Parents Council
OF WASHINGTON
CONNECTING SCHOOLS · SHARING IDEAS · ENGAGING PARENTS

PROGRAM SUMMARY

2013 Spring Speaker: Common Sense Media

Landon School

April 11, 2013

What Every Parent Should Know About Kids and Technology but Didn't Know to Ask!

Presentation from Common Sense Media

Board Member Joan Levy welcomed attendees and thanked the Landon School for hosting the program. Ms. Levy then introduced and welcomed Common Sense Media's Washington Director, Ms. April McClain-Delaney.

Ms. McClain-Delaney thanked everyone for coming and noted that because technology changes and parenting stays the same, it is key for parents to be engaged and involved.

Common Sense Media started 10 years ago and is a San Francisco based non-profit organization. The mission of Common Sense Media is dedicated to improve the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology. Common Sense Media is focused on the media impact on kids and teaching them to be savvy, responsible media users by providing trustworthy information and tools for families to have a choice about the media they consume. The organization offers developmentally age-appropriate rating information on movies, apps, games and websites, educates through programs teaching skills, safety and ethics, advocates on issues that shape the media's impact on kids and researches to provide reliable data on children's use of media.

Ms. McClain-Delaney highlighted a few key facts:

• 7.5 million Facebook users are younger than 13.

• The #1 way teens prefer to communicate is through face-to-face interaction as opposed to texting.

• Over 4 billion hours of video are watched on YouTube each month.

• 33% of the 14-24 age group receive texts or online messages that include sexual words.

• The average number of texts teens send per month is 3,417.

Media contact is comprised of socializing, visiting virtual worlds, texting, creating and downloading. Children use technology for homework and to express themselves. They are not just receiving content, they are creating it. Content is mobile with anywhere and anytime access and interactive where kids connect and collaborate.

A short video presentation followed covering a variety of informative and startling data showing how messages and technology are a constant 24/7 factor in our children's lives:

• Movies rated R in the past are now PG13.

• 1 in 3 teens use cellular phones to cheat in school.

• 1 in 5 teens have sent nude pictures.

• 80% of fatal accidents were of teens texting and driving.

• 81% of teen girls are afraid of getting fat. 40% of teens photoshop Facebook pictures representing how important identities are to them.

The Positives of Media Use:

• Fun and entertaining

• Personalized and play based learning

• Exploration of their identity

• Keeping in touch with friends and family

• Social support/instant community

• Educational – digital citizenship, learning about different cultures and connecting with others

Challenges with Media Use:

• Addiction - 2-3 hours of TV per day/TVs in bedrooms

• Strangers/Predators

• Cyber bullying - it is anonymous and easy and happens in an instant and has long term implications.

• Inappropriate content

• Multi tasking - impacts cognitive memory. Children need to focus to remember.

• Commercialism - kids see 40,000 commercials on TV and through texts each year.

• Identity theft and privacy

• Violent content

• Trustworthiness of information

What can you do to help your kids be safe, smart and responsible media users and creators?

• Engage in a positive way with your children while using technology. Keep lines of communication open and learn what they are creating.

• Help develop a dialogue of rules to use with your kids.

• Try to keep media in public spaces and outside of the bedroom for as long as you can.

• Try to keep cell phones out of the bedroom.

• Encourage balanced use and keep an eye on the clock.

• Be a role model and watch what they watch.

• Talk to young children about cyberstalkers and cyberbullying.

• Use privacy settings and keep passwords secure.

• For 5th-8th graders, recommend what they can download and discuss.

• Keep an eye on ratings, explain that nothing is private and cheating is unacceptable.

• Need to distinguish a difference between online and offline lives. Devices need to be turned off.

Common Sense Media's website www.commonsense.org provides lots of information and will help parents stay informed and keep up with the pace of changing technology.

Ms. Linda Burch, Chief Education and Strategy Officer for Common Sense Media presented on teaching digital citizenship. Digital media and technology can be harnessed for learning. It's about embracing possibilities and balancing parts. Common Sense Media was developed to help schools, educators and parents through a Parents Education Program. At the start, schools and educators were encouraged to be members for free. 5,000 schools signed up in the first year.

A K-12 digital literacy curriculum was then created to help kids navigate the world of technology, learning what is online, but also teaching how to protect privacy security, respecting creative work and forming healthy online relationships. The curriculum is free, also online and in 49,000 schools across the country. Thousands of teachers access it to use as a tool in schools.

