

Tech Tuesday: Protecting Your Child

How Do We Keep Our Children Safe?

BY KENDRA MCGUIRE

Over the last two weeks we have learned about the dangers of being too connected and the disturbing content on our children's devices. That leads to the question, what do we do about it? This week, we share tips on how to begin protecting your children on their devices.



Safety & Family Time

By Theresa Guard, Principal, Immaculate Heart of Mary

Use of technology at a young age not only impacts the way a child's brain develops, but perhaps even more importantly, affects their relationships with family and friends. How often do we see families out to dinner sitting at a table together and each person is on their own personal device? Children often imitate the way their parents use technology. Adults and children seem to have a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) when it comes to social media, but maybe we need to have FOMO when it comes to family moments.

A better option while you are waiting for your dinner, if you can't put the devices away, would be to play shoulder-to-shoulder with your child on his or her device. You can learn what your child is doing and who his or her friends are. As you play on the device, have conversations about inappropriate material and internet safety. You may even learn you need more parental controls.

Be Proactive Parents

By Grant Brannen, Assistant Principal, St. Henry District High School

One of the most important responsibilities of a parent is to be proactive and use prevention measures to keep your child safe. As a parent of a 10 and 12-year-old, I am always searching for sufficient prevention measures. We, as parents, have to make the decision on when our kids should have cell phones, smart watches, or tablets. This is something we never had to deal with as kids. We are now living in their world, and as much as we want to change things, billion dollar tech companies are not leaving any time soon. Moving forward, it will be critical to learn and understand that prevention is a key element to keeping our kids safe online.

Togetherness is a sure thermometer for measuring the health of relationships . . . a family that almost never eats together, or that, rather than talking at the table watches television or looks at the smartphone is not much of a family. We need to recover family togetherness while adapting it to the times. -Pope Francis

How to Protect Your Kids Online

Ideas shared from Protect Young Eyes: www.protectyouneyes.com

Location

The "toxic trio" for a child who has his/her own device is boredom, their bedroom, and darkness. Parents should restrict not only the time a child uses their device, but also the places where a child is allowed to use their device.

Tips:

- Establish house rules on where your child can use their device. Make sure these places are "public" areas of the home such as the living room, dining room, or kitchen.
- Charge devices overnight in the parent's bedroom or kitchen. Require a time they must be turned in each night.

Wi-Fi Networks

If you connect devices to your home's Wi-Fi, then you have a router that likely has parental control features that can be set to protect your child at home. Since this is only in your home, you also need to be aware of your child using his/her device on public Wi-Fi, at a friend's house or even at Grandma's.

Tips:

- Learn how to use parental controls on your home router. Consider buying a router with built-in safety such as the Gryphon router.
- Learn about virtual private networks (VPN). Your child can use a VPN to get around firewalls.

Devices

As parents, you should "co-own" every device that your child uses. This includes knowing his/her passwords. Frequently get onto the device shoulder-to-shoulder with your child so they know you are interested in their activities. This is not an invasion of privacy but a parental responsibility to help your child learn to use technology appropriately. This is also a great time to ask questions about your child's online activities and let them know they can talk to you about concerns too.

Tips:

- If you suspect your child has inappropriate material on their phone and plan to search it, be mindful that children can access the iCloud on any device and erase material before you see it.
- Consider getting a device with built-in safety features like the Gabb Phone for elementary and middle school age students.

Apps

There are many resources for parents to protect children from dangerous content. Explore the resources below and choose the programs that work best for your devices.

Resources:

- Protect Young Eyes Protect App - Mini-lessons for busy families to stay up-to-date and safe with changing technology. It includes videos you can watch with your kids and emergency solutions.
- BARK - Monitors text messages, YouTube, emails and 30+ social networks/apps for safety issues. Including cyberbullying, violence, inappropriate content, depression, and more.
- Google Family Link - An app that lets you set digital ground rules to help guide your children online.

Tech Questions for Parents

- What are the technology rules for your home?
- What are the consequences for violating the rules?
- Are all the devices your child uses protected from online dangers, including video games?
- Have you established an open line of communication with your child so they can report dangerous content they may encounter?
- Do you check in with your child regularly to see what they're up to on their device?

A Look Ahead & Further Learning

Next Tuesday, we will challenge families and our schools to go Tech Free. Stay tuned for big and small ideas!

Can't wait until next week? Take a look at these resources:

- www.faithandsafety.org
- Watch: *The Social Dilemma*