

January 20, 2005

Dear Parents,

We are writing to inform you about concerns regarding Facebook.com, MySpace.com, and other "social networking" websites. If you are unfamiliar with these sites, they allow individuals to create a web page on the site that includes personal information, pictures, a list of friends with similar pages, as well as other information. These sites, if used unwisely, can place students in harm's way, especially if information and pictures that identify a student and where that student lives or goes to school are included. In general, social networking websites also have age restrictions for posting information. We believe that some of our Middle School students may be providing false information about their ages in order to gain access and create web pages.

Because of these concerns about our students' safety, students in the Upper School and Middle School have been instructed to remove any reference to Episcopal on these websites if they have posted a page on them. This includes any mention of Episcopal, pictures of individuals in clothing that could identify them as Episcopal students, use of an email address from Episcopal, or the ability to search by using Episcopal's name. Students are also prohibited from accessing these websites using Episcopal's computers or other technology resources. The Acceptable Use Policy for technology, which is signed by students and parents, states that it is a violation of that policy to post personal web pages that connect students to Episcopal or to use references to Episcopal on any unauthorized web pages.

While these measures should protect students from revealing their school location on line, please be aware that it is possible for students to create their own web pages by using email addresses that are not connected to Episcopal. In order to help you understand more about these websites and the safety risks they could pose, we have posted some links on the home page of our website (www.ehsbr.org) that will guide you to information that can help you protect your children. In addition to the dangers posed by predators, it is important to note that inappropriate content posted on a student's website may be accessed by universities and employers.

We appreciate your support as we work together to conquer the new challenges presented by technology. The current situation points, once again, to the importance of our partnership with parents. While web based communication is our reality, it nevertheless remains true that "It takes a village to raise a child." Thank you.

Sincerely,

Deborah Kay Betts

David Zielinski
Upper School Head

Lucy Smith
Middle School Head

Virginia Hastings
Lower School Head