

IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY ON FAMILIES: DEVELOPMENT OF A SERIES OF
NEWSLETTERS TO EDUCATE PARENTS AND CHILDREN ABOUT THE
SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

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Impacts of Technology on Families: Development of a Series
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to review research regarding technology's impact on families today. This paper reviews new and varied technologies, such as cell phones, the Internet, video games, and television, and their influence on youth in current generations. The benefits and the negative effects of technology on children and families are explored. Lastly, the paper outlines a newsletter series specifically designed to educate parents and children on the significant contributions of technology and offers recommendations to help reduce the negative aspects of technology.

The nine-issue newsletter series focuses on topics of interest to parents and children and suggests ways to preserve the positive aspects of technology while also calling attention to the negative aspects of these technological devices. Many families today have a shortage of time; therefore, this newsletter series is a quick way for parents and children to gain knowledge and enhance communication on various topics. The newsletter series includes (Issue 1) *Parenting in the Digital Age*; (Issue 2) *Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely*; (Issue 3) *Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online*; (Issue 4) *Cyberbullying*; (Issue 5) *Media Influences*; (Issue 6) *Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online*; (Issue 7) *Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles*; (Issue 8) *Media Violence*; (Issue 9) *Healthy Technology Habits*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	6
Theories and Frameworks Pertaining to the Use of Technology in Families.....	6
Key Forms of Technology Affecting Families.....	8
Cell Phones.....	8
Internet.....	12
Video Games.....	23
Television.....	26
Theories and Frameworks Pertaining to the Use of Newsletters for Parent Education.....	31
Key Elements of Parenting Newsletters.....	32
CHAPTER 3. NEWSLETTER DEVELOPMENT.....	34
Newsletter Development.....	34
Newsletter Recipients.....	36
Newsletter Design and Content.....	36
Key Objectives of the <i>Tech Savvy Families</i> Newsletter Series Issues.....	37
Newsletter Review.....	39
Newsletter Evaluation.....	40
<i>Tech Savvy Families</i> Newsletter Series Evaluation Components.....	40
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS: OVERVIEW OF THE <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER SERIES.....	42

General Overview of the Newsletter Series.....	42
Conceptual Outline of the Newsletters.....	42
Issue One: <i>Parenting in the Digital Age</i>	42
Issue Two: <i>Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely</i>	43
Issue Three: <i>Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online</i>	43
Issue Four: <i>Cyberbullying</i>	44
Issue Five: <i>Media Influences</i>	45
Issue Six: <i>Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online</i>	45
Issue Seven: <i>Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles</i>	46
Issue Eight: <i>Media Violence</i>	46
Issue Nine: <i>Healthy Technology Habits</i>	46
Summary.....	47
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	48
REFERENCES.....	50
APPENDIX 1. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE ONE.....	57
APPENDIX 2. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE TWO.....	61
APPENDIX 3. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE THREE.....	66
APPENDIX 4. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FOUR.....	72
APPENDIX 5. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FIVE.....	77
APPENDIX 6. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE SIX.....	82
APPENDIX 7. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE SEVEN.....	88
APPENDIX 8. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE EIGHT.....	93
APPENDIX 9. <i>TECH SAVVY FAMILIES</i> NEWSLETTER: ISSUE NINE.....	97

APPENDIX 10. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* SAMPLE EVALUATION..... 103

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, researchers have witnessed the steady increase, adoption, and widespread use of new and varied technologies and developed awareness that technology has become incredibly important in the lives of adolescents (McQuillen, 2003). Electronics which were once considered luxuries, such as cell phones, televisions, CDs, computers, and video games are now considered “must haves” for many youth today (Wei & Ven-Hwei, 2006). Digital technology can be both a positive or negative influence on youth’s attitudes and behaviors (Walsh, 2000).

One group which has been particularly affected by technology and the media is the generation of children born after 1992 which has been referred to as “The Millennium Generation” or “Millennials” (Tucker, 2006). This group is often identified by their vast array of gadgets, including cell phones, DVD players, modern television, iPods, video games, text messaging, the Internet, instant messaging, e-mail, social networking sites, and sites for photo and video sharing. Raines (2002) identified a number of characteristics which make the “Millennial Generation” different from other generations. For instance, this generation grew up with extremely involved parents, who were especially concerned with child safety and academic achievements (Raines, 2002). Due to high parental involvement, Millennials may be accustomed to being consulted by adults and being included in making decisions.

The Millennial Generation is also considered to be very comfortable in virtual spaces. Many children in the Millennial Generation have grown up immersed in digital technology; consequently, this generation may be comprised of many “technologically savvy” adolescents and teens (Raines, 2002). Youth in the Millennial Generation have also

been considered to be proficient at multi-tasking. A study conducted by The Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) found 30% of young people use multiple mediums at one time. For instance, the youth could be talking on the phone while watching TV or surfing the Web (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Lastly, Millennials are known to be very group-oriented, which may be one of the reasons why these youth prefer social networking sites and highly value being connected through cell phones and the Internet.

Technology offers many exciting possibilities for adolescents to create, connect, and learn from one another; however, the inherent potential for some people to inappropriately use technology for harmful uses also exists. As with many aspects of life, youth need to be careful about appropriate usage and responsibility; proper and improper ways to use technology are going to continue to be present. A challenge for parents, caregivers, and professionals is to eliminate the negative aspects of various technologies while preserving the significant contributions, such as educational benefits and social connection (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Parents and caregivers may have difficulty setting limits and communicating with youth about technology due to their lack of knowledge or experience with the different types of technology. In addition, it is especially difficult to set limits for technology usage when it changes continuously and quickly in significant ways.

In the present day, children view many forms of technology as a “lifeline” to their peer groups. Reports have found children ages eight to 18 are spending more than 50 hours per week with digital media which is more than an average adult’s full work week (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002). Many parents, caregivers, and professionals are concerned with the large amounts of time youth are spending with technology and media. Excessive

quantities of media and technology may lead to negative cognitive, emotional, and physical outcomes for youth (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). Research has found youth who are heavy technology users have lower family communication, fewer hobbies, and engage in fewer extracurricular activities (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). For these reasons, it is especially important for children to establish healthy media and technology habits with help from parents and caregivers. Parents, caregivers, and professionals are also concerned that children and adolescents conduct large amounts of communication through writing in an electronic medium rather than face-to-face or voice-to-voice means, which may be depersonalizing interpersonal communication (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). An important question to address is whether the time youth spend with online communication is coming at the expense of time spent in face-to-face communication. In addition, adolescents' desire for new technologies places a heavier financial burden on the family's income to provide these devices (McQuillen, 2003).

Advances in technology undoubtedly provide wonderful opportunities for enhanced communication, education, and entertainment; however, the potential harm from technology and media exposure also exists, which is a challenge for professionals, teachers, parents, and caregivers to minimize. Since technology and media exposure are a large component of the lives of youth today, it is necessary for parents and caregivers to teach skills and provide good role models for responsible and safe technology and media use.

Many people today have extremely busy and hectic lives, which reduces the amount of family time parents and caregivers may have with their children. A strategy for reaching families with concerns regarding technology is through the use of educational newsletters. Newsletters have become increasingly popular in parent education. They can be utilized in

many different contexts to provide information to increase parents' and caregivers' knowledge and promote healthy parenting practices. Newsletters that are well written and focus on a specific parenting issue can make a difference in the lives of families (Garton, Hicks, Leatherman, Miltenberger, Mulkeen, Nelson-Mitchell, & Winland, 2003; Riley, Meinhardt, Nelson, Salisbury, & Winnett, 1991). Researchers have found empirical evidence that newsletters are an effective tool for providing relevant information to parents in writing at teachable moments (Bogenschneider & Stone, 1997).

Bogenschneider and Stone (1997) found reading materials are a preferred source of parent education information compared to other forms of parent education, such as attending a workshop or class. Hennon and Peterson (1981) also found many parents and caregivers prefer to receive educational materials in written format at home, because it allows parents and caregivers to read the information at their convenience, share it with others, and save it for future reference (Cudabeck & Nelson, 1985; Hennon & Peterson, 1981). A newsletter series can be a useful method to meet the needs of many adults who can not or will not attend parent education classes due to time and distance limitations; for instance, individuals living in rural areas may not have access to parent education classes (Goetting & Pourroy, 1991).

The content for a newsletter series must attract the reader's attention and interest, provide age-appropriate information and activities, be well organized, easy to read, and comprehensible. The newsletters must provide practices which can be implemented and explain the reasons, benefits, and implications of doing so (Reisbeck, 1980). Hughes (1994) provides useful considerations for the development of newsletters. He suggests newsletters should (1) use information grounded in theory and research, (2) fit activities to

the learning objectives, (3) use questions to get participants involved cognitively, (4) test the activities and information on people of the correct age of the intended audience, (5) double-check the readability and use of examples, (6) make it visually appealing, and (7) be sensitive to various cultures.

This paper presents the development of a parenting newsletter series directed at parents and their children age ten to thirteen designed to increase knowledge regarding technology's significant contributions and negative aspects, recognize the importance of parental involvement, and promote communication between parents or caregivers and their children to enhance positive relationships.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter gives an overview of the research on different types of technology which affect parent's and children's lives. First, a key theory is described to explain how interactions between environments affect an individual. Next, the key forms of technology, including cell phones, the Internet, video games, and television will be reviewed. Within each form of technology, social issues, such as cyberbullying, sexting, online safety and socializing, media influences, childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles, and media violence will also be addressed. Then, theories and frameworks pertaining to the use of newsletters for parent education will be reviewed. Finally, the *Tech Savvy Families* parent education newsletter series will be introduced.

Theories and Frameworks Pertaining to the Use of Technology in Families

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory examines child development within the content of systems of relationships that form his or her environment; this theory states child development takes place through interactions between the child and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The interactions that take place are generally extended over long periods of time. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's theory defines each of the complex "layers" of the environment. The first layer is the Microsystem, which may include the family, peer group, religious setting, or school. The Microsystem is generally considered the immediate environment which the child is in. The next level is the Mesosystem. This "layer" includes the linkages between two or more settings. For instance, the relationship between the home and school would occur within the Mesosystem. The next "layer" is the Exosystem, which consists of the linkages and processes which are taking place between two or more settings, where one

setting is not directly involved with the child, but still indirectly influences the immediate setting of the child. An example of relations at the Exosystem level would be the interactions between the home and the parent's workplace or between the parents and the school system (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The final "layer" is the Macrosystem. This "layer" consists of the overarching interactions between the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. Examples of the Macrosystem level include social connections, cultural values, national customs, and economic patterns. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner's theory states a child is affected by the experiences he or she has in these settings. These experiences are called *proximal* or *near-processes*.

This model could be used to observe how one's technology behaviors or attitudes affect the individual, the individual's parents, or the individual's peers. In this context, the child would be at the center of the model. At the Microsystem level, the child is interacting with family and peers. Interactions could take place through face-to-face communication or, as it applies to this paper, through voice-to-voice or online communication. The Mesosystem level consists of the connections between the settings where the child spends his or her time. For example, do the child's parents communicate with the child's peers? At the Exosystem level, other environments where the child does not spend time may be interacting with a place the child does spend time. For example, is the child's parent communicating online with the child's teachers or is the child or his or her parents being affected by mass media? Lastly, the Macrosystem level may include social conditions which the child is involved in. Does the child have access to the Internet to communicate with peers?

Key Forms of Technology Affecting Families

Cell Phones

Adolescents and teenagers today may consider their cell phone a “must have” accessory especially when it is used on a daily basis. Cell phones have been integrated as an important part of many people’s lives. A recent study, conducted in 2008, found 71% of teens have a cell phone (Lenhart, 2009).

Researchers, Wei and Ven-Hwei (2006) have found many reasons for youth to have a cell phone. These researchers chose to classify the reasons into six categories. The first category identified as a reason to have a cell phone was for informational purposes. This included attaining road condition reports, arranging transportation, or finding a social event. The second category identified was for social purposes, such as to relieving boredom, chatting with friends or family members, and providing the pleasure of talking. The third category identified was labeled as affection, which consists of maintaining relationships with family or friends and gaining social support in times of need. Fashion and status was identified as the fourth category. Many youth find that cell phones look fashionable and provide a sense of style. The fifth group identified was mobility, which is basically the ability to use the phone in most locations. Lastly, the sixth group identified was accessibility, since youth find it important to be easily accessible. In addition to the reasons to have a cell phone identified by Wei and Ven-Hwei (2006), Reid and Reid (2007) also found adolescents report finding instant messaging more useful as they are able to talk more freely to members of the opposite gender via text messaging rather than face-to-face or voice-to-voice conversations.

The benefits of cell phones are numerous; however, the potential for problems with cell phones also exist. Problems may include overuse or abuse of cell phone privileges. Research has found the overuse of cell phones can be problematic because it can lead to academic problems, dangerous driving, and sleep disruption, especially for teens who keep their cell phone on throughout the night (Walsh, White, & Young, 2007).

A significant danger also associated with cell phones, which has been occurring more frequently, are teens sharing negative or inappropriate images or videos online, otherwise known as "Sexting" (Baker, 2009). Since many cell phones have both a camera and a video feature, students can take inappropriate pictures of both themselves and others (Baker, 2009). A recent study, "Sex and Tech Behavior," found 20% of teenagers have sent or posted nude or seminude photographs or videos of themselves to people they are in a relationship with or even strangers (Baker, 2009; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008). This fairly new phenomenon is a problematic issue since the teens engaging in sexting are at risk legally and socially for sending illicit information by phone and on the Internet; persons who are found accountable may be prosecuted as sex offenders, which would require registration as a sex offender for life (Baker, 2009). This devastating occurrence may also lead to humiliation among peers, sexual harassment, and possible expulsion from school (Baker, 2009).

The issue of sexting is especially alarming as many teens are unaware of the consequences of their actions once they have hit the "send" button; a text message or e-mail has the ability to be forwarded and shared with an unlimited number of people (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008). How can parents, caregivers, and professionals teach youth to act responsibly and protect themselves?

Parents are encouraged to definitely take a stand on the issue since it is not helpful when parents take the “not my child” attitude; sexting is a reality. Teaching youth positive self worth regarding their bodies may be a valuable component of preventing sexting behaviors. Children who value their bodies may be more likely to behave in respectful ways and resist pressures to display themselves through sexting (Baker, 2009). Talking to youth about the consequences of their actions may also be a valuable lesson. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2008) found that 75% of teens and 71% of young adults reported that “sending sexually suggestive content can have serious negative effects,” yet nude and semi-nude images are still being e-mailed or sent through text messages by 39% of teens and 59% of young adults. It is critical for youth to understand the short- and long-term consequences of their actions regarding sexting.

Numerous negative aspects of cell phones also occur in classrooms. Students using cell phones to cheat on tests has been a recent issue in schools. Many teens have memorized the texting buttons on their cell phone and can easily send a friend or peer the answers to a quiz or test through a text message (Docksai, 2009). Cell phones with the Internet can allow students to search the Web during an exam to access online dictionaries, thesauruses, and encyclopedias. In addition to using cell phones to cheat in school, phones ringing or students’ texting may also pose a distraction to the other students in the classroom (Docksai, 2009).

