High-Tech Education, Safety and Online Learning for Teachers, Kids and Parents

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Teaching Technology

High-Tech Education, Safety and Online Learning for Teachers, Parents and Kids

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AS SEEN ON

TEACHING TECHNOLOGY
HIGH-TECH EDUCATION, SAFETY AND ONLINE LEARNING FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS AND KIDS

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D E D I C A T I O N

From our family to yours – may this long-overdue resource guide and serve future generations well.

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INTRODUCTION

Kids growing up in this digital age – Generation Tech, as we refer to them – are being exposed to technology and consumer electronics at earlier ages than ever before. This group of children is essentially being raised in a world that offers access to high-tech gear, mobile devices and 24/7 connected Internet access from all but birth. From smartphones and apps to computers and social networks, technology has permanently invaded kids' lives, much to the benefit of parents and educators. But with the iPhone, iPod touch and iPad now topping children's wish lists, more kids aged 2-5 are suddenly equipped to run apps than tie their own shoelaces, while preschool-age children are increasingly being armed with faux plastic smartphones and tablet PCs. In the rush to place high-tech and mobile devices in so many hands, it bears noting that we're doing perilously little to prepare adults and kids alike for life in a connected world, potentially endangering future generations.

In short, it's up to us as teachers, parents and positive role models – the adults most prominent in, and capable of exerting a welcome influence over, kids' lives – to guide them every step of the way as they explore a world rich in technology and connected access. While there are many wonderful benefits present in this brave new world of social networks, apps and instant messengers, there are many inherent risks as well. As educators and parents, it is vitally important that we serve as primary resources for children with regard to learning, inspiration and support that both help kids learn to use technology responsibly, and deal with the consequences when it is abused.

This comprehensive training booklet, built as an expert guide for teachers, schools, parents and kids of all ages, is intended to serve as an invaluable resource for those who wish to teach technology online, in the classroom, and at home. But remember, it's only a starting point: Educating yourself first and staying one step ahead of the many technological innovations, social networks and gadgets to come is imperative – homework isn't just for kids alone. Fostering positive, healthy and ongoing dialogue is likewise essential to teaching technology, positive computing and digital citizenship habits, and helping keep children safe online for years to come.

Only by working together, hand-in-hand as parents and educators and actively involving youth in the discussion can we ensure that we are collectively raising the next generation of safe, smart and savvy digital kids. It's our sincere hope that this workbook can help make a positive difference in children's lives, and help bridge the generation gap. We all have the power to make a difference – a process that begins the moment you open yourself to embracing technology, innovation and forward progress, and make a running commitment to helping both ourselves and tomorrow's kids stay ahead of the curve.

Given their vivid graphics, rich characters and backdrops, and often clear-cut mission objectives, it's not surprising that apps, video games and high-tech toys may give the initial impression of leaving little to the imagination. But in actuality, they're among the most successful tools that parents can tap into to encourage creativity and dynamic thinking, allowing children to experiment with situations, scenarios and approaches in safe, fun and inventive contexts.

In the right environment and with the right supervision and monitoring, kids can benefit greatly from interaction with technology. While children's enjoyment of popular apps and games is frequently viewed as a frivolous leisure activity, just as interactive play is a helpful cognitive tool for kids that promotes creativity, imagination and teamwork, so too can it also be a vital educational resource. Today, more children aged two to five can run applications and video games than ride a bike or tie their shoelaces – a fact which may frighten parents and educators. But it bears remembering that not only do many software options actively teach math, science, social studies and other useful topics. Even those which place entertainment first can be helpful educational aids when utilized correctly.

The next time you tell your students or children "Drop that device and do your homework!," it's worth considering – you may actually be doing them a disservice. Following are just a few of the many 21st century learning and career skills that today's leading electronic innovations teach:

Enhanced Learning and Retention

Studies show that a curriculum involving digital media can improve early literacy skills. Participating four and five year olds enjoyed boosts in letter recognition, sound association with letters, and understanding basic concepts about stories and print. However, it should be noted that gains were achieved through the use of high-quality educational titles – and that strong parental and teacher involvement was key to success, as always. Experts further point out that teens and tweens can also benefit from the use of high-tech solutions. As Georgia Tech professor Ian Bogost explains: "Look at [popular online games and virtual worlds]: You've got 11-year-olds who are learning to delegate responsibility, promote teamwork and steer groups of people toward a common goal."

Improved Concentration and Multi-Tasking Ability

Research also indicates that apps and games enhance kids' ability to multitask. Studies by educators at the University of Rochester demonstrate that kids' attention, accuracy and ability to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously enjoyed marked benefits after playing select software options. Authorities

like Merrimack College psychology professor Michael Stroud explain that it's only natural too, as interactive activities and games demand higher attention and working memory requirements. He equates skills gained playing apps and games – which require constant situational awareness and strategic decision-making – to those required when confronted with equally challenging real-world scenarios.

Better Cooperation and Teamwork

Numerous apps, software programs and video games promote cooperative aspects of interaction or gameplay, and encourage working together with others to achieve common goals. Promoting greater levels of user empathy, understanding and teamwork, they also teach delayed gratification, and the need to collaborate with others with diverse skills to accomplish more rewarding tasks. All are lessons that can serve children well in both school and workplace settings, and encourage them to partner with other kids, who may bring differing perspectives and skill sets to the table.

Growing Confidence and Self-Esteem

Many people fear failure, rejection and embarrassment – but making mistakes, observing the consequences and trying new approaches is how we fundamentally learn. By offering safe, approachable contexts in which children are actively encouraged to try varying approaches until success is achieved, high-tech solutions do away with many of the social inhibitors common to classroom or shared environments. Virtual simulations also provide kids with a more accurate sense of context, the ability to watch situations evolve in real-time based on their actions, and often offer multiple perspectives on the action, allowing for deeper observation and critical thinking.

Chapter 2 – Why We Have to Teach Tech in School

According to Norton's Online Family Report, nearly 62% of children worldwide have had a negative experience online – nearly four in ten involving serious situations, i.e. cyberbullying or receiving inappropriate photos from strangers. A whopping 74% of kids active on social networks say they've found themselves in unpleasant situations alone, while additional surveys reveal that nearly eight in ten have witnessed acts of meanness or cruelty on Facebook, Google+ and similar services as well. That's a serious problem when over three out of every four middle and high-school kids owns a cell phone, yet a quarter of adolescents say parents know little or nothing about what they're doing on the Internet. Even more so when you consider that 20% of kids won't tell parents about negative online experiences for fear of getting into trouble, according to Norton's findings, and nearly a fifth fear adults' overreacting as well.

Welcome to the digital age – an era increasingly defined by a growing gulf between those who grew up with technology and those to whom modern-day advancements such as apps, cloud computing and smartphones remain esoteric. And, for that matter, one where experienced role models able to provide positive, real-world solutions for addressing new and emerging problems (e.g. cyberbaiting, sexting and live broadcasting of personal data) are increasingly hard to find. For previous generations, parents and teachers could serve as a vital source of wisdom and learning for all things family- or life-related. But like many of today's educators and experts, they too are facing the stark reality of having never been confronted by life in a world of 24/7 online streaming downloads, instant mobile video sharing, and innocent mistakes that live on in infamy forever via the Internet.

Even technology insiders presently struggle to define rules of online etiquette, social media conduct and personal boundaries, given the speed at which advancements now arrive and online trends shift. That's problematic for parents and instructors, expected to lead by example. As ever, the answer lies with education. But growing worry surrounds the widening chasm that's appearing between the reality of connected life and the lack of online awareness being provided by our school system.

Based on recent surveys, parents and teachers largely agree that the Internet and technology should be better integrated into modern schools, college curriculums and university classrooms. According to non-profit and Homeland Security collaborator the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) however, schools are ill-prepared to teach online safety, security and digital citizenship. Case in point: Over 80% of school administrators say they do an adequate job of preparing students to meet the challenges a digital world presents. However, a frightening 36% of teachers claim they've received zero hours of training in the previous year when surveyed.

A moving target, keeping kids safe naturally requires ongoing effort and discussion from all sides – kids, parents, teachers and law enforcement officials alike – all of whom must actively work to provide families with support, and share learning and best practices. But make no mistake: We need basic training and ongoing education in digital citizenship and online safety in schools now – not the near or distant future.

Companies such as McAfee, Lookout, Kaspersky, Webroot and Trend Micro all offer software solutions that block or filter question content. Others like Web Watcher and Net Nanny offer apps and Web browsers that provide sanitized content for children's usage. But as we know, truly determined kids can circumvent all, and as companies will tell you themselves, software is no substitute for parenting. Only by proactively teaching positive computing and digital lifestyle habits can such problems truly be addressed.

Discussion can, and must, occur surrounding digital citizenship and online safety starting at the earliest years, and continue into later phases of adolescent and even professional life. Moreover, we need to recognize the pressing importance of keeping these conversations going daily at homes, schools and boardrooms the globe over. Standardized educational solutions and training programs that teach high-tech safety rules and responsible online usage could prove the solution. Whether such programs come from the state, private or non-profit sector though, it's vital that we better equip kids and adults alike to meet the challenges of the modern world.

Chapter 3 – Technology and Kids: Questions Every Parent and Educator Should Ask

For parents and teachers hoping to make technology a healthy part of life for kids, it's essential to not only speak with children about online safety and digital citizenship, but also make it a running conversation. Open and honest dialogue isn't just the cornerstone upon which trust is founded, it's also a vital tool around which to build empathy, foster meaningful discussion and create a positive home environment in which questions and concerns can be productively addressed.

When speaking with kids about technology, it's important to discuss a number of topics, including which high-tech gadgets and devices are allowed in the home and classroom; when it's appropriate to use them; which forms of content are appropriate for consumption; how all may be consumed and the rules which will govern the usage of these options. Note that discourses shouldn't focus solely on tools, hardware and software either – they should also extend to healthy computing habits, good decision-making and being responsible digital citizens.

Here are some questions you should ask your students and families (and yourselves!) when contemplating the subject:

- **What devices are you using to access the Internet?**
- **How and in what ways are you using this online access?**
- **What types of activities, sites and interactions do you like to engage with online?**
- **What websites and services do you frequent often and why?**
- **What are our house or classroom rules with regards to the use of high-tech devices and Internet connectivity?**
- **What punishments will be meted out should they be violated? Under what terms will they be rescinded?**
- **What times are designated to be free of high-tech devices?**
- **What is your family's password policy?**
- **Have you implemented parental controls and privacy restrictions?**
- **Will we be monitoring children's online access? How so?**

- **What should you do if you encounter questionable and/or inappropriate content or behavior online?**
- **Do we understand the capabilities of all high-tech devices present in our home and school?**
- **Do we know where to turn if we have questions about any technology service or product, or need the help of a qualified professional?**
- **Is screen time an inherent right or earned privilege? How much will be allowed daily?**
- **What areas of the home and classroom are designated for high-tech use?**
- **What are our rules for appropriate high-tech usage?**
- **Are we aware of the basic safety rules that must be observed when using technology?**
- **Do you know what it means to be responsible digital citizens?**
- **Have we made a running commitment to educating ourselves about new technology trends, topics, products and services?**
- **Do we all feel comfortable turning to each other for help if we have any questions?**

Several online resources can also provide a jump-off point when starting these discussions and creating a safe and positive high-tech environment at home and school, including:

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children - Internet Safety Pledges

Family Online Safety Institute - Family Safe Contract

The Modern Parent's Guide High-Tech Parenting Tips

Common Sense Media - Rules of the Road for Kids

ConnectSafely.org - Safety Hints, Tips and Advice

Norton Family Safety Guide

Enough is Enough Internet Safety 101 Quiz

GetGameStart Family PACT

Yahoo! Family Online and Mobile Device Agreement

Q: How has technology changed parenting and teaching?

A: In virtually every way imaginable, given that technology has permeated nearly every facet of kids' and adults' everyday lives, from the personal to professional and social.

It's hard for many to grasp, but today's kids live in a world of on-demand mobile online access, 24/7 streaming media downloads and endless ways to connect and communicate: This introduces a vital and pressing need for education surrounding online safety, positive computing habits and digital citizenship from the earliest age. The fundamental problem: Fast as technology evolves, and as many new apps, gadgets and services as debut with each passing month, even today's leading experts struggle to define rules of online etiquette, safety and behavior – and yet, as ever, adults are expected to lead by example. Likewise, little is being done in schools to adequately equip children and grown-ups for the connected era. Nor, for that matter, do modern families have as many resources to turn to for help, including parents and teachers, since previous generations didn't grow up with innovations like social media and online video streaming or emerging issues like cyber-bullying and cyber-baiting.

Essential to grasp if you want to successfully parent and teach in the digital age: The mandatory need for to educate oneself on technology, stay abreast of new advancements, and both encourage and maintain ongoing discussion surrounding Internet safety and healthy computing habits. And, of course, the fact is that the stakes have been upped considerably, as silly mistakes that children make can live on forever on the Internet for college recruiters and prospective employers to see. Keeping kids safe online requires that we reevaluate old approaches and reequip parents, teachers and kids with an entirely new set of skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century, which changes the very fabric of our culture. Plus, of course, demands that everyone – parents, kids, teachers, government, law enforcement, etc. – do their part to shoulder the weight of this responsibility, which must be shared by all parties involved.

Q: A wide range of products promise to help you monitor children's use of mobile phones and the Internet. Where is the line between appropriate supervision and spying? Is there one?

A: The line is all too fine, and the decision to implement such solutions is often a point of much contention between parents and children. Realistically, only you can decide what's appropriate here, though it's often advised to openly discuss with children the presence of – and your decision to implement – such solutions. Know this, though: A truly determined tot will always find a way to circumvent such restrictions, whether through software workarounds

or visiting a friends' house.
The best defense here is a good offense: Teach kids positive computing habits, encourage them to come forward with questions surrounding negative situations or questionable content encountered online, and set a good example with your online behaviors. Build trust, foster communication and teach kids how to make good decisions and you'll empower them to safely connect and interact. And know that – like any normal individual – they'll sometimes mess up, and that, once breached, trust can take time to reestablish. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes, despite safeguards and the best of intentions.

Q: How can teachers and parents best protect children from online threats while respecting their privacy?

A: Educate them regarding online safety, cybercrime, rules of online etiquette and behavior, information sharing, spending and other topics. Encourage open discussion about these subjects, and give kids the freedom to come forward and share their thoughts or any questions they might have. Discuss and agree upon house and classroom rules regarding appropriate content and the use of high-tech devices, and the punishments that will be enforced (and terms under which they'll be rescinded) and take care to enforce them consistently. Take advantage of parental controls and software solutions. And beyond doing always doing your homework and researching and going hands-on with new technologies and products, set a positive example through your own words and actions.

Q: Sites like Facebook and Twitter technically don't allow users under the age of 13, but many tweens lie about their age in order to sign up anyway. As a parent, should you prevent your children from signing up for such sites, even if their friends are using them? If so, what are some alternative sites they can use?

A: Children and social networks are an interesting issue. Technically, terms prohibit access to those under age 13, and studies show that three in four kids who sign up can find themselves in unpleasant online situations. But plenty of positive experiences can be had on these sites as well and wonderful, healthy relationships formed, and many kids are mature and sensible enough to make use of them in marked and meaningful ways. There's no single-shot answer here as a result. Every child develops and matures at a different rate, and every household deserves the right to make the decision as to when introducing social networks is appropriate. Alternatives like Google+ (which lets you limit content sharing to pre-approved circles), Everloop and Neer may present promising alternatives, however.

Q: What is the biggest mistake parents and teachers make when it comes to technology?

A: Ignoring it or blocking its use entirely. It's a problem that won't go away,

and trying to halt the advance of progress is like trying to turn back the ocean's tide with a shovel and bucket. The best way to make technology a healthy and positive part of family and school life is actually to embrace it, educate yourself about it and go hands-on with new devices, apps, social networks and services wherever possible. Not only does the practice allow you to make better, more informed decisions – it also provides shared activities and interests for adults and kids to bond over, and equips you to have the healthy, open and honest dialogue that's vital to restoring peace to the household and classroom, and helping kids stay ahead of the curve.

Q: What are examples of safe, educational websites for children?

National Geographic's website is a favorite, as are Disney and Nickelodeon's. But oftentimes, visiting your local park or museum's website can be highly rewarding as well. From games to activities (paper cutouts you can print, nature guides, stories, etc.), many offer a wealth of positive entertainment choices. Anything that offers educational value or encourages kids to learn about real-world subjects from math to science and nature is a plus.

Q: Should parents and teachers be worried that constant online multitasking -- many times even among multiple screens -- is hurting their children's ability to concentrate?

A: Yes and no. Yes, in that it potentially could train them to consume media in a manner that's less conducive to sustaining one's attention span, and rewire the way in which we process information. No, as it also fosters creativity, problem-solving and dynamic decision-making – all qualities that can be of extreme benefit to children. Moderation in everything is key: Making sure that kids enjoy other, more attention-sustaining activities that they can actively put their minds to in addition to fly by the microsecond high-tech pastimes is crucial to maintaining balance here.

Q: Some Silicon Valley executives actually send their children to a school that bans technology. If the people who make technology are removing it from their children's curriculum, should all parents consider limiting or eliminating children's screen time?

A: Eliminating screen time entirely seems a bit extreme, but yes – limiting screen time is of course a good idea. The answer lies somewhere in the middle: Ultimately, parents can't afford to ignore technology, but that doesn't mean they have to let it rule kids' lives either.

Chapter 5 – Technology and Kids: Most Common Mistakes Teachers and Parents Make

As kids are showered with new opportunities to access technology of all kinds – e.g. laptops, smartphones, video games, tablets and more – at nearly every milestone, the debate over the consequences of children's high-tech usage rages on.

