

## Social Media Safety

According to the American Psychological Association (2023) social media usage has increased 97% from 2010 through 2019. With the increase of social media, Survey Monkey released a statement that during summer break, children between the age of 8 and 17 years old spend an average of 9 hours per day using their phone and other electronic devices.

Over the last two school years while being a part of the Valley Christian School family, the amount of students who are in my office due to social media issues keeps increasing. Here is the list of the following cons of social media and how it affects the student's day in and day out:

- 1) Online vs. Reality- Social media has cultivated a natural desire for our children to compare themselves with doctored up photos, perfect homes, and unrealistic expectations in society. This has led to students have strong emotions if so and so gets the newest push in advertisement without understanding that not everything we see posted should be as hyped up.
- 2) Increased usage- The more time spent on social media the lower we are seeing in academic achievement- According to Stanford (2022) grades in the classroom across America has dropped 28 percent in three years.
- 3) Fear of Missing Out. So many students are coming to school extremely tired because they fear missing out information that they are getting online. Students are getting lost in TikTok videos over spending one-on-one time with true social interaction.
- 4) Increased Emotions- Students are finding themselves with scoring higher for anxiety and depression since having increased screen time.

While these are only the four biggest issues that I am seeing with increased social media usage, there are many other subcategories that can be added. Most social media accounts require users to be 14 and above. What can parents do to protect and improve our student's online life while ensuring that they are safe if you choose to let them have social media?

- 1) Open communication about safety
- 2) Making your student know that you have access whenever you want to check their accounts
- 3) Using parental controls to monitor the hours they have online
- 4) Model the behavior you want them to practice
- 5) Set boundaries right away when you give your child their social media access. Know their passwords and make a rule that they should not delete or block posts from you
- 6) Have conversations of what should be kept private. Remind the students that even though Snap-Chat says something can only be viewed for 30 seconds, we don't know who is screen grabbing the images and conversations and what their intent is.
- 7) Make your screen time isn't replacing face to face interactions. You can't learn communication skills behind a screen
- 8) Encourage home chorus and homework to be completed prior to allowing your child to use their electrons after school
- 9) You pay the bill so you set the rules
- 10) Screen time can be earned and taken away if your student isn't following your rules. Don't forget that.

Most importantly safety is first. Know who your child is communicating with. Teach them that their body isn't something that needs to be asked for from strangers online. Let them know that not everyone is friendly and that you are here to navigate with them while also keeping them safe as your child that God has given you. Finally, even if your student is responsible, remember that others do not always have the best intention for them in mind. You are to shepherd them while preparing them like arrows to be released into the world (Psalm 127).