Internet and Social Media Safety

Dear Parent/ Guardian:

For today's students, life online can be just as important as what happens 'in real life,' as young people face a reality in 2018 much different than those experienced by the majority of us. From school to social time, computers, smartphones, tablets, the Internet and social media touch every aspect of their lives. The influence of the online world cannot be underestimated, nor can we underestimate its potential impact on a student's current well-being or their future. While there are tremendous advantages and opportunities available through technology, social media and the Internet, we do know there are also negatives. We only need look to the recent situations at Harvard and Dalhousie Universities to see how someone's online activity can impact on their future plans. As such, the education system has a role to play in helping students become good decision makers.

As it is everyone's responsibility to teach our young people how to navigate the Internet safely and responsibly, as well as to model good online behaviour, we are sharing these resources with you to encourage continued discussion of these topics at home.
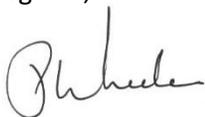
With the goal of developing a strategy to help our teachers better inform students about the use of technology, an Internet and Social Media Safety (ISMS) Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador English School District personnel was established. The committee recommends compulsory resources which have been divided into three categories: Grade 1 to 3, Grade 4 to 6, and Grade 7 to 12. These categories are derived from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy, 2013* and the elements of 'Digital Citizenship.' Further information on the resources and topics is contained in **Appendix A**.

The District believes the more information we provide our students, the better prepared they are to face the challenges ahead. To ensure they are relevant to the latest in Internet and social media trends and issues, all lessons are updated annually. We encourage you to review the resources provided and help inform yourself on matters of Internet and social media safety and engage in discussions at home about how students can and do interact on the internet. The District also has a *Social Media Use* policy and a Student Terms and Conditions of Use that all families are asked to be familiar with. Further, there is an *Acceptable Use of Technology* policy and an associated agreement to be signed by all authorized users of District technology. All these resources are available on the District's website - www.nlesd.ca

Should you have any questions, concerns or suggestions on this matter please discuss them with your classroom teacher or school principal.

Thank you for your continued efforts as we strive to prepare our students for the ever-evolving world of the Internet, and social media in particular.

Regards,

APPENDIX A
Topics and Resources for Internet and Social Media Safety

Before the end of the 2018-19 school year, all schools must have covered three key focus areas.

For Grade 1 to Grade 3 the topics to be discussed are:
- ✓ Digital Etiquette
- ✓ Rights and Responsibilities
- ✓ Digital Communications

For Grade 4 to Grade 6 the topics to be discussed are:
- ✓ Digital Access
- ✓ Digital Commerce
- ✓ Digital Literacy

For Grade 7 to Grade 12 the topics to be discussed are:
- ✓ Digital Law
- ✓ Digital Health and Wellness
- ✓ Digital Security

* Specific recommended lesson plans arranged by grade levels are available as part of the Action Plan provided to teachers and administrators. For more information, please contact your school administration.

The three compulsory resources for schools are:
o www.mediasmarts.ca - A Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization for digital and media literacy. Their vision is that children and youth have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens.
o www.youthprivacy.ca - A site available from the youth privacy section of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada website. Here you will find a variety of resources and tools that have been designed for Canadian educators and parents/guardians.
o www.commonsensemedia.org - A resource dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice needed to thrive in a world of media and technology.

Further, schools and teachers are encouraged to discuss relevant lessons from any of the following resources:
o www.netsmartz.org – A resource provided for parents/guardians, educators and youth from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.
o www.cybertip.ca/app/en - A resource operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the site's mandate is to protect children from online sexual exploitation.
o www.reallifeonline.ca - An Ontario resource with aims to educate children to be safe and healthy by applying real life behaviours to life online.
o www.kidsintheknow.ca – A safety program designed to empower children and reduce their risk of victimization with a focus on self-esteem and critical problem-solving skills.