We have heard a few stories of parents shielding their kids from the ubiquity of technological devices for as long as they can, so that children get more time to develop social, emotional and cognitive intelligence through real-life learning and play (opportunities experts agree that kids need). But it bears considering that the prevalence of computers, smartphones, video games and tablets makes this strategy not only difficult, but also leads other experts to advise against potentially negative consequences on a child's future potential and current social status should they not be tech-savvy.

Although there are a number of dangers to be leery of, as well as positive messages for educators and parents to teach here, many of the perceived problems families encounter with technology start with mistakes made both in the home and in the classroom. Here are several errors that parents and teachers often make when tackling the topic – all of which we'd do well to avoid making:

Not Educating Ourselves as Well

Homework isn't for kids alone. Get to know the social networks, apps or virtual worlds kids visit and spend some time having them show you how to interact with these sites, services or games. Not only will you have a better understanding of exactly what they're doing as they're staring at the screen, but you'll also be forming memorable connections on "their turf" that will help you engender the necessary level of trust you may need as you look to guide and inform their ongoing digital life. You'll also have a better awareness of the kinds of conversations or exchanges you may be overhearing in the classroom or at home, and will be better prepared to address anything questionable that kids are discussing.

Overstepping Our Bounds

Getting to know Facebook, Instagram or Twitter ourselves and keeping abreast of children's online activity is important, but so is giving kids their space. Providing kids – especially younger tots – complete autonomy can be dangerous, but so can overcompensating, a common mistake that parents and teachers make. In short, try as much as you can to be an invisible, trusted guide to sprouts' online experiences, and be subtle where possible – but don't allow yourself to be entirely unaware. For example, if children misbehave or engage in behavior that's questionable, don't chastise them online, but rather

bring the conversation to real life and deal with it there.

Understanding that Kids Use Technology Differently

Just as most adults couldn't imagine sending more than 100 text messages a day, kids may not be able to wrap their heads around why grown-ups would want to bother using their mobile device as a phone. Conversations are so awkward, in their opinion. Additionally, while social networks like Facebook are great for parents and teachers to connect with other friends and family, many kids use the service almost out of necessity, and seek out other, less public ways to communicate with friends. It's vitally important to recognize that children of every age group may use technology and online services uniquely – and oftentimes in ways vastly different to our own.

No Tech Empathy

It's tough to stop doing something you're right in the middle of, so be aware that kids who may be playing a game or engaging with friends in an on-line activity may find quitting immediately tricky to accomplish, especially if they're taking part in an involved interaction. Consider giving 5- or 10-minute warnings so kids know when they need to wrap up, and be sympathetic that they may want to reach an appropriate stopping point (e.g. a predetermined place where games can be saved) before coming to dinner or returning to their desks. By understanding a bit more about how and what technologies children are using, you'll be able to know whether they really need the extra two minutes to finish up a task, or whether they're pushing the limits of acceptable guidelines, in which case you need to reel them in.

Assuming Parental Controls Are Set the Right Way

The vast majority of parents and educators seem to think that just because a device has parental controls built in that these safeguards are adequate to protect children out of the box. Wrong. Controls for every device should be checked, set and customized to your family's settings – many are not configured, or configured to taste, by default. Restrict content, require pass-codes and even set usage timers – devices provide a wide number of tools for parents and teachers, although few take the time to access and leverage all of them.

Modeling Bad Behavior

For parents specifically, if you don't want your kids to check their phones at the dinner table or out at a restaurant, make sure you're not engaging in the same activities yourself. Words can only go so far, but kids model actions and see how their parents treat technology. Treat your devices with respect and set limits for yourself, and your kids will have no problem doing the same.

Chapter 6 – Having the Talk About Tech

Kids think about it all the time. They obsess about it actually. And when they're not occupied by it up in their rooms, it's keeping them in the bathroom a little longer then they need to be. They talk about it with their friends, they crave it during long road trips or any spare moment they've got. We're talking about technology, of course.

Granted, while discussing high-tech and online safety may not seem to require the same gravity as another, equally important "talk" we must all have with children, in some ways parents need to treat it just the same. As with the birds and the bees, kids need to know some basic ground rules of technology, and know that they can trust their parents to talk about it openly and honestly. This means that at some point in all our lives, parents need to be ready to have "The Talk" about technology with kids and teachers need to be able to enforce its guidelines in the classroom.

Following are some of the topics you should cover, and some tips to make sure the meeting goes well to boot:

Formalize the Agreement

Putting what you talk about in writing will provide specific language to refer to later in case something does go wrong, or there's a disagreement, and it's also easier to discuss issues when not caught up in the heat of the moment. There are any number of free online resources available, such as the PACT on Microsoft's Get Game Smart site to Yahoo!'s Family Online and Mobile Device Agreement which provides a checklist that teens and parents are asked to initial. Trend Micro also has created a dedicated guide specifically about tackling this subject, and how to go about having "The Talk" with children.

Use Real-Life Examples

Much of what is being done online can be equated to real-life interactions. Help draw comparisons to real-life to make kids realize the importance and permanence of their actions, as well as why and how you would react when faced with similar scenarios. From likening online interactions with dropping your kids off at a public place like the zoo to specific examples of celebrities or other teens misusing technology, finding teachable moments that kids can relate to can go a long way towards helping them understand and role-play about how your family would react when confronted with certain scenarios.

Realize That Kids' Opinions Count, Too

Although you are the one who is enforcing the ground rules, have your kids help establish them, and be open to their feedback about what works and what doesn't. Involving kids in discussions and having them help set conse-

quences makes them more likely to respect these guidelines. And kids need to understand that as they grow older, their opinions and input matter as well, and that you as a trusted parent and teacher will listen to them, even if things are going wrong.

Transparency Does Not Mean Invasion of Privacy

Let kids know that anything they do with technology can be tracked and monitored. There's no reason to perform checks unless you suspect something is wrong, but checking in once every so often into text conversations or e-mail accounts should make them think twice about doing anything they shouldn't with their devices. However, let children know that doing so doesn't mean that you will be prying into their personal details, either.

Password Policies

Many experts recommend enforcing a transparent password policy with your kids, meaning that every password for any site or service login is available for parents to access. If that's not for you, make sure you're clear on what does work for your family. Set rules that if you discover that any inappropriate activities or actions have taken place, these can be grounds for immediate restriction or loss of privileges. Just as you as a parent shouldn't be doing anything online that's inappropriate to share with your family, there shouldn't be anything that your kids are doing that requires being kept secret as well.

Downloading Dos and Don'ts

Have a discussion about buying new apps, music or digital downloads, what types of content is acceptable to consume inside and outside of school, and how it may be enjoyed – then set a household policy that all members agree to abide by. Be sure to consistently apply and enforce it as well.

A Time and a Place for Technology

Discuss the appropriate times to use technology as well as times that should be device-free. For example, there should be an expectation at dinner that no one is checking their smartphone or playing with their PlayStation Vita.

Texting and Driving

Depending on the age of the child, you also want to make sure they know that they should never try to use any piece of technology that will distract them from driving. Texting while driving can have disastrous and devastating effects on families, and if it's a concern, you may want to consider one of the many available apps that disables texting ability while on the road.

Helpful Tips for Digital Educators

With technology and consumer electronics gear now topping children's wish lists in 2013, it's gratifying to see a growing range of examples of how technology can serve as a widely beneficial part of kids' lives. But to realize its full potential, it's vitally important that teachers and education industry professionals help prepare them to take best advantage of these tools and toys.

Note that doing so requires recognizing that the process of integrating tech into children's lives will inevitably come with ups and downs – this requires to committing to cruising alongside them on the rollercoaster ride. Ready to help your students take the plunge? Here are five tips that high-tech educators should keep in mind.

Connect on Neutral Territory – For teachers and educators, it's important to meet children on common ground, and engage with kids by going beyond providing simple instruction and advice regarding appropriate behavior and usage habits. Use technology as a shared activity over which to bond and spark discussion on a variety of topics, and (from an overarching standpoint) tool to bring your classroom together – as a source of shared interest and neutral platform, it can serve as a powerful starting point from which to spark conversation. Being enamored with high-tech devices, programs and activities, otherwise reticent children may find themselves all too open to chatting about these topics – and unknowingly learning from the exchange.

Commit to Ongoing Education – Dozens of software programs, apps and child-friendly Web browsers are available to kids, and promise to help parents block questionable online content. But software's no substitute for proactive teaching, whether inside the classroom or otherwise. As many new ways to connect constantly emerge or evolve, technology is a moving target. As an educator, the only way to help pupils meet the new opportunities and challenges presented is to constantly keep tabs on and personally try out new advancements. Ongoing research and hands-on trials are essential: You can't teach the rules of the game if you don't comprehend them yourself.

Create and Enforce Class Rules – Help kids understand the difference between right and wrong by setting class rules that everyone

agrees to on appropriate content, when/how it's suitable to use high-tech devices and when access is prohibited at school. Limiting screen time is important too: While the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no more than one to two hours daily, some educators and families offer more or less time as a reward or punishment for accomplishments (e.g. doing well on tests) and good or bad behavior. (Others treat use of high-tech devices as a privilege, reinforcing positive habits by letting kids earn time by performing well on assignments.) Note that kids should feel comfortable approaching you with questions as well concerning classroom rules and questionable content – open, honest discussion is paramount.

Stay Positive – While a decade ago, frenzied parents and teachers were beside themselves at the potential danger of online predators stalking chatrooms looking for victims, the reality is that most kids who interact online do so appropriately, and are more apt to encounter individuals engaging in appropriate behavior than not. Instead of focusing solely on bad apples and potential points of danger, it's equally important to teach kids the positive applications of technology, and virtues of Digital Citizenship – i.e. the ability to apply real-life morals and judgments to online activities. While issues such as cyberbullying, identity theft and cybercrime are real threats, we're not trying to scare children, but rather explain how they can appropriately act, and to know how to react, if they ever do happen to encounter negative situations or behaviors online.

Be a Guide and Mentor – On the flip side, don't teach kids that the world is all sunshine and rainbows: Make them aware of what they need to know to spot something fishy, or potential pitfalls, whether situations concern a piece of questionable content or unscrupulous individual. Ensure that they're equipped with a basic awareness of shady characters, online scams and potential sources of erroneous facts and misinformation. Cultivate a healthy sense of skepticism without instilling a sense of fear or powerlessness, and – most importantly – let kids know that they can come to you when questions or concerns arise. Kids need to learn to think for themselves – but they also need to know that they have your full support if and when issues emerge.

Helpful Tips for Digital Parents

When it comes to kids and technology, here are a number of handy digital parenting tips that any modern family will find useful: Seek Help from the High-Tech Community – The reality is that families everywhere are facing tough digital decisions when it comes to parenting. When is the right age to buy a cell phone? What about an iPod touch? Which video games are appropriate? Talk to other parents about your feelings on these issues and to find out theirs. Chances are, you can suss out some great tips and learn a bit about what kids are dealing with these days. And don't forget to talk to teachers, too. They're often at the frontlines of the latest trends that kids are obsessed with and talking about.

Establish Ground Rules for Your Family – Just like every kid is different, every family is different, so take charge and set the ground rules regarding technology use that are right for your family. Start with considering screen time limits. For starters, determine what counts as screen time. Is it TV watching? Does use of smartphones and tablets count? What about homework done in front of the computer? Establish what a need is and what's a privilege, and consider using a baseline like one hours a day of screen time, and adding or subtract time based on good behavior or as a punishment. Talk about music, movie, media and video game ratings, and determine where you'll draw the line for your family. It's imperative to have these conversations, and to continue to have them as kids grow older, as these ground rules establish the baseline for all your family's digital media and decision making in the future.

Use Parental Controls and Security Settings - Don't ignore the basics: From Windows 7 to the iPad and Nintendo 3DS, most mass-market computing and entertainment devices offer parental controls built-in. System settings – optionally guarded with a password – can limit access to questionable content, the Internet or hardware itself, or filter material by age-appropriateness. Such solutions make it simple to block R-rated movies and mature games, limit access to devices during off-hours, prevent downloadable purchases, and/or confine online interactions to pre-approved friend lists.

Guard Personal Information - The Internet can be a wonderful place, but it's also an intensely public one: Keep your personal information private. Intimate as social networks seem, everyone is ultimately playing a character. Many healthy relationships can

be formed online. But it never hurts to stay paranoid. Knowing this, never give out personal information such as names, addresses, birthdays or telephone numbers, or reveal when you'll be out of town. Likewise, use online services' built-in tools and custom privacy settings to limit access to photos, status updates or videos of yourself only to pre-approved viewers.

Kids and Technology: Know Your Boundaries – Although we do recommend you connect with your kids on Facebook, Twitter, Google + or any other social network they may be on, you as a parent need to also know your boundaries, just as you do in real life. You wouldn't rush the soccer field or take out the other team's goalie just to help them score a goal, so don't feel the need to interject yourself into kids' online interactions and happenings. By connecting with them, and even establishing that you may check in on their e-mails or social media accounts from time to time (with or without a bit of a warning), the notion of parental proximity is often enough to keep children's behavior in line.

Capitalize on Together Time When You Can – While you should keep at arm's length from certain online activities your kids have with their friends, don't be afraid to use technology as a tool to help bring your family closer together as well. Play video games with your kids, or establish a family game or movie night in which technology plays a large role. Not only will this help keep you up to speed on how the latest gadgets and apps work, it's also an invaluable chance to connect with your kids on their turf, and can provide great perspective into their thoughts and dreams about all sorts of issues, not just on the specific app, movie or game you're enjoying.

SECTION I: SMARTPHONES AND GADGETS

Chapter 7 – What Age Should You Introduce Technology Devices At?

The most recent report on media in the lives of 8-18 year-olds from the Kaiser Family Foundation, among the more detailed looks at kids' use of technology, shows that children are constantly using some form of device to consume media, and often using many at the same time. Whether it's for TV watching, listening to music or playing games, technology use is ingrained into the youngest generation's behavior – hence the reason we refer to them as Generation Tech. But although it seems obvious to many parents that different content is appropriate for different ages when they think about movies or music, many parents struggle with figuring out when and how to introduce their kids to various technologies.

As a recent holiday report revealed, the iPad, iPhone and iPod touch were kids aged 6-12's most-wanted gifts, just narrowly outranking computers and handheld gaming systems like the Nintendo 3DS. Bearing this in mind, knowing when to start your kids on different types of technology is one of the most important questions today's digital parent must ask. Essentially, experts say, kids climb a continuum of media consumption. As an example, what may start with children communicating via chat room or instant messenger may soon blossom into videoconferencing sessions or exchanges on social networks, or in the case of gaming, kids may graduate from playing on smartphones or tablet PCs to playing on full-fledged set-top video game consoles. Similarly, a technology ladder they may begin climbing with high-tech toys and basic feature phones may eventually lead to the use of portable media players and smartphones. Suddenly the whole world is at kids' fingertips, with the ability to connect to who and what they want whenever and wherever they want to.

Happily, it helps to recognize that even the youngest tots can show tremendous technical aptitude, and all can benefit from these interactions – so long as parental supervision is provided, limits set, and positive content provided. That said, it's not always easy to tell when it's appropriate to bring technology into kids' lives. And for parents, the median age seems to be getting younger and younger. When considering the best times to introduce technology to your children, the following guidelines may help:

Preschool and Toddlers

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for kids aged two or younger. However, in reality, many parents allow children shared access to their smartphones and tablets for purposes of playing apps, games or videos. Wherever you stand on the issue though, a welcome alternative may be educational toys with electronic components.

Just a few of many options include puzzles, play sets and stuffed animals that speak numbers, letters or animal sounds aloud when kids poke, prod and pick them up, or storybooks which vocalize their action. Musical learning kits

and faux versions of adult devices like cell phones and tablets are also common, letting kids sing-along or practice playing make-believe at their leisure. Whether in an organized childcare setting or at home, it's best to look for choices that promote cognitive thinking in addition to fine motor skills, and help boost kids' memory while teaching reading, spelling, science, math and other real-life subjects. Educational apps, games and software can also help provide many welcome choices here, such as those found on kid-friendly tablets – see the many selections offered for play on systems like the LeapPad 2, appropriate for ages three and up.

While these devices have garnered many parenting and educational awards, be aware that, like video game consoles, each of these devices require you buy a specific type of cartridge, disc or app that's designed only for the system to be able to play. And, of course, that although many will be billed as "educational" in nature, mileage may vary by system, app or cartridge. This is worth noting, as when looking for games and activities for young preschoolers to play on computer, tablet or smartphone, we always advise looking for options that are easy-to-play and have some educational value. The best technology solutions encourage interest in real-world subjects, and spark excitement in low-tech and outdoor complements to high-tech activity.

Remember: It's one thing to introduce kids to tech – another entirely to encourage positive computing habits, and teach the importance of being able to pull away from the screen.

Early Elementary

By this age, kids will have been exposed to many high-tech devices – including age-appropriate tech toys such as pint-sized robots, action figures with companion apps, electronic diaries, and collectible dolls supported by free online virtual worlds. Reading and game playing also factor heavily into such sprouts' digital lives: Expect multimedia experiences, app-based storybooks and video games of all types to be popular as well (note: be sure to check ratings on all forms of media for age-appropriateness).

For game players, the Nintendo Wii proves a longstanding solid starter console, but the company's Wii U, and popular motion-controlled gaming accessories the PlayStation Move (for Sony's PlayStation 3) and Microsoft's Kinect (a 3D camera which makes your body the controller for Xbox 360) are all now great choices as well. No matter which system a family chooses though, we recommend disabling any of the online features for kids who are under age seven. More advanced solutions such as children's computers and portable learning systems (i.e. the Leapster GS, recommended for ages four and up) are also available to children in this age group. Of the myriad selections available here, many are perfectly safe and fun to introduce to kids at this age, given proper guidance and supervision. But it's worth noting that several may also offer online connectivity and expandability via downloadable apps: Be sure to educate yourself and children regarding each device's communica-

tions capabilities in addition to its base features.

