Parents Should Ask Their Children About Technology](#)" to guide your discussion. Our [printable anti-bullying pledge](#) and [parent/child online agreement](#) are also useful tools.
- ✓ Make a rule that your child must ask for permission before downloading any apps — even free ones — just so you're aware of them. When your child wants to join a new social media platform, go through the security settings together to choose the ones you're most comfortable with. Advise your child not to share passwords with anyone, including best friends, boyfriends, or girlfriends.