

Pros & Cons of Kids Using Digital Technology

Transcript

The explosion of technology is changing how kids learn, interact, communicate and play.

“It’s a new world for them and it’s a new world for us.” [Sepi Khazai, Mother]

Smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices, now an inevitable part of life at home and in school. A middle school principal in suburban Washington says technology has made learning fun and relevant.

“It is a natural way to begin to get kids engaged in their learning. They have moved on from just reading textbooks and completing worksheets. It’s really about the process of learning. And so technology allows students to be able to access information, just in a matter of seconds.” [Monifa McKnight, Principal, Ridgeview Middle School]

We recently met up with several families in McLean, Virginia outside Washington. Kids and parents we talked to here agree there are countless benefits.

“When you’re typing it’ll pick out your errors, like if you have a spelling error or grammatical error.” [Michael Zhang, Student]

“And all the assignments that the teachers give is always online, so it’s really easy.” [Alexandra Zhang, Student]

Six-year-old Aiden’s favorite thing to do:

“I love to play games.” [Aiden, Student]

Ali, a father of two, says his ten year old son Cameron, who also loves sports, taught himself how to play chess a few years ago.

“Some kids were playing chess in school, but he wanted to learn, and he picked it up through the iPad. To my surprise, he came in second in the tournament.” [Ali Khazai, Father]

Recent studies suggest many children are using digital devices more than the recommended two hours maximum a day. And experts warn too much screen time means less face-to-face interaction.

“I think the biggest downside is the loss of social skills.” [Prof. Patricia Greenfield, University of California, Los Angeles]

Patricia Greenfield, a psychology professor at UCLA, studied two groups of sixth graders from the same public school. One group stayed at school, the other was sent to an outdoor camp where no electronic devices were allowed.

“And we found that after five days at this nature camp, their social skills, their ability to read emotion, had improved. And we knew that because we compared them to a control control group from the same school, the same grade, who just were doing their normal thing back at their school.” [Greenfield]

These parents say their kids have to follow the rules at home, and at the end of the day it's about good parenting and common sense.

“Now we try and limit the iPad to Friday afternoons and through the weekend if they've done everything they had to do during the week.” [A. Khazai]

“We also have to teach them their limits. We have to teach them what it is to socialize with friends, family or to speak to each other. Have eye contact.” [S. Khazai]

Family therapist Dr. Elaine Brady says that's the right approach, but wants parents to take it even further.

“Parents are going to have to be engaged with your children, and actively work to engage children in outside activities: sports, interests, hobbies that bring them into face-to-face contact. And that is the key.” [Dr. Elaine Brady, Family therapist]

So technology can be a great tool for kids, fun and educational, but studies show it cannot replace talking with them one-on-one and what experts call real human interaction.

Asieh Namdar, CCTV, Washington.