Lastly, the issue of texting and driving is a negative aspect of cell phone usage. Teen drivers are more likely than adults to crash their vehicle, especially due to inexperience; however, many teens may also have an inflated sense of driving expertise (Beck, Yan, and Wang, 2007). Added disturbances, such as cell phones, can contribute to

higher crash rates. Teens can become so distracted by the cell phone that they often attempt to drive and talk or text at the same time (Beck, Yan, and Wang, 2007). Teens may feel they have the ability to multitask; however, the phone can be a significant distraction to driving. Parents' and caregivers' role-modeling of cell phone use during driving may have an impact on their child's cell phone use while driving.

Setting guidelines and rules for these devices can be difficult for some parents and caregivers as they may not have had experiences with them in their own childhood; therefore, parents and caregivers do not always have a model to reflect on for managing their child's cell phone usage. In addition, cell phones change frequently and quickly in regard to new technologies and services. All this modernization can be helpful; however, the constant revising and updating can make it very difficult for parents and caregivers to keep up with the ever-changing devices.

Research has found that open and regular parent-child communication has been linked to reduced participation in high-risk behaviors (Weisskirch, 2009). Parents and caregivers can encourage appropriate usage while enforcing rules and consequences for inappropriate use. Researchers found parents and caregivers who communicate clear expectations for cell phone use have enhanced parent-child relationships (Weisskirch, 2009). Researchers Hinduja and Patchin (2009c) have suggested parents utilize a "Family Cell Phone Contract" for setting limits and communicating expectations for the family's cell phone usage. The contract may contain expectations for the child's and the parent's cell phone usage, such as financial obligations, who the child is allowed to talk to, where the child is allowed to use the cell phone, what time of day the child can use the cell phone, and what cell phone activities are appropriate or inappropriate, such as hurtful messages,

downloads, and photos (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c). Other expectations may include where the child is allowed to use his or her phone, such as in school or at home, if the child is allowed to keep the phone on at night or required to give it to the parents overnight, and if the information on the cell phone will be restricted to the child or shared with the parents (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c). Parents and caregivers may choose to schedule times with their child to review billing statements and discuss issues, such as minutes used and purchases made (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009c). Cell phones can be a great learning tool to encourage responsibility and teach youth about finances.

Internet

The Internet is integrated into many people's daily activities; people use it to keep in touch with family and friends, do research for school, check out potential colleges, find volunteer opportunities, or find a movie playing at a local theatre. Many children today have access to computers at school and at home, which poses both the benefits of enriched learning and the risks of possible dangers (Behrman & Anderson, 2001). Tynes (2007) identified many reasons for youth to access the Internet, including entertainment, social, and educational purposes. Entertainment purposes online may include playing online games, downloading music or videos, or simply surfing the Web. Social purposes online may include instant messaging, interacting with others in chat rooms, and participating in social networking sites. Lastly, educational purposes for the Internet include researching educational information for school purposes or looking up educational information related to one's interests.

Undeniable benefits of computers and the Internet have been identified, including enhancing the classroom by engaging students, giving teachers a variety of teaching tools

to work with, and providing useful homework support for students while they are at home (Behrman & Anderson, 2001). Computers as a teaching tool in the classroom may be beneficial by enabling students to better understand core concepts, especially in science and mathematics (Behrman & Anderson, 2001).

Outside of the classroom, students are using the Internet to maintain connections with friends and peers. The Internet provides youth opportunities to enhance their social and cognitive development and may benefit youth by relieving social anxiety and reinforcing peer communication (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). The Internet can provide social support from peers through social networking sites, instant messaging, and e-mail (Tynes, 2007). Youth who have difficulty communicating with peers in a face-to-face interaction may find comfort communicating in an electronic medium (Tynes, 2007).

Another benefit of Internet use is for identity exploration through social networking sites. Online communication can compensate for one's poor social skills; therefore, youth may prefer online communication since they are able to talk more freely to peers (Tynes, 2007). Youth are also able to receive valuable social support from friends and family online. Social networking sites are websites which provide a virtual community for people who have similar interests, want to interact with others, and would like to make new friendships or maintain existing friendships (Sheldon, 2008). Social networking sites also allow people, including children, to plan events in their social life, share messages, videos, or photos, participate in interest groups, play online games, and connect with family and friends (Sheldon, 2008). Currently Facebook and MySpace are some of the most popular social networking sites used by adolescents; however, many less well-known social networking sites also exist, including Bebo and Cyworld.

Social networking sites present many benefits, such as relieving social anxiety and enhancing identity exploration. They can assist youth with exploring and defining who they are and connecting with others who are like themselves (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). In fact, social networking sites are widely used to meet new people with similar interests (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). In addition, blogging everyday happenings about one's life and accessorizing one's profile with interests, pictures, and information about themselves can contribute to an adolescent's identity and be exciting for youth. An adolescent's online identity can be very different from their real-world identity; some parts of online identities may even be completely made up (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). Having this alternative identity allows adolescents to try on different characteristics, change their look, and enhance their interests (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). It gives them a sense of who they are, what they believe in, and what their future might be (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a).

The Internet provides many useful benefits to youth and their families; however, it can also present many dangers. One problem is parents' and caregivers' concern with excessive communication with peers coming at the expense of communication with parents or caregivers (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Parents' feelings of loss of parental influence and control may lead to problematic parent-child conflict (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). While online communication can provide positive benefits for youth, too much computer or Internet use can cause loneliness, depression, and decreases in social activities (Behrman & Anderson, 2001).

Excessive Internet use may also put youth at risk for other problems, such as susceptibility to cyberbullies, online predators, invasion of privacy, and identity theft (Mesch, 2009). Youth have a tendency to want to share information with friends and

peers; however, they are not always familiar with how to protect their privacy or their reputation (Youn, 2008). Livingstone (2008) stated that unlike adults, youth have different degrees of openness, different attitudes toward sharing personal information, and a fascination with self-display. They are also more likely to share passwords, have less discretion when choosing who they add as a friend online, and use poor judgment when posting comments or photographs online (Livingstone, 2008). In addition, youth may be uninformed of how to use privacy and safety settings on their Internet e-mails and online accounts (Livingstone, 2008).

Youn (2008) stated that as with many aspects regarding off-line life, parental monitoring and socialization are also important for online behaviors. Parents and caregivers can educate youth on the importance of reducing the risks associated with the Internet. Youn (2008) identified three ways which parental mediation or parental supervision may take place in regards to technology usage. They include discussion regarding Internet content, co-viewing, and rule-making. Discussions may be on topics related to online safety, privacy, cyberbullying, or Internet content. Co-viewing has been found to be significantly related to children's cognitive assessments, since parents are able to promote online learning (Youn, 2008). Co-viewing may also reduce a child's exposure to unintended inappropriate material (Youn, 2008). Lastly, rulemaking may include setting rules and limits for youth on which online behaviors are permitted and which are not (Youn, 2008).

Many parents and caregivers choose to utilize parental controls developed by Microsoft and other computer software companies to monitor their children's internet activities (Beale & Hall, 2007). Relying solely on content filtering software may not

always work for monitoring youth's Internet usage (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008); teens are often very protective and perhaps even secretive about their Internet activities (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Researchers report that some teens may even create multiple profiles or e-mails; some which their parents can have access to, others of which they do not, and still others which they do not even know exist (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to have discussions with their children regarding what behaviors are and are not acceptable on the Internet (Beale & Hall, 2007). Researchers including Beale and Hall (2007) and Hinduja and Patchin (2009b) have suggested that parents and caregivers develop a "Family Online Agreement" for their youth which includes where they can go online, what they can do while online, how much time they can spend online, what to do if they receive messages that make them feel uncomfortable, and what personal information is appropriate to share. These researchers feel a "Family Online Agreement" will help remind children that Internet use is privilege, not a right.

Another idea for monitoring and supervising Internet usage is to place the family's computer or laptop in a centrally located area where parents can easily walk by to monitor or participate in what the child is viewing (Mesch, 2009; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Researchers also recommended removing computers and laptops from children's bedrooms. Research shows 26% of teens go online at home in the privacy of a bedroom (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2005).

Safety is of utmost importance to parents. Research shows children who discuss online communication with their parents behave safer online (Youn, 2008). Parents and

caregivers are encouraged to have discussions regarding who they are talking to and who their “friends” online are. Since children may not be able to clearly distinguish between what is not appropriate to share online and what is, youth should be reminded to assume that everyone has access to their profile, including their parents, teachers, future employers, and even law enforcement (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). Teaching youth to use discretion when posting pictures and online comments may help them think about how the behaviors can affect them in their future, such as reactions of a potential employer to a photo or post (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a).

Parents, caregivers, and professionals can educate youth about people who may be trying to harm them; for instance, predators may look specifically for information or clues regarding who adolescents are, where they hang out, and even where they live (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). For this reason, youth should not add people as friends or share information with anyone unless they know them well in real life (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). Youth may have difficulty thinking about long-term outcomes; therefore, parents and caregivers may need to set limits and rules regarding Internet use and online behaviors. Parents and caregivers need to be clear about what is safe for children to post and what is not safe, who they are allowed to communicate with online, if they are allowed to meet people in person whom they have met online, and what information they are allowed to share with others (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

For some, when hearing the word “bullying,” one might imagine school hallways, bus stops, or the playground; all settings related to school; however, in society today bullying can occur in many other settings, including online virtual worlds. One major concern with computer and Internet use is the prevalence of youth bullying online.

Bullying is a problem worldwide, especially in North America; however, now bullying has taken a modern twist. Cyberbullying, which is also referred to as electronic or online bullying, has been defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted on another using forms of technology, such as e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, Web sites, or text messaging (Beale & Hall, 2007; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Mesch, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Cyberbullies engage in cruel and harmful practices that demean, embarrass, and hurt their peers, leading to an increasingly challenging issue for parents and school personnel (Beale & Hall, 2007). Often cyberbullying includes acts of aggression; the bully may make threatening comments, spread rumors, post embarrassing or offensive clips or photos, forward confidential e-mails, encourage others to gang up on the victim, or even set up derogatory web sites (Campbell, 2005).

A study conducted by Juvonen and Gross (2008) found nearly 72% of the youth in the study were affected by cyberbullying. The study found insults and name-calling were the most prevalent forms of online bullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Researchers found both girls and boys have been targeted by online bullies (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Unfortunately both traditional bullying and cyberbullying can be stressful and harmful for victims; however some research suggests cyberbullying can be more serious than traditional bullying because students are unable to escape from it (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). For instance, in the past students who were bullied at school could at least seek safety in their homes; unfortunately now cyberbullying can even occur within people's homes (Beale & Hall, 2007). The individual may be victimized anywhere and at any time through forms of technology; a bully may be tormenting a student online in his or her home, while the parents are in the next room (Beale & Hall, 2007). Being bullied virtually

anywhere may lead to the victim feeling there is no safe place or escape from being victimized (Campbell, 2005).

In the virtual world cyberbullies often think they will remain anonymous or there is only a slim chance of the misbehavior being detected by an adult (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Mischa, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). This sense of being anonymous may lead bullies to say harmful things to the victim which they would be less likely to say in a face-to-face situation (Beale & Hall, 2007; Kowalski & Limber, 2007). In order to reduce these feelings of anonymity, youth should be advised that nothing is ever really private online and they never know who is looking at what they post or write (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009a). Another issue with online bullying occurs if a student is accused of cyberbullying, but blames someone else for using his or her screen name to avoid the penalty and thus may not be held accountable for his or her actions (Beale & Hall, 2007). For this reason, it is especially important that youth know to never share passwords, not even with best friends, boyfriends, or girlfriends. When private passwords are shared, people can log on, pretend to be the user, then “trash” the user’s identity or someone else’s identity (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Electronic bullying can be especially harmful since messages can be distributed quickly and to a large audience.

Similar to traditional bullying, cyberbullying seems to increase through the elementary school years, peaks during the middle school years, and then declines during the high school years (Beale & Hall, 2007). All students are potential victims; however, certain students may be at higher risk for being bullied than others. Beale and Hall (2007) identified several risk factors which make youth more susceptible for being a victim of cyberbullying, including those who are considered overweight, small in size, learning

disabled or overly sensitive. Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) also identified heavy Internet use, disclosing personal information to strangers, and accessing chat rooms as additional risk factors. One difference from traditional bullying is the gender which is more likely to be involved; traditional bullies at school tend to be male; however online bullying is more common with females (Beale & Hall, 2007). Lastly, those who are doing the bullying tend to have poor parent-child relationships, difficulties with substance use, and delinquency problems (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

Cyberbullying has many negative long- and short-term consequences (Campbell, 2005; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Victims may experience increased daily levels of anxiety, emotional distress, and depression (Campbell, 2005; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Daily anxiety may occur from the victim not being aware of who the bully is, especially when the bully has been able to remain anonymous. Being a victim of cyberbullying may also lead to higher absenteeism from school and lower academic performance (Campbell, 2005).

Cyberbullying is an issue which needs to be addressed by administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and students. Schools first need to assess the level of electronic bullying which is occurring in their school (Beale & Hall, 2007). This can be accomplished by focus groups, class meetings, and surveys sent to teachers, parents and students (Beale & Hall, 2007). The school board should have in place an anti-bullying policy which includes policies on harassment conducted using forms of technology (Beale & Hall, 2007). Within the school system, professionals who work specifically with Internet use could be invited to the school to speak to parents and students on proper Internet use and responsibility (Beale & Hall, 2007). Professional development seminars for teachers and school professionals could include the issue of cyberbullying (Beale &

Hall, 2007). Lastly, the school climate should be one which the students feel comfortable and encouraged to report any type of cyberbullying to a trusted adult (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Bullying used to be thought of as a “normal childhood right of passage,” but awareness of the severe consequences has led to more concern about the victims of bullying (Campbell, 2005). Researchers have identified several aspects which act as protective factors against youth being cyberbullied (Campbell, 2005; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Children whose parents have rules regarding Internet usage and monitor the Web sites their child visits are less likely to be bullied online. For this reason, parents’ and caregivers’ central focus should be to monitor their child’s computer use, the amount of time their child spends on the computer, and the types of activities the child is engaging in online (Beale & Hall, 2007; Behrman & Anderson, 2001; Hinduja & Patchin, 2006).

One research study conducted by Juvonen and Gross in 2008 found 90% of youth reported *not* telling adults about cyberbullying incidents. Students affected by cyberbullying are often reluctant to disclose the situation to their parents due to fear of losing Internet privileges; children in the digital age see the Internet or their cell phone as a “life-line” to their peer group (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). For this reason if a child does disclose an issue with bullying, parents are encouraged to listen to the child’s concerns, remain calm, and talk to their children about the situation, rather than restrict the child’s cell phone or Internet privileges (Beale & Hall, 2007; Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to regularly discuss with their child to seek help from a parent or trusted adult in the event of bullying, traditional or online, rather than attempt to handle the situation by themselves or suffer in silence (Beale & Hall, 2007). Creating a home climate where youth feel encouraged and comfortable with reporting

cyberbullying is also necessary (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). Since children may be reluctant to tell a trusted adult about the bullying situation, parents, caregivers, or teachers should be aware of changes in the child's behavior, such as becoming withdrawn or obsessive with an electronic communication form (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

Parents are encouraged to seek education on the topic of cyberbullying to be able to engage in conversations with their children (Beale & Hall, 2007). It may be advantageous for parents to learn some of the language associated with online forms of communication. Some examples include "PIR" (Parent in Room), "NOYB" (None of Your Business), and "POS" (Parents over Shoulder). To prevent further cyberbullying reporting negative messages to parents or teachers is crucial. Lastly, youth should be encouraged to not pass along negative messages to others, rather simply delete them, and respect others' rights and feelings in cyberspace; being bullied doesn't make it right to bully back (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006).