Access to digital music players and toys with limited tech features (e.g. voice activated diaries or touchscreen devices) may also be introduced at this point in some households. Be careful what content you let your children consume (be sure to monitor for age appropriateness), and the manner in which they consume it. Setting time limits, off-hours and household rules governing the use of all devices is important as well, as is observing how kids interact with these devices, with whom, and to what extent. You should also speak extensively with children regarding positive computing habits.

Tweens

By the time children reach their tweens or teens, their definition of "technology toy" will have evolved to cell phones, media players and full-fledged PCs or tablets. Before many kids make the leap to having their own phone, many have their own MP3 player or other device that can be connected to the Internet and used for texting, e-mails and music downloads, such as an iPod. The important thing to remember here is that for devices which offer connections to the Internet, you must stay aware of what your kids are doing, who they're doing it with, and the way in which they choose to participate and interact in these activities.

Likewise, in terms of children who are gaming fans, by the time they enter third grade, kids will want to go online via services such as Xbox Live or PlayStation Network. Both services offer the ability to link your child's account to an adult's so you can manage what your children can and can't do, as well as who they interact with. Kids may also have access to portable video game consoles like the Nintendo 3DS and PlayStation Vita at this point – all of which allow online access, the passing of virtual notes, socialization, etc. Many of the devices this audience will embrace – including digital music players, eReaders and gaming systems – will offer extensive online connectivity. Before putting a device in a child's hands, be sure you understand the options the device offers and have taken steps (e.g. using parental controls) to limit access to unwanted capabilities or age-appropriate content. So remember: No matter what devices they are using, kids in this age bracket are going to embrace instant messaging and chat if they can, as well as features which allow them to interact or play with other children, whether it's via your Wi-Fi connection or through the mobile wireless connection built into their device. Make sure they're always only talking to people they know, and enforce the device dark times and rules that you've set and followed as they've grown up.

Teens

Middle schoolers who play video games are now most likely drawn to titles which don't focus on educational aspects, but rather games that are on the cutting edge of graphics, and allow them to play against their friends on services like Xbox Live or PlayStation Network. The ESRB even has a T for

Teen rating for games that are a bit more sophisticated and deal with more serious themes, but still falls short of games that are M for Mature, which is reserved for kids 17 and up. Talk to your kids about what games it's okay for them to play, both at home and at their friends' house.

Similarly, on the general consumer technology front, studies show that most kids receive their first mobile handset (read: feature phone) or smartphone between ages 12-13 (although we keep hearing stories of this age being pushed younger and younger). What parents shouldn't do, experts say, is buy kids a full-fledged smartphone at this point. Instead, buy them a basic cell phone with strong parental controls built-in, and set specific limits about its usage. Good options for managing consumption are MobileProtector, Firefly or Kajeet, but many kids will jump straight to an Android device or iPhone – for more tips on managing this type of tech, we recommend seeing additional guides here on-site, or downloading our free Modern Parent's Guide high-tech parenting books.

Ultimately though, at every age, it pays to remember: Make a running commitment to keep up with devices, new advancements, and the way your kids are using technology and you'll all be playing to win.

Chapter 8 – Questions to Ask Before Giving Kids High-Tech Devices

Just as baby's first steps, first tooth and first words are greeted with much fanfare and celebration, today there are an entirely new and equally important number of major life milestones that kids and parents must be prepared to greet. Will you remember the time when your tween gets their first iPod? They certainly will. How about their first smartphone? Chances are they've been looking forward to that day for years. Nowadays, when families get kids their first tablet computer and laptop, it's as momentous as the time when your family in the '80s finally got a VCR or microwave. But before they give their kids a new high tech device, there are a number of questions parents should be asking themselves.

Can it connect online?

Chances are it can, and if so, that means you've got to be on top of its usage. Even if it's just through a Wi-Fi connection, that means kids will be able to chat and text with others, access the Internet, download apps and even post and share information on social networks whenever they're online.
Have I set up parental controls?

You can't assume that your device has been preconfigured exactly how you want it. In fact, you should assume it's not. Check out the device's parental controls and restrict age inappropriate content. You can also block the ability to make purchases or downloads without a password, set time and usage limits, and more. If the device doesn't have parental controls (such as most Android devices), download an app like Mobicip to help regulate access and usage.

What types of content are accessible?

Let your kids have the fun of taking the device out of the box, but be present during setup, and tell them you're going to test it out while they're asleep so you know how it works. See how the consumer electronic or gadget can be used when you first get it, and check in from time to time to see what sort of apps and activity your kids have been up to on it. High-tech devices are mere gateways to nearly any type of content or activity you can imagine, and while chances are your kids won't get in trouble, you need to be on top of how they're using their technology.

Have I set ground rules with my kids?

Do your kids know when it's appropriate to use devices and when it's not? How about how long they can play with them for? Does homework need to be done before they can use the device? How will they earn or pay for apps or games that they're going to want to buy for it? Set ground rules with your kids, and if you need help, feel free to use checklists and discussion guides from the many sites we've referenced in this guide – all offer expert hints,

tips, advice and starting points for constructive dialogue.

How will I monitor children's activity?

It's not a question of whether or not you'll be monitoring their activity, it's a matter of how. Use technical solutions like your Web browser's history as well as third party apps that monitor activity and provide reports to your e-mail. But in addition to reactive solutions, also employ proactive strategies as well, e.g. engaging in discussion with your kids about how and when they're using technology and devices, as you may learn more from these conversations then you're able to sleuth out through other means.

How can I use this technology to connect with my kids?

Aside from the short-lived rush of gratitude from giving them the device, how can you make sure that technology helps bring your family together? Make a plan to use it with them. Don't be afraid to use technology as a tool to help bring your family closer together as well. Play video games with your kids on social networks, like Words with Friends or Bubble Safari. Not only will this help keep you up to speed on some of the activities your kids are engaging in on social networks, it's also an invaluable chance to connect with your kids on neutral ground.

Chapter 9 – When Parents Should Buy Kids a Cell Phone

It's the most common question about kids and technology that we're asked as high-tech parenting experts: At what age should you buy your kid a cell phone or smartphone? The answer: Unfortunately, there's no magic number – it's largely a function of family need, children's maturity level and both how well-equipped that you feel your children are to make good decisions and the safety tools that you've put in place to catch them if they should stumble.

In short, while it won't be right for every household, many parents first introduce a cell phone to kids around age 13. While some households lean a little younger, this is a fairly reasonable starting point if you're looking for an opening guideline. That said, when you really should introduce a mobile device to kids' lives is when there's actually a meaningful, pressing need – e.g. when they'll be outside of easy contact, and you absolutely, positively need to stay in touch with them, or be able to communicate on-demand should an emergency arise.

A few other points to consider:

- Consider buying a cell phone that dials only your contact number if and when kids need to come home alone. Prepaid cell phones can also let you limit call times and features, restrict Internet usage, prevent access to unwanted features, and monitor overall usage, and usage patterns.

- If you're concerned about receiving unexpectedly large bills, or kids' Internet activity, opt out of texting or endless data plans and choose a basic feature phone that forgoes bells and whistles such as downloadable apps, unlimited Web browsing and GPS tracking to limit children's online interactions.

- Always read the manual, and research and go hands-on with phones, smartphones, tablet PCs or any high-tech device – especially those that provide Internet access, messaging capability, and VoIP or digital calling functionality – before you hand them over to children. It's imperative to know the ins and outs of the cell phone you're considering for your child before you give it to him or her: A good rule of thumb to keep in mind for any high-tech device, for that matter.

- Consider restricting cell phone usage to only taking place in your presence until kids are mature enough to handle calls, texting and online interactions on their own.

- Be certain to monitor cell phone activity and usage, and review your bill regularly for suspicious calls, activity or communications made when mobile handsets are supposed to have been shut down, e.g. 3AM on a Tuesday night.

Chapter 10 – Kids and Screen Time: How Much?

Even before their first birthday, most kids these days are intimately familiar with images and entertainment presented to them via screens. Whether it's via the TV, a tablet computer or a smartphone, screen time is almost an inevitability for youngsters, especially if they have older siblings – hence the reason teachers and parents need more information and tips on kids and screen time, including answers to the #1 burning question about it: How much is enough?

While the AAP's recommendation of no screen time under the age of two may fit into the lives of preschoolers, these guidelines must be adjusted as kids grow older. Likewise, it's also important to consider "bad" screen time vs. "good" screen time, and whether you believe there's a difference. Certainly, a case could be made that a toddler watching Signing Time DVDs or a middle schooler watching a documentary about healthy eating habits is more valuable than time spent watching meaningless cartoons. Then again, you may beg to differ – either way, take time to think about where your opinion falls on the spectrum.

Just as kids will desire screen time, make sure to set aside device-free times that the entire family can spend together as well. Parenting experts such as Richard Rende, PhD, associate (research) professor in the department of psychiatry and human behavior at Brown University, suggest that the use of technology isn't in itself necessarily what's dangerous for kids as an impediment to healthy development. Instead, problems can arise if all the technology and connecting is done at the expense of other proven developmentally healthy and necessary activities. From a parental standpoint, setting a good example is potentially more important than establishing these rules. Make sure you don't get caught up dedicating your focus to your phone or other screens over your kids.

On the bright side, parents and teachers can both play along and engage with kids about the activities they're enjoying on-screen. Children will love telling you about what they're watching, and treasure the time you are able to play together. Many parents and educators love to chat with kids about books, but fail to see how apps, games, movies and TV shows also engage their imagination. Each and every one of these activities can serve as a neutral and approachable platform through which to connect with children and bond with them over shared activities.

If possible, translate the high-tech activities and games kids are engaging in into a real-life context. Case in point: If they are enjoying an alphabet tracing app, prepare some worksheets that highlight the same skills. If they're playing games like Angry Birds at home, you could similarly setup an Angry Birds-style obstacle course in the house or classroom, and use it as an opportunity to teach children about the basic principles of physics.

As a general rule, when it comes to screen time, we often suggest that children might be started off at 30-60 minutes, which may be extended to 60-120 minutes of viewing time when they reach their tween years. But this is an entirely subjective recommendation. You may wish to allow more or less time, or add or subtract based on kids' behavior.

The short answer is that there's no magic sliding scale when it comes to screen time, but it does pay to remember: Time spent in front of interactive media is better than that spent in front of passive viewing experiences such as TV, while time spent in front of educational or physical high-tech experiences that require children's active input is more preferable still. However, at the end of the day, it's all ultimately time spent in front of a screen – just one of many activities that should be part of a healthy, well-balanced diet of activities. Whether using high-tech devices for productivity or play, it's just as important to know when to take a break and power down.

Checklist of What to Do After Buying Kids Devices

Like it or not, with each new technological purchase, kids will find their digital lives and virtual sense of independence evolving by leaps and bounds, even though several years may yet remain before they're ready to become independent in the real world. It's important for kids to know that even though these devices can literally open up a whole new universe of content and connections, they've still got a responsibility to use them in certain ways that adhere to family, classroom, community and social standards. After establishing ground rules in the house and in classroom (as applicable, since many schools nowadays ban the use of high-tech gadgets), other key things to keep in mind after acquiring new devices for children's usage include:

• **Input Key Contacts** – If kids will be using the device to communicate, make sure to input contact information for parents, siblings, other family members, doctors and after-school programs into the device. Not only is it essential that they have access to this information, but having these close contacts available will help set the stage for responsible use. It's also important to have these numbers handy should emergencies arise at school.

• **Establish a Password Policy** - Remember the importance of password protection and privacy. Establish your family's (or classroom's) password policy and practices while kids are just beginning to get up to speed with technology. Many families we talk to have a transparent password policy for their kids, meaning that kids must share all passwords and login information for any site they visit or service used with adults. Keep detailed notes on this information, and set rules that if you discover that any inappropriate activities or actions have taken place, these can be grounds for immediate restriction or loss of privileges.

• **Discuss Download Details** - Each family should have rules about buying new apps, music or digital downloads, what types of content are acceptable to consume, and how it may be enjoyed – then set a household policy that all members

agree to abide by. Be sure to consistently apply and enforce it as well. Likewise, make a rule that apps and games can only be downloaded from specific, trusted sources – typically, the official app store or download program (e.g. iTunes, Google Play, etc.) that the devices are associated with.

• **Be Smart About Ratings** - When shopping for apps, music, TV shows, movies or video games, check associated ratings. For video games, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) provides game summaries and details on retail packaging, while Google and Apple have their own certification system and age recommendations for each app available via their respective online storefronts' on each product's download page.

SECTION II: INTERNET SAFETY

Chapter 11 – What to Know Before Playing Online

Technology can be a boon to every classroom and family, offering dozens of fun and engaging ways to connect with kids and bond over shared activities – including options that are both entertaining and educational in nature. As digital parents and educators already know, a wide range of devices allow children to take part in virtual interactions and playdates, and enjoy great escapes nearly anytime, anywhere. Just a few options that can help you get connected include:

- **Computers and Laptops**
- **Tablet PCs**
- **Internet-Ready TVs**
- **eReaders**
- **Smartphones**
- **Video Game Systems**

Similarly, a small sampling of activities and amusements that parents and kids can enjoy online follows:

- **Arts & Crafts**
- **Educational & Learning Apps**
- **Games**
- **Online Videos**
- **Puzzles**
- **Reading and Storybooks**

But before introducing high-tech devices into the home and in the classroom, and allowing kids Internet access, especially outside of direct adult supervision, it's also vital to teach them online safety basics, though. Important to consider: Millions of children can and do enjoy safe, fun and uplifting high-tech playdates with friends every single day. But just as young tots are required to ride in car seats and bike riders don helmets, so too must parents and teachers provide guidance and protection before shooing kids out to play online.

Following are 10 Internet safety rules that kids and adults of all ages should observe when engaging in connected conversations, interactions or playdates:

1. Always play and browse on trusted sites – parents and teachers should take time to research and get to know websites that children and students will visit online. House and classroom rules should also be set about what types of activities, play and content are appropriate.

2. Never share personal information (e.g. your name, address, hometown, birthday, school or telephone number) online.

3. Never upload pictures or video of yourself onto the Internet where they can be accessed by strangers.

4. Never tell people where you're currently located or headed soon, including when and where you're headed out on vacation.

5. Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated – good sportsmanship pays.

6. Don't download pictures, click on email attachments, or visit unsolicited online links from an unknown source.

7. Don't be afraid to come forward and discuss it if you see something that you have a question about online.

8. Don't forget that everyone is, to some extent, playing a character online – in-game or otherwise.

9. Set limits on screen time: 60 to 90 minutes makes a good starting point. Every hour of online activity should also be balanced with equal or greater time away from high-tech devices.

10. Play nicely together. Remember: Everyone should get a turn, and have a good time! The more positive and encouraging you are, the more fun your classroom or family will have – and the easier you'll find it to convince kids to spend quality time together.

Chapter 12 – How to Keep Kids Safe Online

Whether you're worried about social networks, texting, apps, video games, online privacy or other growing areas of high-tech concern, it bears remembering: Keeping kids safe in today's online and always-connected world requires a multi-pronged approach and is a responsibility that teachers, parents and kids alike should share. As with any form of technology, the most effective strategies are proactive both at home and in the classroom. Educate yourself on new innovations and teach kids positive computing habits, and they'll be better equipped to make good decisions when they encounter questionable content -- an inevitability every instructor and parent must be prepared to accept.

Much as we educate our kids not to take candy from strangers, we need to consult online safety resources for teachers and parents and work to ensure that our students and children know how to deal with strangers online, and have safe places to work and play while they're on the web. Face-to-face communication is important, too. Talk to kids about online safety, answer any questions they have, and assure them that they can always come to you with more questions and concerns. The following online safety tips can help you prepare children for life in a wireless and connected world:

• Think homework is for kids? Guess again – as technologies, software programs, apps and services are constantly being introduced and updated, parents have running research assignments too. Always study and (wherever possible) go-hands on with new developments to help yourself, and kids, stay ahead of the curve.

• Don't have a lot of time to study up on the hottest new gadgets or social networks? Get a crash course on the Internet. Visiting popular technology news or reviews websites, or simply conducting an online search ("How to Password Protect Your PC") makes an easy way to educate oneself. Chances are you aren't the first to encounter a problem – take advantage of experts' shared learning.

• Numerous software makers such as McAfee, Symantec, and Trend Micro offer child-friendly apps, software programs and child-friendly web filters. But they're no substitute for positive parenting and education: Teach kids healthy computing habits, educate them about online dangers, and encourage them to come to you with questions about suspicious content, individuals or situations.

• Many popular devices and operating systems come with built-in parental controls, which can regulate access to the Internet, online shopping and even systems themselves. Take advantage of these features as a helpful first line of defense, and be sure to password-protect your settings (hint: don't use birthdays, anniversary or other easily-guessed numerical codes).

• Keep screens out of children's bedrooms and limit usage of connected devices to shared household areas so usage (and usage habits) can be monitored and regulated.

• Don't share private information on the Internet: Addresses, birthdays, phone numbers, ages, locations, school names and other personal details should never be posted online.

• Limit strangers' access to personal data including photos, videos and status updates on popular social networks like Facebook and Google+ by controlling your privacy settings. Should you choose to meet strangers encountered on these sites in real-life, meet in public places, bring responsible adults or friends along, tell others where you'll be before departing, and stay in constant contact with caregivers – including letting family members know when you've safely arrived and returned.

• Concerned about the ways in which kids can potentially connect and interact online? Use software programs' and hardware devices' built-in features to disable Internet connectivity or digital purchases, and restrict interactions to pre-approved friend lists.

• Avoid posting potentially offensive, embarrassing or controversial content, as it may come back to trouble you – and lives on forever online for prospective employers, significant others or college recruiters to see on the Internet. When in doubt, always err towards the side of extreme caution – you can never be too careful, or polite.

• Discuss safe online spending and allowance levels with children before providing them access to digital storefronts or programs which offer in-app or in-game purchases. If you do decide to allow kids to buy virtual or real-world goods, prepaid cards may help you avoid the surprise of unexpectedly hefty bills.

If you're looking for additional online safety resources that can help raise online safety awareness or provide a useful tool for further discussion and research, consider these sites and services a great starting point:

WiredSafety – A site that keeps readers up to date with the latest news on online safety legislation, and offers common sense stories and tips across every aspect of online life, including friendships, security, and relationships. There's also advice for kids about how they should deal with online arguments and bullying.

Get Netwise – Get Netwise is an easy-to-navigate website that boasts a big library of video tutorials for kids with regard to online privacy and safety. Some tutorials include tips on how to filter search engine results, while others offer in-depth looks at online security programs.

Google's Family Safety Center – Not surprisingly, Google features a portal to a variety of tools that parents and teachers can use to help kids navigate the Internet safely. You can use the Family Safety Center to control YouTube and search content, report abuse, and watch video tips from other parents.

NetSmartz – NetSmartz is run by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Its colorful tips and characters should hold special appeal to young visitors. Kids can even access, print, and read free eBooks that use metaphors to describe the hazards of giving away information to online advertisers.

StaySafeOnline – StaySafeOnline by the National Cyber Security Alliance emphasizes the importance of online security, especially when using social networks like Facebook and Google+. The site also provides parents and teachers with advice for keeping an eye on kids who love online gaming.

For even more resources for parents and teachers, visit:

Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use
www.csriu.org

ConnectSafely.org
www.connectsafely.org

Facebook Family Safety Center
http://www.facebook.com/help/safety

Family Online Safety Institute
www.fosi.org

FBI Cyber Alerts Index
http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/story-index/cyber-crimes

GetGameSmart
http://www.getgamesmart.com/

Microsoft Family Safety
http://www.microsoft.com/security/family-safety/default.aspx#Overview

Modern Parent's Guide Free High-Tech Parenting Books
http://www.parentsguidebooks.com

NetSmartz.org
www.netsmartz.org

SafeKids.com
www.safekids.com

Chapter 13 – How to Track Kids' Online Activity

While it's a smart idea to keep tabs on where students and kids are going online, the reality of today's mobile generation is that educators and parents need technological help. While we recommend informed conversation and open dialogue above all else, part of any Internet agreement should also be that you will learn how to track and monitor kids' online activity, including installing software that will provide access to records of all their Internet access and searches. That said, by all means, be up-front with kids about this plan, as you don't want them to think you are spying them, and also because many times the simple knowledge that adults will be checking in is enough of a deterrent to keep children from misbehaving or acting out of turn.
Even though many computers and web browsers come with these features built in, we recommend checking out these additional programs for both home and classroom use that provide monitoring and other safeguards to help kids have a positive online experience.

Web Watcher Kids

Web Watcher bills itself as an online chaperone, and encourages users to think of its software as a parenting tool. It serves not only as a block against and filter for inappropriate websites, but records Internet and general computer usage, giving parents the option to block access to sites or activities based on what their kids are doing. Web Watcher costs more than other services, however, so peace of mind won't come cheap.

Net Nanny

As one of the best-known brands of parental control and monitoring software, Net Nanny not only allows for tracking and viewing of kids' online activity across all the popular social networks, but it also provides tools for positive and healthy Internet experiences for kids. Utilizing Net Nanny's timers, filters and questionable content blockers helps parents enjoy knowing that our kids are protected beyond just what they're finding on their own in their monitoring reports. There's also NetNanny for mobile devices, too. Net Nanny averages about $40 per year per computer and $20 per year per mobile device and makes a good beginning point if you're looking to learn how to track and monitor kids' online activity, and enjoy some control over Internet interactions and searches.

Cybersitter

Cybersitter offers a great value for families, with the ability to install it on up to three computers for $40 a year. You can create your own custom block and allow lists, record e-mails and Facebook activity, and also set certain times when specific sites can be accessed (and when they can't). Some of the controls and features require parents to be more computer literate than the average person, but if you're trying to keep up with your kids' activity online,

you need to be willing to expand your tech-savviness.

Norton Online Family

The Norton Online Family suite of products allows families to set time limits, filter web content and receive reports and summaries of usage and activity. While a full range of services is available for a small fee for per year, there's also a free version which provides basic monitoring and limiting capabilities. If you're looking for a great way to start monitoring or to get a feel for it, Norton Online Family is a great option.

eBlaster

Designed for homes and small businesses, eBlaster captures incoming and outgoing e-mail, texts and chats from your PC, and can send you instant updates. It also monitors activity across social networks such as Facebook and can send you daily updates (or hourly if you choose). With a cost of $100, eBlaster seems best suited for those who suspect there may be a preexisting problem, but seems a little strong if you're just trying to keep an eye on your kids.

Mobicip

Mobicip has emerged as a leader in smartphone monitoring and web filtering, allowing for broad blocking, filtering and parental controls, all of which can apply to all your family's mobile devices. And better yet, settings can be easily tweaked from a computer. Mobicip offers online reports of activity and time logs, and can also send these out via scheduled e-mails. Basic filtering is available for a one-time fee of $5, and the full suite of features costs $10 per year on top of that.

Chapter 14 – Online Safety: A Workbook for Home and Classroom Use

Now that you've set up all your devices for maximum security, you want to make sure everyone is ready to brave the online world. Here are some activities you can do together and rules to review to make sure everyone is on the same page in terms of Internet safety.

Activities:

- Have your family check out the Internet Safety 101 quiz from Enough is Enough, this 10 question test is designed to see how cyber savvy educators and parents really are.

- For children, SafeKids.com also provides a test designed to let kids show that they know what it takes to be safe online.

- Formalize your agreement on what steps your students will take to ensure online safety. Through the company's GetGameSmart site, Microsoft has also outlined a discussion for families about their use of technology and the Internet. Its interactive PACT contains questions designed to ensure that families are on the same page about video game usage, general online usage as well as other forms of entertainment. You can print out your completed Family PACT so it can easily be referenced in the future.

- Yahoo! also offers a Family Online and Mobile Device Agreement which provides a checklist that teens and parents are asked to initial, promising to abide by rules such as using privacy controls, alerting parents should pressing issues arise, and more.

Rules:

- The Family Online Safety Institute offers a Family Safe contract, a set of cyber do's and don'ts for parents and kids alike, featuring a number of ground rules, such as the need to be honest with each other and parents agreeing not to overreact.

- Common Sense Media also offers Rules of the Road for Kids, which provide helpful insights like assuming everyone is watching your every action, and the importance of always applying the golden rule.

- NetSmartz's website has a great set of pledges for both online and real-life situations, tailored for different age groups.

- Dr. Gwenn O'Keefe offers a one-page discussion guide and pledge at Cybersafebook.com that provides agreements for kids, parents and the entire family as well.

Resources:

- Trend Micro has created a dedicated guide for having what it calls "The Talk" with your kids about technology and online safety.

- FOSI's website also provides great tips for parents, such as getting involved and striking a proper balance in terms of real-world and high-tech use.

- ConnectSafely.org additionally makes a number of tips on topics ranging from cyberbullying and sexting to password creation and video games available for ready access.

- Marian Merritt of Norton suggests a number of great conversational questions in her family safety guide that are geared towards younger kids, such as asking them about the coolest and newest websites, or finding out if anything online has ever made them feel sad or uncomfortable. She also includes topics to discuss with older children as well.

- Microsoft additionally offers an incredible amount of information, presentations and brochures that are meant to be shared with others, and can provide great discussion tools for parents and school administrators as well.

- The Google Family Safety Channel features a number of easy-to-understand videos on YouTube all about keeping kids safe online.

SECTION III: ONLINE PRIVACY

Chapter 15 – How Teachers and Parents Can Protect Kids' Online Privacy

We recently read an estimate that every month, Internet users worldwide spend the equivalent of nearly 4 million years online. US users are at the forefront, with the average American spending 32 hours online every month, or more than an hour every day.

At the top of many of these users' concerns about their time online is a worry about a lack of privacy and sharing of personal information. Many are fearful of companies like Google or Facebook compiling and selling their data. Concerns like identity theft and reputation management are legitimate scares that could come from sharing too much or the wrong kind of information online, especially when it comes to kids who are unaware of the potential data collection efforts happening out there.

So for parents and teachers looking for tips to help manage their kids' online footprint, here are 10 ways to protect online privacy.

1. **Take Charge** – Don't assume privacy settings are automatically configured the way you'd like them to be. In fact, it's a safe bet that default settings are probably wrong for your kids. Take the time to configure any social network, e-mail or other accounts to make sure you understand who can see the information they're sharing.

2.**Use The Tools You Are Given** – Computers, web browsers and even search engines all have some degree of privacy protection functionality built-in, many under the heading of "Parental Controls." Activate SafeSearch on Google, use Private Browsing on their cell phones (if kids use one), and regulate site access and cookies on your favorite web browser.

3. **Use Passwords that Can't Be Guessed** (see more details in Chapter 17: Create and Manage Secure Passwords) – Come up with a system with kids for generating and remembering safe passwords, whether it's through an encrypted service such as that offered by Norton, or a real-life or virtual document and log of all their site passwords (which itself should be encrypted with… you guessed it… a password). Help them be creative and unique with passcodes, such as creating a phrase like "We Had a Family Vacation in Hawaii" and turning it into WHAFV1H.

4. **Don't Use Identifying Information** – If your kids are trying to stay as anonymous as possible on the Internet, it obviously helps if they don't provide things like, say, their street address or name of their school. The only way you can ensure your kids' information doesn't fall into the wrong hands is make sure they don't share it at all.

5. **Turn Off Geolocation Services** – With GPS capabilities built into nearly every portable device, it's easy for kids to unwillingly and unknowingly

provide their exact location by posting a picture or status update. Turn off geolocation services on your kids' smartphone and within each sharing service to ensure that location information isn't being shared, even if only via data contained in their pictures.

6. **Use Nicknames for Family and Friends** – Want to share information about loved ones but maintain a level of privacy? Tell kids to come up with nicknames for friends, like "The Beastie Boy" or "Buddy." Their friends will know who they're talking about, and they won't be unwittingly giving that info away.

7. **Use Separate E-mail Accounts** – When setting up services, don't have your kids use your primary e-mail account for signing up or providing notifications. Often, these can and will be used and sold. Instead, have your kids create a social network e-mail account, or one used specifically for making online purchases (free online email services like Gmail can help), while keeping the one they use to stay in touch with everyone completely out of the equation.

8. **Google Your Kids Regularly** – You may as well see what's posted online about them, because other people certainly will. From prospective employers to potential romantic interests way in the future, everyone Googles everyone else these days, and the best way to make sure you're on top of the information out there is to know what's there.

9. **Be Leery of Public Wi-Fi** – Logging on to the network at the local library or McDonald's may be convenient and seem like a useful way to save on a cell phone data plan, but you need to make sure kids alter their browsing habits when there and that they're not visiting any sites asking with personal or sensitive info. Also be sure to log out of any accounts when finished using public devices.

10. **Respect Others' Privacy** – As hard as you work to maintain your kids' low online profile, it can all be undone without the help of others. Make sure students and kids follow the golden rule online and treat others' privacy as they'd like to have theirs treated, and that others know to treat them with the same respect – letting friends know you're not comfortable with certain information being shared is a reasonable place to start.

Chapter 16 – Guarding Children's Online Reputations

It's imperative you stay on top of kids' digital images and imprints, and help them learn how to protect their online reputation. According to a recent infographic from KBSD Digital Marketing, 78% of recruiters check search engines to learn about potential employees, and half of recruiters and HR professionals refer to personal websites when deciding whether or not to hire you. They're looking at photos, status updates and other online footprints, trying to find unflattering or incriminating information. And even if your kids are young and don't have to worry about prospective employers for many years, kids need to be aware that what they put out there is permanent for the world to see.

While it's simple to suggest not to ever put any content out there that may offend others, the reality is that many children (and adults) use enjoy and utilize social networks precisely because people are sharing personal information about their thoughts and happenings. Following are some basic tips to help kids control their image while still maintaining a positive Internet presence, thereby ultimately protecting their online reputation:

Always Consider Their Online Footprint: Consider that everything they post or any picture that appears of them online is available for the broad public to reference. Although you can lock down Facebook privacy settings, if you're on Twitter, be aware that anything your kids tweet is easily searchable, so be leery of them taking any potentially controversially viewpoints or stands.

Focus on Positive Communications: Take steps to help kids create their own brand by highlighting activities and thought leadership in areas they want to be associated with. For example, if they want people to see them as someone who appreciates the arts, have them ask questions about or post information from art classes or school concerts.

Control Their Information: Take advantage of privacy settings wherever you can. Don't trust Facebook, Google or any other social network or photo sharing service to preconfigure default settings exactly how you want them. If your kids will be posting information or sharing photos that you (or they) would never want the public at large or college recruiters and/or future prospective employers to see, make sure to restrict access to their accounts and content.

One of the previous tips suggested for parents and teachers is to Google kids' names – and if they're old enough – teach them to regularly Google themselves as well. See what's on the first few pages of search results and make sure to see what images are out there associated with a search for their names. If you do find information online that you'd rather wasn't there, consider using one of these services to help manage your kids' online reputations: Reputation.com offer free scans to help you find information online, with an

option to subscribe for $100 a year to help them keep your reputation clean. Be forewarned though: For those that do have information they want to remove, prices to get that info removed or changed from Reputation.com will enter the thousands of dollars range, with it being even more expensive if you have a common name.

BrandYourself helps make entries you want to highlight more visible in search results than those you may want removed. Brand Yourself attempts to make the process much simpler and user-based than Reputation.com, offering "do-it-yourself" tips and free profiling and alerts. The free version of the platform will help optimize up to three links and track the first page of Google search results for your name. For $10 per month, you can boost your plan to unlimited links and track the first 10 pages of results.

Integrity Defenders helps individuals or businesses remove negative comments or content from the first page of search results of the most popular search engines like Google, Bing and Yahoo! for a little more than $600, and even offers to push the content off the first and second pages for twice that price.

For those interested in reading more on reputation management, Microsoft also offers a number of tips and helpful online resources to help you take control of your online image.

Chapter 17 – Create and Manage Secure Passwords

As the key to the proverbial kingdom with regards to protecting students' and kids' custom safety restrictions and personal information online, the importance of passwords can't be overstated. The damage done should they fall in the wrong hands can take weeks or even years to potentially repair.
With online services requiring greater strength requirements and even periodic changing of passwords, every household and classroom should have a clear password policy in place, and should institute individualized passcodes to protect all safety settings, personal accounts and parental controls configurations. Here are a few of our favorite tips for managing and creating safe passwords:

Build a Better Passcode– Following are some basic tips, courtesy of our friends at eBay, who recommend as follows:

• Don't use personal information that others can easily obtain or guess (example: kids' name, phone number, or birthday).

• The longer and more complex your password is, the harder it will be to guess.

• Create a password that's secure, but still easy for you to remember. To help you remember your password, consider using a phrase or song title as your password. For example, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" can become "Sw0tR8nBo."

• After creating your password, protect it. Don't share your password with others.

• Don't use the same password for your other online accounts, such as email, bank, and social networking accounts.

Common Sense Media points out that it can actually be fun to develop secure passwords, especially if you're converting phrases that are hard to guess for others, but easy for kids to remember, into a mixture of letters and numbers. In the end, a good password should be at least 8 characters in length; involve a variety of numerals, letters and/or punctuation marks; and not be a word found in your average, everyday dictionary. Many computer programs that hackers use can easily be configured to search for common terms in a variety of forms, including textual (e.g. "ModernParents") and numeric (i.e. "M0dernP4rents").

Keep a Password Log - Experts are split on the best way to keep password logs. Although some experts say real-world versions are unreliable, it often makes more sense to keep such lists as separate from the computer as possible. The downside here is that if you misplace or lose this list you could be giving someone easy access to all of your online accounts, so if you do decide

to do this, keep it safe and secret. Likewise, should you choose to store a master list somewhere on your computer – never advised – it should be encrypted and password-protected itself. Ultimately, one thing everyone can agree on though is that you must take simple steps to make your passwords impossible for hackers to guess.

Keep Track of Your Kids' Passwords - While you absolutely should be aware of kids' passwords when they first dabble in the online world, you may wish to treat this practice like training wheels, and relax or remove it from your household policies as children get older and become more responsible technology users. Should you request access to children's passcodes though, be sure to remind them that the reason you need this information isn't to spy on them or tarnish their online image – rather, to simply monitor and keep them safe. One tip for families who don't choose to freely share passwords is to set up a regular time with children to access kids' accounts so you can monitor privacy filters and change settings.

Log Out of Accounts –Guarding passwords is useless if you stay logged in, especially on public networks where the next person to visit the computer or device can gain instant access to accounts. Remembering to log out of active accounts when finished using them is just as important as not sharing your password – doubly so on public computers. If kids leave their Facebook account open on a PC and someone else accesses their profile, the results can range from a harmless spoofed status update to a serious breach of privacy and even potential identity theft.

Chapter 18 – Online Safety and Privacy Tips

For kids who love technology, the Internet can be a boundless source of learning and entertainment. For teachers and parents, it can also be an endless source of anxiety and heated conversation, due to concerns surrounding online safety, health and privacy.

In addition to the privacy tips mentioned above, here are four overarching principles that teachers and parents should always keep in mind:

Study, research and sample new technology: Technology constantly advances, as do the number and types of devices and apps available, and features they support: The only way to keep pace, and see what you're up against, is to research and try out new options. Time-strapped parents and teachers needn't worry either. Given the multitude of hints, tips and how-to guides available from blocking online purchases to configuring parental controls, answers to most questions are a single search query away. But above all else, take note – it's vital to recognize that you can't ignore or discount technology. Teachers and parents have to do their homework, and invest the time needed to comprehend and appreciate just what sorts of challenges and opportunities they're confronting.

