



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEPENDENTS SCHOOLS EUROPE  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, EUROPE  
UNIT 29649  
APO AE 09136



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Dear Parents,

Internet safety and security is a topic of ongoing concern for our DoDEA schools and indeed school systems across the nation. While the internet has revolutionized the way we communicate and access information, the benefits of an open and global online experience comes with risks for our children.

We understand that it is certainly difficult for both parents and teachers to keep up with the ways our children are using new and ever-changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, tablets, gaming, and other wireless high-tech devices. Children as young as elementary students have become savvy in the use of technology. It should come as no surprise that the Internet has now become a favored forum for socializing and is the preferred method of communication among children and teens. As your children and their peers increase their online engagement for schoolwork and personal interests, we must work together to ensure their safety and well-being.

In recent years, schools have witnessed a troubling trend whereby young people sometimes misuse social media sites and mobile applications to bully, intimidate, and harass others. Another growing concern is the posting of inappropriate text messages, photos, and short video clips called "snapchats" by students under the false belief that these will "disappear" if they use certain mobile applications. In all actuality, the receiver can simply take a picture or recording of their phone or computer screen and share with anyone they choose. These images and messages can come back to haunt students many years later such as during the college admissions process or when applying for employment in the workforce.

More recently, security agencies report terrorist organizations such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are using social media and online forums to try and recruit children from western countries. While online predators have long been a problem, the potential for a terrorist organization to interact online directly with our children introduces a new dimension of risk.

Our intent is not to cause undue alarm or interfere with private family matters, but rather to alert you to these trends as they often begin off-campus and grow over time into the school setting.

As a school system, we want our students to use the internet in positive and productive ways. After all, we cannot adequately prepare them for college and career success without

digital literacy. Ultimately, misuse of the internet can expose young people to permanent harm or serious legal consequences. Appropriate use of technology by students - both at school and at home - is a shared responsibility. DoDEA adheres to the U.S. Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and takes student safety online seriously. We are constantly working to stay ahead of the technology curve and are in the process of upgrading our filters. Although we have layered security measures in place while your children are in school, the vast majority of their time is spent outside the classroom and that's where your vigilance and guidance matters most.

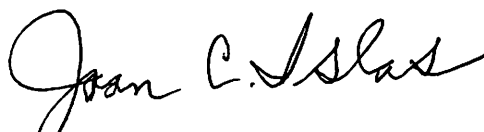
As part of our shared responsibility, I ask you to:

- Discuss the dangers of on line activities in general and social media in particular
- Spend time with your child online to model your expectations and help guide them toward wise decision-making
- Develop your family "rules of the road" for internet use- particularly with today's mobile devices which are actually sophisticated computers complete with high resolution cameras, microphones, Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking, and potentially nonstop internet access. Some families opt to have their children turn in electronic devices at night to prevent disrupted sleep
- Keep your computer in a high-visibility area of the home to make monitoring easier
- Periodically review the web and social media sites your child visits. Let them know up front to expect this
- Filters are not perfect therefore please inform your children to notify the teacher or principal if they come upon something inappropriate on the school web that slips through our filters so we can promptly address the issue.

For our part, we go beyond network and computer security measures by educating and empowering students to use the internet responsibly. Lessons and information are provided periodically throughout the school year to help students recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, inappropriate, or unlawful online behaviors. If you have questions about student use of the internet at school, please contact your child's principal.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Working together, we can help students maximize their learning outcomes by using the internet safely and effectively.

Sincerely,



Joan C. Islas, Ed.D.  
Interim Director, DoDDS-Europe