Many people believe electronic communication forms are the cause of cyberbullying; however, they are not the cause of the problem, but considered as a tool youth utilize to communicate in both positive and negative ways (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007). While it is important to be aware of the negative consequences of online communication, it is also important to keep in mind the positive aspects, such as enhancing communication with family, friends, and peers, exploring one's identity, building interpersonal skills, and gaining educational benefits through academic support and expansive access to knowledge.

Video Games

Due to new technology and advances in gaming, youth are now spending more time playing video games than watching television (Anderson, 2004). Researchers have found 92% of children and adolescents between the ages of two and seventeen play video games (National Institute on Media and the Family, 2001). Video games are in 80% of children's homes in the United States (Anderson, 2004). They can be played on several different types of technologies including computers, home consoles with TV sets, arcade machines, hand-held devices, and cell phones (Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001).

Video games can benefit youth by involving them in technology which opens up opportunities for high-paying technology-related careers (Anderson, 2004). Video games have also been referred to as the "training wheels" for computer literacy; they may improve skills, such as spatial visualization and visual attention (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2000). Lastly, video games may benefit youth by giving them practice in following directions and problem solving (Subrahmanyam et al., 2000).

One concern recognized by many researchers is the negative impact on children and adolescents from viewing violent behavior in video games and in the media. The American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that by age 18, the average child will have witnessed nearly 100,000 acts of violence (Earles, Alexander, Johnson, Liverpool, & McGhee, 2002). A detrimental effect of excessive observations of violent behavior is that children who observe violence are more likely to show aggressive behaviors (Earles et al., 2002).

The violent content of video games is particularly of concern because playing a video game is a participatory action, while television viewing is passive; therefore,

professionals are concerned that risk of violence exposure may be greater for youth playing video games (Anderson, 2004). Exposure to violence in games leads to increases in physiological arousal, leading to increased feelings of anger or hostility and increases in physical aggression, such as hitting or kicking (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth, & Wartella, 2003). A study conducted by Lynch (2001) found that youth who play violent video games are 10 times more likely to be involved in fights than other “non-aggressive” adolescents who do not play video games. Playing violent video games has been found to significantly decrease prosocial helping behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Earles et al., 2002). Professionals are also concerned because video gaming is an activity that children often do alone; therefore, they are not developing any social skills while engaging in this activity (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002).

Human beings begin imitating each other at a very young age; therefore, theoretically children can be expected to learn from whomever they observe, including parents, siblings, peers, and media characters (including celebrities, actors, actresses, animated characters, musicians, etc.) (Anderson et al., 2003). Not all youth react to media violence similarly; individual differences may be a result of personality, gender, family, and community differences (Earles et al., 2002). Researchers have identified many reasons why media violence may be attractive for youth. Media violence may be portrayed as a “quick fix” to a problem, generally carried out by the hero in the show or game (Earles et al., 2002,). In addition, the character performing the violent act may not be punished or receive consequences for his or her actions and may even receive a reward for the violence, which can lead to children accepting violence as an effective way to accomplish goals and

a natural part of life (Anderson et al., 2003). Many youth find violence exciting and arousing; it increases heart rate and physiological arousal (Anderson et al., 2003). According to Anderson et al. (2003) scenes which are highly vivid and have attractive movements, sounds, and colors are especially eye-catching to youth. Video gaming has also been considered to affect academic performance because it may interfere with how well children complete their homework (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2002).

Some gender differences have been found in regards to the use of video games by youth. Boys have been found to spend twice as much time playing video games than girls (Anderson, 2004). According to a Michigan State survey, males tend to prefer action-oriented video games, which often include shooting, fighting, sports, action adventures, fantasy role playing, and strategy, whereas females tend to prefer classic board games, trivia quizzes, puzzles, and arcade-like games (Anderson, 2004).

Violence in the media is problematic because it conveys the idea that hurting or killing others is fun and normal or that the world is a scary and dangerous place (Walsh, 2000). Parents' and caregivers' role is to monitor media violence and help children distinguish between real-life and make-believe. Many children are unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality; they may be drawn to weapons and fighting, rather than the underlying concept of war (Walsh, 2000). For this reason, parents and caregivers are encouraged to discuss with their children that real violence hurts people and that in real-life situations the perpetrator is often punished for his or her actions. Explaining the difference between reality and fantasy may encourage children to play non-aggressively since someone may get hurt accidentally.

Parents and caregivers are also encouraged to communicate their values regarding media violence to their children. Research found when parents speak negatively about violent acts or behavior, children place less importance on viewing the violent program and have less aggressive attitudes (Anderson et al., 2003; Nathanson, 1999). Values can be discussed in the event of viewing a violent act with a child while the parent and child are co-viewing television or playing a video game together.

Parental rule setting regarding children's television viewing and video games usage has also been associated with less youth aggression (Comer, Furr, Beidas, Babyar, & Kendall, 2008; Nathanson, 1999). For this reason, parents are encouraged to monitor the content of television shows, news, movies, and video games which their children are viewing. To assist in monitoring violence in video games the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has developed a rating system. This rating system can be helpful for parents and caregivers; however, ratings may not always match parents' or caregivers' expectations; therefore, it is important for parents and caregivers to supervise their children when playing a game for the first time. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to limit their children's screen time, including television, movies, computer, and video games, to no more than two hours per day. Lastly, parents and caregivers should keep all violent video games out of homes with young children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001)

Television

It is estimated that an American youth born in the "television generation" will spend the equivalent of seven years of his or her life watching television (Biocca, 2000). Ninety-eight percent of households have a television set and two thirds of American youth between the ages of eight and 18 years have a television set in the bedroom (Comer et al.,

2008). These researchers also found children report on average about two hours of daily television use and one hour of Internet use, with media use increasing with age (Comer et al., 2008). Another study found kids and teens spend approximately four hours a day in front of television screens and almost two additional hours on the computer, outside of schoolwork, and playing video games (Brown & Cantor, 2000). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under two years old not watch any television and those older than two years watch no more than one to two hours a day of quality programming (Earles et al., 2002). Since brain development is critical during the first two years of life, television and movies should not be a distraction and get in the way of activities which promote healthy physical and social development, such as exploring, playing, and interacting with people (Gentile & Walsh, 2002).

Television in moderation can be beneficial. Some programs can be very entertaining and educational; television shows directed at preschoolers encourage children to learn the alphabet, nature shows can teach grade school children about wildlife, and parents watch the evening news to keep up with current events. Also media can be used as a tool to discuss acceptable and unacceptable forms of behavior (Earles et al., 2002).

While there are benefits, television can have negative effects. Screens can be a powerful influence in children's lives (Walsh, 2000). Children imitate naturally, but are especially likely to imitate when the person they are imitating is an admired character or celebrity from a television show (Walsh, 2000). Electronic media can provide youth with many poor examples of inappropriate behaviors. These negative impacts from media have various disadvantages, such as increases in violent behaviors from viewing media violence, messages regarding sexuality, influences on body image, exposure to risky behaviors,

gender stereotyping, influences on health and well-being, and exposure to advertising and marketing pressures (Brown & Cantor, 2000).

Media violence has received large amounts of attention in research. A detrimental effect of excessive television viewing is that children who observe violence are more likely to show aggressive behavior (Brown & Cantor, 2000). As stated in regards to video game violence, excessive viewing of television violence may also result in children who become desensitized to violence and adopt violent attitudes and behaviors (Brown & Cantor, 2000). In addition to children developing more aggressive behaviors from viewing violent acts, news coverage of traumatic events can also cause children to become frightened by violent images leading to behavior problems, nightmares, and difficulty sleeping (Comer et al., 2008; Nathanson, 1999). Researchers found parental limits and rule-setting in regards to television viewing is associated with less youth aggression (Comer et al., 2008).

Researchers Brown and Cantor (2000) reported a large portion of sexual education comes from media exposure. Unfortunately information on sexuality from the media may not be accurately portrayed or appropriate for youth. For instance, television shows and movies may portray teenagers having sex with minimal or few consequences (Earles et al., 2002). Many young males and females also receive media messages and feel pressure at a very young age to have an "ideal" body (Brown & Cantor, 2000). Insecurity regarding physical appearances may occur from unrealistic images of bodies and viewing air-brushed models in the media (Brown & Cantor 2000).

Media may also influence risky behavior among youth. The media shows many of children's favorite characters or celebrities participating in risky behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and engaging in unprotected sex (Earles et al., 2002).

These risky behaviors may be depicted as cool, fun, and exciting; unfortunately television shows rarely displays any of the negative consequences of these risky behaviors.

Lastly, media can have a large impact on the health, well-being, and eating behaviors of youth. Children and adolescents who spend excessive amounts of time watching television are more likely to be overweight (Ebbeling, Pawlak, & Ludwig, 2002; Escobar-Chaves, Markham, Addy, Greisinger, Murray, & Brehm, 2010). Childhood obesity, which is a serious medical condition that affects children and adolescents, is often a result of unhealthy eating patterns and too little physical activity (Ebbeling et al., 2002; Straus, 2002). Increasing popularity and use of computers, video games, and television contributes to children today becoming increasingly less active (Ebbeling et al., 2002). The amount of time children spend in sedentary activities takes away from the time they could be spending engaged in physical activity (Ebbeling et al., 2002). Many other factors also contribute to childhood obesity, including genetic, biological, behavioral, and cultural factors (Ebbeling et al., 2002; Straus, 2002). The rising rates of childhood obesity have been a significant health challenge for parents, caregivers, and professionals.

Eating behaviors and physical activity habits are developed in early childhood; therefore, it is necessary to develop *healthy* eating and physical activity habits as early as possible. There are many long- and short-term risks and complications associated with childhood obesity, including increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes, breathing difficulties or asthma, sleeping difficulties, obesity in adulthood, emotional difficulties, social discrimination, and lower self esteem or negative self images (Ebbeling et al., 2002).

Several methods can be utilized to enhance children's television experiences and provide alternatives to watching television. Screen time not only displaces physical activity, but also increases energy intake. Children are more likely to consume excessive amounts of energy-dense foods while watching television (Ebbeling et al., 2002). The consumption of energy-dense foods is related to the food advertisements children are exposed to while watching television (Ebbeling et al., 2002). For this reason, parents are encouraged to limit the number of hours their children spend watching television and limit sedentary time whenever possible (Ebbeling et al., 2002). In addition, recording programs to avoid having to watch commercials can be beneficial.

Media messages teach both positive and negative messages that shape children's attitudes and behaviors (Walsh, 2000). Parental participation and involvement is necessary to protect youth from the negative effects of media and to promote healthy outcomes. Media use is less easily controlled and more difficult for parents and caregivers to censor; however it is still imperative for parents and caregivers to incorporate family values into media exposure (Austin, 1993). Media can be used as a tool to discuss acceptable and unacceptable behaviors (Austin, 1993). Due to the various negative effects of excessive media exposure, parents and caregivers are encouraged to minimize or eliminate negative media exposure, especially violent shows.

In addition to limiting or reducing media exposure to children, parents and caregivers are also encouraged to provide plenty of non-screen entertainment, such as books, puzzles, toys, and board games. Television should be used as an occasional entertainment, rather than a constant "babysitter" or escape. The television should be removed from children's bedrooms and turned off during family meal time and while

children are doing homework (Ebbeling et al., 2002). Researchers, Jackson, Brown, and Pardun (2008) found that adolescents who have televisions in their bedrooms spend more time watching television than those without televisions in their bedrooms. The adolescents were also exposed to larger amounts of television programming with mature adult content and R-rated movies (Jackson et al., 2008). In addition to keeping children's bedrooms "media free," parents and caregivers are encouraged to promote their families to watch public television stations or quality programming (Walsh, 2000).

Theories and Frameworks Pertaining to the Use of Newsletters for Parent Education

William Doherty (1995) authored an article in which he proposed a practical conceptual model for professionals who practice parent and family education. The model is titled, "Levels of Family Involvement Model." This model describes five levels of involvement with families as educators from a minimal acknowledgement of the importance of families (Level 1) to a therapeutic intervention with families (Level 5). A newsletter series not included with a parent education workshop or class would be classified somewhere between Level 1 and Level 3 of the family involvement scale. The basic categories of involvement in this model are as follows, (1) Level 1, minimal emphasis on the family, (2) Level 2, information and advice without discussion between the parent and educator, (3) Level 3, feelings and support, including listening empathically, discussing family life stressors, (4) Level 4, brief focused intervention, working with families with specific assessed needs, and (5) Level 5, family therapy (Doherty, 1995).

This model provides a conceptual framework to understand different approaches to educating parents and caregivers. The *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series would be considered a Level 2 involvement since educators are communicating information and

advice through the use of parent education newsletters; however, little if any discussion is taking place between the parent and the educator. To increase the level of involvement between an educator and a parent the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series could be utilized in a family therapy setting or parent education class with thorough discussion between the educator and the parent.

Key Elements of Parenting Newsletters

Parental involvement is an important factor for helping youth grow to be wise users of technology. In order for parents and caregivers to have quality involvement in their children's technological lives, it is necessary for them to have knowledge and information to understand what their children are experiencing. Time and distance may prevent parents' and caregivers' from participating in useful programs which can increase their knowledge on topics relevant to what their children are currently experiencing, such as technology (Garton et al., 2003). One educational tool that has become increasingly popular in parent education is the use of parenting newsletters.

A newsletter series can supply support in many different ways. The purpose of many newsletters is to increase parents' or caregivers' knowledge of a relevant topic, give parents or caregivers confidence to discuss significant issues with their child, and promote healthy parenting practices through practical applications. Newsletters can help parents connect what they already know about a topic to new additional resources. This effective parent education tool is often targeted at a particular population group, such as parents or caregivers with children of a certain age.

Many parents have little or no experience from their own childhood with the various aspects of technology; therefore, parents and caregivers need information and

knowledge to help them understand what their child is experiencing and how to communicate effectively with them. The more knowledge parents and caregivers have on technology, the more likely they will be able to assist in educating their child on safe and responsible usage of technology, leading to better outcomes for the child. Also, for parents and caregivers with young children who may not be currently experiencing an impact from various electronic devices, the newsletters can be kept and referred to when needed. They may also be shared with friends and family members who are in need of the information.

