

Healthy Electronics Use

by Dave Conroy

Technology has changed our lives in so many ways. Information is at our fingertips and by saying a few key words, voice activated smart speakers will now search the web, schedule your next appointment and play your favourite songs. Life has become so much easier in some ways, but more complicated in others.



At Dallas Elementary, we are helping to guide our students as they navigate this brave new world. Grade 5/6 teacher, Jodi Saemerow regularly leads her students in classroom discussions about online ethics, identity fraud and tools for reporting cyber bullying. Josh Ruddick's Grade 5 class recently used the materials from Common Sense Media to develop awareness of safer ways to navigate the digital world. In Shawn Bodger's Grade 2 class, students are taught

how to use classroom Chromebooks to access websites related to classroom curriculum such as Spelling City. Debbie Krueger, Grade 1 teacher, uses the apps Epic Reading, Monster Math and Animal Math. These apps encourage the development of students' foundational reading and numeracy skills in a secure environment.

Each year, Dallas Elementary invites the RCMP to come in and present to our Grade 6/7 students regarding online safety. Students are challenged to examine their "followers" lists and delete individuals who they do not actually know. In addition, the RCMP and teachers encourage students to ask for permission before posting any images of individuals to online sites such as Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook. This is a simple idea that parents can support from home and lead by example. As with most things in life, adult role modelling influences youth behaviour to a much higher level than the words that we use.



Many Dallas families are taking a proactive rather than reactive approach to electronics use. More and more families are using Family Electronics Contracts to outline expected and unexpected behaviours. These contracts establish clear family boundaries for how electronics will be used and consequences for breaking these expectations. A downloadable Family Electronics Contract example is available on the Dallas Elementary website and through the QR Code in a format that parents can adapt to meet their needs.

Navigating this changing world of electronics can be challenging and rewarding in so many ways. As school communities come together to support our young people, role model healthy electronics use and set fair boundaries, our next generation will have the tools they need to adapt to this exciting new world.

