

Dear TrekNorth Parents and Guardians,

We would like to bring to your attention to a growing concern about apps students can download that can cause great harm. These apps can be downloaded from easily accessible places such as the App Store or Google Play to a smartphone or tablet and appear normal (like a picture of a calculator), but actually can be used as a place to store secret information right out in the open or anonymously comment on other posts. These types of apps can be used for sexting nude pictures of one's self, bullying, and commenting inappropriate anonymous comments, among other negative behaviors. TrekNorth can block these apps from our school devices but we cannot block them from a student device. We have no control over what is downloaded on a student's personal device and cannot stop the types of behavior listed above when done secretly or anonymously. We want you to be aware of the issue so that you can better monitor your student's devices and prevent some of the negative behavior and consequences associated with these apps.

There are a couple different kinds of apps to be aware of. Secret Vault or Ghost Apps are apps that allow people to conceal photos, video, and information in plain sight on their phone or tablet. These apps are growing increasingly common and are used to hide a user's activity. An example of one commonly used is "Calculator % App". This app looks like a calculator when downloaded, but when a pass code is entered opens up a private area to store and hide personal activity.

Another type is one that allows people to make comments yet remain anonymous. An example of this is the "After School App". This is the type of app that can easily turn into a place for bullying to take place, where mean spirited and/or sexual comments can be placed. The scary thing is that it can all be done anonymously.

We recommend talking with your students about this concern and that you closely monitor the apps on your student's device. Look to see if you can set parental controls on the devices and try to stay current on device usage.

TrekNorth will be hosting a Parent Event on "Students and Social Media" on March 22, 2016 at 6PM, where we will cover some of these concerns. Also, attached are several articles discussing the usage of some of these Apps and illustrate the high level of concern around this topic.

Thank you,
Kristin Gustafson

<http://fox59.com/2015/11/09/teens-using-ghost-apps-to-conceal-nude-photos-for-sexting/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/11/07/how-colorado-teenagers-hid-a-massive-nude-sexting-ring-from-parents-and-teachers/>

<https://www.yahoo.com/tech/how-to-keep-your-kids-from-hiding-nude-pictures-on-150920505.html>