Know the software, apps and games kids enjoy: There are a great deal of apps, software programs, video games and virtual worlds available on computers, smartphones and tablet PCs, but not all of them are appropriate for kids. Therefore it's vital that you get to know the software your child is using, and familiarize yourself with each title's features, capabilities and potential uses. Some programs even let parents hook up their own accounts to their kids' accounts so that adults can moderate activity. But in the end, it's important to remember that homework isn't just for children: Parents have to make a point of using the many resources available online to research breaking titles and trends, and actively going hands-on with them.

Talk about safe online spending: Many programs and games – especially free titles – offer special items, add-ons, bonuses, features and exclusive levels for a small fee (this is primarily how most 'freemium' outings fund their existence). Talk to your kids about online spending, and make sure they understand that they need your permission before making purchases. Likewise, many devices – e.g. the iPhone – allow you to turn off in-app purchases from the settings menu, while many parents limit kids' spending capabilities to prepaid solutions with set spending limits. It goes without saying, but don't just hand over your credit card!

Above all else, communicate: Talk to your children or students about their Internet adventures. Discuss the websites they like to visit, ask about the friends they make, and address any questions or concerns they may have. After all, when it comes to the online world, and Internet safety in particular, there's no such thing as a boring or fruitless conversation.

SECTION IV: SOCIAL NETWORKS

Chapter 19 – Should Kids be Social Networking?

It's an inescapable fact of high-tech parenthood: Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google+ now enjoy near-ubiquity amongst kids, teens and tweens. But is access to these forms of social media necessarily a negative? It all depends on how you look at it.

First, let's provide a brief definition: Social networks are dedicated online spaces where users share personalized content (photos, videos, text updates, etc.), and are designed specifically to facilitate direct or indirect interaction amongst members. Some require approvals from each party to be connected; others allow you to follow and observe others' activities and/or personal information without prior consent. All are immensely public areas of cyberspace.

Used properly, social networks can be a positive force, helping children meet, communicate and form lasting relationships with people from all nations, cultures and backgrounds. But they also amplify the speed at which information is shared, making it essential that kids comport themselves properly, and be cognizant of both the image and information that they're presenting to the world at large. A recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics actually states that kids can enjoy many benefits from using these services, including better engagement and connectivity, and improved learning opportunities. However, what we reap from social networks is directly proportional to what we sow, making it essential to treat others with respect, engage in healthy online behaviors, and carry ourselves with a respectful image.

Worth noting: Facebook's terms of service require that children be at least 13 before signing up for an account, for purposes of safety and privacy. However, studies show that millions of kids are utilizing these services, and that many parents actively lie to help them register. That's not to say that 10, 11 and 12 year-olds, or even younger children, couldn't theoretically use the service responsibly, if only to share photos with friends and family. Rather, that the decision when, whether and how to let them use the service often rests directly in caregivers' hands – and is one that shouldn't be undertaken lightly.

Once over 13 though, it's unrealistic to assume you can micromanage or control access to such sites. But it is realistic to recognize the importance of educating children about safe computing habits, online dangers and safe social networking practices, and take steps to actively prepare them for the experience. According to surveys, many teens still accept requests from strangers, and have witnessed acts of meanness of cruelty on social networks. However, others show that kids are largely handling themselves well on these services. From a practical standpoint, perhaps the best solution is simply to prepare them as best you can for taking the plunge, and actively monitor their behavior once made, without being overbearing or intrusive.

Ultimately, it bears remembering: Parents and teachers shouldn't be concerned that their children are utilizing social networks. More important to

note is when, how and with whom they're using these services. Of course, once kids log in, there's little chance of going back, and their participation may expose them to content, individuals, and influences you find negative or controversial. But then again, it's a wide virtual world out there, and one you can't keep them safe from forever – as always, the proactive approach is recommended. Teach yourself and your children how to safely use social networks, keep running tabs on their usage, and you'll have less to worry about than by pretending that these services don't exist, potentially leaving kids to greet their challenges unprepared.

Chapter 20 – Social Network Basics and Services

Social networks continue to grow by leaps and bounds, allowing fans of all ages to connect with friends, family and peers worldwide and share status updates, photos, videos, comments and more. Credit the meteoric rise of popular social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and Pinterest, which continue to captivate billions of users globally, and can be accessed from a growing range of high-tech devices.

What are these forms of communication exactly? Think of them as dedicated online spaces and Internet-based communities where users are encouraged to share personalized content and updates in all forms, including but not limited to multimedia, live video conversations or text messages. These websites and services thrive on interpersonal interaction, and users are encouraged to chat, connect and keep friends updated on the latest news, happenings and events in their life. Several services such as Facebook also provide access to free apps, games and utilities that can be played from within your Web browser.

At the core of any social network are its users: Millions of everyday individuals who connect to form a community dedicated to sharing personal or professional information in the form of text, multimedia or online links. Whether you've actively chosen to connect with these folks, or they have the option to publicly follow your notifications, depends entirely on the specific service and your privacy settings, however. That said, given their booming popularity with adults and kids, whether you feel social sites make us more emotionally isolated or bring us closer together, it bears repeating: One cannot afford to ignore their impact on the modern world, and the lives of those who choose to utilize them.

Note that some social networks require approval from other in order for you to become connected to them. Others let you follow, observe or monitor others' posts and interactions without consent. All are highly public spaces, and information broadcast on them can travel quickly.

Naturally, it pays to know your social sites. Here's a quick look at today's most popular social networks:

Facebook helps people stay connected with friends and family, and with nearly 1 billion users is today's most well-known social network amongst all age groups. Users must agree to become "friends" in order to view each others' updates, photos, links and more, which can be accessed from the Web, smartphones, tablets and other devices.

Twitter is a real-time information or "micro-blogging" network in which users exchange short text messages called "Tweets" containing 140 characters or less. Anyone can access these updates through public searches, and users can subscribe to follow others' public updates.

Google+ connects kids with peers, as does Facebook, but it also provides the option to group contacts by social circles, letting you filter the updates that friends can receive. As an example, using the service, you can share private updates only with family members and more public missives with anyone else.

Pinterest is a visually-rich site that easily lets users share and sort photos and brief captions for others to enjoy. It's exploding in popularity thanks to its highly graphical nature and user-friendly interface, and as of early 2012, was already the third most-popular social network.

Tumblr is a "short-form" blogging service that allows for quick updates and photo sharing, and allows users to easily follow each other or discover content that may be of interest.

Posterous is a site designed for mobile blogging, making it easy to share content from your mobile device. As of March 2012, the company was acquired by Twitter.

Also worth noting, at least from a teacher's or parent's perspective, are a few more lesser-known social networks that are geared towards kids:

Whatswhat.me is a "kids-only" social network designed for kids ages 7 to 13 that uses a webcam to verify children's identity. It's fully compliant with COPPA rules about collecting data about minors.

Imbee is another social network designed for younger kids that features a profanity-free music streaming service called Imbee Radio.

YourSphere is designed for kids 18 and under, and subjects its applicants to strict background checks, and features games, activities and a system for earning credits.

Setting aside the relationships constantly being formed and evolved via these services, reasons that teachers and parents need to be concerned about social network usage partly include the volume and nature of information being shared, and partly because this information is forever visible to the world. Teachers and parents should especially take note, with the vast majority of teens having witnessed acts of meanness or cruelty on social networks. Likewise, over 80% of them admit to posting content to Facebook they've hidden from friends and family, according to a recent TRUSTe survey. These statistics indicate potential problem spots for tomorrow's kids, with both college recruiters and prospective employers increasingly turning to these sites to research prospective candidates. Kids and adults alike should think twice before posting anything, as it may spread like wildfire, and information live on forever via the Internet.

However, it bears remembering – social networks can also be a great way to

connect and communicate with individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life, including those we'd never encounter in the real world, and a perfectly positive and healthy part of childhood. What you take away from them depends entirely on what you choose to put in, whom you interact with and how, though. Therefore it's imperative that kids be educated in safe computing habits, digital citizenship and online privacy before they're simply shooed off to play on social media platforms, the most public of online spaces.

Chapter 21 – Kids' Most Common Social Media Mistakes

Despite what you may have heard in the media, social networks like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter aren't bad for kids - like any other form of technology, essentially a neutral tool, it's all in how you use them. Nor can teachers and parents simply afford to dismiss them: For today's high-tech children, these online community and sharing solutions have become near ubiquitous.

Social networks can be a tremendously enjoyable, positive and uplifting way to connect with individuals from all places, backgrounds and walks of life. Thankfully, integrating social media into classroom or home life doesn't have to be a difficult process, as long as you keep the following hints, tips and advice in mind. The key to using them safely is to avoid making several common mistakes, including the following:

• **Failure to Control Privacy Settings** - The first thing you or kids should always do after signing up for these services: Set privacy controls so you can determine who sees information that is being broadcasted.

• **Befriending Strangers** - If your kids don't know someone in real-life, it's best to avoid making the connection online, and potentially inadvertently sharing private information with them – make sure they don't feel obligated to accept all friend requests.

• **Oversharing of Information** - Personal details (age, address, birthday, hometown, when you'll be away on vacation, etc.) should be kept private - be wary of what your kids post online, as anyone could be watching.

• **Inappropriate Postings** - It should be assumed that anything your kids post can and will be seen the world at large. Before sharing controversial, questionable or embarrassing information or multimedia, think hard and remind them to ask themselves: Would I feel comfortable if employers, college recruiters or my grandmother read this? If not, don't click that mouse.

• **Unlimited Access for Apps and Games** - Thousands of free apps and games can be played via social networks. However, many may want to track location info, automatically post on your Timeline, or offer access to paid in-app purchases - be careful to configure settings so as not to compromise their privacy, or present potential problems.

Parents and teachers concerned that children are connecting to social networks needn't be afraid, so long as proper rules of behavior, conduct and digital citizenship are observed. Who kids are interacting with, how they're doing so and when is far more important than the simple fact that they're utilizing Facebook or similar services.

Educate your students or family about online safety, make an active commitment to learning about new features, and keep abreast of kids' usage habits,

and you'll have infinitely less to fear about technology.

This may be obvious to some, but a surprise to others: Adults and kids use Facebook very differently. While adults are very tuned into accepting friend requests from only those that truly are their friends, kids are far more likely to use the social network to connect to other kids they barely know. Either way, it's important that parents know about kids and social networks, and how to ensure that proper rules of Internet and online safety are observed. Important to consider: For many parents and adults, the appeal to a service like Facebook is the number of connections they have. For kids, that's sometimes a big turn off. We've talked to a few tweens and teens who are on Facebook because all their friends are, but that tell us they don't like to update or "use" the social network for the exact same reason – because all their friends are on it. Therefore they're constantly searching for other services which allow them to connect to the friends they want to in other ways.

So find out which services your kids and students and are using, and if you're not already using them, you need to start, or at the very least have a firm understanding of how these social media platforms work and how kids can use them. As a benefit, this also may provide some common ground for discussions with your teens at a time when having conversations that involve more than grunts or talking about how they're hungry can be a rare and precious occasion. But at the same time, you also need to know your boundaries when it comes to following your kids online. So refrain from posting publicly to their Timeline on Facebook, and don't follow their friends on social networks to save everyone from mistrust and embarrassment. One good idea is to use social networks to connect to your kids' friends' parents. It's another great way to foster community connections and create a sense of safety around kids' activity.

Oftentimes kids' unspoken rules involve how to use Facebook how they want to despite the fact they're connected to you. There are detailed instructions easily accessible via Google offering kids tips on "how to friend your parents without sacrificing your privacy," which essentially comprise a step-by-step guide for kids on how to setup their privacy controls before accepting your friend request so they can continue to post information without you seeing it, even if you're friends. According to one recent survey, 80 percent of teens have admitted to posting content to Facebook that they've hidden from certain friends and/or parents by using privacy settings. So be aware that just because you're connected doesn't mean you'll see anything. In fact, posts being hidden from parents is what led to this incident in which a Texas dad shot his daughter's laptop on a YouTube video in order to teach her a lesson. Although you may not agree with his tactic, the incident provides a great conversation point for you and your teens that can lead into discussions about appropriate behavior.

Monitoring your teens' Facebook accounts is only part of the choice as well: You must also figure out how often you'll be checking in. In the October 2010

TRUSTe survey, 72 percent of parents surveyed said they monitor their teens' accounts, with 50 percent of these parents monitoring weekly, 35 percent daily and 10 percent monthly. Figure out what's right for your family, and have an open and honest dialogue with your teens about how you'll be checking in.

A few other tips to remember:

• It's not nice to talk about people behind their back, and many families also operate by the old saying "if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." So make sure your kids and students understand not to engage in negative banter about others and not to post pictures that they wouldn't wanted posted themselves.

• As we've stated with regard to other devices and services, don't assume that everything is automatically set just how you want it in terms of privacy settings on social networks. Go in and make sure all your kids' updates, photos and more are visible to their friends only on Facebook or other social media services such as Google+. Consider setting up a family group to allow only immediate members of your clan to share information among each other without broadcasting it to the general public.

• If you're feeling overwhelmed, use the Help section. Many social networks have extensive, easy-to-understand and searchable help sections, too, so if you don't know how to do anything, you can look it up pretty easily on-demand.

• Bring the dialogue into real-life. Talk to your teens about social networks. Whether discussing a funny status update or article you saw or general feelings about the service and current events, using the social network as a starting point for discussion can lead to great conversations with your kids.

Chapter 23 – What Children Need to Know About Social Networks

A couple years back, TRUSTe announced the results of a nationwide survey of both parents and their teens investigating their privacy habits and preferences on social networks. What they found was that, for the most part, "the kids are alright," noting a majority of teens use privacy controls on social networks and that most parents actively monitor their teens' privacy. But there's still room for improvement, with more than 2/3rds of teens admitting they had accepted a Facebook friend request from someone they didn't know, and nearly 1 in 10 teens admitting to accepting all friend requests they receive, pointing to the need for more education around kids and social networks.

Unfortunately, examples of what NOT to do on social networks seem all too common. Whether it's posting inappropriate videos, an abundance of pictures with alcohol prominently involved, or generally distasteful updates, schools are keeping an eye on what students are doing, and disciplining those who act inappropriately. And there are also some potentially grave and dangerous consequences to misuse and abuse of social networks. Consider the case of Tyler Clementi, a homosexual teen who committed suicide after his roommate posted videos of his romantic encounters online for the world to see.

But don't be unduly scared by these instances. Social networks are now an important part of children's development. A 2011 clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics entitled "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents and Families" finds that a large part of this generation's social and emotional development is occurring while using social networks. The report lists a number of benefits for kids from being connected, such as better engagement with friends, family and community; enhanced learning opportunities via collaboration; connections with like-minded teens; and enhancement of creativity. Tellingly, the study also found that 22 percent of teenagers log onto their favorite social media sites more than 10 times a day.

Naturally, kids need to be empowered to realize that they can shape their own image on these social networks, and use these services in positive ways. Tell teens they don't need to be afraid to connect with you. Remind them that you don't want to interfere with or embarrass them, you just want to make sure they're making good choices, just like in real life. And even though kids may want to "hide" things they're posting from parents and teachers, the reality is that in today's world once information is made available, it's out there forever. So forcing kids to have a confirming thought of "do I want my mom to see this?" prior to anything they post actually isn't a bad thing.

Although no one knows exactly what the future holds, chances are kids will be applying to colleges after high school, and entering the workforce soon after that. In the future, those making life-changing decisions about your child's future are sure to examine their social media profiles in addition to

any other information they've made public. So remind kids that the things they post now can and likely will be used against them, even if it's five or ten years down the line.

Chapter 24 – Make Social Networks Safe for Kids

According to Norton Online Safety expert Marian Merritt, more parents are concerned that their kids will give out too much personal information online than are concerned about their kids interacting with inappropriate people or being exposed to indecent information.

And certainly exchanging information over social networks is one way where kids are prone to overshare.

Although many experts are critical of the way they do it, Facebook has in fact taken many steps to allow users at least some semblance of control over the information that users share online. In fact, the social network even adds extra default privacy settings on accounts for kids under the age of 18. Obviously, the first step in keeping any information private is not to share it in the first place. But if you're dealing with a social network, there's a certain "quid pro quo" expectation that everyone who's linked together will participate in some sort of exchange of information.

Here are several steps to take that can help you make Facebook and other social networks safer for children:

Control the Audience - You may not realize it, but you can control who can see your kids' status updates, photos, check-ins and other information when they post online. This is a key feature of Google+, but a lesser-known option on sites like Facebook. There's an option within every post to allow you to select visibility, and within each network's Privacy Settings menu you can configure default settings for different updates so that they're seen by friends, the general public, or only specific parties.

Manage Connections - You can control your kids' social network settings regarding how they can be found, who is allowed to send them friend requests and who can send them messages. Decide if you want everyone to be able to perform these actions, or to just limit the availability of such features to friends of friends. In the case of receiving messages, many also limit connectivity to just friends as well.

Decide What Others Can Post – Facebook and Google+ allow you to control whether or not others can post on your Timeline and profile, tag you in photos, or mention you in their posts and have it appear on your user page – take advantage of these features.

Note that unless you're a public figure, it's usually fine to let others post on your profile, as the friends in your network are not likely to post something inappropriate (after all, you did carefully manage your connections as suggested before, right?). But if you're nervous about that happening, simply configure privacy settings so as to not allow others to post on your Timeline or page.

To prevent your child from appearing in photos or updates posted by others, make sure to restrict the ability for others to tag them in photos or check-ins as well: Alternately, there's also an option to allow this feature, but only after someone has approved it. Many social network sites these days further use facial recognition software, and you can control whether or not to allow the social network to suggest tagging you if in fact others do upload a picture of your kids.

Limit Third Party Access to Information - According to the Facebook's Privacy Settings page, "your name, profile picture, gender, networks, username and user id are always publicly available, including to Apps." The reason for this, the company says, is to make this information more social.