CHAPTER 3. NEWSLETTER DEVELOPMENT

The steady increase, adoption, and widespread use of various technologies have made significant impacts on people's lives, including children. Digital technology has both positive and negative impacts on children's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. The primary challenge of parents and caregivers is to eliminate the negative aspects of various technologies, while preserving the significant contributions. This section of the paper describes the development of a newsletter series designed to enhance parents', caregivers', and children's' knowledge on aspects of technology.

Newsletter Development

This project includes the development of a newsletter series which includes information directed at children age ten to thirteen and their parents. Many researchers have found newsletters to be an increasingly useful tool in parent education. Several researchers have identified numerous factors that increase the effectiveness of newsletters; these factors have been taken into consideration throughout the development of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series.

The first factor noted by Reisbeck (1980) was the importance of developmentally appropriate material. Reisbeck (1980) also recommended information provided must be factual and pertinent to the needs of the reader. Each issue of the newsletter series will consist of information targeted at parents to enhance their knowledge on the various aspects of technology. Definitions and explanations will be provided. Information presented in the newsletter will highlight the positive aspects of the specific form of technology addressed, the negative impacts or outcomes of the specific form of technology, and ideas and suggestions for positive parental involvement. By calling attention to the

negative influences of technology and media on youth, parents, caregivers, and professionals can work on preserving the positive aspects of technology while reducing harmful impacts. The goal of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series is to enhance parents' and caregivers' knowledge of technology, promote parental monitoring, and encourage parental discussions.

The second factor noted by researchers is the importance of receiving information at "teachable moments" (Bogenschneider & Stone, 1997; Riley et al., 1991). The targeted audience of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series is children age ten to thirteen and their parents. The adolescence period can often be referred to as a time of "storm and stress" (Freud, 1958; Henricson & Roker, 2000). For this reason, many parents or caregivers benefit from help in understanding what influences their child is impacted by, such as technology and media influences. In addition to providing basic information and knowledge regarding technology, the newsletter series may also help families benefit from improved communication. Riley et al. (1991) found parents reported improved parenting practices, increased parental confidence, and decreased parental worry as a result of receiving monthly newsletters. Parents reported finding newsletters issued regularly were especially effective (Reisbeck, 1980). The *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series will include nine issues; this design will allow for one issue to be distributed each month of the school-year.

A third factor influencing the effectiveness of newsletters is the specific design of the material. Information presented in the form of newsletters is especially effective when it is easily accessible, appealing, and in an attractive format (Cudabeck & Nelson, 1985). The information provided in the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletters will be research-based,

educational, easy-to-read, visually appealing, and consistent in format with each issue. Also, in order to ensure quality, the newsletter series will be professionally peer-reviewed and professionally designed prior to final printing and distribution.

This series of nine publications contains research-based information designed to educate children, parents, and caregivers on the positive and negative aspects of various types of technology and issues specifically related to each form of technology. They have been developed to provide developmentally appropriate information for the target age group using professionally designed materials that will be distributed on a monthly basis throughout the school year.

Newsletter Recipients

This newsletter series is intended for distribution in the Fargo-West Fargo School Districts, the Moorhead School Districts, and Early Childhood Family Education, Moorhead, MN during the 2010-2011 school year. Distribution of educational materials through school systems may assist in strengthening the partnership between the school and the parents or caregivers (Garton et al., 2003). In addition to distribution from these avenues, the “Newsletter for Parents” and the “Newsletter for Young People” will also be made available online through the NDSU Extension Service website and the “eXtension” site. The newsletter for young people could also be distributed to students through the school with the link to the online newsletters for parents at the bottom of each issue.

Newsletter Design and Content

The newsletter design will include a professionally developed header which will appear consistently on each issue. The title that has been selected is *Tech Savvy Families*. The newsletters will include several domains related to technology. Each issue will

highlight one specific form of technology. The issue will address the positive aspects of the specific form of technology, the negative impacts or outcomes of the specific form of technology, and ideas and suggestions for positive parental involvement utilizing supporting articles based on current research, but written with parents and caregivers in mind. Each issue will have research-based information for the parents and caregivers, with headings to attract attention and encourage easy-reading. The newsletter directed at the youth will feature information and activities designed for youth age ten to thirteen. The suggested activities may provide parents, caregivers, and their children with opportunities to spend time positively interacting and discussing pertinent issues together. References for the information used in the newsletters are included at the bottom of each issue. The issues addressed in each newsletter are as follows.

Key Objectives of the *Tech Savvy Families* Newsletter Series Issues

Issue One: *Parenting in the Digital Age.* This issue introduces the idea of parenting children who are influenced by modern technology and the media.

Issue Two: *Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely.* Cell phone usage is the topic of this issue of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series. The use of cell phones for positive uses is encouraged and negative effects of cell phones are addressed. Setting clear expectations for children's cell phone usage is encouraged.

Issue Three: *Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online.* This issue explains some of the specific reasons why youth find the Internet valuable and an important part of their daily lives. Advantages as well as the disadvantages are identified. Parental mediation is promoted in regards to discussion, co-viewing, and rulemaking.

Issue Four: Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the topic of the fourth *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series. This issue informs parents and caregivers of this fairly new phenomenon, specifically in regards to the risk factors and consequences of bullying. Ideas are presented to help parents and caregivers prevent cyberbullying from affecting their child.

Issue Five: Media Influences. Influences which may result from media exposure are addressed. Suggestions are offered to promote teaching positive messages and reducing or eliminating the negative messages from media. This issue highlights the significance of parent-child communication.

Issue Six: Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online. This issue introduces the topic of social networking sites. It concentrates on how youth utilize social networking sites in both positive and negative ways. It also promotes ideas for encouraging children to be safe online.

Issue Seven: Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles. Children today are influenced by unhealthy eating patterns and increasingly less active lifestyles. This issue of the newsletter series discusses the implications of unhealthy lifestyles and offers recommendations for parents and caregivers to promote healthier lifestyles.

Issue Eight: Media Violence. Media violence is evident in many forms of technology. This issue encourages parents and caregivers to discuss with children how to distinguish between real-life violence and make-believe violence in the media. Reducing children's viewing of media violence is also promoted.

Issue Nine: *Healthy Technology Habits*. The last issue of the series provides an overview of each form of technology included in the newsletter series. Ideas for setting limits, positive uses, and fun and creative practical applications are discussed.

Each of these issues will thus focus on a central topic with supporting articles, ideas, and activities. These topics relate to themes of parental involvement and are also linked to important aspects of child and adolescent development. The format of a nine-series newsletter was chosen because it allows for the newsletter series to be distributed during the school year months. It is anticipated that other important topics could be added to the newsletter series in the future. Such topics could include using technology to improve communication with children who have disabilities, driving high-tech vehicles, using online visual communication, such as Skype, online educational classes, and technology in the classrooms, such as SMART boards. This newsletter series tried to maintain a focus on aspects of technology which are currently relevant to families.

Newsletter Review

One Extension Specialist, one graduate student, and one North Dakota State University Associate Professor reviewed the newsletter series to make recommendations and revisions. It is also planned that Extension Specialists and Agents from other various counties and states will review and approve the newsletter series prior to final editing and graphic designing. Recommendations made by these persons upon review will be incorporated and revisions will be made before the newsletter is considered for distribution. This review process will enhance the quality of information provided to families.

Newsletter Evaluation

Effective parenting newsletters should reassure the reader, provide useful information, and are timely according to the child's age and stage of development (Martin & Weigel, 2001). The newsletter format for the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series meets these criteria. The series is geared at a specific audience: children age ten to thirteen and their parents or caregivers. The information and activities presented in the newsletters are age-specific and the topics provide educational information intended to be valuable and useful. The content is designed to be appealing, understandable, and applicable to a wide range of educational levels.

The newsletter format is intended to be an effective parent education tool. In order to determine if this newsletter series fulfills these criteria and is meeting the needs of the targeted audience, an evaluation could be conducted. The evaluation piece, shown in Appendix 10, would determine how the newsletters are being utilized and the results and impacts of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series on those parents and caregivers who are utilizing the newsletters. Dimensions of the planned evaluation tool will include the following.

***Tech Savvy Families* Newsletter Series Evaluation Components**

Characteristics of the Population Using the Newsletters. Determining who is using the newsletters and the characteristics of those reading the newsletter series can be useful. Hennon and Peterson (1981) found parents preferred receiving written materials. Researchers have also reported that newsletters were read by others, including a spouse or partner, grandparent, relative, or friend (Cudabeck & Nelson, 1985; Riley et al., 1991). Information regarding the person reading the newsletter, such as age, gender, education

level, family status, employment status, and other characteristics are included in the evaluation tool.

Usage of the Newsletter. Understanding how the newsletter is being used will be another piece of information included in the evaluation tool. This component of the evaluation will include questions regarding how many of the issues are read, how much of each issue is read, what is done with the newsletter after reading, and also if the newsletter is shared with others.

Usefulness of the Newsletter. Studies have suggested newsletters are considered a useful source of parenting information when compared to other sources (Riley et al., 1991). The evaluation tool includes questions on what other sources of information and education the parent or caregiver also utilizes, such as talking to parents, relatives, physicians, reading books, or utilizing parent education. Determining what other educational sources of information parents utilize can help the researcher determine how useful the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series is compared to other sources of information.

Impacts of the Newsletter. The goal of the development of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series was to enhance knowledge on the variety of influences technology has on families and encourage parental involvement and monitoring. The evaluation tool includes questions that allow an understanding of how the newsletter series has impacted families who are reading them and if the newsletter series was found to be helpful.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS: OVERVIEW OF THE *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES*

NEWSLETTER SERIES

This section provides a brief, general overview of the newsletter series for parents, caregivers, and children. It also furnishes a conceptual outline of each specific newsletter in the newsletter series. The actual content of each newsletter is included in Appendices 1 through 9.

General Overview of the Newsletter Series

The nine-issue newsletter series is planned to be distributed for the 2010-2011 school year to Fargo-West Fargo School Districts, the Moorhead School District, and Early Childhood Family Education, Moorhead, MN. These avenues will help the newsletter to reach its intended audience.

Conceptual Outline of the Newsletters

Issue One: Parenting in the Digital Age.

Concepts. This issue highlights how families and generations are different from the past and how they are affected by new trends in technology and interactive media

Objectives. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to recognize their family's technology and media habits. Knowledge regarding media and technology can help parents and caregivers monitor and encourage responsible usage and establish limits and consequences for inappropriate usage. An activity for youth is provided to familiarize children with words associated with technology and media. Parents and caregivers can use these words as a "springboard" to begin discussions with their child.

Issue Two: *Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely.*

Concepts. This issue discusses reasons reported by youth to have a cell phone. It reviews the positive effects and benefits of having a cell phone; the issue also reviews the various negative effects of having a cell phone. Knowledge of the negative impacts of cell phones can enhance parents' and caregivers' awareness of current issues and help parents set clear expectations for cell phone usage. Lastly, the issue discusses how modern technology, such as cell phones can be used as a communication tool for parents and caregivers.

Objectives. Many modern forms of technology are being introduced to parents and children at the same time; therefore, parents may not have a model from previous experiences to reflect on for setting guidelines for their child's cell phone use. This issue offers a variety of ways for parents to set guidelines, enhance parental involvement, and communicate clear expectations to their child. Tips addressed specifically with the child in mind can increase the reader's awareness of safety issues regarding cell phones. Lastly, the "Family Cell Phone Contract" is encouraged to help parents and children work together on developing a set of expectations for the entire family's cell phone use.

Issue Three: *Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online.*

Concepts. The issue reviews reasons why youth are particularly attracted to and affected by the Internet. This newsletter addresses the import role Internet plays in the lives of youth. The negative impacts of online behaviors are also included to enhance parents' and caregivers' understanding of the Internet. Lastly, suggestions for parental involvement for online behaviors are recommended. Specific information is provided for youth regarding safety online.

Objectives. This issue is designed to help parents recognize the importance of parental mediation with their child's online behaviors. It introduces three key concepts of parental mediation, including discussion, co-viewing, and rulemaking to encourage parental involvement. An activity for youth is provided to familiarize children with words associated with the Internet. Parents and caregivers can use these words as a "springboard" to begin or continue discussions with their child.

Issue Four: *Cyberbullying.*

Concepts. This issue introduces the topic of cyberbullying to parents, caregivers, and children. Key definitions, risk factors, and consequences of cyberbullying are addressed. Cyberbullying and traditional bullying are also contrasted to enhance parents' and caregivers' knowledge on the difference between the two forms of bullying. The issue also provides youth with ideas for preventing or avoiding situations associated with cyberbullying.

Objectives. This issue of the newsletter includes a number of practical suggestions for parents and caregivers to be involved in their child's risk of being victimized by a cyberbully. The issue offers advice to parents and caregivers for discussing with their child the topic of cyberbullying. An activity for youth is provided to familiarize children with words associated with the cyberbullying. Parents and caregivers can use these words as a "springboard" to begin discussions with their child. An activity is also provided to encourage youth to think critically about cyberbullying.

Issue Five: *Media Influences.*

Concepts. This issue addresses various media influences youth may encounter through technology to enhance parents' and caregivers' knowledge. Ideas and suggestions are presented to minimize the negative effects of media on children.

Objectives. This issue is designed to help parents and caregivers recognize and enhance their knowledge of media's influences on children. Parental participation is persuaded to buffer negative effects from the media and promote healthy outcomes. An activity is provided to encourage youth to think critically about advertisements. These open-ended questions can facilitate positive discussions between parents and children about healthy media choices. An activity is also provided to encourage creative uses of the media.

Issue Six: *Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online.*

Concepts. This issue introduces the topic of social networking sites. The reasons why youth highly value social networking sites is addressed. The issue focuses on how youth utilize social networking sites in both positive and negative ways. Suggestions are offered for parents and caregivers to set limits on children's online interactions and promote online safety.

Objectives. Parents and caregivers highly value their children's safety; therefore, this issue promotes the idea of positive parent-child communication, setting clear limits, and establishing guidelines for youth regarding online safety and privacy. An activity for youth is provided to familiarize children and parents with words associated with the social networking sites. Parents and caregivers can use these words to begin discussions with their children regarding social networking behaviors.

Issue Seven: *Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles.*

Concepts. Unhealthy eating patterns and inactive lifestyles can have both short- and long-term influences on children. This issue discusses the implications of unhealthy lifestyles, including poor eating behaviors and small amounts physical activity. Lastly, the issue addresses ways to overcome barriers which affect achieving a healthy lifestyle.

Objectives. This issue offers recommendations for parents and caregivers to promote healthier lifestyles. Ideas of activities which families can participate in together are provided; an activity is also included to motivate the youth to think about physical activities which they can do on their own or with friends. Lastly, some healthy snack ideas are provided to promote healthy eating behaviors.

Issue Eight: *Media Violence.*

Concepts. Media violence is apparent in many forms of technology. This issue introduces the topic of media violence. The messages which children receive from media and the detrimental effects of violence are addressed.

Objectives. This issue encourages parents and caregivers to discuss with children how to distinguish between real-life violence and make-believe violence in the media. It also promotes the idea of limiting and removing media violence from homes with children. Discussion questions are presented to encourage parent-child discussions. Lastly, the activities designed for the youth encourage critical thinking about the characters they prefer and encourage children to adopt a non-violent attitude.

