

What parents should know about two new social media apps

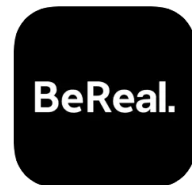
Hello SDWD Parents,

While the stalwarts of social media for teens are still well known and remain popular (Snapchat, TikTok, etc.), there is seemingly a new option always lurking on the horizon. As is often the case, the newer apps gain a large user base before us old fogies get wind of what they are. I'm going to share information on two apps, one of which is most likely already on your teen's phone and the other is one that is apparently poised to take off but which advertises itself as a force for good. Whether an app is "good" or "bad" generally depends on how it is used, but consider this merely informational and a potential conversation starter with your youngster.

BeReal (information provided by Ben Tracy, founder of Safe Social Network)

What is BeReal?

BeReal, which has grown 315% this year, brands itself as the opposite of other popular apps. It doesn't have any filters or photo editing features. This makes it more authentic and less curated than most other social media apps.



Users receive a notification to post their BeReal at a random time each day. They then have two minutes to make their post. The post is two pictures that are taken simultaneously from the front and back camera on their phone. If the person posts after the two-minute window, the BeReal shows that the post was made late.

What are the dangers of BeReal?

- No privacy features, blocking, or parental controls
- Oversharing of friends, family, location, or school
- Potential to view inappropriate content
- No age verification

Are there any positive aspects of BeReal?

- No filters or photo editing. This makes it more authentic than other apps like Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram.
- No private messaging
- Users can only post once a day

How will BeReal impact schools?

- Photos taken during school hours - With only two minutes to post their BeReal, students will be encouraged to use their phones during school hours.
- Photos of other students - It's likely students who do not want to be photographed or aren't on social media will be on someone else's BeReal.
- Location sharing - Location sharing is turned on by default on BeReal. If a student posts to the Discovery feed on BeReal, they risk showing their location to online predators. Students should be encouraged not to allow their BeReal to be posted to the Discovery feed.

Gas (information taken from an [article](#) by Hannah Towney at *Business Insider*)

Gas is a new app for high schoolers and is ranked #1 in the app store right now, beating out BeReal and TikTok. The app "Gas" lets users send anonymous compliments to their friends and classmates through polls. "Gas," after the Gen Z lingo for "gassing someone up." For the older readers out there, that means giving someone a compliment.



Here's how it works: After you sync up your location and contacts to the app, users anonymously vote for their friends in a round of polls that refresh every hour. The prompts range from friendly superlatives to flirtatious confessions. If you win a poll, a "flame" gets sent to your inbox.

The app was created by Nikita Bier (the founder of a nearly identical app "tbh" that Facebook acquired in 2017 only to shut down months later), Isaiah Turner, and former Facebook engineer Dave Schatz. Right now, it's only available in 12 states but is scheduled to go nationwide soon, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Anonymous social media apps for teenagers have a history of burning up in flames. Yik Yak, a similarly anonymous, location-based app shut down in 2017 following a series of cyberbullying controversies. Then there's Ask.fm, an anonymous question-and-answer app, that was linked to [several teenage suicides](#).

But unlike Yik Yak or Ask.fm, Gas users can only vote on pre-written compliments, and there's no direct messaging.

The company [says](#) the app is intentionally designed this way in order to "create a place that makes us feel better about ourselves" and show users that "there are people who love and admire you."

According to Bier on Twitter, Gas has 1 million daily active users and is acquiring 30,000 users per hour. After a Twitter user asked the co-founder how he knows Gas won't be a one-hit wonder like tbh, Bier responded: "To be honest, I don't really care," adding that the "best part" is receiving messages from teens who say the app has helped their mental health and self-esteem.