

News & Notes from the Library: Cyberbullying

It seems that the world is changing at a progressively faster pace each year. As new technology and new apps are developed, people find new ways to use and abuse the power of cyberspace. Although lessons about bullying, including cyberbullying, are included in the classroom, and all teachers emphasize the need to treat others with kindness, the topic must also be talked about at home. Your child needs your guidance and support in developing online responsibility.

With advanced technology, kids are becoming increasingly adept at bullying "under the radar." It is possible that even sites normally considered safe can be used to bully by exclusion. And then there are other sites that seem to encourage inappropriate behavior.

Now you may be asking yourself, "How can I keep informed? What can I do?" I encourage you to take a look at www.common sense media.org. Common Sense Media has an abundance of information to keep you informed of trends, as well as information on how to talk with your kids about media and technology. It includes reviews of books, movies, games, apps, and more to help you determine at what age something might or might not be appropriate. A partial sample review is included below:

What parents need to know [about Yik Yak]

Parents need to know that *Yik Yak* is a free, local social-networking app that lets users post "anything and everything" anonymously, including a lot of explicit content that's clearly not for kids. *Yik Yak* users post brief, Twitter-like comments, which are distributed to any 500 people using *Yik Yak* closest to them geographically (or more than 500 people, with in-app purchase). *Yik Yak* works via GPS to identify where the user is each time he or she opens the app and posts messages (called "yaks") to other nearby users. People read and "upvote" or "downvote" other people's posts to rate them. Message content ranges from simple questions ("Where are all the spring breakers?"), personal opinions, and local information, to negative messages aimed at specific people, sexually explicit messages, and posts about seeking or using drugs and alcohol. Unless the user's location is toggled off for each post, it can be seen by others. According to *Yik Yak*'s terms, users must be at least 17, although there's no age verification on the app itself (there's an initial content warning on the iTunes App Store that requires users to confirm that they're 17 by tapping OK; there's no verification or warning on Android devices). Bottom line: *Yik Yak* is not appropriate for kids.

Common Sense Media review of Yik Yak app, 12/17/2104
<https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/yik-yak>

Finally, to help you begin the discussion with your kids, today's family folder includes a *Family Tip Sheet: Common Sense on Cyberbullying*.

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