

SATURN APP – Threat to Student Safety



The following parent testimonial is important for parents to know and be aware of in order to keep students safe. Please share accordingly.

Risks to our students:

1. **Predators - nation-wide**
2. **Private Chat areas that allow pictures**
3. **Opportunities for bullying**
4. **Students under the age of 13 can lie and still be verified as a user**

Please note the information gathered about students that will put their safety at risk:
[Saturn - Time Together \(joinsaturn.com\)](https://joinsaturn.com)

Testimonial:

PARENTS- There is an app which has exploded in popularity this week at my daughter's school called Saturn. It is a scheduling app in which you upload your class schedule, and it tells you who all is in your class. Neat concept, right? After downloading it myself to understand it better, what I found was surprising, and the reason for this post.

Upon launching Saturn, I was asked to provide a phone number as my login ID- although I could have logged in with a School email address or a Snapchat account. I was prompted to enter my birthday and select a graduation year. (The app was originally intended for only High Schoolers, so I had to fib and give it an incorrect birthday and the wrong graduating class.) I then was able to join ANY school I desired in the country. Naturally, I chose my daughter's school.

At this point, I have not had to verify anything except a phone number. Not my name, birthday, where I lived, email, relation to the school, etc.

I was just a 41-year-old man using the Saturn app to gain access to 350 new friends.

The app indicates you would need to verify you are a student (using a school email) to see the schedules of the other students. But this is not exactly true. I was able to input a bogus

schedule (choosing from a list of teachers the app provided) and see who was in any class. I was even able to see a girls athletic team roster. It then told me who all had joined my classes. And then, simply by changing the teachers on my own schedule, I was able to see who was in ANY class. So, it's not unreasonable to think that a predator or intruder could compile a full schedule for any student in the app without ever having to fully log in.

But the reality is, even if the app did require an official login, it's still allowing anyone in the school to see my daughter's schedule- a bully, a stalker, an unwanted admirer, a mean girl, etc. But the app doesn't stop there. Each student's profile allows them to upload a photo, a description of themselves (which some did) and add links to their Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Venmo, or any website they choose. I was able to click the student's links and watch some reels right there in the Saturn app- thus gaining more information about them. There is also a Direct Message feature available for private discussions, which is unlocked once you verify yourself using a school email address. So, anyone who has logged in, can now DM your student.

Taking this a step further, I realized I could change my profile name, even if it matched another student in the app. What would stop me from cyber-bullying using another student's name? Another "feature" is a Bulletin board where students can post school events. One of the posted events was this Friday evening's game. The app gave the location, date, time, and (thanks to the social nature of the app) a list of all the students (and their profile pictures) who will be attending.

The last thing I'll mention was the most surprising. Let's remember, I have not had to verify who I am at all- in the app I am a 14-year-old in 8th or 9th grade using a fictitious name. Within just a few hours I had received 3 friend requests from students. 2 girls and 1 boy. I'm not sure what the benefit of being "friends" is within the app. I did not accept their requests, so I can only speculate what could have happened at that point. I suspect we could have sent DM's or photos.

Instead of getting mad at our daughter for wanting this app, we used this as an opportunity to educate her on the realities of the world we live in, and how what was described to her as an innocent app, turned out to be a whole lot more. In the end, I am just a dad trying to protect my daughter.