

School Counsellor Newsletter



Taking an active role in your son's device use - Part Two

Edition Sixteen

The importance of play

Learning through play helps children to develop collaboration and problem-solving skills, resilience, creativity and empathy. Professor Paso Sahlberg, a renowned international educational expert, says children are losing the benefits of free outdoor play and instead watching digital screens. It could be useful to review a typical week to see if your son has time to play - screen free - each day. Your son may not necessarily agree with this but it is vital, not just for him to play but even for him to be bored so that he can create his own play. Dr Vanessa Lapointe, a psychologist and parenting expert, believes children need to sit in the "nothingness of boredom in order to arrive at an understanding of who they are." Boredom allows children to daydream, look inwardly, think outside the square and create a version of fun that isn't spoon fed to them. So consider creating play, or even boredom, time as well as screen time each day.

Different perspectives

Dr James Donald has studied Australian teenagers device use and acknowledges that we now have the first generation of truly native digital users who grew up with a device. As a result teenagers do not think of them as a device but more like an appendage - part of who they are - so taking them away can be seen as a violent act.

This does not mean that parents should not apply limits and uphold core values, yet it is important to empathise with the experiences of young people. Professor Sahlberg believes devices have a role to play in our lives but at the right times and in the right ways. This is where the advice of organisations, such as Netsafe, are of great value for parents.

Netsafe

Netsafe is an excellent, New Zealand based organisation, offering online safety support and advice. One area of particular use is the [Netsafe Parenting Resources](#). There are a variety of resources offering information and advice in regard to social media apps and online games, such as Snapchat and Fortnite. There is information in regard to screen time advice, online safety and bullying, setting effective privacy settings on social media as well as understanding what one's digital footprint is. It could also be useful to read about one's online behaviour as a parent, for example what you are sharing about your child and whether this is appropriate, how to access community resources and also how to understand online challenges from a young person's perspective. Information is also available in regard to challenging subjects such as online grooming, sexting and pornography, which parents need to be aware of and feel able to talk about with their children.

Netsafe also has some suggestions for using parental controls on devices. Such devices can allow parents to set usage limits and times for internet access, allow parents to see what their children are accessing, block calls or texts from certain people and prevent the use of the camera as well as the ability to download certain apps. Alongside talking to your son about their device use, parental controls can be an effective way to monitor and manage his device use as he learns how to navigate the online world safely.



Jenelle Hooson

Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the school counsellor can provide please see your son's homeroom teacher or Amos Pilgrim
amos.pilgrim@medbury.school.nz.