USN Middle School:
Recommendations for Parents about Use of Phones and Other Devices

In light of what we know about brain science and middle schoolers, the USN Middle School strongly recommends the following device-related guidelines to parents:

● A child should not have regular access to a cell phone until 6th grade at the earliest. Thoroughly discussing expectations for appropriate use and consequences, and having in place a signed agreement, should precede any child having his/her own phone.

● Parents should aggressively monitor their child’s digital life by maintaining their own accounts on the platforms their children use, regularly checking phone texts, emails, and social media posts, and having regular conversation about appropriate use. (Think of it this way: Would you drop your child off in New York City without supervision? Think of the Internet and unmonitored social media platforms as virtual New York City.)

● No digital device should be kept in a child’s bedroom at night.

● Screen time should be limited at home - as it is at school - and not take place within 30 minutes of bedtime.

● We at school benefit from knowing when inappropriate messages have been sent among students. But, when this occurs outside of the school day, the parents of the children involved should contact one another directly to address the breach in a collaborative way.

● It is unhealthy for children to participate in digital activities that create a perceived obligation to communicate with friends 24/7. Those who feel obligated do not have the social and emotional skills to moderate their participation in balance with the rest of their lives.

For more information about any of these topics, please contact Helen Tarleton, Middle School Director of Counseling and Resources, or Jeff Greenfield, Head of Middle School.