Tech Tuesday: A Family Crisis?

Consumed with Tech

BY KENDRA MCGUIRE

Every Tuesday during the month of March, we will share information about the use of technology and its impacts on the lives of our students, families, and our schools. This week, we focus on the amount of time we all use technology and what the latest research is telling us about this constant connection.

Our Faith

"For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his full potential."
-Guadium et Spes, 12

Too Much Technology

- In a 2020 Pew Research Center survey, 71% of parents were concerned that their child may spend too much time in front of screens.
- In a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 95% of teens reported that they have a smart phone or access to one.
- According to the CDC, the average amount of time children spend in front of a screen is as follows:
  - Ages 8-10, 6 hours per day
  - Ages 11-14, 9 hours per day
  - Ages 15-18, 7.5 hours per day

Happiness & Mental Health

- A survey of 14-24 year-olds by the Royal Society for Public Health found that Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all led to increased feelings of depression, anxiety, poor body image, and loneliness.
- Individuals ages 8-12 that spend considerable amounts of time using computers and smart phones describe themselves as less happy and less socially comfortable. (Developmental Psychology, 2012)
- The number of teens who get together with their friends nearly every day dropped by more than 40% from 2000 to 2015. (Dr. Jean M. Twenge, 2017)

Human Relationships

- The majority of parents agree that parenting today is harder than it was 20 years ago, citing technology and social media as the first and second reasons why.
- 68% of parents said that they "at least sometimes" feel distracted by their phone when spending time with their kids.
- 59% of U.S. teens have been bullied or harassed online, and a similar percentage say it is a major problem for people their age.

Source: Pew Research Center

Addictiveness

- Using smart phones/technology can stimulate the same reward centers of the brain as substance abuse. (Child Mind Institute)
- Psychiatric clinics are seeing continually increasing instances of children who have trouble disconnecting from technology and exhibiting troubling behavior when being forced to do so. (NPR)
- TikTok, a popular app, has been intentionally designed with an algorithm that makes it very hard to disconnect by tracking the user's every movement and bombarding the user with content it knows he/she will be interested in. (Protect Young Eyes)

Technology Impacts on School

BY JILL LONNEMANN & DAN STEFFEN

The COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers and students to find ways to connect from afar, but that process may have had lasting, negative effects on students. After months of relying on computers, many students have struggled to re-acclimate to in-person classroom instruction and are behind on social skill development. Some challenges include: verbally expressing needs and emotions, reading non-verbal cues, collaborating with others, communicating with empathy, and managing the routines of day-to-day life. Students need increased focus on executive functioning skills, peer relationships, grit, and rigor in order to catch up to where they need to be.

Our students seem to know and use the latest apps and websites before their parents and teachers are aware of their existence. What students view as harmless sources of communication or entertainment may actually be harmful to their lives and social development. Children are often faced with peer pressure, social media challenges, dangers, and decisions that could have long lasting impacts on their lives. Parents have a difficult time keeping up and educators are looking for ways to balance the amount of technology used in the classroom. All of this leads many people to feel that they are in a chronic state of crisis regarding technology. The challenge that everyone faces is balancing the beneficial uses of technology while minimizing its harmful side effects.

Children often develop a dependence upon their devices, which causes them to crave more and more time on them. According to Dr. Nicholas Kardaras in *Glow Kids*, the blue light emitted from screens causes the brain to release dopamine, which causes many children to become addicted to the technology they are using. Studies have shown that teenagers who regularly use the internet and consistently log onto social media are more likely to present psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, mania, paranoia, aggressiveness, antisocial behavior, narcissism, impulsivity, moodiness, trouble focusing, and increased substance use. These students are more likely to express feeling bored or unhappy at school.

(Adrianne Albarado Ortiz, West Texas Counseling & Guidance 2018)

A Look Ahead & Further Learning

Technology has quickly changed our world and our daily lives. Finding balance and seeking the positive aspects of technology will be key to our successful use. Next Tuesday, we will dive into the dangers that exist on every device. Stay tuned!

Can't wait until next week? Take a look at these resources:
- Online Article: "Has the Smartphone Destroyed a Generation?" by Dr. Jean Twenge, *The Atlantic,* September 2017.
- Documentary: *Childhood 2.0: The Living Experiment,* by Directors Jamin & Kiowa Winan and Robert Murature, 2020.