

SAPTO FAMILY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2011

Editor: Jean Starks, Mom to Allison 7-1, Ian 2-2 and Emily, 2011 grad.

I hope you all find some of this information helpful and useful. I could really really use some other contributions to our FAMILY newsletter – recipes, stories, helpful hints, book or movie reviews, restaurant reviews, fun-places-to-go reviews You name it, please help me out! It's OUR newsletter! Thanks!

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**HAVE A HAPPY AND SAFE HALLOWEEN!** Safety tips copied below from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**S**words, knives, and similar costume accessories should be short, soft, and flexible.

**A**void trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.

**F**asten reflective tape to costumes and bags to help drivers see you.

**E**xamine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating them. Limit the amount of treats you eat

**H**old a flashlight while trick-or-treating to help you see and others see you.

**A**lways test make-up in a small area first. Remove it before bedtime to prevent skin and eye irritation.

**L**ower your risk for serious eye injury by not wearing decorative contact lenses

**L**ook both ways before crossing the street. Use established crosswalks wherever possible

**O**nly walk on sidewalks or on the far edge of the road facing traffic to stay safe.

**W**ear well-fitting masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips, and falls.

**E**at only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid eating homemade treats unless you know the cook well.

**E**nter homes only if you're with a trusted adult. Otherwise, stay outside.

**N**ever walk near lit candles or luminaries. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes

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As the school year moves along, here are a few websites that are worthy of parents checking out for information and advice!

www.kindnessabovemalice.org - we all want our kids to be respectful and caring towards others. Here's a great website based on one family's personal tragedy to remind us to teach our kids to always care.

www.tutor.com - an awesome website that we have personally used for a couple of years now. Amazing resource for those evenings when your child's homework may stump them AND you. They can get help from an on-line tutor 24/7. They can "draw" out a math problem with the mouse which is what we found to be the most help of all! And then assigned tutors, respond to your child by typing or "drawing".

www.wiredsafety.org - the perfect website for parents who feel that their kids/teens can dance circles around them in the world of computers and social media. Helpful hints on how to keep your kids safe on-line.

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***Back to School Tech Rules for Kids & Families***

***Collected from Internet: Rachel Simmons on her blog "Leadership for Life"***

It's a moment of great expectation: pencils are sharpened, binders are crisp, and hope

abounds for new friendships, successes and growth. It's also a time when a window opens for change at home and at school: new wakeup times, new carpools, new class schedules.

This is a perfect moment for parents to think about how they want their kids to engage with social media – and introduce any new rules for the school year. A recent study found that **over half of teens text more over the summer**, making the need for a serious conversation about use and limits even more vital.

*Most middle and high school kids need their parents to limit social media use. They are not able to do it on their own. Many girls are addicted to social media because, simply put, they are addicted to their relationships. And social media intensifies the insecurity many girls already feel about their relationships.*

In 2010, only three out of ten young people had rules limiting tech use. But here's the good news: kids with rules used social media three hours less than peers with no rules. As hard as this battle can be, it's worth it. In the **newly revised and updated Odd Girl Out**, I've listed strategies for parents to limit social media use. Here are a few:

**1. Create a cell phone parking area.**

Establish a place in your home where cell phones are parked and charged (and, if possible, silenced) during preset times. It might be during homework time, dinner, or when friends come over. With fewer external stimuli, family members can focus on each other and on important tasks.

**2. Prohibit sleeping with phones.** *Many kids rest their phones under their the pillows or on their chests so they can wake up if someone texts. If drama is afoot, late night texts quickly become irrational and explosive. Kids lose sleep, too. Park the phone at night somewhere else, and if you're not sure she'll leave it there, put it under your own pillow and turn it off. Yes, I'm serious.*

**3. Limit social media during homework.**

With the constant disruption of a vibrating phone or blinking chat window, kids do not develop habits to sustain longer periods of work, focus and thought. Scientists call this study time "rich learning," the kind of knowledge required for higher order thinking tasks like math and reading. With social media used during homework, kids end up multi tasking, or switching rapidly between different tasks. Multitasking does not allow for rich learning and results in epic amounts of distraction.

If moderating Internet access is not an option, focus on the cell phone. Implement a 15 minute texting break following 45 minutes of work without a phone. Internet safety expert Lori Getz suggests asking kids to try homework one night while using social media, then the next night without it. After the two nights, talk with your child about the difference in learning, efficiency and effectiveness he/she experienced.

As you undertake these changes, keep a few things in mind:

**1. Change takes time.** *Remember, you are developing new habits in your family. This means repeating something over and over again, understanding that some days will be harder than others. Sticking to it, no matter what, is key. If you've ever accomplished an athletic feat, remember how long it took to train, and how you gradually progressed. Same is true here.*

**2. Don't give in at first.** Just like a teacher who has to establish her authority with the class before she makes exceptions and softens up, you must also be the heavy until your rules are respected.

**3. Explain why.** Let your kids know why these rules are important to you, and to them. It doesn't mean negotiating. It means showing your kids you respect them as individuals who deserve to understand why they must comply with certain expectations.

***From Patt and Steve Saso – they did a speaking engagement at our school a few years back on Raising Successful Young People .....Their tips on Back to School Success:***

What may help is a softer, kinder, more holistic approach to your teen. Here are ten tips to help you parent for school success:

1. Learn to trust your children, believing in their abilities to do things on their own. Let go of your attachment to the outcome you want.
2. Continue to get to know your child. They change daily and if we have them locked into a stereotype (lazy, crazy, air-head adolescent) then we will miss seeing him or her because we are blinded by our own ignorance.
3. Ask your child what his concerns are. And then listen to what he or she has to say. Value your child's inner world.
4. Discover what your child likes and dislikes with total acceptance. Without judgement.
5. Engage your son or daughter in conversations about his future. Ask about their dreams and desires. Appreciate them no matter how outlandish they seem to you.
6. Know your child's daily activities. Be involved and interested in their life. Support extra-curricular activities, such as speech tournaments, school plays and concerts, and sporting events. Your participation in school programs is a great way to support your child's success in school.
7. Attend school functions. Make it a priority to attend school programs, such as Back to School Night, PTA meetings, and Parent-Teacher conferences.
8. Be a partner in your child's education. Get to know your child's teachers and form a working relationship with them. Engage in dialogue with the teacher to stay on top

of any trouble spots. Use the phone or e-mail to keep in touch.

9. Give guidance with homework, if asked. Some kids will not want help. Others will welcome it. Do not force your help on them, and be sure to work with your student; do not do the work for them.

10. And lastly, remember your child is a human being, not a human doer. If you just focus on grades and not consider a holistic picture then you, as a parent, may lose focus. This creates more pain rather than connection.

Even if you do all these things and more, there is no guarantee that your son or daughter will not hit bumps on their path. It is important to keep in mind that your teen's success in school has little to do with you being a good or bad parent. It has more to do with the learning style, temperament, talents, personality and life journey that is your child's alone.