However, you can control how all of your students' or kids' information is shared with these third-party application providers, which is extremely important because they are separate entities that have different privacy policies than Facebook. It's important you regulate what information can be shared, such as your kids' bios, birthdays, photos and status updates – pretty much anything you've updated on Facebook. If you don't want external apps and websites to access these, make sure to setup privacy settings to disable them. You can even disable the use of games and apps entirely on social networks, which isn't a bad idea: The only drawback then is that you can't use any yourself, but surprisingly that is not that difficult a sacrifice to make for most.

Block Other Users - If someone is harassing your child or you don't want them to be connected to certain people for some other reason, you can block a user, and your child and the individual will no longer be visible to each other. By doing this, you break all ties with them, and both users will no longer be able to see each other's profile or appear in any search results. This task is a little more difficult to perform, but can be managed via privacy settings or through a link at the bottom of each profile.

Chapter 25 – How Educators Can Benefit from Social Networks

Although some states and school districts have taken steps to ban private relationships between teachers and students on social networks, there are still many ways in which social networks can help in a classroom setting, when used appropriately.
In fact, social networks can be a driving force for good in education, as teachers can use it to teach about digital citizenship, current events and even help with research.

Here's a look at how educators can benefit from social networks, and some specific ideas on how they can use it:

Improved Educational Benefits – The power of digital networks is in the ability to connect learners and teachers across space and institutional boundaries, to build linkages between school, home and community, and to make information and learning resources highly accessible and personalized. Dr. Paula Tallal, professor of neuroscience at Rutgers University, says that "social media is training us for the environment we live in now," noting that it's a great tool for building communities where none existed before. Tallal gives the example of kids texting or tweeting about a class or lecture, and then forming study groups based on these interactions.

Enhanced Social Awareness – Although there's a perception among many that social networks are really just a bunch of people saying "look at me," research shows that nearly half of all teens who use Facebook are more cause-oriented because of social networks. It could be as simple as liking a charity or following them on Facebook, but often kids are at the forefront of spreading and disseminating videos and information that have a global focus.

Promotion of Charitable Efforts – A recent study from World Vision showed that social media is opening teens' eyes and increasing their engagement with many charitable causes. Nearly half of all girls on social networks are apt to "like" or "follow" charity pages and accounts, while just less than a third of boys do the same. Kids are likewise using social networks to kick-start their own funding campaigns and causes. A college student was able to raise more than $150,000 for relief for Haiti by simply creating an event on Facebook asking for donations and sharing it with friends and family. And a seven-year-old boy in the UK named Charlie Simpson organized a five-mile bike to raise more than $80,000 for the same cause.

Heightened Civic Engagement – A recent survey from the MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics found that social media services are playing a "crucial role" in the trend of 15-25 year olds participating in civic life. This observation is particularly interesting because by traditional standards, this group is judged to be the least involved in participatory politics. What this information indicates is that, as parents, we need to rethink the ways that social media can influence the way

our kids live their lives.

Better Community Building – Many kids have unique interests, and while they may struggle to find others with similar interests in their schools, chances are they can find a thriving and passionate base of like-minded fellows via social networks. These connections help prevent kids from feeling isolated. Social media sites are also expanding from general interest topics to more specific uses that benefit society. For example, sites have been created for medical purposes such as dealing with life-altering diseases, alcoholism, drug addiction, weight loss, and autism. Social networking sites with a specific focus help introduce people to others who are dealing with similar issues and provide information, contacts, peer support, and encouragement.

How can teachers use social networks in a way that will benefit the class? Here are three ways:

Create a Classroom Page On Facebook – Use this as a hub to connect with and communicate with students about class projects, subject matter and even homework assignments. Teachers can be the admin of the group and control who can join and who can post.

Use Pinterest for Classroom Ideas – Create a board on Pinterest and use it to collect ideas for classroom activities, or images of ongoing programs and projects for sharing.

Provide a Parental Communication Hub – Sites like Shutterfly offer a way for parents to connect to one central location to post information about class activities or field trips, showcase pictures and more. It's a quick, easy way for many to communicate efficiently.

Social Networking Rules for Families and Classrooms

Here's a complete workbook for families and classrooms – including a checklist of discussion topics and rules to understand and implement – to address questions that many have about getting their kids started on social networks. Think of the following as a quick how-to guide for your teaching your family and students all about social networks.

Discussion Topics:

- **What is so important about social networks?**
- **What sorts of activities are okay on social networks? Which are not?**
- **Who will you be friends with online?**
- **How will we interact with them?**
- **What happens if you get a friend request from a stranger?**
- **What social networking sites are okay for our classroom or family?**
- **Are there any time limits our class or family will have with regard to social network usage?**
- **What's the process for teachers or parents to check on kids' activity?**
- **Will our school or family use monitoring software to track behavior?**
- **What times of day is it okay to access social networks? What times are not?**
- **What information is okay to discuss on social networks, and what is not?**
- **What will we do if we come across bad behavior such as cyber-bullying online?**
- **What are our biggest concerns about social networks, and how will we avoid and address them?**

Make sure you continue the dialogue after initial set-up phase. Talk to your students and kids about what they're doing on social networks and how they're using them. Fostering continued, open and honest discussion is vital to promoting trust, education and online safety.

Rules to Teach Kids:

Avoid Negative Situations - The golden rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" applies just as much online

as it does offline. Teach kids to avoid saying anything negative about specific people, places, classmates, etc., not only because it is hurtful behavior, but it's almost certain that engaging in this manner will come back to haunt them in the future. Focusing on positivity and avoiding negative comments, status updates and tweets is the best advice for participating on social networks.

Keep the Future in Mind – It's hard for kids to look ahead since here and now is most often what they are focused on. But for older teens who envision college and jobs in their future, the permanence of whatever they put out on their social networks is a very important lesson to teach. Anything they have made public via social media has a long shelf life that could negatively impact their future opportunities.

Use Common Sense – Advise your kids not to spread rumors, innuendo, name-calling and negative gossip. If they can't back up what it is they're posting online by being willing to say it directly to others in real life, then they shouldn't put it out there for the world at large to see.

Track Their Time - After you set time limits for children, come up with a timer or other way to track kids' online social network usage at home or in the classroom. It's easy to whittle away the hours checking out photos or interacting with friends, time which is often supposed to be used for more important tasks, i.e. studying and homework.

Police Others in Your Kids' Networks - Don't be afraid to ask others to remove photos, videos, comments or tags of you or your kids from their profile which you don't approve of. Any friends won't want to do anything which could offend you or make you feel comfortable, and it will likely even spark a dialogue as to what is and isn't inappropriate for others to share about your kids.

Respect Boundaries - Although we do recommend that you connect with your kids on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or any other social network they may be on, you as a parent and teacher (where allowed) need to also know your boundaries, just as you do in real life. Refrain from posting to their Timeline on Facebook, making embarrassing statements and attempting to connect with their real-life pals online – you may think you're chummy in

real-life, but kids may feel less so than you suspect, or simply be sensitive with regard to perceptions of personal space (online or otherwise).

Provide Balance - Encourage kids to spend at least an equivalent amount of time as they spend on social networks engaging in real-life activities. Whether it's simply requiring certain exchanges or types of communication to be done via phone or in person, or setting aside time for activities not related to online social efforts to be enjoyed, experts agree that a healthy balance between online time spent on social networks and other real-world, face-to-face and outdoor activities is essential for a balanced lifestyle. When kids are on social networks, consider pointing out if real-life friends are online – and encourage them to connect more in the actual world.

For more information on protecting kids on Facebook and monitoring their usage, here are several great additional resources:

Connect Safely Guide To Facebook – This 36-page guide dedicated exclusively to Facebook is put together by Internet Safety experts Larry Magid and Anne Collier.

Facebook Family Safety Center – Facebook safety page featuring broad overviews as well as detailed categories for teachers, teens, parents and law enforcement.

Twitter Safety Tips for Parents – Twitter Basics page designed for parents to answer questions about aspects of teen safety for users of the service.

SECTION V: DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Chapter 26 – Tenets for Teaching Digital Citizenship

The concept of digital citizenship, especially as relates to kids and technology, may sound foreign to those who didn't grow up with computers, smartphones and tablet PCs in-hand. But it's also one that every teacher, parent and child should grasp, as the idea advocates teaching children safe and respectful online behavior, as well as responsible technology use. Happily, the process of preparing kids to greet the challenges and opportunities that high-tech solutions present isn't difficult once you understand the principle's core tenets.

Digital Citizenship is a concept pioneered by organizations like the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) in which parents, schools and other technology leaders recommend focusing energy on preparing students and kids for a tech-centric society by teaching them about appropriate and positive ways to use technology, as opposed to focusing on the potential negative outcomes of technology. Instead of spending all of our time teaching kids about cyberbullies and online predators, it essentially advocates that we should focus on teaching a curriculum wherein in which kids learn the right ways to act online and use the Internet for positive causes, such as charity.

For some issues, such as drugs or smoking, it's easy to see the clear goal and message for kids. Telling kids not do drugs or smoke cigarettes are – at least at surface value – very tangible objectives and principles to put forth. (Although doing so is often easier said than done, as any experienced hand can confirm.) But with Digital Citizenship, saying that you need to be good online is a bit more nebulous – and every bit as tough to explain the reasoning behind.

For those hoping to rise to the occasion though, it's important to remember: Raising responsible Internet users is a process that begins at home and extends to the classroom setting. The good news for teachers and parents being that it's easy to get kids started on the right path by teaching them the following digital citizenship tips:

Treat Others With Respect - Online interactions may differ from those in real-life in many ways, but not the most fundamental: There's the Golden Rule again. Internet users should treat others the same way that they'd ask others treat them - e.g. with dignity and respect. Before posting, commenting or uploading multimedia, it's essential that kids and adults consider how their thoughts and actions will affect others. Tell kids to be polite, respectful and considerate, and prior to hitting "Post" or "Send," always put themselves in potential readers' or viewers' shoes.

Always Think Twice - Anything shared on the Internet, privately or otherwise, can inadvertently become public – and lives on forever online. Actions cannot be taken back: Before posting, sharing or sending messages, tell kids to consider if it's something they'd be comfortable with your grandmother, employer or teachers seeing. The second content enters the public eye you

and they lose control of it, and the way in which it may be perceived. Kids have to be smart about what they share: From goofy photos to comments inadvertently made in anger, unwise choices can come back to haunt them. Be Original - With information readily available online in record amounts, kids are often tempted to borrow liberally from third-party sources. But it's important to consider: Not everything posted on the Internet is accurate or true, and plagiarism is unacceptable in any form. If children are interested in referencing other parties, teach them to be healthy skeptics first, and always cite original authors and publications. It's important to respect others' creativity, thoughts and research, and not attempt to pass off their work as your own. Give credit where it's due if they borrow information or spread someone else's message. And of course, they are forbidden from plagiarizing works or taking credit things for which they had no part in creating. Respecting the intellectual property of others is a key tenet of digital citizenship.

Stay Positive - Negativity can be catching online, but seldom does the world a service, or looks flattering to those who engage in it. Never forget – the image kids project on the Internet will influence how others perceive them, and be reflected in the tone and shape of all subsequent interactions. Tell kids to stay positive, be supportive of others, and carry themselves with dignity and class... how they comport themselves and interact with others will define their experiences and takeaways in cyberspace. Likewise, if they don't have something nice to say, recall that it's best left unsaid.

Never Stop Learning - With dozens of new apps, online services, gadgets and technology introduced each week, it's crucial that teachers, parents and children stay abreast of new developments. Researching and going hands-on with these innovations allows for more informed decision-making, debate and discussion. Make a point of actively engaging children in dialogue about their online and high-tech experiences as well - you may be surprised what you learn. Creating a positive classroom and household environment in which everyone feels free to come forward and discuss questions and concerns is a cornerstone of keeping kids safe online, and associated digital citizenship efforts. When it comes to kids and technology, remember: You can never be too informed.

Remember the Three Ps of Information – All the information kids share is permanent, public and powerful. Information is permanent because once they post it, this data can live forever, even if they delete it off your profile. It's also public because everyone can potentially see it. And, of course, it's powerful, as words and online actions can have a deep and lasting impact, so they need to be used for good.

Chapter 27 – Digital Citizenship: A Family and Classroom Workbook

So what are specific ways we as parents or teachers can help our children understand the ins and outs of being a good cybercitizen? Here you'll find a number of actionable activities, exercises, and questions for you to use to help your family or classroom understand the concept. Think of this workbook as a quick how-to guide for teaching kids about digital citizenship:

Discussion Topics

What does digital citizenship mean to you?

Digital Citizenship can be a broad term with a number of meanings. Talk to kids about what it means it to them and how it will affect their actions online.

Can you be anonymous on the Internet?

While tweens and teens struggle so much in real life to forge their own identity, much of their online life must be spent keeping certain details private. But how much is really private, and what's really out there for the world to see? Take the time to Google your kids and yourself to show them what personal data is freely available and just how much someone can learn.

How do we deal with information permanence?

It's easy to forget how public the Internet can be when you're accessing it from your handheld device or in the middle of your family's living room working on a public classroom computer. But things that are posted on the Internet can stick around forever and be impossible to clean up. It's a lot like a tattoo – it may seem like a good idea at the time (or even a bad idea), but no matter what, you'll live with the consequences the rest of your life.

When is virtuallife like real life? When is it different?

Although much ado is made about the difference between online and real life, especially when it comes to sharing personal information, the reality is that many of the social mores and customs that apply to real-life interactions are also applicable. You'd never say bad things behind someone else's back, for example, so don't do it online either. If you saw another kid being bullied or beat up, you'd tell a grown-up about it, so do the same if you're online. The roots of digital citizenship lie in positive real-life interactions and activities that can and should be translated to the virtual world.

Activities

A number of online activities and games are also designed to be educational

and fun for kids with regard to teaching them ways to be good citizens online. NetSmartzKids is aimed at elementary-aged kids, using cartoonish, colorful characters to star in games and videos teaching concepts of digital citizenship.

Professor Garfield's Learning Lab teaches kids lessons about cyberbullying, self-esteem, peer pressure and more.

Digizen offers a game to help kids learn about cyberbullying and how to support those that are victims of it.

Role-playing is also important as well. Both before and after playing these games, ask kids what they would do in certain situations, or what the best way to share certain information is, if at all: You may be surprised at how the discussions and interactions play out.

Resources

There are also a number of resources available for parents and teachers online, such as a free curriculum for elementary, middle and high schools at Common Sense Media. Although it was designed for schools, it's great for parents to check out as well.

The Family Online Safety Institute's A Platform for Good is designed to highlight Digital Citizenship and encourage it by offering kids rewards. With sections for parents, teachers and teens, it's a must visit for all online.

Connect Safely is among the Internet's most useful resources for all things pertaining to online safety, featuring extensive tips, articles and links to other Digital Citizenship resources.

One of the first sites to focus on the issue was DigitalCitizenship.net, providing an overview of Digital Citizenship, with links to resources and a description of the Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship. It's excellent for stimulating classroom or family discussions.

SECTION VI: TEACHING TECHNOLOGY – SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Chapter 28 – 10 Technology Lessons Every School Should Teach

According to the Center for Digital Education, schools spent nearly $20 billion in 2010 and 2011 on technology costs, and with the increasing acceptance of tools like iPads or other tablets in the classroom, that figure should only continue to grow in the coming years ahead. But aside from simply having the right equipment and instructing children in basic technology usage, what else should educational institutions be teaching kids about technology, starting as early as kindergarten? Here are 10 essential technology lessons every school should teach – in many ways, our children can't afford to leave school without learning all of the below:

1. **Online Etiquette** – Perhaps just as important as table manners and other social graces, teaching kids how to act online is one crucially important way that schools can reinforce the lessons parents should be teaching at home. For those interested in learning more, we dive further into these concepts for kids of all ages (and adults) in our book Netiquette Essentials.

2. **Privacy and Safety** – As a major concern for parents as well as the federal government, keeping kids safe online and their information private will remain a top priority, and should be for schools too. While online platforms and the corporations behind them all need to act appropriately as well, it's even more important that kids be taught now how and what they can share online without divulging or losing their precious data.

3. **Permanence of Information** – It has been previously stated that any information disseminated online is permanent: The need to keep revisiting this topic is because of its importance. The fact is that information can be used against kids and will be if they're not careful. Above all else, kids need to realize they can't take something back online, even if they put it out there in a moment of haste.

4. **Digital Citizenship** – Technology can be used as a force for good, and Digital Citizenship is all about empowering kids to use it as such by acting appropriately and spreading positive messages. As previously explained in Section V, Digital Citizenship can be a cornerstone for how Generation Tech takes advantage of technology in their future, both for the benefit of themselves and other digital citizens they interact with. In addition to socializing and communicating online, kids who use technology in more of a philanthropic way will get much greater benefit from their time online.

5. **Texting and Messaging Basics** – Texting is perhaps the most popular tech-based activity for tweens and teens, so schools should make sure kids understand the ramifications and effects of these seemingly disposable communiqués. From avoiding overage costs to the consequences of negative or controversial texts, teachers can't afford to bury their heads in the sand to this ubiquitous young adult activity.

6.**Tech Isn't Everything** – While technology has no doubt made life more convenient, few if any are the experts that would argue against the continued importance of real-life interactions and play to the developing adolescent brain. There's still immense value in reading actual books or tinkering with real-world problems and building physical objects – offline play is more important than online in many cases. However, both prove a nice complement to one another: There's room for both in children's lives.

7. **Technology Addiction** – Just as with drugs and drinking, there are dangers that kids, teens and even grown-ups can become addicted to certain types of technology, whether it's a video game, social network or even texting. Schools need to help kids recognize the dangers and warning signs of too much tech and what to do if someone needs help, including providing support, guidance and – if needed – assistance with reaching professional help.

8. **What to Do When Mistakes Are Made** – Whether it's by themselves or through engagement with one of their friends, it's inevitable that kids will engage in inappropriate conduct or behavior using technology, whether such infractions are intentional or not. Kids need to know what to do when they access a questionable site, observe controversial content and view or participate in online behavior that's unacceptable. Understanding that mistakes will be made – kids will be kids, after all – and providing appropriate support and guidance is crucial to positive growth and development.

9. **Technology as a Teaching Tool** – It's important that kids don't feel that technology is a negative aspect of life, or that it's only to be used as a reward or pleasurable experience. The truth is there are a great many benefits to technology, and kids should be taught them so they don't have to feel guilty about the role it will continue to play in their life. Those that provide continued learning, education and self-empowerment can easily be highlighted and prized most of all – especially with regard to interactive tools that promote real-world interests and social engagement.

10. **The Value of Technology** – Kids are just beginning to experience the impact that technology has on their lives now and will continue to in the future. And while it remains unseen what kind of innovation there is to come, by educating kids early on – both in the classroom and at home – about the benefits (and potential risks) of technology, it's more likely that they'll appreciate its value and truly become responsible digital citizens because of it.

Chapter 29 – 10 Questions Teachers Can Ask Students About Tech

Technology is becoming more and more ingrained in today's school curriculums, and teachers are even using hardware like tablets, touchscreens, and digital whiteboards to help teach basic skills like reading and math.

And while one key part of what kids must learn about technology involves what it is and how to use it, teachers must also get their kids thinking in broader terms about the impact of the technology they use. It's one thing to know how to sync a device to the cloud or setup a tethered connection, but it's an entirely different possibility to think about the impact of the actions we take on social networks, instant messaging services and blogs or other online forums.

Going beyond the computer lab, what are some questions that teachers can ask kids to better engage with them regarding technology usage, and prompt them to think about the impact and ramifications of this technology use on everyday life and their future? Here are 10 queries you can put to children to get them thinking more deeply about the apps, online services and consumer electronics they use:

What's the first thing you do with technology every day, and the last thing you do with it at night?

Help kids realize how, why and when they use technology, to what extent and with how much frequency – and discuss whether that's a good or bad thing.

Do you think you could go a whole day without technology?

Get students thinking about just how dependent they are on different types of technology, and identify those that are both necessary to their daily routine and those that are extraneous.

If you could invent one new piece of technology, what would it be?

Get kids' creative juices flowing by encouraging them to problem solve or think about how to change the world for the better via technological solutions.

What are some types of information that are okay to share online, and some things that aren't?

It's hard to talk tech without talking about online safety and privacy, so it's always a good time to chat about how technology that provides online connectivity should be safely used.

How do people act differently when using technology?

Whether it's as simple as using a calculator to becoming engrossed in a video game system, learn to identify the impact that technology can have on real-life relationships and interactions.

What are some of the bad things that can happen because of technology?

Technology has its drawbacks and the potential for negative consequences such as distracted driving, an over-reliance on computers, the oversharing of information online, and/or the lack of directional sense caused by GPS reliance – kids should identify and consider several forms.

What are some of the good things that can happen because of technology?

Just as there are many drawbacks to technology, it can also be used for tremendous good, and to effect positive change in the world. Discuss how technology brings us all closer together or can be used for real-time sharing of information, as well as its potential charitable benefits and the opportunity it brings to developing nations.

What's the most important technological invention of your lifetime? What about within the last 25 years?

Encourage kids to think deeply about the role different advances in technology and innovations have had on modern society.

Can you think of some examples where new technology had a major impact on history?

Take the conversation even further by looking at historical events and how technology changed the outcome and altered the course of history.

What will technology be like in the near and distant future?

Project ahead and think about the upcoming advances and science-fiction type devices that your classroom either thinks are likely or would just like to see: You may be surprised at some of kids' suggestions – and their ingenuity.

Chapter 30 – 10 Ways to Teach Tech in the Classroom

Teachers are at the forefront of kids' educational experiences, and it's now incumbent on them, as well as parents, to provide children with the guidance and technical skills they need to succeed in their connected future. Through the use of technology as both a learning tool and a subject matter discipline in and of itself, there are a number of new ways that teachers can inspire kids to learn. Here are 10 ways to teach technology in the classroom:

Embrace Connected Learning – The concept of "Connected Learning" is at the center of a new theory that champions say "is a model of learning that holds out the possibility of re-imagining the experience of education in the Information Age" that draws on "the power of today's technology to fuse young people's interests, friendships and academic achievement." According to Dr. Mizuko Ito, a leader in the field of Connected Learning and a professor at the University of California, Irvine, and cultural anthropologist of technology use, examples of Connected Learning are when a teacher may ask a student to do a report on their favorite video game, or if a kid who likes to draw on the computer creates the signs and banners for a classroom party.

Share Content Online – Whether it's posting videos to a private channel for class members and parents to see, using Google Docs to share materials so students can collaborate on a shared project, or posting homework assignments to a class website for everyone to access, using technology as a tool demands a base level of proficiency from students that they'll need to continue to build on.

Have Fun with Twitter – For classes with kids over 13, consider using Twitter to contact well-known personalities or to create hashtags about a relevant classroom topic and see if you can spawn participation from external parties. You may be surprised at just how much support and interest your students can garner from the community at large, or who's happy to hear from them – all of which reveal how the power to make valuable new contacts and influence the world is often waiting just one click away.

Use Video Chats – Use videoconferencing solutions such as Skype to connect with faraway experts or other classrooms for an online meeting via webcam, letting children share their experiences, make new friends around the world, and engage in distance learning. All provide opportunities to teach your kids basic rules and etiquette for teleconferencing online, such as when and how it's okay to connect, as well as how to act when you're on camera, especially if sessions are being taped or recorded.

Create a Class Blog or Wiki – Encourage kids to respond to in-class lessons or current events and topics, and devise a system for posting thoughts, news or impressions of them to a class blog or Wiki. Kids will love improving their creative writing skills and seeing their work appear online, and parents will love being able to feel more connected to the classroom. As the school

year progresses, it's often great fun to watch a class' page fill up with posts and discussions, and see kids, parents, and educators engage in more frequent and ongoing dialogue.

Put Together a Podcast – Have your class take turns reading passages from a book, or schedule and record a discussion point based on your curriculum or a specific topic. Not only will you show kids how easy it is to broadcast thoughts to the world, but also provide handy references – e.g. recordings of recent lessons – if they or future students would ever like to go back and review them.

Use Pinterest – Create a private board on Pinterest to share snapshots of classroom activities, projects, and field trips, or encourage parents to connect and find ways to help show their support for the classroom. Pinterest is a great, visual medium with lots of creative ideas that can encourage kids to share insights into their world and try new projects, and give parents an easy way to share recipes, photos, and other fun pick-me-ups or supplements to current class projects.

Create Interactive Maps – Whether it's marking locations of family trips, tracking the progress of Flat Stanley with the official App or simply identifying state capitals, consider using an interactive map to which children can pin their thoughts or exploits. These tools may also offer multimedia elements such as photos, videos and street-level views, so kids can discover fun facts about faraway places or get an up-close look at distant locales discussed during geography lessons.

Harness the Power of Excel – If working with kids on a mathematical or budgeting exercise, have them work with a spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel to promote understanding of both simple and complex calculations, as well as how such tools can be used to enhance productivity. You may be surprised at how well basic financial planning concepts take when you focus on real-world scenarios – e.g. saving for desirable items like iPads or new cars – and break down what level of earning, savings, and credit it may take to purchase each using formulas that kids help create.

Promote Greater Good – If there's an international, national or even local need for charitable donations or disaster relief, classrooms can use online tools to solicit and track charitable donations, or spread awareness for these causes. Sites like FirstGiving or Pledgie can help teachers use technology as a complement to cause-based learning. Helping kids create social awareness, all show how high-tech solutions can be used as a tool for kindness, understanding, and good.

Chapter 31 – Giving Kids Room to Learn: How to Avoid the High-Tech Parenting Trap

With the modern parent's job description presently sitting somewhere between anxiety-ridden manservant, full-time bodyguard, and personal guidance counselor, it's only natural for caregivers to fret over children growing up in the digital era. Doubly so concerning their education, with web-based tools Weebly and Edmodo now transforming classrooms into online communities, and providers like Pearson and Engrade providing plug-and-play portals that offer a real-time window onto children's academic world. But while parents suddenly enjoy unfettered access to lesson plans, grades and progress reports, we wanted to point out here that it also bears noting. While too much information is never enough, it's equally vital to respect the bounds of both tots' and teachers' privacy, and not inhibit children's sense of personal accomplishment, independence and overall growth.

PowerSchool, iParent, MyBackPack… Off-the-shelf remote-learning and classroom management solutions are suddenly everywhere, and as varied in feature set and capabilities as actual schools themselves. All sell a similar promise – leveraging technology, social media, and the Internet's power to facilitate enhanced learning by putting more data in kids' and parents' hands than ever before. Using these online services, families can track tots' attendance, monitor homework assignments, instantly parse grades or test scores, read transcripts of schoolroom exchanges, and more. As much overview of current classroom initiatives and interactive forums for discussion and debate as virtual gradebooks, each acts as a one-stop shop from which families can connect, communicate, and keep tabs on kids' schoolroom experience. But is more information necessarily better? The answer depends entirely on how caregivers choose to use this data, and what purpose it is used for.

For parents, it's hard not to see the upside of these tools. Kids can actively track growth and progress, using online and Web-based apps as both a motivator and objective source of feedback. Families can see at a glance how curricula and coursework are evolving, monitor progress, source insights from teachers, spot potential problem areas, and even provide proactive suggestions for improvement. Educators enjoy a one-stop solution for sharing information on that tech-savvy, but time-starved families are likelier to engage with, and a simpler way to connect, communicate and engage with pupils and parents. Furthermore, administrators can also tap into a more effective suite of online, blended, and mobile learning solutions.

Alas, the shadow of helicopter parenting – hovering and obsessing over children with an view towards swooping in to rescue them from every little perceived danger – looms large over electronic solutions. Kids are already being railroaded into more structured daily schedules and pushed harder than recent generations, with an estimated 40% of today's schools having cut recess entirely. Parents' interest in maintaining greater control over kids' lives from preschool to graduation continues to grow to the point it has

even bled over into the professional world, as a recent survey from Michigan State University reveals. And with America's international competitiveness freefalling, and education system ranked 26th among industrialized nations by the World Economic Forum, even as digital kids enter an age of growing 24/7 global competition, let's be blunt. Concerned parents' inherently megalomaniacal natures will almost assuredly lead to still greater overcompensation here, potentially turning collaborative tools into cold, hard and constant reminders of the yoke hanging over kids' heads.

On the flip side, studies of college-age kids show that children with more engaged parents report higher levels of engagement and more frequent use of deep learning activities, e.g. tutoring programs and training exercises. But while many enjoyed boosts in communications and critical thinking skills, researchers found no overall improvement in actual grades. So while able to facilitate greater social involvement and awareness amongst parents and kids alike, it's crucial to consider: Platforms and portals that foster enhanced participation are not some magic academic cure-all unto themselves.

Likewise, though improved access to information can lead to better decisions, it can also prompt more immediate and impulsive ones. Bear in mind – individual grades and performance reports provide single data points, not the broad information sets from which trends are gleaned. Overbearing parents may actually interfere with the learning process by overreacting to this data, or crafting academic strategies and solutions they feel are best… not those objectively best for the child. While it's important to actively monitor progress and take necessary corrective steps, many parents will instinctively react, to kids' ultimate detriment, because they can't see the proverbial forest for the tress.

Independence is also of concern. Just as babies learning how to walk must first fall, pick themselves up, and try again, so too must kids be given adequate room to try, fail, and learn from mistakes – that's how people learn. Similarly, the more time teachers spend reporting, entering data, and fielding parental queries, the less time they have to mentor students and actually teach. Details on kids' attendance records, homework assignments and grades are all valuable updates that parents absolutely can and should monitor. However, immediate concerns arise when caregivers do so too frequently, and react too quickly without taking time to consider potential ramifications. Perhaps the real issue here isn't how much information one can access – it's how often one should do so, and to what extent: As we do every day when perusing overflowing email inboxes, it's vital for parents to learn how to filter. Maintaining an active awareness of children's educational activities and assignments is good. But as with countless millions who grew up in a pre-Internet world, we also have to invest some measure of trust in our kids as well. Rather than micromanage schoolwork on a daily basis, or flip out over the occasional bad grade, there has to be a better approach.

To achieve more positive results, one might consider utilizing online learning

tools more effectively. Just one example: Configuring online alerts that let you track kids' impending deadlines, assignments, and tests by smartphone or tablet – and, if you feel that they're slacking, quickly verify that the work's been done. Parents might also schedule regular times to connect with children (e.g. Sunday evenings) and/or teachers to discuss progress, performance, and current updates of note. Ultimately, it's best to skip checking in daily to avoid being overbearing or overreacting, and foster children's sense of trust and independence. Most of all, don't forget either – online portals are ultimately there to help kids themselves.

Just as you wouldn't feel comfortable with a domineering supervisor constantly peering over your shoulder at work, or questioning every decision, it's a safe bet that children and teachers won't either. As a parent, few would begrudge you your right to stay informed: Maybe it's time we paid them the same courtesy by respecting their rights to individual privacy and professionalism as well.

Chapter 32 – Technology Lessons by Age Group

Although it seems obvious that different media content and tech devices are appropriate for different ages, many adults seem to play by different rules when it comes to kids and technology. By having a better understanding of general guidelines around age groups and when introductions to tech should generally be made (there are no hard and fast rules, though!), both teachers and parents will have a better sense of what to expect from kids and their peers from a tech adoption standpoint, and more importantly, what they are ready for. Teachers and parents who are one step ahead of kids' technology usage are well-equipped to engage with them in discussion, foster the best learning environment to take advantage of technology, and find common ground, both in the classroom and at home. Here are key points to keep in mind for different age groups as kids progress through their school years:

Preschool (Ages 4 and Below)

Despite the general recommendation that kids under the age of two don't have any exposure to screen time, the reality is that many toddlers will use a computer or high-tech device before their second year, especially if they have older siblings. And not only is technology prevalent at home, kids in organized daycare and preschool settings are even getting exposure in the "classroom" setting through digital whiteboards, computer labs, and more.
Many parents even allow one and two year-olds to play games, watch videos and enjoy educational apps on their smartphones or tablet computers. In fact, we've all probably laughed at one point or another when we hear stories of young kids touching a TV screen or the screen on their digital camera in hopes of controlling it as they do these motion-controlled devices. Just imagine how different their view of technology is going to be than yours.

Although we don't recommend specifically purchasing any tech devices for (or providing ownership of them to) kids this young or giving them too much exposure in a childcare setting, chances are they'll use computers, tablet PCs, smartphones and even video game systems owned by the family nonetheless.
By the time kids are two-year-olds, they should be able to understand the concept of limits, and appropriate and inappropriate times for activities. So start screen time limits young, so it's a concept that kids will always be cognizant of. Since finite concepts like minutes and hours don't mean much to their young mind at this stage, though, use a timer with a sound so they'll know when their time is up. But remember, you're not just setting screen time limits because you can, there's a reason behind it. There is plenty of time in their future to interact with technology. It is in these earliest years – when their minds are developing at exponential rates - that their worlds should be filled with real-world play and human interaction, and not engagement through a flat screen.

But that said, our homes are completely tech-laden and it is getting more difficult to completely shield them from screens, gadgets, and devices. In the limited exposure they have, there is opportunity to begin teaching important lessons,

like learning about the value of a dollar and respecting things that cost money. Toys with technology built in, smartphones and TVs all need to be treated with care and respect, and toddlers should be taught from a young age to be gentle when they are using them, and to protect and store them properly when they're not being used. And as stated, there is no substitute for one-to-one interaction - nearly all experts agree that nothing is better for the developing brains of preschoolers more than real play, where imagination as well as trial and error lead to great cognitive leaps. Some lessons kids should be taught at this age that can help them in all areas include:

Technology as a Privilege – Although it can be quite a relief for parents and caregivers to get a few minutes of downtime while their kids are engaged with technological toys or playthings, kids need to understand that using these devices or watching TV is a privilege, and they need to be treated with care and respect. It's easy to get caught up in taking away privileges to discourage bad behavior, but adults can also use them as a reward or motivator – think hard about how you to plan to manage technology usage before introducing it into children's lives.

Computer Basics – By the time kids enter kindergarten, they'll be expected to be proficient with a mouse and keyboard, so make sure to engage your kids in computer-based activities while they're three or four years old that use basic mouse or keyboard inputs. There are any number of great sites like NickJr.com or DisneyJr.com which feature games with very basic and simple controls, perfect for those just learning computer basics.
Importance of Real-Life Interactions –Help kids understand the importance and difference between real-life play and technological play, or engage them with technology as a complement to real-world interactions instead of a substitute (e.g. have a virtual tea party where the iPad acts as a table, but stuffed animals are gathered around).

Parental and Teacher Involvement – Your role as kids' trusted expert and technology role model begins the moment they start using technology, so take the time to educate yourself about and engage with whatever devices, shows or toys they're using, and make sure you know how they work. You also want to build trust and establish rapport with children from an early age, so they know to come to you for answers and advice as they grow older – make sure you begin establishing your role and building these bonds at the youngest age to foster affinity, empathy and trust going forward.

Early Elementary (Ages 5 to 7)

Kids' journeys of media consumption usually start with watching videos or gaming on a smartphone or tablet PC, which graduates onto computers and other high-end gadgets. These activities then give way to enjoying on-demand entertainment, Web browsing and communicating with others, which eventually leads to the introduction of kids' own iPods, cell phones and other mobile devices. Suddenly, the whole world is at children's fingertips – including the ability to connect

to who and what they want to, whenever they want to.
By the time that kids finish kindergarten, chances are that they will have been exposed to many of the most common technological devices at home and via regular visits to the school's computer lab. As they progress through grade school and learn to read, they'll inevitably graduate to more advanced devices, and before you know it, you'll soon be dealing not only with how this technology works, but also how to best control, monitor and safeguard the activities they're using it for. To help kids and parents stay on top of appropriate uses for technology, here's a look at lessons that are perfect for helping early elementary-aged kids understand and use technology.

