

*On October 25, 2011 PIN school administrators, faculty, PA heads and representatives met at Middlesex School to learn about cyber-safety and cyber-addiction. A summary of these presentations is provided below.*

## **Forays and Footprints of the Digital Generation Presented by Katie Koestner**

### **Introduction**

Parents are often very naïve about their children's digital experiences. Do you know what your children text? What they post online? Who they talk to and where they go online? It's important for parents to know the benefits and drawbacks of their children's online lives.

### **It's never too young to be savvy**

For parents with younger children, you need to consider how your children spend their time online. Webkinz and Club Penguin seem so friendly and benign, but what do your children really get out of these sites?

- Diminished language skills - to ensure that their child is "safe", many parents select the ultimate safe chat. This restricts their language to a list of pre-written words or phrases. While they protect the child from inappropriate language, it does little to help improve their word power.
- Time well spent? When you child joins these sites, the games never end and your child may feel like they need to always be online caring for their pets. Many of the places you can visit in these sites offer gambling, betting, and other grown up activities.
- Lessons learned - these sites all about buying items for their pet. Many of the prices are inflated, giving them an unrealistic sense of what things cost and what is "expensive."

### **Gaming and chatting - not all fun and games**

We want to believe our kids when they say these are just games and that they can distinguish between what's good and bad. What they don't know is that there is serious science behind gaming and it is designed to subtly get users engrossed in the game.

Games offer characters with depth and complex back-stories. Users will spend most of their time interacting with scantily clad women and men. Most popular games have mini movie modes that are often graphic, sexual.

The games they play may not make players more violent but they do make users less empathetic.

Do your children visit Chatroulette, Formspring or other chat and poll sites? Do you know who they talk to and what they say while they are there? Talk to your children and find out.

### **Digital footprints: not a walk on the beach**

When your child walks on the beach and leaves a footprint, you can usually trust that the tide or rain will wash away that footprint and that it won't be there the following day. When your child uses any of their digital devices to post a message, a photo, etc. their digital footprint does not wash away. Ever.

Most parents are very naive about digital identities and this makes it hard for them to help their children manage theirs. Yet they need to be managed because the stakes for not managing them are very high, now and in the future.

### **A cautionary tale: how a "private" photo cost a student a scholarship**

Do you and your child think that what happens on their phone, computers and other digital devices stays on those digital devices? Think again.

In January, a high school senior finds out she will be a finalist for a 4-year college scholarship. In February, her boyfriend asks her for an intimate photo so that when they are different colleges he will have something to remember her. On Valentine's Day she and her boyfriend go out on a romantic date and she gives him a topless photo of herself for his phone. In March, the final selection is made and she receives the scholarship. In September, she and her boyfriend start their freshman years at different colleges. While eating lunch at the dining hall on campus, he leaves his phone on the table while he goes to get more food. His dining companions check out his phone, find the photo of his girlfriend and send it to everyone on his contact list. The scholarship committee finds out about the photo and because she gave it to her boyfriend during the time in which she was being considered for the scholarship, they rescind the scholarship moving forward and retroactively to March. Her college finds out, and she is faced with not only paying for school but also telling her parents that she lost the scholarship and why.

### **Who looks at your child online?**

Guidance counselors, athletic coaches, potential employers, as well as college admission and scholarship organizations really do check social networking sites such as Facebook for positive and negative information about a candidate. Your child's digital identity can and will be used as a screening tool for college admission, jobs, etc.

### **How will they find your child?**

These people and organizations don't just Google your child's name. They use fee-based products that help them find all the digital dirt. Products like Spokeo.com and the wayback machine.

If your child has a fake identity online, it may not be as fake as they think. By using Photo recognition software and tracking e-mails and IP addresses, even fake ids can be linked back to your child.

Tell your children not to create or use a fake identity; it's identity fraud and it's against the law.

### Who owns your online content?

If you think your child owns the content they post online, think again. How many of your children have read the terms and agreement contracts for your e-mail service, MySpace, Facebook, etc. and understand them? When they signed up for these free programs, they provided "Proprietary rights in content." This means they agreed to give them the right to use, copy, modify, adapt, translate, publicly perform, publicly display, store, reproduce, transmit and distribute such content, even after they delete their account.

Paying for it does more to ensure your content stays private, so consider switching to fee-based programs.

### Digital disasters

Here is a list of the Top 10 things that can cost your child admission, jobs, and scholarships:

1. Links to inappropriate sites
2. Hate speech
3. Talk of violence and crime
4. Derogatory or racist jokes and slurs
5. Drug use
6. Underage drinking
7. Scantily clad, naked videos or images
8. Threats to harm others
9. Retaliation
10. Stalking

### Creating a positive online image

The reality is we can't tell our children to stay offline. We can help them be more selective about what they put online. Consider reviewing these guidelines with your children.

**Be selective** – your digital footprint should create a positive image. Post only what you are comfortable with an admission counselor seeing. If you're going to brag, do it on your social networks. If you put on your application and it's not on your social network pages, it counts against you.

**Posting is forever** – think well before you post anything online. Once it's posted, it can be saved, copied and used by others.

**Privacy schmivacy** – there are many ways to get around your privacy settings on a social networking or other free share site. People can and will find you so don't think anything is private. Even if you use a fake identity, you can be found and can get into lots of trouble.

**Find yourself** – even if you are careful about what you post, you also need to monitor what other people post about you. Regularly search your name to see how

friends include you in their sites. Ask that unflattering posts, videos or photos be removed.

