



# Unified District No. 338

## VALLEY FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Guardians:

The USD #338 Valley Falls School District prides itself on providing a safe learning environment for its students. An emerging national concern is the inappropriate use of the Internet by students. This problem has the potential to be harmful, and we ask your support in assisting us with this challenge.

Across the nation, schools have seen an increase in negative student behavior as a result of messages written using electronic technology, posted to popular social networking Web sites. Many sites contain instant messaging components that allow students to chat with other students and to post statements that ordinarily would not be said in a face-to-face conversation.

The popularity of these Web sites seems to be growing. SnapChat, Facebook, Instagram, Skype, and Kik, just a few examples, have millions of members and have become some of the most popular “message exchange” sites among students nationwide.

Unfortunately, some of these Web sites are being used by child predators, “cyber bullies,” and con artists. To our knowledge, there are no adults officially responsible for monitoring the content on such Web sites, and some students use the sites to participate in online bullying or to threaten harm to other students. The so-called “cyber bullies,” mostly children between the ages of 9 and 14, use the anonymity of the Web to hurt others without witnessing the consequences. Students who are bullied online sometimes do not report these occurrences for fear that they will be barred from using the Internet.

Outside of our schools, there have been instances of adults posing as youths and gaining access to student chat rooms. In some cases, these contacts have led to tragedy. Some unsuspecting students post enough personal information that predators are able to locate students’ home or school addresses, thereby becoming easy targets for predators.

***The Valley Falls School District has blocked the use of these social networking Web sites from our school computers. We will continue to block objectionable material as we deem appropriate. The school district maintains an updated firewall protecting internet usage within our buildings.***

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## **Helpful Tips and Resources**

We encourage you to talk with your son or daughter about the potential danger of the Internet. Ask if they have an account with Facebook, Instagram, or similar Web sites. If your child is using such a site with your permission, you may want to review his or her profile to ensure that no personal and identifiable information has been posted. It would be our recommendation that you have access to all passwords, etc. in order for you to readily access any and all accounts.

We also encourage you to establish rules and guidelines to ensure the safety of your child while on the Internet. Some Web sites offer parental or family guidance for Internet safety. We have provided a list of resources below to help guide you.

[www.netismartz.org](http://www.netismartz.org)

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org)

[www.safekids.com](http://www.safekids.com)

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/protecting-kids-online>

[www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)

[www.commonensemedia.org](http://www.commonensemedia.org)

The Valley Falls School District will continue to provide Internet security within our schools. It is important that parents also monitor Internet use at home.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in keeping our students safe. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact administration; see contact information below.

Sincerely,

District Technology Committee

### **Contact Information:**

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