Common Sense Media finds content for kids. With the increase of tablets in schools, schools need to know what content is of high quality. Common Sense Media recommends lists of games and apps and supplies ratings on movies, etc.

There are 100,000 apps on the iTunes Store that are rated "educational," but it is the companies themselves who give themselves this rating. Common Sense Media has gone through them to give these apps a true educational rating. Educators are a part of the Field Group doing the research, testing and developing the rating system.

Ms. Joni Lupovitz, Vice President of Policy for Common Sense Media and former Chief of Staff of the Federal Trade Commission further discussed online privacy issues and tips. Preteens can be technology savvy, but not yet have good judgment. When surfing online, cookies monitor one's every move. A Wall Street Journal investigation found that companies spend extra to have 30% more cookies installed on popular websites where teens spend the most time online to monitor and record every click, purchase and compile profiles of activities for online brokers/ advertisers. With the increase use of

mobile devices, there are increasing privacy challenges. It's no longer limited to the home computer.

Apps also collect data. They are fun and convenient and many are free. However, these free apps are tracking physical locations as well as asking to capture your contact list, what you are interested in, etc. and selling that information. It is important to be careful before downloading, but difficult for parents to assess sometimes as background information about what data the app is collecting and how it will be used is rarely disclosed.

• 60% of apps directed towards kids request and collect personal information (phone number, email addresses, calendar) that is then shared, but only 11% explain that upfront.

•84% of children's apps that allow real life purchases are free.

•58% of kids' apps include advertising. These apps offer incentives to sign up on Facebook.

One of the things that the FTC does to provide consumer protection is limit the access of information of children 13 and under by requiring parent permission/ consent. Silicon Valley companies are pushing back on California law to disclose information collected. Transparency is key.

Tips:

• Before handing over a tablet or phone, take a look at and be familiar with the settings. Sometimes you can make adjustments to restrict content and set passwords to limit downloads or purchasing.

• You can turn off wi-fi.

• You can track history.

• Do your homework before you download or let your children go online with particular apps. Check reviews or find out background information on app provider.

• Immerse yourself on what your kids are doing online.

Questions and Answers

Q: Are there health effects of having routers, radiation from wi-fi, etc.?

A: This is still unchartered territory. Brain effects and health effects are being considered and research is being collected.

Q: How do we as parents monitor the back route ways kids get information?

A: Reading the privacy settings on devices is really important. Purchase filtering software. At schools, technology people can look at settings on school devices.

Q: Is there any software available to limit the YouTube video suggestions that are flagged based on number of reviews?

A: It is very difficult for YouTube to monitor or track appropriate videos that are uploaded or downloaded. Because parents of young children have problems of limiting access to inappropriate material, keep device more open in public spaces and use personal filters. For Apple products, the store employees can walk you through the privacy settings. AT&T store employees also can help with their products.

Q: Is there an appropriate age to introduce a cell phone or iPad device to a child?

A: Difficult to answer. This is something that comes down to individual parenting and what a parent is comfortable with, but it does seem that the average age is dropping. 9 ½ is the average age today for a cell phone. Kids are engaged in the community. There is a stage of progression: email, texting, social media. Common Sense Media's website does have some online tips.

Q: Are there any studies or measurements on the impact of exposure to technology?

A: Studies used to think it was helpful overall, but now studies show it is not helpful in all areas. There is a lot of value of technology in the classroom and kids are often more engaged online which creates a sense of excitement about learning and they are learning well interactively. We are in the early days of research on this – we know they are engaged, but whether they are actually learning depends on the content. In certain areas – especially for kids with learning differences – this has been a very positive piece of the educational process. With Math and Science, it is more demonstrable. With Language Arts and creative expression, it is strong but harder to measure.

Q: Can gaming sites track information?

A: Best to turn off location device if you do not want to make tracking easy for the companies or say no to kids. It depends on devices... Apple products do not allow tracking. You have to pay attention to the messages that the companies provide and ask companies to supply more information. There are also programs you can get for your computer to track cookies.

Additional tip:

There is a book out written by Shirley Turkle where she has done research about the effects of children and technology and whether the use of technology limits their social interactions. A researcher at Stanford found that face-to-face interaction is what kids want and value and showed that kids who spend more time on technology had lower self-esteem. The research is still developing.