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Dear Parent/Guardian:

I write this to you to bring to light a very real threat to the fabric of our community, a mobile application called *Yik Yak*. *Yik Yak* is a somewhat new social network that has quickly gained popularity amongst young people. It's allure, besides the fact that it is just the latest of a long line of apps that let kids communicate with one another – like Ask.fm, Snapchat, Vine, Kik, and more – is that users are anonymous. The developer describes it as, "...a local bulletin board that allows anyone to connect and share information with others **without having to know them.**" Sadly, the majority of the posts to this site have been racist, slanderous, hateful, sexually charged comments meant to hurt and harm our students and faculty. *Yik Yak*, as well as the medium itself, inspires insidious behavior where people who post can hide, faceless and nameless, as they tear others down. *Yik Yak* "asks" users to confirm they are older than 17 to use it. Kids under 17 download it with ease.

In terms of what to talk about with your family, consider these three things:

1. Anonymity is an illusion in the digital world. Authorities have tracked down users before after *Yik Yak* shared location data collected by the application. In other words, users need to know they can run but they cannot hide. Every digital device has an IP address that allows it to be tracked.
2. Criminal charges don't look so good on college resumes and job applications. Slanderous comments and threats, for instance, can bring with them legal consequences.
3. Digital footprints live forever. This concept is not one that teenagers will think about often, but if the adults surrounding them talk about it with enough frequency, it will sink in. At the very least, it may give them pause when they consider posting anything remotely inappropriate or threatening.
4. **AS PARENTS YOU NEED TO TAKE ACTION.** If your child has the *Yik Yak* app on his/her phone, ask him/her to open it and find "My Yaks" in the settings to see what he/she has either posted or responded to. Then, have your child remove it. Make it clear that he/she may not be in possession of or use this application.

There will always be a *Yik Yak*, so at the end of the day it is more about the behavior than the tool... but if our children are equipped with the right emotional and educational compass to know how to behave online, hopefully the temptation to tease, bully and cut others down will soon disappear.

[Newsday](http://www.newsday.com/long-island/yik-yak-app-s-anonymous-posts-draw-warnings-from-school-officials-1.9496061) ran an article not too long ago. Please click this link to read that article: <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/yik-yak-app-s-anonymous-posts-draw-warnings-from-school-officials-1.9496061>

As always, we appreciate and value your support as we try to put an end to the use of this mobile application. We will do all that we can as a school to promote empathy, compassion, and cyber citizenship. We ask you to do the same.

Bernie