

SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Guardians of Students in Grades 3-12:

I am writing to ask for your continued support in helping the district to maintain a safe and positive learning experience for all students in our digital environment. We have recently been addressing the student use of applications (Apps) that allow students to communicate online with one another, and at times, share inappropriate messages. The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of the Apps that students are using and share with you the steps that we are taking to ensure that students demonstrate digital citizenship in the Suffield Public Schools. While the recent incidents are specific to Suffield High School, I believe it is important to inform parents of all children in grades 3-12.

The school district's wireless infrastructure and firewalls block such applications; therefore students are accessing the Apps from their individual cellular service when they are on school grounds. While there are a number of popular Apps that allow children to communicate with one another, the district is most familiar with: *Yik Yak*, *As.fm*, *Snapchat*, *Vine*, and *Kik*. The App allows users to post what appear to be anonymous messages online and those messages are seen by users within a set radius. This has the potential to be very hurtful and disruptive in a school environment. Please talk with your child about these Apps, and if your child has this App on his/her phone, we strongly encourage you to delete the App from the phone or carefully monitor your child's use of the phone.

Please know that this type of behavior is not tolerated and is addressed under the district's bullying and harassment policy. When these behaviors come to administration's attention, administration partners with the Suffield Police department to trace the IP address of the device and hold the individual(s) involved accountable for his or her actions. Anonymity does not exist in the digital world, and we will not tolerate this behavior in the Suffield Public Schools.

If you have a question regarding the contents of this letter, please contact your child's building principal. As always, I appreciate your support and partnership with the school district to maintain a safe, healthy, and positive school environment for all of our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Baldwin", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Karen Baldwin, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools