



Principal's Bulletin

March 18, 2014

"You are growing up in a fast and ever changing world.

It is exciting and enticing.

Keep it simple every chance you get.

Trust your powerful mind and giant heart above any machine."

- Janell Burley Hoffman

[Gregory's iphone contract](#)

Dear Heather Families,

It was wonderful to see Heather parents at last week's [My Digital TAT2](#) parent education evening, where we explored opportunities and consequences for K-4 children in the "living out loud" world of our Internet age. We experienced a fabulous presentation, which surprisingly wasn't focused on simply "turning off devices", but really took a look at the social and emotional skills that make it imperative for parents and educators to support them as they begin to navigate online.

Our kids are digital natives, blurring the lines between online and offline life. They are intensely curious - creators and curators of information, diving into a world of learning at their fingertips. This is an exciting, transformative time, and it's also a time when children still are at risk to make all the mistakes we made growing up. In this digital age, these mistakes can have wider impact and potentially greater consequences. Remember those silly, but also hurtful notes we wrote and received in middle school? Now, imagine those being re-forwarded instantly in digital pile-ons that could include every student in the school—just for starters.

None of us would allow our children to play in a swimming pool unsupervised, especially if they didn't know how to swim. The same thinking should apply to their online behaviors, where one click may move them from the shallow end of the pool to being in over their heads. Children need our guidance, our rules for behavior, and our supervision as they navigate the digital world. Just like when our kids learned to swim, we must start "in the digital pool" together, where we can model and guide.

The elementary school years are a tremendous time of opportunity for parents to build a solid foundation of good decision making and habits. Already, you are an expert on your children and your children are at the magical age where they still highly value your opinion and direction. To extend this parenting expertise to the digital world, take some time to think about where you stand and what you want for your household. Then, draw upon these values to set guidelines, consider developing a [Family Device Contract](#) that fits your family's needs.

Here are a few tools and strategies to help you get started.

- **Take interest in and learn** about your child's online activities. Build communication early so that you can have the conversations you need to have together, as things come up.
- Allow the use of devices only in **public spaces** (and not behind closed bedroom doors) so that you can supervise and support your child's use of technology.
- Implement a **digital curfew**. Determine a "bedtime" for devices well in advance of your child's bedtime. Since we know that the light from devices is highly stimulating and can negatively impact sleep, device-free time to connect and unwind each evening is so important!
- **Collect devices** each evening and **charge them in your bedroom**. This will be an important routine to establish while children are young so that it is in place before the teen years when it may be hard to resist screen time late in the evenings.
- **Limit** your children's online usage and screen time and make these limits explicit to all family members.
- **Establish scheduled "no device" times** so that kids and family members can connect. Great choices include "no device dinners" and "no device sleepovers". Especially as kids become "tweens", they may need reminders to connect in person so that they are not "alone" while they are "together".
- Teach your children to think about how their behaviors will impact themselves and others, and help them understand the **potential consequences** of their actions. Remind children that if we wouldn't say it in person, we shouldn't say it online.
- **Model** what you want for your family and be present for your kids. Adhere to the agreements in your family contract yourself and help your kids see the importance of "unplugging" for face to face conversations and fun!

Best always,

Pam Jasso
Principal

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