Online Safety Basics – As kids get older, their activities involving technology will begin branching out beyond self-contained experiences to those involving connections with others online, such as in any of the popular online virtual worlds. Kids need to learn the basics of online safety, such as protecting personal information and what types of sites links are appropriate and which aren't allowed by your family or school.

Caring and Sharing – Although seemingly ubiquitous, technology isn't necessarily cheap, and elementary schoolers are definitely old enough to understand the importance of proper care for their devices. Set ground rules for how and when they'll be stored and charged, and make sure kids are clear on lines for sharing their tech with classmates or siblings.

Stranger Danger – You teach your children to be leery of strangers in real life, and kids this age need to be reminded to treat everyone online as a stranger unless they are certain they know who they are as well. The point isn't that everyone that's unknown is bad, it's that you have to be on guard for the bad apples that may be lurking.

What To Do When Something Goes Wrong – With more and more unsupervised access to game systems, mobile devices and the Internet (though not as likely in the school setting)kids are bound to come across content or engage in activities that they know is wrong. Key here is that kids know they can come to you if they make a mistake, and it's incumbent on you to use these instances as teachable moments to help children learn a little more about what's right and wrong with technology.

Cyberbullying Dos and Don'ts – Cyberbullying has been a hot-button topic for years, and should continue to be with friend-based interactions making up the bulk of many kids' technological activities. Begin teaching tots at this age about types of behavior to avoid online, and some simple tips to remember if someone cyberbullies them, such as not to react to cyberbullying, but instead finding a grown-up in real-life to help out. And in this day and age, a Cyberbullying curriculum or set of policies should be an essential part of every school system and classroom setting.

Ratings – Most digital content, whether it's apps, video games or even TV

shows, has some sort of ratings guideline that helps kids and parents decide whether content is appropriate for them. Learn about all the different ratings methods, and come up with an agreement for your family and class as to what is okay to play or watch, and what's not.

Tech Lessons: Tweens

As your pupils and kids enter their socially awkward middle-school years, they'll begin securing their own e-mail accounts; instant messaging and chatting; and, potentially, taking possession of their very own mobile devices (including smartphone, iPods, portable media players and more).

The tween years are an especially challenging time for parents and teachers when it comes to technology, as they must leverage the groundwork they've been laying since their kids were in preschool to ensure that their offspring or students have enough savvy and common sense to capably establish their first online footprints. Stressing the importance of online safety both at home and at school will also be doubly important, as children begin to connect and communicate with the broad world for the first time in any number of different ways.

What follows are seven of the most important topics to discuss with tweens:
Even More Online Safety – Although general concepts should have been introduced by now, at this age it's key that kids are given a deep and thorough understanding of many of the aspects of online safety. From privacy concerns to cybercrime, it's imperative that kids know what's not acceptable during the time they'll be spending online.

All About E-mail – Even though some services like Gmail require kids to be 13 in order to get an account, studies show that most kids get their first e-mail address when they're nine years old. Help kids learn about how e-mail works, why it's useful and what type of information is appropriate to exchange, as well as how to recognize spam or scam e-mails.

Digital Citizenship – A complement to the discussion about online safety is making sure kids are well-versed in the tenets of digital citizenship, in which children exhibit positive and appropriate behaviors online. Digital Citizenship encourages educators and parents to connect with their kids about their use of technology without feeling that they are scaring them, instead refocusing the discussion around the power of technology to play a positive role in children's lives when used correctly. Teachers can help promote this important theme by implementing homework assignments and projects around the use of technology for good.

Permanence of Information – As tweens enter the world of connecting with others online, they need to be well-aware of how much of what they say and do now can and will be used against them in the future. Make sure your kids are mindful of the information that they share via e-mail, text, YouTube or any other technological avenue, and know that they can't take something back or simply

sweep it under the rug once it's been placed out there in the public eye.

App Do's and Don'ts – Kids are going to be downloading, using, sharing and deleting any number of apps with their mobile devices, so make sure they know what's okay to use, as well as how much they cost. It's imperative you lock away the ability for kids to make in-app purchases as well, unless you want to be treated to a hefty bill, as many popular game-based apps are free-to-play but offer paid shortcuts to help players progress or succeed in-game.

Texting Basics – Even today's handheld gaming consoles offer ways for kids to engage in text-based communication with others, so help them understand not only who they are allowed to connect with, but what content is okay to discuss as well. While it's nearly impossible for parents and teachers to monitor every conversation, it's good to check in from time to time just to make sure nothing unseemly was said. And don't allow kids to delete conversations – if they do so it may be a sign that they have something to hide.

Wi-Fi Network Safety – Since most kids will be connecting their technological devices to the Internet via various sorts of online connections, make sure they understand the basics of Wi-Fi safety, such as the difference between public and private networks, and what types of data and transmissions could potentially be intercepted on each. In general, kids should really only be connecting to networks with their parents' and teachers' permission and assistance at this age.

Tech Lessons: Teens

For today's kids, the 13th birthday marks a significant milestone. This is the age not only at which many children receive their first cellular phone, but it also signals that they're old enough to sign up for Facebook. Kids may also begin getting their own laptops or computers to use for schoolwork, and being faced by online or connected classwork and assignments. In fact, 93% of American teens aged 13 to 17 uses the Internet, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, and 66% of children get their first cell phone before they're 14. That's a lot of online access and computing power to place in kids' hands, reinforcing the need for parents and teachers to play a pivotal role in shaping positive interactions around technology.

Social Network Rules of the Road – Now that they've been granted access to the world of social networks, they need to know the ground rules. Start with talking about who they will be connecting with, and transition into the types of content they'll be sharing. Parents and teachers need to have a firm grasp of how each and every social network works, so you can help guide them on their path to digital independence.

Photo Sharing – It seems even toaster ovens these days have a built-in camera of some sort, so make sure your kids are aware of when and how it's okay to post pictures. Also important is how to behave in pictures others have taken that may be shared, and whether or not it's OK to tag others or be tagged yourself in them.

Just as many grown-ups strive to never have a picture taken with a cocktail in hand, kids would also do well to make sure that any pictures they take don't cast them in any potentially negative light.

Permanence of Information – Although you've hopefully covered this subject many times by now, it bears repeating and reinforcing both to tweens and teens that all online actions should be considered permanent. Once a text is sent, a photo posted or a status is updated, those thoughts and images can spread like wildfire. Encourage the use of a "grandparent" mentality – if you wouldn't want grandma or grandpa to see it, don't post or send it. This is also something that teachers especially can emphasize as talks of college applications and summer jobs come into play.

Relocation and Tagging – With the built-in GPS functionality of many of today's tech devices, photos and information uploaded or shared with others often contain information about the user's location, whether it's publicly shared on social networks or embedded in the photo's underlying data. As teens deal with privacy concerns and limit their sharing of information, they'll also need to be cognizant of the perils of giving away too much information whether they're at school, at home, or elsewhere, especially in status updates or photos that can be seen by the general public.

Texting – The number of texts teens send is staggering. It's easily the primary way kids use their smartphones or mobile devices. Consider that the AVERAGE teenager sends nearly 3,500 texts per month, with girls approaching 4,000 every month. Make sure teens know proper etiquette for texting, and realize that information shared via this method should be considered just as permanent as if it were shared online on Facebook. Make sure your family has the right messaging plan to support all this communication and data, or the extra charges could add up quickly, and in the classroom setting, you may wish to ban mobile phone usage altogether.

Technology Addiction – Although technology is inevitably ingrained in the daily lives of today's teens, there are fears about how its widespread use is affecting teen brains and leading to symptoms associated with addiction. Every teen is different, so make sure you are watching for warning signs such as withdrawal or overdependence, lack of participation in class, behavioral changes among peers, and loop in qualified experts or psychologists if you need help.

Respect the Ratings – Although most teens will tell you they're ready for anything, nearly all content ratings systems have designations for content that is okay for teens, separate from more mature-rated content. Whether you utilize the parental controls on devices or entrust your kids to make wise choices based on ratings alone, make sure they know what's appropriate and what's not based on the ratings guidelines and your own individual household agreements.

Best Sites and Services for Teaching Tech

Teachers may feel sometimes like they're on an island with little help in sight. But it may encourage you to hear that there are a number of online resources available to help promote education from teaching reading basics to organizing classroom activities and encouraging civic involvement. Here are 20 of the most promising sites and services every teacher should be using to help improve classroom learning:

Collaborize Classroom - A free online collaborative platform designed to complement classroom instruction with additional activities, assignments and discussions that can be accessed online.

Cool Math – A collection of games that are designed to be safe to use in the classroom, covering a variety of math subjects as well as reading, science and geography.

DoSomething.org - With a new call-to-action every week, DoSomething.org encourages teens to band together and work for positive social change.

Edmodo – An online collaboration hub that leverages the power of social media to provide customized classrooms for every teacher/student situation.

Exploratorium - As the website of San Francisco's Museum of Science, Art and Human Participation, Exploratorium links to a variety of online activities that make science fun.

First In Math - A schoolwide resource that teaches kids as young as kindergarten basic math skills via online games. Kids are encouraged to keep playing by earning stickers and other rewards from their teachers.

Fun Brain - Online games portal that focuses on games that have educational value for kids. Teachers can easily find games, curriculum and even flash cards that are perfect for whatever subject matter they're teaching.

Hippocampus - A project of the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, the goal of HippoCampus is to provide high-quality multimedia content on general education subjects to high

school and college students free of charge.

HowStuffWorks - Explains thousands of topics with video and illustrations so students can learn more about how everything works.

iCivics – Founded by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, iCivics is a web-based education project designed to teach students civics and inspire them to be active participants in US democracy.

Melody Street- A musical world where instruments come to life, offering games, music and online videos to help teach kids about instruments, melody and more.

MyBackPack – Offers a way for teachers to communicate directly with parents and students by connecting administrative software and giving real-time updates on grades, schedules, attendance and more.

PowerSchool – Web-based information system that provides instantaneous updates on everything from attendance to seating charts, and it's even accessible via iPhone and Android apps.

Raz Kids- A full curriculum of reading lessons presented as mini online books for a wide range of ages, allowing students to easily log in and for teachers to monitor their progress.

Scholastic Kids Press Corps - Offers news for kids by kids, encouraging teachers to incorporate current events and reporting into their own daily teaching.

Schoology - Learning management system and social network that makes it easy to create and share academic content.

Scratch - A programming language from MIT that teaches basic concepts and invites kids to turn them into interactive stories, games, music and art.

Spelling City - Offers vocabulary, spelling, writing, parts of speech, handwriting and alphabetical order games to elementary, middle and high-school classes.

Starfall - Teaches young children to read with phonics via online games and interactive storybooks.

Weebly - Provides an easy way for teachers to create a classroom site and blog that can be used to communicate with students and parents, and includes a way for kids to easily create sites of their own.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between kids and technology is continuing to evolve, and as teachers and parents, it is essential that you help cultivate that relationship in the most beneficial way possible. We have demonstrated the many benefits that technology and social networking can have on kids, but it is equally important to be mindful of the potential risks as well.

There is a whole wide world out there to explore on the Internet and Web, and it is our hope that this guide has served as a helpful starting place for parents and teachers who are looking for more information and guidance on where to start. By employing the techniques offered in this booklet and constantly engaging with kids about their use of technology, we can be confident that we are indeed raising digital kids to be responsible digital citizens of the future. The power to make technology a positive part of children's lives is in your hands – we encourage you to use it responsibly and well. By doing so, we can create a brighter tomorrow for all involved: Teachers, parents and kids alike.

SCOTT STEINBERG
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BESTSELLING AUTHOR | FUTURIST

Scott Steinberg is one of the world's best-known business strategists and strategic innovation consultants, and the CEO of TechSavvy Global, a management consulting and market research firm which helps clients create value and cultivate competitive advantage on the back of emerging innovations and trends. A strategic advisor to Fortune 500 firms, colleges, universities, non-profits, schools and startups, he aids partners with identifying emerging opportunities and developing powerful leadership, marketing and content strategies designed to capitalize on rising business, social and technology trends.

Among today's most-quoted keynote speakers and technology analysts, he's consulted on dozens of market-leading products and services, and authored nine books including international best sellers The Crowdfunding Bible and The Modern Parent's Guide, and the critically-acclaimed Business

Expert's Guidebook. His motivational speeches, leadership seminars and training workshops show executives and educators how to become more effective – and make both they and their businesses indispensable in an increasingly disposable world.

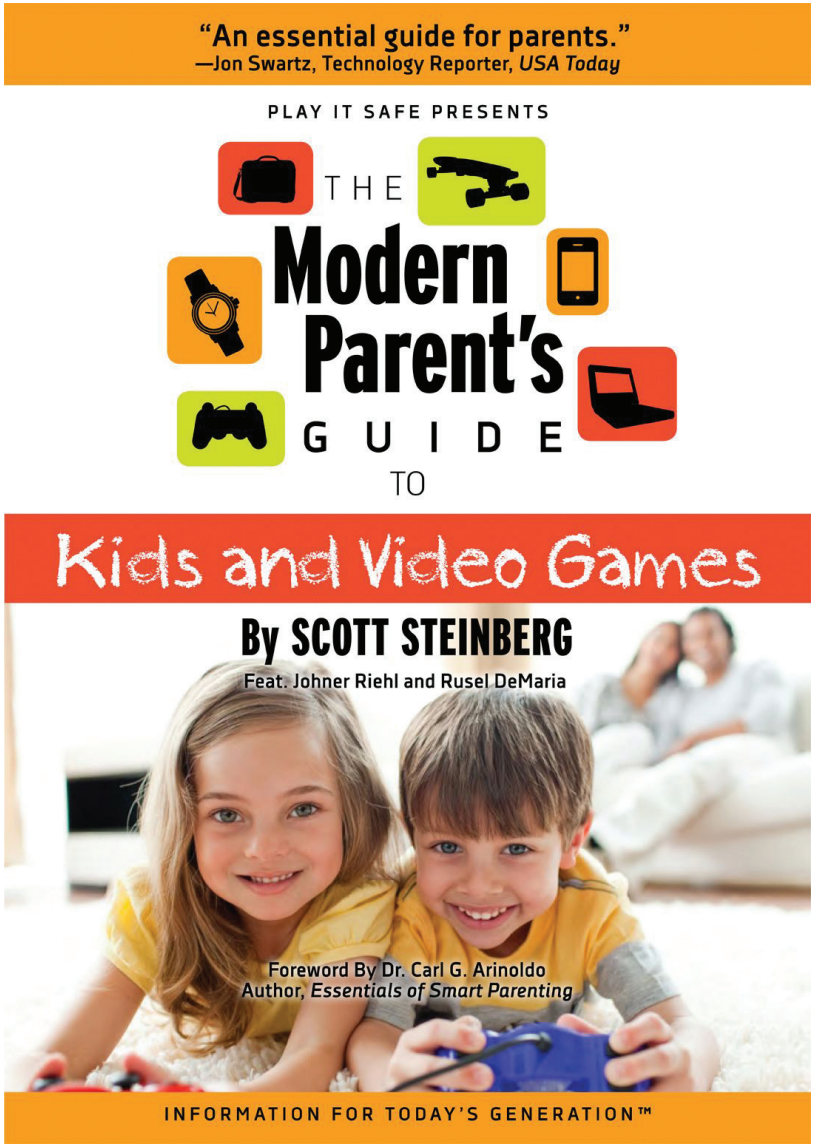
As an industry consultant, Steinberg has helped top corporations from Microsoft, Sony and Intel to ESPN and MTV adapt to changing consumer, high-tech and social trends. Hailed as a top technology futurist by leading media outlets including NPR, BusinessWeek and The Wall St. Journal, his advisory work enables clients to identify emerging cultural and technological forces and create powerful business strategies that meet changing market needs.

This eye for business analysis has led to his work as a strategic insider for 600+ publications from CNN to The New York Times and Fast Company, and pioneer in the field of digital publishing. A nationally-syndicated columnist who routinely explores topics including change, innovation and connecting generations, he's also the creator and host of Gear Up, Rolling Stone's first dedicated blog and video series devoted to consumer technology. A regular guest on ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC, he serves as a featured expert for Fast Company, VentureBeat, The Huffington Post and more.

For more info, see www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com.

ABOUT JOHNER RIEHL

Johner Riehl is a freelance writer focusing on family technology and online safety. As founder and editorial director for FamilyFriendlyVideoGames.com, a site that provides reviews and recommendations geared towards families, he examines hundreds of family-friendly games and apps every year. He's also been a PR rep for Nintendo, Microsoft, Midway and more. TWITTER: @FamilyTechDad & @FmlyFrndlyVdGms



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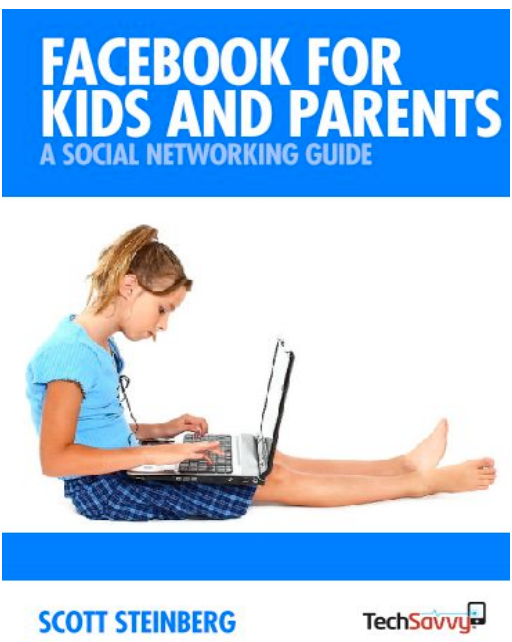

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