

Dear EPS Parents,

As you are aware EPS is one of many Oklahoma school districts that provides secondary students with a district mobile device they can take home. Our chromebooks greatly expand the educational opportunities available to students by placing a world of information at their fingertips and allowing them to collaborate with classmates, access online instructional resources, type papers, create audio/video content, and more. As has been said, however, “with great power comes great responsibility”, and with the power of chromebooks comes the responsibility of ensuring that our students have a safe online environment. The purpose of this letter is to share with you the steps EPS takes to ensure your student’s online safety and to discuss how you can help us achieve this goal.

Edmond Public Schools has taken many steps, as follows, to create a safe online learning environment for our students:

*Content Filtering:* We use the iBoss internet content filter to block access to internet content that is inappropriate, has no instructional value, and/or would allow students to communicate directly with people other than EPS students and staff. iBoss blocks websites by category, a customized block list, and by key words. Google, Bing, Yahoo, and other search engines are forced into “Safe Search Mode” and searches that contain inappropriate words and phrases are blocked. Social media sites including Facebook, Instagram, and SnapChat are blocked. Most streaming audio/video sites including YouTube, Netflix, Spotify, Pandora, etc. are blocked. iBoss also logs all internet activity and searches, allowing EPS staff to run reports and investigate individual students’ internet usage history. iBoss blocks nefarious software such as VPNs and proxies designed to circumvent our filtering, and we maintain different filtering “tiers” for elementary, middle and high school students. **In summary, the iBoss content filter is a premier product with many advanced features and we are continually refining our configuration. That being said, we also wish to stress to parents that no content filter is 100% effective, so we strongly suggest that you supervise the use of chromebooks in your home to the extent that you deem appropriate.**

*Google Chrome Management:* The Google Chrome operating system on our student chromebooks is also customized to maximize student online safety. Students can only load a pre-approved set of “apps” and “extensions”, the chromebook must be logged into an EPS account to be used, and the iBoss content filter cannot be removed. Our Google domain is closed, meaning that students can only exchange email and share google documents with other EPS students and staff.

*Gaggle:* We use this software service to proactively scan and monitor all pictures, documents, presentations, and email that students create in Google Drive and email. It looks for key words and phrases related to self-harm, threats, bullying, pornography, profanity and more. When key words are flagged, real people review the content and notify school administrators when necessary for follow up.

*Digital Citizenship:* Students in all grade levels are taught about appropriate and safe use of the internet. In addition to our “iSafe” curriculum, our Annual Student Review, Responsible Use Agreement, and technology policies stress that students have a role to play in ensuring their own online safety.

*Additional Student Safety Strategies:* EPS teachers supervise the use of chromebooks in the classroom, the technology staff reviews and investigates cases of misuse, and site administrators follow up directly with students and parents on student online safety issues.

### How Can Parents Help With Online Safety?

As mentioned earlier, one of the purposes of this letter is to let you know as a parent what steps you can take to help create a safe online learning environment at home. Here are some suggestions that we have:

- Have open and honest discussions with your children about online safety, the dangers of the internet, and your expectations as a parent.
- Establish clear rules or guidelines for the use of the EPS chromebook (and other internet-connected devices) in your home, including when and where it can be used.
- **Be aware that no content filtering system is 100% effective**, and provide direct supervision of chromebook use in your home, to the extent that you feel it is necessary.
- Require your student to share their EPS username and password with you, if you so wish.
- Click the “Technology” link on the [EPS website](#) for more in depth information on online safety and our larger digital conversion initiative.
- Use the “Need Support” link on the [Technology Resources page](#) to report any inappropriate content or websites to our technology staff, or simply send email to “epstechnology@edmondschools.net”.
- Use the Ctrl-H keystroke combination (hold the Ctrl key down while pressing the “H” key) in the chrome browser on your student’s chromebook to view internet usage history. Note that students do have the ability to delete their “cache/cookies/history”, as this procedure is a frequently used and necessary troubleshooting technique.
- Implement the parental control features of your home WiFi router, as appropriate. Many home WiFi routers, for example, have basic content filtering and the ability to restrict hours of use.
- Consider using OpenDNS or other home internet content filtering products, as necessary. Be aware that PCs, smartphones, gaming consoles and other internet connected devices in your home may have no content filtering or restrictions at all.

In conclusion, thank you for taking the time to review this information. EPS is committed to ensuring that our students have a safe online learning environment in which to learn and grow, and to helping you as parents understand and manage the technology we send home. Please do not hesitate to use the “Contact Us” link mentioned above to share your comments, concerns, and questions with our staff. Again, thank you.