



eParenting®

High-Tech Kids

Guiding Parents in a High-Tech World: School Blog Project 2016

Situation

Technology plays an ever-increasing role in children's lives. Three in four teens have access to a smartphone. Ninety-two percent of teens go online daily, while one-third of parents and teens report they argue about screen time. Parents want to learn more about the digital world in which their children are growing up.

Some programs about digital media for parents focus on potential negative effects (for example, cyber-bullying and online predators) and on how parents can protect their children. While these are valuable, they ignore many positive aspects of digital media, such as its ability to contribute to child development; enhance the parent-adolescent relationship; and provide tools to strengthen parenting skills. How can parents learn about the ways digital media fits into their children's lives and enhances their role as parents?

Response

eParenting® High-Tech Kids for parents of youth aged 9-to-14 helps parents understand the role digital media can play in supporting their adolescents' growth and development. It helps parents create strategies using digital media that can enhance parenting skills. University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living county educators and state specialists developed the program

after conducting a survey of parents and consulting with national experts.

eParenting® High-Tech Kids is available in an online blog-based delivery format (<http://fyi.uwex.edu/eparenting/>) and as a two-hour workshop. The online format divides the workshop content into weekly posts, or short articles that can be read in any order and are organized by parenting functions, child development and type of technology.

Outcomes

In 2016 state specialists and family living educators collaborated with middle schools across 24 counties to email summaries of the High-Tech Kids blog posts to parents in each school. For one school semester, from January to May 2016, over 34,000 parents of 4th to 8th graders in 77 Wisconsin middle schools received weekly emails or Facebook posts from their school connecting them to the eParenting® High-Tech Kids blog. To make it easy to visit the website, email summaries sent to parents included direct links to a new article each week. Over 100 of those parents provided feedback via a post-program questionnaire.

92% of teens go online **daily**

“I learned that I should check in with my child using social media.”

— Parent reader of eParenting® High-Tech Kids

Family Living Programs Impact Report

Benefits to parents

After reading eParenting® High-Tech Kids posts, parents significantly increased their knowledge and changed their attitudes about the role of digital media in parenting. Specifically, parents reported that their understanding of, confidence in, and use of digital media in parenting increased. The majority of parents (88%) said they used, or intend to use, at least one new idea from the blog posts.

"I learned that I should check in with my child using social media. It actually worked; my child seems more able to communicate with me through technology than in person."

Most parents (91%) agreed technology can benefit teen development. Several parents noted that after reading the blog, they had more discussions with their kids about digital media.

"It just reminded me to ask more questions."

"I learned what to have conversations about with my child when it comes to digital media."

Benefits to school partners

Schools value High-Tech Kids as a way to communicate with parents and use it to leverage more resources to support students and families. One colleague reported, "I...heard from a school counselor indicating she wants to continue the program next year... they have listed the project in their Title I grant application as one of their parent communications. "

School-parent connection

- Both parents and school administrators found the weekly delivery of the emails to be a positive experience.
- The delivery was convenient and the content high quality and informative: "As a single mom with 2 jobs and 2 kids, my time for reading is limited. Receiving eParenting emails made it possible for me to stay connected at my pace. I could read the



articles during my lunch on the day that worked best into my schedule. It was very convenient."

- Parents trusted school-sponsored content: "[it] makes me feel like there are a lot of other people going through the same thing and I have even heard the school refer to it as a good resource."
- Parents felt supported: "I loved it! I am a parent of Middle School children and I tried to reread every post and visit every website along the way."
- School partners (such as principals) valued connecting to parents on the topic: "Our school is not required to connect with parents but I consider this program an asset to our school because it was one more way to positively communicate with parents."
- Schools would participate again: "It's a win-win for everyone. The credibility that Extension offers to the emails was [sic] helpful."

To learn more, contact:

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Connecting parents to UW-Extension

Several parents also reported that the High-Tech Kids blog posts helped connect them to other UW-Extension resources: "I did not know Extension had this type of information available... I now check their website for more good information." In fact, nearly one-third of participants reported that they "liked" Family Living Facebook after reading an eParenting® High-Tech Kids post.

Connecting UW-Extension with other states

In 2016, the program was piloted in three additional states: Montana, Texas and Indiana. Here is what they say about the project:

Montana State Extension—"The superintendent is excited about the program and it meets requirements for the school with Office of Public Instruction. One person suggested we contact OPI in Montana about delivering this program to all schools..."

Texas Prairie View A&M University—"It is very easy to promote and deliver. You provided us with everything we needed."

Purdue Extension Indiana—"We were able to connect with more parents than ever before to provide research based parenting education."