

# Rupert A. Nock Middle School

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NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Families,

In our on-going effort to create a safe and healthy community at the Nock, we would like to share some information about middle school students and social media sites.

Many of our students use social media to connect with friends, share stories with relatives, and post exciting events in their lives. These sites can be a great way to stay connected. However, our experience shows that student use of social media sites can also be dangerous. Our students are in the process of developing socially and are just learning how to solve social problems, find new friends, and make healthy choices. Since their social skills are untested and emerging, children struggle to effectively navigate difficult social situations and social media can intensify situations.

Children are unaware of the wide-scale impact of statements they make on-line, are unsure of how to handle it when a peer posts something that is inappropriate, and can be immature in their own posting. And, unlike the world most of us grew up in, the words and pictures our children are using on-line are available for many to see and difficult to take back. Many children are finding themselves on both the receiving and giving end of unfriendly, and sometimes painful, posts.

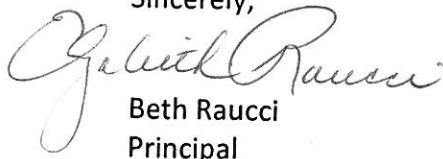
Every family needs to make their own decisions about when, how, and what social media will be a part of their children's lives. We would suggest that you take the time to educate yourself on the various sites that children are using, monitor your child's on-going use, and support your child in learning what's appropriate and what's not in the world of social media posting.

There are a number of social media sites that students at the Nock are using. This article on Today.com provides a useful (and short) overview: <http://www.today.com/tech/where-kids-are-social-networks-parents-may-not-know-about-8C11414212>. Although all these sites pose potential difficulties for children, because of the lack of oversight and the ability to post anonymously, we have found the Ask.fm site to be particularly problematic.

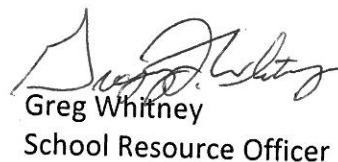
We will continue to offer opportunities in our curriculum for students to meet new friends, learn healthy communication skills, and think critically about their choices. To specifically address student use of social media, we will be partnering with the Newburyport Police Department and our school resource officer, Greg Whitney, to offer a series of lessons on the legal and social issues related to social media use.

The middle years are an exciting and complicated time of enormous growth. We are pleased to be a part of your child's development and look forward to a continued partnership with the community and parents to create a safe environment for all children to learn.

Sincerely,

  
Beth Raucci  
Principal

  
Lisa Furlong  
Assistant Principal

  
Greg Whitney  
School Resource Officer