Issue Nine: *Healthy Technology Habits.*

Concepts. The last issue overviews the forms of technology addressed in the previous issues. Ideas for setting limits, positive uses, and creative applications are

discussed for cell phones, television, video game, and Internet usage within the family.

Objectives. This issue is designed to remind parents and caregivers that technology can have many positive and entertaining uses. Often the negative effects of technology are highlighted more often than the positive aspects. Encouraging parent involvement and family time is a theme in this last issue of the newsletter series.

Summary

The issues outlined in this section comprise the content of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series for parents and children. Each newsletter was prepared with specific content ideas and objectives for the parents, caregivers, and children.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Technology plays a huge role in families today; it has been integrated into the lives of many people, including children. Cell phones, television, the Internet, and video games offer many entertaining and educational benefits to families; the inherent potential of negative influences or uses also exists. Reducing or eliminating the negative aspects of various forms of technology, while preserving the significant contributions is a daily challenge for parents and caregivers. Since many parents and caregivers are inexperienced or newly exposed to the various forms of technology, the need for parent education which promotes knowledge and information is beneficial.

Parents and caregivers have increasingly hectic and busy lives; due to this lack of time, many parents or caregivers are unwilling or simply unable to attend formal parent education classes. Despite being able to attend parent education classes, many parents still seek advice and assistance regarding the strains of parenting in contemporary society (Walker, 2005). In order to provide parents or caregivers with information and strategies on parenting techniques, the use of parent education newsletters has become gradually more popular. Creating newsletters which are well-written and focused on a specific parenting issue can make a difference in the lives of families (Garton et al., 2003). These newsletters are designed to impact the target audience and act similar to Bronfenbrenner's "mesosystem layer" by providing a link between the home and school. The newsletters will also provide positive interactions not only between parents and their children, but also between parents, educators, and children at a microsystem level.

Parents and caregivers who receive the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series can read the issues in their extra time and at their own pace. They are also portable and

convenient to carry which may allow them to be shared with friends or relatives. Parents and caregivers are able to file-and-save the newsletter issues for future reference, especially if they have children who are not currently in the age range which the newsletter is specifically addressing. The content of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series has been developed to provide age-appropriate, research-based information and activities to parents, caregivers, and children.

Although newsletters are very beneficial, some limitations do exist. For instance, newsletters do not provide contact between a parent educator and the parent or caregiver. To overcome this limitation the newsletter series could be utilized by a parent education class or support group. Newsletters are also fairly inexpensive compared to other methods of parent education; however, without funding for distribution the newsletters may be too costly for some organizations to print and distribute. Lastly, the content of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series was developed from researched-based information; however, the newsletter content may need to be adjusted as the latest research on technology's impacts on families is published.

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APPENDIX 1. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE ONE

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 1: Parenting in the Digital Age
A Newsletter for Parents

Children in today's society are being raised differently than any other previous generation. Recent generations are affected more intensely by exposure to mass media and interactive media.

How is Parenting in the 21st Century Different from the Past?

Families today are much different from families fifty years ago. They are smaller, more likely to be headed by a single parent, and more likely to live in an urban or non-farm setting. They are also increasingly affected by modern technologies. The things that were once considered luxuries, such as cell phones, televisions, CDs, iPods, and video games are now considered "must haves" for many teens today. One significant adjustment for many families is trying to find ways to stay connected during their busy and hectic lives. Having a close relationship with one's child and spending time with them is strongly related with an adolescents' involvement in risky behaviors.

Parenting in a Digital World:

Parents who are more highly educated in regards to media and technology are better able to control the effects of media and are more comfortable setting limits with their children's media and technology use. Research has found parents who are more knowledgeable about media and technology and its effects on children are more consistent with rules, are more likely to monitor its usage, and offer more alternatives for their child's

technology use. Recognize your family's technology and media habits. Ask yourself,

- ♦ In our home, where is technology or media located?
- ♦ What technology or media does my family have access to?
- ♦ Who uses these technologies and how often?

Monitoring media and setting limits for technology usage can be tricky since media changes continuously and quickly in significant ways. Parents and caregivers can set limits on the amount of media and technology allowed, the content allowed, and the context in which media and technology may take place, such as viewing television under parental supervision or surfing online with parents and caregivers. Create a media agreement which incorporates your values. The agreement may include information in the following categories:

- ♦ **Child's Personal Safety:** sharing passwords, posting personal information, uploading photos or videos, or meeting strangers in person
- ♦ **Establishing Positive Digital Habits:** encourage children not bullying others through cell phones or the Internet, developing consequences for inappropriate uses of technology
- ♦ **Appropriate Uses of Technology and Media:** make smart decisions about what to watch, and follow rules regarding television use, movies, video games, the Internet, or cell phones

- ♦ Create a Healthy Balance: set limits on the amount of time the child spends plugged into technology and media, and encourage non-media activities

Advances in technology undoubtedly provide wonderful opportunities for education and entertainment; however, the potential harm is also a challenge which professionals, teachers, parents and caregivers need to minimize. Many parents and caregivers are concerned with the large amount of time youth are spending with technology and media. Excessive quantities of media and technology may lead to negative cognitive, emotional, and physical outcomes for children. Research has found children who are heavy technology users have lower family communication, have fewer hobbies, and engage in fewer extracurricular activities. For these reasons, it is especially important for parents to help their children establish healthy media and technology habits; however, it is also important to recognize that not all children are affected similarly by media and technology.

Since technology and media exposure are a large component of the lives of youth today, it is necessary for parents and caregivers to help them learn skills to use it safely and responsibly. Spending time with your child online can help expand your knowledge of the Internet and recognize what risks and harmful information your child is being exposed to. In addition, having your child show you how to do something online may enhance the parent-child relationship.

Our busy lives reduce the amount of family time we have; keep communication lines open with your child. Regularly discuss who they are talking to and what activities they are engaged in. Remember, your child is growing up in a world filled with modern technology. Keep an open mind about how important media and technology usage are to your child.

Set limits and rules regarding all forms of technology and media usage. Express inappropriate and appropriate usage of the Internet, cell phones, video games, and television. Lastly, be a positive media role model for your child. The forms and amount of media parents and caregivers use influences their child in many ways. Parents and caregivers can model appropriately by limiting their own media usage, having good judgment on media content when in the presence of their children, co-viewing with their children, and modeling alternatives to media.

Resources:

Gentile, D. A. & Walsh, D. A. (2002). A normative study of family media habits. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 23*, 157-178.

Raines, C. (2002). *Managing Millennials. Connecting Generation: The Sourcebook.*

Walsh, D. A. (2000). The challenge of the evolving media environment. *Journal of Adolescent Health 27*, 69-72.

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 1: Parenting in the Digital Age
A Newsletter for Young People

Suggested Activity:

Matching Game:

Can you match each device to the year it was invented?

- ◆ Telephone-1876 (Alexander Graham Bell)
- ◆ Television-1927 (Philo Farnsworth)
- ◆ Color TV-1953 (RCA)
- ◆ Computer Mouse-1964 (Douglas Englehart)
- ◆ The Internet-1973 (U.S. Department of Defense)
- ◆ Cell Phone-1973 (Martin Cooper, Motorola)
- ◆ Compact Discs-1980 (Philips)
- ◆ The V-Chip (Device that uses infrared signals to allow parents to block out certain levels of violent programming)-1995 (Tim Collings)
- ◆ DVDs-1995 (Many companies collaborated)

Technology and Media Word Find:

CCBTMMVINVTRIRS
 ZORKOPSQIMEENER
 SAMVDHHDFFLLPTGE
 QGIPQBEUIOEAEAR
 MEJSUOSAZCVPRPW
 SNFVGTMTTYISNSI
 VSQASEEDZPSWEYL
 RFMLCELREZIETYN
 MERILRNIGGONANC
 SBOIDARIAANKBUJ
 QVGRSAFZZMMOEQD
 TELEPHONEAEEDQX
 SENOHPLLECGNNGJ
 UAZSIXDXVGGQACMA
 NXWPWZRHTSHFMVH

CELLPHONES
 COMPUTER
 COMPUTERGAME
 EMAIL
 INTERNET
 MAGAZINES
 MOVIE

NEWSPAPER
 PAGER
 RADIO
 TELEPHONE
 VIDEOGAMES
 VOICEMAIL

Adults enjoy talking about what things were like when they were younger. Ask a parent, grandparent, or another adult these questions:

- ◆ What radio stations or television shows did you like when you were growing up?
- ◆ Do you remember your first experience with a computer?
- ◆ How have computers and television changed in your lifetime?
- ◆ Describe the first cell phone you owned?
- ◆ What technology has impacted you the most in your lifetime?

APPENDIX 2. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE TWO

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 2: Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely
A Newsletter for Parents

Cell phones are considered a “must have” for many of today’s youth. Cell phones have been integrated as a part of our everyday lives. A recent study conducted in 2008 found 71% of teens have a cell phone. One reason many youth report having a cell phone is for emergency situations; however, cell phones have many other valuable uses.

Reasons for Youth to Have Cell Phones:

When an adolescent first acquires a cell phone it is often for security or emergency reasons. In addition, social connection and communication are extremely important. Many youth view having a cell phone as part of their social identity and a medium for which to communicate with peers. Researchers have found the following to be additional reasons for having a cell phone:

- ♦ Information-cell phones can be used to access information on road conditions, find social events, for entertainment purposes, and arrange transportation
- ♦ Social-relieve boredom, chat, and provide the pleasure of talking
- ♦ Affection-maintain relationships with family and gain social support in times of need from family or friends
- ♦ Fashion and Status-youth find cell phones look fashionable and provide a sense of style
- ♦ Mobility-the ability to use the cell phone at any time in most locations

- ♦ Accessibility-always being accessible, provides immediate access

New Technologies and Services:

Cell phones have changed frequently over the last decade and will continue to modernize and be updated in the future. For instance, cell phones today may have features including cameras, video recording, text messaging, e-mail, Internet access, MP3 players (devices which store music), radio access, Bluetooth (a wireless phone connection), and gaming. An endless list of cell phone accessories could also be added. All this modernization can be helpful; however, the constant revising and updating can make it very difficult for parents to keep up with ever-changing devices. These devices can also be very costly to families.

Benefits and Positive Uses of Cell Phones:

As we have noted there are many reasons young people use cell phones. Cell phones have both helpful and communicative benefits. They can be helpful to schedule appointments and obtain information. They are also very convenient in allowing youth to communicate with friends and family and may give a sense of security. In addition, cell phones can be a great tool to teach youth responsibility.

Negative Effects of Cell Phones:

The benefits of cell phones are infinite and many of us can hardly

imagine our life without it, but dangers with cell phones also exist. The following are some of the negative aspects of cell phones:

- ♦ One problem may be the occurrence of texting and driving. Adolescents may have a sense of “driving expertise,” which coupled with driving inexperience and distractions, such as cell phones, may lead to higher crash rates among teenagers.
- ♦ Overuse or abuse of the privilege of having a cell phone can lead to costly charges. To avoid this problem parents may want to teach youth about the responsibility of a cell phone. For instance parents may need to review billing information or the amount of minutes used monthly.
- ♦ Cell phones also give youth the ability to talk to anyone, even strangers; therefore, youth should be advised to only use their phone to communicate with friends and family.
- ♦ A relatively new phenomenon termed “sexting”, which is electronically sending inappropriate messages, nude or seminude images, has received a great deal of media attention. It is extremely problematic because youth may not be aware of the consequences of sending inappropriate messages, videos, of photos. Many short- and long-term consequences have been identified, such as the embarrassment or humiliation received from peers, possible expulsion from school, and the legal component, such as charges

of sexual harassment or registration as a sex offender.

- ♦ Some problems may occur from insomnia and sleep disturbances if youth are allowed to have cell phones on throughout the night.
- ♦ Cell phones can also be used inappropriately in school to cheat on tests. They also pose a distraction in the classroom.

What Parents Can Do:

Setting guidelines and rules for these devices can be difficult for some parents as they may not have had experiences with them in their own childhood; therefore, parents don't always have a model to reflect on for managing their child's cell phone usage.

Research has found open and regular parent-child communication has been linked to reduced participation in high risk behaviors; therefore, cell phones can be used as a contemporary parenting tool to communicate. They may also help us monitor adolescents' activities, whereabouts, and with whom they are spending their time. Researchers found better family relations when adolescents maintain communication with parents regarding where they are, what they are doing, and confirmation of the child's safe arrival.

Engage in conversations with your child about the consequences of sending electronic nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves. One of the most important things parents and caregivers can do is make sure your child fully understands that messages or videos are not truly private and the consequences of their actions can last forever. Parents and caregivers can remind the child what

he or she does electronically affects him or her in face-to-face interactions as well.

Lastly research has found parents who communicate clear expectations for cell phone use have enhanced parent-child relationships. One idea that has been proposed by researchers to communicate clear expectations may be the use of a "Family Cell Phone Contract." The contract may contain expectations for the child's and the parent's cell phone use. Expectations for the contract may include:

- ◆ Who the child is allowed to talk to.
- ◆ Where the child is allowed to use the cell phone, for instance, can the child have the cell phone in school?
- ◆ What time of day the child can use the cell phone.
- ◆ What cell phone activities are appropriate or inappropriate, such as hurtful messages, downloads, and photos.
- ◆ How many minutes or text messages are allowed on a weekly or monthly basis.
- ◆ What the consequences are if the child texts or talks on his or her phone while driving.

Cell phones can be a great communication tool for parent-child relations. Parents and caregivers can encourage appropriate usage while enforcing rules and consequences for inappropriate use.

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 2: Cell Phones: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely
A Newsletter for Young People

How Can You Keep Yourself Safe and Avoid Misuse of Your Cell Phone?

- ♦ Think about who you give your number to. You never know where it might end up; for that reason, only give your number to people you know and only respond to text messages from numbers that are familiar to you.
- ♦ Do not take any inappropriate picture or videos or type any inappropriate messages on your cell phone. You never know who might end up seeing them.
- ♦ Be aware of the school policies on cell phone usage.
- ♦ Be a good “digital citizen.” Try to talk quietly on cell phones when you are in public places and keep your music quiet
- ♦ Never text and drive. No text or phone call is worth the consequences of driving while talking or texting. If the text or phone call is urgent, stop the vehicle to take care of it.
- ♦ Respect others. If you receive an inappropriate message, inappropriate picture, or bullying remark, don’t send it on to others, just delete it. If you do forward the message onto others, you are likely to get yourself into trouble too.
- ♦ Ask before you download. Some downloads can carry viruses. For this reason, it is important to ask your parent or caregiver for permission before you download music, applications, pictures, or videos.

Sample “Family Cell Phone Contract”

Expectations for Child’s Cell Phone Use:

1. I will not give out my cell phone number to anyone without permission from my parents.
2. I will not bring my cell phone to school if it is prohibited.
3. I will not use my cell phone after ___ am/pm on a school night and ___ am/pm on a weekend.
4. I will not take pictures or videos of anyone without their permission.
5. I will not send threatening or hurtful text messages, photos or videos.
6. I agree to pay for any additional charges beyond the monthly fee for my cell phone.
7. I will not be disruptive when using my cell phone.
8. I will not text or talk on my cell phone while driving.