**Get help** – if you do find negative content about yourself, tell a trusted adult, the service provider or a company that specializes in online reputation management. Products like Reputationdefender.com help you vacuum up your digital dirt. You can also pay to develop search algorithms so that the positive postings are viewed first.

### Digital manners

Help your child develop digital manners. When a digital situation is getting heated, help them to

1. Delay delivery
2. Set the digital device down, set pause, and
3. Walk away without making the day worse.

### The complexities of parenting in the digital age

As you can see from all of this, parenting is even more complex in the digital age. Many parents need help staying current. DragonFly learning was developed to help parents do just that.

### DragonFly

- Started in 2006 as an interactive, online learning division of Campus Outreach Services
- Site for students, parents, athletes, faculty and administrators to access health and wellness topics presented by subject matter experts

### DragonFly programs

- DragonFly offers the following programs
- ParentConnect (high school)
- PrimaryConnect (prek-8<sup>th</sup>)
- Faculty Connect (for school faculty and administrators)
- PeerConnect (for student peer leaders)
- CommunityConnect (for school consortiums, including PIN)

### Topic schedule

Each program presents topics on a set schedule. This provides each group with the chance to share and exchange ideas from their webinars.

- October – Alcohol and High Risk drinking
- Nov – Learning and Study Skills
- December – Internet Safety and Technology
- Jan – Bullying and Harassment
- Feb – Body image and nutrition
- March – other drugs and addictions
- April – healthy relationships
- May – mental health and stress

### **Webinar format**

Each webinar is organized into a standard format:

- 1/3 – provides new findings, facts, definitions
- 1/3 – interactivity – questions, polls, Q&A
- 1/3 - where to go from here – how to talk to your kids, connect to your community, resources for more information

### **Why attend these webinars?**

- Empowers parents with education
- Teaches new parenting skills and helps improve existing ones
- 8 topics related to safety, success and happiness of children
- Reaches distant parents
- Maximizes program dollars

### **Please join us**

PIN is excited to share the CommunityConnect webinars to your school. We hope you will attend these webinars throughout the year and look forward to hearing your feedback about this exciting new learning opportunity.

# **Unplug and Stay Connected: How Over-consumption of Technology is Negatively Affecting Our Teens**

## **by Aaron Fernandes**

### **Current connections**

The reality of our time is that families are together but connected closer with their digital devices than each other.

We need to know about the technology that our kids are using. Not all technology is bad, but it must be monitored. Most of us spend all of our time with our device; the last thing most kids do before sleeping is screen time.

### **How technology impacts our children**

Our growing dependency on technology is having noticeable consequences on our young people and our families. They are exhibiting decreases in

- Impulse control
- Distress tolerance
- Psychological resilience

The level of immediacy that kids have has an impact on their comfort dwelling in the unknown or when their needs are not met now. Yet that's where all the mystery is.

### **Research**

- Computer users check email and change windows 37 times an hour.
- People consume 12 hours of media a day, often with TV and another device, compared to 5 hours in 1960.
- On average, teens receive 110 texts per day. That means that 6-8times/hour there is a text coming in or going out.

### **Multitasking myth**

Multi talking limits your ability to discern between good info and bad info. The brain that isn't used to multitasking is able to focus on 1 thing and find the important thing.

### **A typical teenage week**

How do your children spend their time? Research shows that they spent

- 31 hours online
- 3.5 hours social media
- 2 hours on YouTube and chat
- 1.5 hours of porn
- 1.5 hours looking into diets and weight loss
- 1 hour cosmetic surgeries

- 1 in 4 teens of 100 spoke to strangers but saw no problem with that
- 3 hours doing HW

### Impact of technology on the interpersonal

By limiting how much people engage with one another, technology diminishes empathy and fragments our relationships. Some students really struggle with these negative impacts.

### What is Open Sky?

Open Sky provides, among other things, technology detox. Open Sky separates students from their technology, gets them into nature and helps them discover themselves.

This helps them understand

- Reflective vs. reactive response to stress
- Discover authentic self; away from their devices
- More meaningful connections; sharing feelings and hearing about other's feelings
- Increased creativity; gives students enough space to ponder and explore
- Better eating (all organic) and sleep (away from technology) habits
- Lowered stress, anxiety, depression
- Better overall health
- More grounded and connected to peers

### Target students

Each group is 8 students. Students range in age from 13-17 and 18-30 (most are 18-23) from at risk to people who simply need to break away from technology. By using an interdisciplinary approach, they can accommodate therapeutic needs, and can also support non-clinical needs.

In 2 months, they can do as much as clinical settings can do in a year. Why? There's no escape and nowhere to hide.

Students are coming in less complicated but more stressed.

### Goals of Open Sky program

The goals of this program include

- Stabilization
- Therapeutic interventions
- Clinical assessment
- Preparation for aftercare; Some students can return to their school and home settings, other need additional supports

The average stay is 65 days.

### **Research: what they are doing works**

Since starting this organization, we have been tracking students after they leave. We find that students leave energized; they are at the top of the world. They usually experience a drop as they re-integrate into their old lives. After they make it through that adjustment, they then bounce back and maintain that level.

### **Recommended reading**

- How to land your kid in therapy – Lori Gottlieb, The Atlantic, July/August 2011
- Beautiful brains - David Dobbs, National Geographic, October 2011
- NY Times technology section

### **For more information**

To get more information about Open Sky, visit [www.openskywilderness.com](http://www.openskywilderness.com)