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Education in the digital age

Children today have access to media everywhere they go. They can watch television on demand, play Minecraft on their tablets, cruise the Internet on their laptops, or engage with friends on smartphone apps. The digital age also has produced opportunities for young people to learn and has opened the door to new careers in science and technology. In this issue, we take a look at education in the digital age.



Migrating the digital divide with our children

By Christopher Clayton, *Assistant Director of Education Services at Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)*

"What century are you teaching in?"

This question was posed by Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs, author and internationally recognized education expert, speaking at a professional learning session I attended. She asks this question to point out that a great many of the classrooms of today look eerily similar to those of our own and even our parents' childhoods. Maybe the chalkboard has been replaced by the whiteboard, and there might be a DVD player instead of a VCR on the media cart. There may be laptops or tablets instead of huge desktop computers collecting dust. But, in general, many of the classrooms of today look pretty similar to the classrooms of yesterday. As a parent, I wonder how ideal these conditions are for my 21st century children.

In educational parlance, the students of today are often referred to as "digital natives," while those of us in our 30s and older are "digital immigrants." The idea is that the children of today are

growing up in a digital world with the inherent right to know and communicate whatever they want whenever they want at the touch of a button, while us experienced (not old) analog folks must migrate to this "Brave New Digital World." Consequently, our kids might never get to experience the joy of making a call from a public pay phone, clumsily unfolding a map in the car to figure out where they are going, or thumbing through a tome-like phone book, dictionary, or encyclopedia. The world and what it means to exist, to "know," and to communicate has forever changed. And as a parent and educator, I find myself asking: Shouldn't education be changing with it? If so, how much and how quickly? And how much digital learning do I expose my children to at home?

Read Christopher Clayton's full commentary at www.partnersforpubliced.org/PartnersforPE.aspx?id=12012.

Tips for parents to embrace digital education

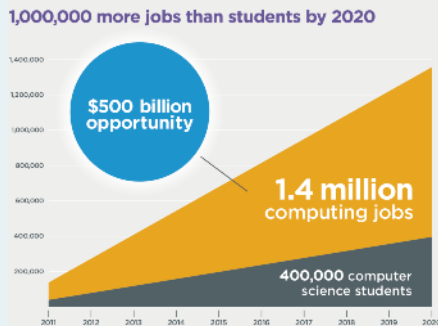
1. Show and tell: "If your child is using a device, program, or website you aren't familiar with, have them show you how it works."
2. Google it: "Google your child's name. Google your family name. See what's out there."
3. Keep tech public: "Keep technology in an open space." Parents "should check the browser history so they know what sites their children are visiting."
4. Get excited: "Parents can overcome their own digital insecurities by talking to other parents and engaging with their child's teachers. Send the teachers a quick email and ask how they use technology in their classrooms."

Adapted from U.S. News & World Report, "Four Tech Tips for Parents to Embrace Digital Education," Oct. 25, 2011.

A parent's guide to social media apps

Having trouble keeping up with the seemingly endless rollout of social media apps marketed to tweens and teens? "High-Tech Dad" blogger Michael Sheehan offers simple, straightforward information about the apps kids are using to connect with each other today, from Facebook to SnapChat to Ask.FM, among others. Read more at <http://www.partnersforpubliced.org/PartnersForPE.aspx?id=12015>.

Computer Science Education Week opens new pathways to careers



Computer science is a top paying college degree and computer programming jobs are growing at 2X the national average.

Women lead Fortune 500 companies, serve in Congress, and earn more bachelor's degrees than men, but the country's first female Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, or Mark Zuckerberg has yet to emerge. Women hold only 27 percent of computer science jobs, and fewer women are pursuing computer science degrees.

Research shows that courses directly linked to careers are often more motivating and meaningful for students. Computer science courses and other programs that engage students and set goals for them beyond high school graduation often lead to increased enrollments in college. And

now there is a concerted effort to encourage girls to benefit from this coursework.

Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicate that computer science jobs are growing in Pennsylvania at more than three times the state average and at two times the national average.

Computer Science Education Week, observed each year in December, aims to expand computer science education opportunities to all students, to help to light the pathway to new careers. Learn more: www.csedweek.org.

How much screen time should your child have?

Children today have seemingly unending choices when it comes to media. They can watch videos on television or tablets, play videogames on smartphones or gaming units, or engage with friends on social media and email. Round-the-clock media exposure is a hallmark of our digital age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends parents use moderation when it comes to their children's screen time.

- Model effective "media diets" to help their children learn to be selective and healthy in what they consume. Take an active role in children's media education by co-viewing programs with them and discussing values.
- Make a media use plan, including mealtime and bedtime curfews for media devices. Screens should be kept out of kids' bedrooms.
- Limit entertainment screen time to less than one or two hours per day; in children under 2, discourage screen media exposure.

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