Child’s Signature: _____

Parent’s Signature: _____

Develop a “Family Cell Phone Contract”

Expectations for Child’s Cell Phone Use:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Child’s Signature: _____

Parent’s Signature: _____

APPENDIX 3. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE THREE

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 3: Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online
A Newsletter for Parents

Many people believe that it would be very hard to live without the Internet today; we use it to keep in touch with family and friends, do research for school, check out potential colleges, find volunteer opportunities, or find a movie playing in a local theatre.

Many children today have access to computers at school and at home, which creates both the benefits of enriched learning and the risks of possible dangers. In order to maximize the learning and social experiences the Internet provides, we also need to eliminate or reduce the exposure of the dangerous aspects.

Why Do Youth Go Online?

There are many reasons youth are attracted to and utilize the Internet:

- ◆ Entertainment purposes: youth can play online games, download music and videos, or surf the web
- ◆ Social purposes: youth can instant message online, interact with others in chat rooms, and participate in social networking sites
- ◆ Educational purposes: youth can look up information for school work and research educational material.

How Has the Internet Affected the Lives of Youth Today?

A study conducted in 2007 found 51% of households own a computer. This statistic has been steadily increasing from 8% in 1984 and will continue to

increase into future generations. The Internet becomes part of many children's experiences fairly early in life.

Advantages of the Internet:

Unquestionable benefits of computer and Internet use have been identified:

- ◆ Children and adolescents are able to enhance their social and cognitive development through computer use.
- ◆ Computers have enhanced the classroom by engaging students and giving teachers a variety of teaching tools.
- ◆ Computers have also provided useful homework support for students.

The Internet can provide social support from peers via social networking sites, instant messaging, and e-mail. Youth who have difficulty communicating with peers face-to-face may find comfort communicating in an electronic medium. Sometimes personal questions which are too personal to ask face-to-face could be asked in an online forum with a friend or peer.

Identity exploration through social networking can also be revealed by using the Internet. Communicating with others online helps youth determine who they are, who they would like to become, and their values.

Disadvantages of the Internet:

One concern is that the Internet and computer use takes away from the amount of time youth are spending with their family and with friends in face-to-face communication.

The Internet can also present many dangers since it is a world designed by adults. Youth may stumble across inappropriate sites or come into contact with strangers. Adolescent's vulnerability is also a concern with online privacy and disclosure.

What Parents Can Do:

As with many aspects of off-line life, parent socialization is also important for online behaviors. Parents and caregivers can teach youth how to reduce the risks of being exposed online through many direct and indirect interactions of parental mediation. What is parental mediation? It is any strategy used to supervise children's media use or help children interpret media content. Three types of parental mediation have emerged in research:

- ◆ Discussion: helping children understand the underlying meaning of Internet content
- ◆ Co-viewing: surfing online with your child can stimulate conversations about privacy issues and appropriate uses of the Internet
- ◆ Rulemaking: restricting the amount of media exposure in terms of time or content

Discussion:

Parents and caregivers are very concerned with how careful their children are when online. Adolescents are often exposed to many potential privacy risks online, especially because they are considered to be the most vulnerable group using the Internet. Youth may be the target of cybercrimes (any criminal act dealing with computers), cyber stalking (the use of the Internet harass an individual), online sexual harassment, and cyberbullying (bullying or harassment which occurs through forms of technology). Young people have been considered "vulnerable" because they have a tendency to be adventuresome, eager for attention, trusting, naïve, curious, and eager to participate if offered a reward. Researchers have found parents who express their concerns regarding online safety contribute to their child's online privacy.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to have open discussions about the risks associated with the Internet and encourage youth to keep information private and tell a trusted adult if they feel harassed by a stranger or friend online. Open discussion on what Internet content they are coming into contact with is important. Discuss what appropriate and inappropriate Web sites are for your child. Also showing the adolescent how to block people or delete names from their friends list can help reduce vulnerability.

Co-viewing:

When researchers compared children whose parents passively monitored computer usage versus children whose parents actively got involved with their child's online

activities, they found children who had parents who facilitated online learning scored significantly higher on cognitive assessments and school readiness assessments. Parents, caregivers, and teachers can facilitate online learning by accompanying the child while online, pointing to the task, reminding the child of the goal, suggesting ideas and solutions, and asking questions. Also co-viewing with your child may reduce exposure to unintended inappropriate material.

Rulemaking:

Parents may feel anxious about establishing rules regarding their child's Internet usage as some children may know more about the Internet than their mom or dad. Do not use lack of knowledge as an excuse to not monitor your child's Internet usage. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to create rules and set limits regarding their child's Internet and computer usage. Monitor or discuss with them what web sites they are visiting and the purpose of the sites. With an older child, placing the computer or laptop in a "high traffic" area of the home may help parents or caregivers monitor online behaviors. Relying solely on content filtering software may not always work for monitoring youth's Internet usage.

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 3: Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online
A Newsletter for Young People

How Can You Stay Safe Online?

There are many fun things to do online, but there are also some dangers of which you need to be aware. Here are some tips to keep you safe while surfing online:

- ◆ Tell a trusted adult if you see something that worries you or makes you feel upset.
- ◆ Create a username that is easy to remember, but is not your real name.
- ◆ Only add your real friends to your social networking site or messenger.
- ◆ Use privacy settings. If you do not know how to use them, ask an adult.
- ◆ Always remember to log off when you are finished on the computer.

What Information is Inappropriate to Post Online?

- ◆ Full name or age
- ◆ Home address
- ◆ Phone number
- ◆ Social security number
- ◆ Passwords
- ◆ Names of family members
- ◆ Credit card numbers
- ◆ Posting on your profile or in a chat room that you are home alone or where you are
- ◆ Your schedule

What Should You Do If Someone You Do Not Know Talks to You or Asks You for Personal Information?

- ◆ Tell an adult right away
- ◆ File a report to CyberTipline, an agency for reporting crimes against children, at www.missingkids.com/cybertip or by calling 1-800-843-5678

Tips for Passwords:

- ◆ Never share your password
- ◆ Remember your secret question and answer
- ◆ Do not use personal information for passwords
- ◆ Use a mixture of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and characters if possible
- ◆ Change your password often
- ◆ Use a unique screen name which is not similar to your name or nickname
- ◆ Find a secure place to store passwords you have written down
- ◆ Do not save passwords in documents on your computer
- ◆ Use a variety of passwords for each account

Suggested Activity:**Internet Word Find:**

HKBDBTIFIJMXEPD
 DWOZZJENINKGEOQ
 KRGGWOTCSKAEGTD
 WAORTEXEHPDEDKI
 DERWRDAOLNWODSM
 CHBNSRWYEJOKMEU
 YZEECSXLLNRLSDQ
 BTOHDSAYXOGXOCF
 EFNSXKYPWWNIMGT
 RELWVIRTUALINUY
 SLIAMEEGODETGEI
 PUNKMNSITEMOVOC
 ACEWZBLPRKOILWL
 CWXZNEHYJUHNLVV
 EMOLFRFIHKFXJDN

CYBERSPACE	DESKTOP
DOWNLOAD	EMAIL
ENGINE	HOME
INTERNET	LOGIN
NETWORK	ONLINE
PAGE	PASSWORD
SEARCH	SITE
TECHNOLOGY	VIRTUAL

APPENDIX 4. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FOUR

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 4: Cyberbullying
A Newsletter for Parents

When hearing the word “bullying,” one might imagine school hallways, bus stops, or the playground; all settings which are related to school; however, today bullying can occur in many other settings, even in virtual worlds. With the emergence of many forms of technology, bullying has taken a modern twist.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying has been defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted on another using technology. Youth can utilize many forms of technology to bully other students, such as e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, Web sites, and text messaging. Often cyberbullying includes acts of aggression. The bully may make nasty or threatening comments, spread rumors, post embarrassing or offensive clips or photos, forward confidential e-mails, encourage others to gang up on the victim, or even set up derogatory web sites.

How is Cyberbullying Different from Traditional Bullying?

Unfortunately both traditional bullying and cyberbullying can be stressful and harmful for victims. A few reasons have been identified why cyberbullying is even more severe than traditional bullying:

- ♦ In a virtual world, the abuser has a sense of anonymity. He or she may believe there is only a slim chance of the misbehavior being detected by an adult. This sense

of being anonymous may lead bullies to say harmful things which they would not say in a face-to-face situation.

- ♦ Cyberbullying can also be more difficult to escape from; the individual can be victimized anywhere and at any time, even at home, which may lead to the victim feeling there is no safe place or escape.
- ♦ Electronic bullying messages can also be distributed quickly and to a large number of people. What occurs in the virtual world may also affect the victim in everyday reality.
- ♦ It may be more difficult to hold a cyberbully accountable for his or her actions because the bully may be able to blame someone else for using their screen name or create a fake screen name.

Risk Factors for Children and Adolescents:

All students are potential victims; however, some factors have been identified which place some youth at higher risk than others to be victims of cyberbullying:

- ♦ Heavy Internet usage
- ♦ Youth who disclose personal information to strangers
- ♦ Having a social networking profile and accessing chat rooms

Consequences of Cyberbullying:

Being a victim of cyberbullying can have many negative long-term and

short-term consequences. Victims may experience increased daily levels of anxiety, emotional distress, and depression. Cyberbullying may also lead to higher absenteeism from school and lower academic performance. Daily anxiety may stem from victims not knowing who the bully, especially if he or she has remained anonymous.

What Parents Can Do:

Bullying used to be thought of as a “normal childhood rite of passage,” but awareness of the severe consequences has led to much more concern about the victims of bullying.

Research has identified several factors for youth which act as protective factors against being cyberbullied:

- ◆ Parents who have rules regarding Internet usage
- ◆ Having the computer in a shared common space
- ◆ Similar to adult supervision on the playground, parents and caregivers monitoring Web sites visited by the youth can decrease the incidence of online bullying

One research study found 90% of youth reported *not* telling adults about cyberbullying incidents. Often children experiencing cyberbullying are reluctant to tell their parents or an adult due to the fear of their parents restricting their Internet or cell phone usage. Children in the digital age see the Internet and their cell phones as the “lifeline” to their peer group. Any thought of losing that lifeline may feel very overwhelming and scary. Therefore, rather than overreacting, parents and caregivers are encouraged to listen to the child’s concerns, stay calm, and keep the lines of communication

open. Regularly discuss with the child what to do if he or she experiences or witnesses cyberbullying.

Another reason youth are disinclined to tell an adult is because they may feel there is nothing the parent can do to help them. This may be due to the sense of a “digital generation gap” between the child and parent. Therefore, learning as much as possible about the Web sites your child visits can help parents become more “technologically savvy.” Since children are reluctant to tell an adult about cyberbullying instances, be aware of changes in your child’s behavior, such as becoming withdrawn or becoming obsessive with electronic communication forms.

Creating a home climate where youth feel encouraged and comfortable with reporting cyberbullying is important. It is also essential to engage in conversations about which Web sites are appropriate and the possible risks posed by certain Web sites.

Conclusion:

Some may believe electronic communication forms are the cause of cyberbullying; they are not a cause of this problem, but they are a tool youth use to communicate in both positive and negative ways. While it is important to be aware of the negative consequences of technology use, it is also important to remember the positive aspects. For instance, technology offers socially anxious individuals a chance to communicate easier, explore their identity, build interpersonal skills, and gain educational benefits through academic support and expansive access to knowledge.

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 4: Cyberbullying
A Newsletter for Young People

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying can take many forms. It includes spreading rumors, making threats or belittling comments, name calling, and gossiping. Cyberbullying can take place online, through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging or Web sites. Cyberbullies may also use cell phones and text messaging.

How Can You Prevent Cyberbullying?

- ◆ Report any negative messages to a trusted adult.
- ◆ If you receive a negative message, do not pass it on to others. Simply delete it.
- ◆ Block anyone who sends you mean or negative messages.
- ◆ Be respectful of other people's thoughts and feelings.

Suggested Activity:

Think of a time you have heard about someone being bullied, either in person or through media, such as cell phones or a computer.

What made the person a bully?

How do you think the person being bullied felt?

What would you do if you were the person being bullied?

How could you help the person being bullied?

Cyberbullying Word Find:

A W W I N G P W M Y X B K T F
 G N I Y L L U B L R L L O E D
 R X O E F T I L F O A X O X E
 C E C N H W U W C L B H B T K
 E I T R Y B G K G C K H E I Q
 Q A E U R M I O L E T Z C N H
 X A L E P N O A P L H Q A G I
 T A B F G M T U R L V V F Y D
 A Y Z Q X I O P S P L V X R I
 C X C F G U Q C R H R P T M Z
 E Q H I M H O T T O T S J F X
 Y K D R T X K O Q N F U N C M
 M Y S P A C E B O E U I I X X
 A G G R E S S I O N G O L B G
 A H X B A W O J W O C Z J E D

AGGRESSION
 ANONYMOUS
 BLOCKING
 BLOG
 BULLYING
 CELLPHONE
 COMPUTER
 CYBERBULLY
 DIGITAL
 FACEBOOK
 HARM
 MYSPACE
 PROFILE
 TEXTING
 THREAT

APPENDIX 5. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FIVE

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 5: Media Influences
A Newsletter for Parents

Youth on average spend anywhere from six to eight hours a day exposed to media. Due to this large amount of exposure it is very important for parents and caregivers to know what their children are seeing and how they interpret what they see.

What Media Influences Do Youth Encounter?

There are many areas where youth may be influenced by the media. One large area which we seem to hear most often is influences from media violence. Other areas include health and well being, sexuality and body image, eating behaviors, substance use and risky behaviors, materialism, gender role stereotyping, and advertising. Parents, caregivers, and professionals are very concerned about how these aspects affect children's development and socialization. When children are young, the adults in their lives are the primary teacher guiding their socialization, but as children grow, they are able to make choices about what they pay attention to and how to interpret the content observed.

What Makes Youth More Vulnerable than Adults?

Screens are a powerful influence in children's lives. Children copy naturally, but are especially likely to imitate when the person they are imitating is an admired character or celebrity from a television show. Electronic media can provide many bad examples to children.

Youth are able to attend to more than one form of media at the same time. An adolescent may be watching the television, checking his e-mail and texting a friend on his phone all at the same time. Youth are more likely to observe many forms of media all at once.

Disadvantages of Media:

Violence

Media violence has received a great deal of attention in research. Evidence shows media violence contributes to desensitization of violence, adoption of violent attitudes and behaviors, and fears or anxieties about violent actions. Media violence may also promote ideas of hostility, disrespect, and lack of empathy towards others.

Sexuality

Research has found a large portion of sex education comes from the media. Unfortunately information on sexuality from the media may not be accurately portrayed or be inappropriate for youth. For instance, television shows and movies often portray teenagers having sex with minimal or no consequences.

Body Image

Young males and females feel media pressure to have an ideal body at very young ages. Insecurity about physical appearances may stem from non-realistic and unhealthy models.

