

Pointers For Parents

Keeping Up With Today's High-Tech Kids

(NAPSA)—Most kids today are natural technophiles—gracefully and enthusiastically adopting technology into their everyday lives. In fact, a recent study showed that, on average, today's school-aged children are consuming and using media about 7.5 hours a day.

From first graders to high schoolers, technology is not something children “turn on” after school or on the weekends but is now more than ever an integral and organic addition to life. As their children move seamlessly from computer screens to video games, many parents ask “What is the appropriate level of ‘screen time’ for my child?”

It's all a matter of balance. According to Janeal Roberts, vice president of education for Champions, a national provider of online tutoring and before- and after-school programs, “Technology is a powerful tool that can and should be adapted to education and learning—in a way that is appropriate and even more exciting for your children.” In a controlled environment, such as under parent supervision or within a classroom or after-school program, technology lets parents and teachers tap into the ways children love to learn today.

Today's technology has amazing and productive applications in education. The key for parents is understanding how and when to use technology to spur their child's interest in learning and discovery.

Roberts suggests parents consider the following guidelines for bridging technology to education:

- Designate computer time with your child. Carve out 30 minutes or so to explore the Internet together. Whether to conduct



Parents and children can learn much and enjoy more when they navigate the Web together.

research for a homework assignment or to virtually explore far-off locations, use the time to navigate the World Wide Web together.

- Encourage creativity. Take photos from a weekend trip to the zoo or museum or from the last family vacation to create an e-book or online slide show that you can share with friends and family.

- Explore the universe. Go beyond the boundaries of planet Earth with online applications that allow you and your child to learn about the sun, moon, stars and more. For example, make a map of the solar system or look up satellite imagery, maps and three-dimensional views from galaxies in outer space. You can even go on a “geocaching” adventure—an online treasure hunt activity using GPS technology.

- Collaborate with your child's teachers. Talk to your child's teachers about what subjects are currently being taught or those that are forthcoming, so you and your child can spend time researching the topic and connecting classroom learning with discovery at home and out of school.

- Visit sites associated with national organizations. Organizations that focus on education, research or nutrition often house

content-rich information on their websites that appeal to children. As an example, visiting NASA's website lets your child access the Kids' Club. At the USDA's site, children can learn about the food pyramid through interactive games.

- Take an online class together at your local library or community center. This will let you and your child learn together and help your child see you as a student as well, open to learning.

- Look for learning-based online programs. To supplement classroom time, look for online academic enrichment programs, such as the Champions Virtual Science Club (www.discoverchampions.com), which lets kids go on a virtual archaeological dig, explore a science laboratory and discover the world of science.

With the growing presence of technology—from video-sharing sites to online learning programs—kids have even more opportunities for constructive discovery and creativity at their fingertips.

Parents and teachers are in the midst of a significant shift in how to inspire children. By looking at technology as a powerful partner, they have an opportunity to incorporate the tools that really interest and excite kids into their everyday learning.

Instead of asking yourself “How much technology is too much?” consider the important balance between uninspired screen time and guided discovery time. Whether it's conducting research for a homework assignment, creating an e-book or sharing the results of an online science experiment, kids have the interest and the motivation to learn through technology.