Risky Behaviors

The media illustrates many of youth's favorite characters participating

in risky behaviors, such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, or engaging in unprotected sex. Research has found children and adolescents who are exposed to greater amounts of tobacco and alcohol advertising are more likely to use those products. Risky behaviors may also be depicted as cool, fun, and exciting. Television shows often have little if any discussion on the negative consequences of risky behaviors.

Gender Stereotyping

Stereotypes of males and females are portrayed throughout the media. For instance, boys may be stereotyped as being powerful and girls may be stereotyped as being obsessed with appearances.

Health, Well-Being, and Eating Behaviors

A large change in the lives of children in recent generations is the risk of childhood obesity. The amount of time children are spending with media takes away from the time they could be spending doing physical activities. While watching television and other forms of media children are more likely to snack excessively. Their choices are influenced by the unhealthy food choices presented in popular television shows and food advertisements.

Advertising and Materialism

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children in the United States see approximately 40,000 commercials each year. Marketing messages concerning junk food and toy advertisements overwhelm kids of all ages. It is very difficult to reduce or eliminate exposure to marketing messages. Also most kids do not

understand the purpose of commercials and are therefore very vulnerable.

What Parents Can Do:

Often children learn by watching, imitating, and incorporating ideas suggested by others. Media may teach both positive and negative messages which shape children's attitudes. Parents may have little involvement in their children's media exposure due to the large availability of private media, such as televisions in bedrooms, iPods with headphones, and handheld video games. Be your child's media educator. Parental participation is necessary to protect youth from the negative effects of media and promote healthy outcomes.

Although media is less easily controlled and more difficult to censor by parents and adults, it is still possible to incorporate family values into the media. Watch what your kids watch. Use media as a tool to discuss acceptable and unacceptable forms of behavior. Communication among parents and children should not stop because the television turns on. For instance, content-related discussions can help parents and adults convey their feelings about what is being shown by the media. Start discussions by asking children if what is being shown in the media reflects real world situations. Share your beliefs and values; have a conversation if you see something you disapprove of. Minimize or eliminate media which shows violence. Also ask thought-provoking questions, such as, "Do you think it was okay for those two men to fight?" "What else could they have done?" "What would you have done?"

The rising rates of childhood obesity have been a significant health challenge for parents and professionals. Removing food advertising can be especially beneficial to limit the influence of unhealthy eating behaviors. This may be done by limiting screen time whenever possible, recording shows and skipping commercials, and encouraging your child to do another activity during commercials. Parents and caregivers can provide healthy snacks while children are occupied with media.

Teach children to be critical consumers; discuss with them the purpose of the advertisement and commercial. Ask thought-provoking questions, such as, "Why would you like to buy that?" "How do you think you would play with that toy?" If necessary, take your child to a store and show him or her the desired product in real-life.

Limiting and reducing media exposure can be one option for avoiding the negative effects of media all-together. Providing plenty of non-screen entertainment, such as books, toys, puzzles, and board games; get your kids involved in non-media activities.

Media can be entertaining, occasionally educational, and promote healthy development, such as language development when television shows promote vocabulary. Just as with other aspects of your child's life, healthy habits and limits also need to be developed with media exposure.

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 5: Media Influences
A Newsletter for Young People

Advertisements: What are commercials really telling you?

Many advertisements and marketing messages are meant to look ideal to kids. The people trying to sell their products use fun colors, interesting pictures, or your favorite character to promote their item. How can you tell if the product is really something you want?

Ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ What is being advertised?
- ◆ What message are they trying to send to me?
- ◆ What do I like about the product?
- ◆ Would the real thing really be as good as the ad?
- ◆ Is there a healthier choice?
- ◆ Ask your parents about what advertisement is selling.

Suggested Activity:

The next time you see a product you want on a commercial or in an advertisement:

- ◆ Think about why you want the product. Do you want it because you saw it on TV or do you want it because it looks fun?
- ◆ Look at the real product in a store. Does it look the same as on TV? Do you still want it now that you have seen the real thing?
- ◆ Draw a picture of the product and write what you would do with it if you had it. What could you do with the product?

Make TV Time Fun!

- ◆ Cover the TV with a blanket and imagine what the characters of the show look like. Draw pictures of the characters and the story line you are listening to.
- ◆ During commercials, get up, move around.
- ◆ Turn off the movie or TV show before the end and write your own ending to the story. Then watch the end to see how your ending was similar or different. If you disagree to the ending a show, write your own "alternative" ending.
- ◆ Imagine you are a toy inventor. Create a toy and produce a commercial to sell it.
- ◆ Write a letter to an actress, actor, or TV producer. Tell them what episodes you have enjoyed and why.

APPENDIX 6. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE SIX

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 6: Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online Safely
A Newsletter for Parents

For children today, technology is an essential part of their lives. Most of them have grown up with computers and cannot imagine living without the Internet. A new challenge for parents is the constantly changing virtual worlds of social networking. Online social networking is becoming increasingly popular in adolescents' lives.

What are Social Networking Sites?

Social networks are websites that provide a virtual community for people who have similar interests or want to "hang out" together. Some examples of these virtual club houses are Facebook and MySpace; however many less well-known social networks also exist. The main purpose of social networking sites is to make new friendships or maintain friendships which already exist.

Why are Social Networking Sites so Appealing to Youth?

Parents and caregivers often wonder why youth would want to post so much personal information online. Social networking sites allow people, including children, to:

- ◆ Communicate with family and friends
- ◆ Meet new people
- ◆ Plan events in their social life
- ◆ Share messages, videos, and photos
- ◆ Participate in interest groups
- ◆ Play games online
- ◆ Try on different identities

Benefits of Social Networking Sites:

While dangers of online social networking are present, benefits also exist, such as relieving social anxiety, receiving valuable social support, and reinforcing existing relationships with peers. Adolescents report preferring online communication to chat with friends because it allows them to talk more freely; it also allows youth to compensate for poor social skills. Many social networking sites have online groups which adolescents can join and talk to members who have similar interests, which contribute to a sense of community and connectedness.

Another popular use of social networking is to blog everyday happenings about one's life on their personal profile. Blogging and spending time accessorizing one's profile with interests, pictures, and information about themselves contributes to an adolescent's identity. It gives them a sense of who they are, what they believe in, and what their future looks like.

Negative Effects of Social Networking:

Social networking sites have potential for negative consequences. Social networking sites may cause problematic parent-child conflict and cause feelings of losing parental control. Parents and caregivers may feel online communication with peers replaces the face-to-face communication and interaction with parents.

Use of social networking sites may put youth at risk for other problems, such as susceptibility to cyberbullies, online predators, invasion of privacy, and identity theft. Compared to adults, youth have different degrees of openness, different attitudes toward sharing personal information, and a fascination with self-display. Kids have a tendency to want to share information with friends, but are not always aware of how to protect their privacy and their reputation. Children are also more likely to share passwords, not be very selective about who they add as a friend, and give less thought to what information or photos they post. Also many children are uninformed on how to use privacy and safety settings on their account.

What Parents Can Do:

Online interactions are believed to be less rich since they lack face-to-face communication, such as gestures and eye contact. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to set limits on the amount of time their child spends online. Parents and caregivers can monitor their child's Internet use by placing computers and laptops in common areas of the home and checking the history. Also ask your child to see their profile; this may cause them to re-think what they have posted. In addition, monitoring can also be done by using Internet software, filters, and blocks.

Safety is of utmost importance to parents. Research shows children who discuss social networking websites with their parents behave safer online. Discuss with your child who they are talking to and who their "friends" are online. Having knowledge related to social networking sites can help parents participate in discussions with their

children about social networking. Try developing your own Facebook or Myspace profile. Perhaps getting involved online will help keep communication lines open between you and your child and who knows, maybe your child will even ask you to be their "friend."

Since children may not be able to clearly distinguish between what is not appropriate to share online and what is, remind your child that more than just their "friends" can see what they post. What they post today may affect their reputation with future teachers, possible colleges, and potential employers. It may be difficult for youth to look at long-term outcomes; therefore as a parent it may be necessary to set some limits and a few rules for your children. Be clear about what is safe to post and what is not. Teach them the risks and dangers of sharing too much personal information and what to do if they feel threatened. Many youth are not aware of how to use the privacy settings in social networking sites. Help your child learn how to change his or her privacy settings. Also establish rules about Internet usage pertaining specifically to social networking.

Social networking sites provide youth with a virtual world to maintain current relationships, meet new people with similar interests, and develop their identity in a creative way. Blogging allows youth to express thoughts and opinions.

Internet usage and social networking sites can be an enjoyable media experience if used appropriately with parents and caregivers providing necessary limits and boundaries.

Resources:

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 6: Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online Safely
A Newsletter for Young People

How Safe are Social Networking Sites?

- ♦ Assume that everyone has access to your profile, including your parents, teachers, future employers, and law enforcement.
- ♦ Use good judgment when posting pictures and comments. Ask yourself, "How would my parents react if they saw this picture?"
- ♦ Do not say anything online that you would not say in person.
- ♦ Assume there are predators trying to find you. Predators may look for specific information which gives clues to who you are, where you live, what school you attend, or where you hang out.
- ♦ Never agree to meet someone in person without parental permission.
- ♦ Be leery of people who want too much information.
- ♦ Remember you may be held responsible for inappropriate content on your profile.
- ♦ Never give out passwords, even to friends.

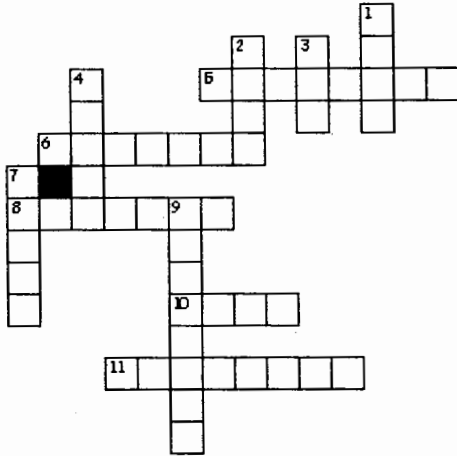
What Information Should Be Kept Private?

- ♦ Full name
- ♦ Home address
- ♦ Phone number
- ♦ Social security number
- ♦ Passwords
- ♦ Names of family members
- ♦ Credit card numbers
- ♦ Hometown
- ♦ School attended
- ♦ Age
- ♦ Schedule

What Information Can You Share?

Adding content to your personal profile is part of the fun of using social networking sites. However, what is posted on profiles is also public information. To post or not to post? How do you decide?

- ♦ Post only information you are okay with others seeing, even people who are not your friend.
- ♦ Think about the language you use before posting. Once you post information you may not be able to take it back.
- ♦ If you are not sure if you should post some information, ask your parent or a trusted adult what they think.
- ♦ Limit your friends to people you actually know in real life.

Suggested Activity:**Social Networking Sites Crossword Puzzle:****Across**

5. Another popular social networking site
6. A user-created Web page on a social networking site
8. A popular social networking web site
10. Putting a message on a bulletin board online
11. A worldwide network of computers communicating with each other

Down

1. An interactive diary posted online, viewable to others
2. Taking a program or file and copying it to your computer
3. WWW stands for the World Wide...
4. A file or program that is uploaded to your computer without your knowledge and may damage your computer
7. Sending an electronic letter to someone
9. An electronic device that stores and processes information and facilitates electronic communication

APPENDIX 7. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE SEVEN

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 7: Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles
A Newsletter for Parents

Childhood obesity is often a result of unhealthy eating patterns and too little physical activity. These behaviors are developed in early childhood; therefore, it is necessary to develop healthy habits as early as possible.

What are Childhood Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles?

Childhood obesity is a serious medical condition that affects children and adolescents. It occurs when a child is well above the normal weight for his or her age and height. If you are concerned your child may be at risk for being overweight or feel your child may be currently overweight, talk to your pediatrician or health care professional.

Factors Impacting Childhood Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles:

Increasing popularity and use of computers, video games, and television contributes to today's children becoming increasingly less active. On average, a child in America spends approximately 24 hours each week watching television.

Many factors contribute to childhood obesity, including genetic, biological, behavioral, and cultural factors. Obesity in childhood and adolescents can be related to:

- ◆ Poor eating habits
- ◆ Lack of exercise
- ◆ Family history of obesity
- ◆ Medical illnesses or medications
- ◆ Stressful life events, such as parents' divorce, moving, deaths, or abuse

- ◆ Media consumption and increases in sedentary activities, such as watching television, spending excessive time on the computer, and talking on the telephone
- ◆ Larger food portion sizes
- ◆ Fear of strangers or predators may lead to parents not allowing their children to play outside unsupervised
- ◆ Modern-day conveniences

Risks Associated with Sedentary Lifestyles (Short-Term & Long-Term):

There are many risks or complications associated with childhood obesity. Some risks include:

- ◆ Increased risk of heart disease
- ◆ High blood pressure and cholesterol
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Breathing difficulties or asthma
- ◆ Sleeping difficulties
- ◆ Obesity in adulthood
- ◆ Emotional problems
- ◆ Social discrimination or stereotypes. Children may be stereotyped as unhealthy, academically unsuccessful, or lazy.
- ◆ Lower self esteem or negative self-image

What Parents Can Do:

Studies have attributed screen time and food advertising to be a risk factor for childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles in children. Screen time not only displaces physical activity

but also increases energy intake, since children are more likely to consume excessive amounts of energy-dense foods while watching television. This consumption of energy-dense foods may be a result of food promoter's effects on children's preferences. Since television food advertising and obesity are highly related to the amount of time children watch TV, it is recommended that parents and caregivers reduce and limit sedentary time whenever possible.

Quiet reading time and homework is necessary; however, limit the time your child spends watching television, playing video games, and surfing the Web. Allow a certain number of hours per week and have the child choose, with the parents' guidance, programs to watch in advance. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that kids under the age of two have no screen time. Children over the age of two are recommended to watch no more than two hours each day of quality programming. In addition, practice the following behaviors to reduce media use:

- ♦ Keep televisions and video games out of children's bedrooms.
- ♦ Turn the television off when nobody is watching.

Children are recommended to spend 60 minutes each day involved in physical activity. The recommended 60 minutes can be divided into small increments throughout the day. For example, your child may walk to school, play tag on the playground, and go for a bike ride in the afternoon. Parents and caregivers also influence their child's physical activity by setting a good example of healthy physical activity. Children imitate adults; therefore, parents

and caregivers can make a huge difference by setting a positive example.

Get the entire family involved in physical activity. Make physical activity a part of your daily routine by setting aside a special time devoted to doing activities as a family. Choose activities which feel more like fun than exercise:

- ♦ Go for a bike ride
- ♦ Dance
- ♦ Go swimming
- ♦ Go for a nature hike
- ♦ Play tag
- ♦ Play catch
- ♦ Play basketball
- ♦ Take the dog for a walk
- ♦ Go on a family walk
- ♦ Play soccer

Remember Safety! Be sure your child has appropriate athletic shoes to wear while participating in physical activities. Have your child wear protective gear, such as helmets which have a chin strap to buckle, wrist pads, and knee pads. Remind your child to keep the helmet buckled whenever he or she is on the bike, skateboard, rollerblades, skates, scooter, or skateboard.

Parents and caregivers can play a huge role in preventing childhood obesity by providing healthy meals and snacks. Practice and encourage the following healthy eating habits:

- ♦ Eat meals together as a family rather than in front of the television. Eating in front of the television may make it difficult to pay attention to feeling full and lead to overeating. Also eating as a family seems to decrease television viewing and improve the diet quality.

- ◆ Provide sensible portions.
- ◆ Limit the amount of high-fat and high-calorie foods. Sweets and high-fat treats should not be everyday foods; rather they can be eaten in moderation or as occasional treats.
- ◆ Provide plenty of healthy options, especially fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products.
- ◆ Encourage your children to drink plenty of water throughout the day and limit sugar-sweetened beverages.

If you are having difficulty getting started increasing your physical activity, make a list of the barriers and brainstorm ways to overcome them. Here are some additional tips:

- ◆ Provide plenty of athletic equipment, such as balls, bats, bikes, and gloves.
- ◆ Take your child to places where he or she can be active, such as parks, baseball fields, or basketball courts.
- ◆ Be positive about the physical activities which your child is engaged in.
- ◆ Ensure activities for your child are age-appropriate.
- ◆ Avoid eating snacks in front of the television.

Resources:

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- Zabinski, M. F., Norman, G. J., Sallis, J. F., Calfas, K. J., & Patrick, K. (2007). Patterns of sedentary behavior among adolescents. *Health Psychology*, 26(1), 113-120.

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 7: Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles
A Newsletter for Young People

Why Is It Important to be Healthy?

- ◆ Have more fun
- ◆ Have stronger muscles and bones
- ◆ Less risk of developing diseases
- ◆ Sleep better
- ◆ Feel more positively about yourself

Fun Activities:

- ◆ Kick or throw a ball
- ◆ Play tag or follow the leader
- ◆ Hop on one foot
- ◆ Ride a bike
- ◆ Play freeze dancing
- ◆ Run through a home-made obstacle course
- ◆ Help wash the car
- ◆ Play baseball or basketball
- ◆ Take a bike ride
- ◆ Try yoga
- ◆ Skateboard, skate, or rollerblade

Suggested Activity:

Snack Ideas:

Snacks are a terrific way to satisfy your hunger and get the vitamins and nutrients your body needs! It is important to pay attention to what you eat. Unhealthy food choices high in fat and calories will only slow you down and will not give you enough energy. Make a habit to keep healthy snacks in your backpack.

Examples of Healthy Snacks:

- ◆ Granola bar
- ◆ Trail mix
- ◆ Fruit, such as a banana, apple, or strawberries
- ◆ Vegetables, such as carrots or celery sticks with peanut butter
- ◆ Frozen yogurt
- ◆ Whole-wheat pretzels
- ◆ Rice cakes
- ◆ Raisins
- ◆ Air-popped popcorn
- ◆ Cheese

Get Moving!

Make a list of activities that involve physical activity which you can do by yourself or with friends when you are feeling bored:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

APPENDIX 8. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE EIGHT

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 8: Media Violence
A Newsletter for Parents

Technology today allows youth to view violent acts directly in their home through television, movies, and video games. Movies, video games, and television entertain with realistic violent events, which can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviors. The American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that by 18 years of age, the average child will have witnessed nearly 100,000 acts of violence.

Why are Youth Attracted to Media Violence?

Not all children react to media violence similarly; individual differences can result from personality, gender, family, and the community in which the child lives. There are many reasons why media violence is attractive to youth:

- ◆ Media violence may be portrayed as a “quick fix” to a problem.
- ◆ Violence is generally carried out by the hero, who may also receive a reward; this representation supports the use of violence.
- ◆ Children may not be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Children are generally drawn to weapons and fighting, not the underlying concept of war.
- ◆ The absence of consequences for their actions may increase children’s likelihood to accept violence as natural and a part of life.
- ◆ Violence is exciting and arousing for most youth. It increases the heart rate and physiological arousal. Scenes which are violent

also tend to be highly vivid and have attractive movements, sounds, and color.

What Forms of Technology Have Media Violence in Them?

- ◆ Television Shows
- ◆ Movies
- ◆ Internet Games
- ◆ Video Games

Does Media Impact Children’s Aggression?

Humans begin imitating each other at a very young age; therefore, theoretically children can be expected to learn from whomever they observe—parents, siblings, peers, and yes, even, media characters. Observing aggressive acts can lead to long- and short-term effects.

Negative Impacts of Media Violence:

Media violence typically does not demonstrate patience, compromise, or negotiation. Viewing acts of violence towards others leads to youth who believe violence against others is acceptable. Children are too young to fully understand what they hear and see in the media. Aggressive youth are more likely to be aggressive adults.

What Parents Can Do:

Violence in the media conveys the idea that hurting others is normal, killing others is amusing, or that the world is scary and dangerous. The role of parents’

and caregivers' is to help children distinguish between real-life and fantasy or make-believe. They are able to explain that actors are wearing costumes, using fake weapons, and special effects are not real.

Parents and caregivers are also encouraged to discuss with their child that real life violence hurts people and that the perpetrator of the violence is punished, hurts his or her friends' feelings, and feels bad. Parents and caregivers can discuss with children that when playing aggressively, someone may get hurt accidentally.

Research found when parents speak negatively about violent acts or behavior, children place less importance on viewing the violent program and have less aggressive attitudes. However, if parents simply said nothing about the violent content, children were more likely to express aggressive attitudes and behave aggressively. Here are some ideas for starting a discussion:

- ◆ What did you think about that show/game? Did you like it when _____ happened? Why do you think that happened?
- ◆ Was that pretend or real? How could you tell?
- ◆ Could anything like _____ happen to you? What would you do if you were in that situation?

Parental rule setting regarding children's television viewing has been associated with less youth aggression. In addition to monitoring television viewing, televised news may also be problematic for youth since news coverage usually includes violent events. Parents and caregivers may need to reduce or monitor

the amount of news violence their children are exposed to.

Resources:

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 8: Media Violence
A Newsletter for Young People

Real Life Violence versus Fantasy Violence:

- ◆ Violence on television, movies, and video games is make believe, not real
- ◆ Violence in real-life hurts people.
- ◆ Weapons can hurt and kill people.
- ◆ Tell your parents if something you watch makes you scared, confused, or afraid.
- ◆ Even though you see guns and weapons on television you should never touch them. Instead show or tell an adult.
- ◆ Violence is never the best way to solve a problem.
- ◆ Even if you are “just pretending,” someone could still get hurt.

What can You Do If You See Violence on TV, Video Games, the Internet, or Somewhere Else?

- ◆ Tell your parent or an adult.
- ◆ Send a letter to the person responsible for showing the violence. This may be the TV station, movie company, toy manufacturer, a magazine, or a local newspaper. Have a parent or an adult help you.
- ◆ Decide with your parents which shows are not okay to watch. Make a chart of the shows you are allowed to watch.
- ◆ If you see violence, don't watch. Turn off the TV, movie, or video

game if you see violence or change the channel.

Suggested Activity:

Name or think about one of your favorite television or movie characters.

- ◆ What kinds of bad things does this character do to others?
- ◆ What kinds of good things do they do to others?
- ◆ What would happen if they did these things in real life?

Invent a Toy or Gadget!

Invent a non-violent toy or gadget for your character to use. Draw a picture of it!

What special features does your toy/gadget have?

What does the toy/gadget do that helps other people?

APPENDIX 9. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* NEWSLETTER: ISSUE NINE

Tech Savvy Families
Issue 9: Healthy Technology Habits
A Newsletter for Parents

Technology can be very entertaining and provide excellent opportunities for education. It has opened many doors to vast amounts of information, convenience of communicating with others, and entertainment. Many parents find it difficult to understand the current generations' reliance on new technologies; however, many youth were raised in an up-and-coming digital world and to them, technology is simply a part of life.

Benefits of Technology:

Technology offers many benefits to families, including entertainment purposes and educational opportunities. The following are various benefits of technology:

- ◆ Provides family entertainment
- ◆ Allows people to explore places they may not be able to visit
- ◆ Enhances understanding on topics of interest
- ◆ Enhances critical thinking
- ◆ Provides additional educational opportunities

Cell Phones

Cell phones have become a part of our daily lives. They make our lives easier and are a tool of convenience. They allow us to stay connected to friends and family through both texting and calling. In addition, cell phones assist parents in keeping in touch with their children and monitoring their child's whereabouts. Lastly, cell phones are

extremely valuable in emergency situations.

Setting Limits with Cell Phones:

- ◆ Develop rules regarding your child's cell phone usage. Set limits on with whom your child is allowed to talk, where the cell phone can be used, what time of day is appropriate for cell phone usage, and responsibilities of minutes used, text messaging, and downloads.

Positive Uses for Cell Phones:

- ◆ Many parents benefit from using a timer to announce transition times for their child. For example, a parent may set an egg timer and tell their child, "You have 5 more minutes on the computer!" Cell phones can also be used for transition times virtually anywhere, by using the alarm function or the stopwatch.
- ◆ Keep an up-to-date photo of your child on your cell phone. It can be used in case of emergency to show others exactly what your child looks like.
- ◆ Teach youth proper cell phone etiquette. Parents and caregivers can encourage their child to avoid talking loudly in public places, silence phones and avoid texting during classes, in movie theatres, or during religious services, and encourage children to avoid answering their cell phone during a conversation.

Fun and Creative Uses for Cell Phones:

- ◆ Have your child record a message for a parent going away on a business trip.
- ◆ Send a "Good luck!" text message to your child on the day of a big exam.
- ◆ Use your weekend minutes to get in touch with family members to say hello!

Television

Establishing healthy television habits is one of the most important things parents and caregivers can do for their children.

Setting Limits with Television:

- ◆ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of screen time each day. Try tracking your family's current television intake by listing all the shows your family watches each week. While children are watching shows, use a kitchen timer, stopwatch, or clock to monitor the length of television viewing.
- ◆ Be aware what your children are watching. Parents and caregivers can do this by co-viewing with their child or previewing programs in advance.
- ◆ Encourage your child to ask permission to watch television. Instead of children asking if they can watch TV, instead, ask them what specific program they would like to watch. Once they have finished watching the program, get in the habit of turning the TV off and doing something else. Even when children are not watching the screen, they may

still be listening or catching glimpses of the program. In addition, charting a "Family TV Schedule" in advance may reduce screen time. At the beginning of the week create a chart with a balance of shows each member of the family enjoys and shows which can be viewed by the entire family.

- ◆ Create family rules regarding television viewing. For instance, you may choose to have a rule about children not being able to watch television until homework or chores are completed. You may also choose a rule regarding no television during meal times.

Positive Uses for Television:

- ◆ Treat television as a privilege that kids need to earn, not a right to which they are entitled.
- ◆ Co-viewing has been found to lead to lasting educational benefits. While watching television with your child:
 - Ask open-ended questions, such as "What do you think is going to happen," "Why do you think that happened," or "What did you learn from that program?"
 - Talk about ideas and concepts presented in the show.
 - Ask about words which are not familiar to them. If they are not sure what they mean, use a dictionary to look them up.
- ◆ Use modern technology, such as a DVR, to record shows to skip commercials.

Fun and Creative Uses for Television:

- ◆ Host a family movie night. Choose educational programs or movies.
- ◆ Shut off or pause the television before a recorded show or movie is over. Have your child write how they feel the show should end. Then finish the show and compare how similar or different the real ending and your child's made-up ending were.
- ◆ Use sporting events or your favorite show as an excuse to host a gathering to bring family and friends together. Throw an "Olympics" kick-off party.

Video Games

Video games may improve computer literacy and skills, give children practice in following directions and problem solving, and provide opportunities for parents and children to play together.

Setting Limits with Video Games:

- ◆ Be aware of the ratings of the video games your child is playing. Ratings may not always match parents' expectations; therefore, it may be essential for parents or caregivers to preview games or monitor video games while your child is playing them.
- ◆ Keep video game consoles out of children's bedrooms.
- ◆ Establish family rules regarding video game usage, such as homework and chores must be completed before playing or the length of time your child is allowed to play.
- ◆ Discuss with your child what he or she is playing; explain content

which your child may not understand.

Positive Uses for Video Games:

- ◆ Choose games which encourage problem solving, logic, fine motor or spatial skills, and following directions.
- ◆ Look for games which involve multiple players to encourage group play.

Fun and Creative Uses for Video Games:

- ◆ Opt for games which include physical activity, such as Wii games or Dance Dance Revolution.
- ◆ Start the tradition of a family game night. Incorporate digital video games, card games, and board games.

Internet

Computers can be used as a teaching tool both at home and school and allow youth to maintain connections with peers and family.

Setting Limits with the Internet:

- ◆ Many parents and caregivers are concerned with the amount of information youth disclose while online. Have open discussions about the risks associated with the Internet and encourage youth to keep information private and tell a trusted adult if they feel harassed by a stranger or friend online.
- ◆ Establish family rules regarding what Web sites your child is allowed to visit, what time of day your child is allowed to access the Internet, and activities your

child is allowed to do while online.

- ♦ If your child is using social networking sites or instant messaging, have discussions regarding who your child is allowed to talk with online.
- ♦ Place the computer in a “high traffic” area of the home to help parents or caregivers monitor online behaviors. Avoid allowing computers in children’s bedrooms.

Positive Uses with the Internet:

- ♦ Facilitate online learning by accompanying the child while online, pointing to the task, reminding the child of the goal, suggesting ideas and solutions, and asking questions.
- ♦ Encourage your child to utilize the Internet for homework assistance. Teach them how to identify credible sources from less credible ones.

Fun and Creative Uses for the Internet:

- ♦ Participate in social networking sites to stay connected to family and friends.
- ♦ Many youth enjoy identity exploration while online. Communicating with others online helps youth determine who they are, who they would like to become, and their values. Children and adolescents may be able to join youth online groups where youth share common interests.
- ♦ Check out high-quality web sites.

Resources

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Tech Savvy Families
Issue 9: Healthy Technology Habits
A Newsletter for Young People

Suggested Activity:

Track Your Technology and Media Usage!

Screen Time Log						
Name: _____				Week Of: ____/____/____		
	TV	Video Games	DVD/Movies	Computer/Internet Use	Cell Phones	Time (Hours)
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						
TOTAL:						

Check out these Webs:

National Geographic Kids: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

- Games, videos, stories, activities, and much more!

Funology <http://www.funology.com>

- Offers fun, creative activities, arts, crafts, games, jokes, boredom busters, wacky facts, kid-friendly recipes, educational materials, and more!

Funbrain <http://www.funbrain.com>

- Provides web books, comics, and tons of activities

Kids' Science Challenge <http://www.kidsciencechallenge.com>

- A website based on a nationwide competition for 3rd to 6th graders to submit experiments

DOGO News <http://www.dogonews.com>

- This site has current events, science activities, sports, stores, pictures, videos and more!

APPENDIX 10. *TECH SAVVY FAMILIES* SAMPLE EVALUATION

***Tech Savvy Families* Parenting Newsletter Series Parent Questionnaire**

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong answers. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please check or circle the answer as appropriate. When you are finished, please return the questionnaire.

1. Nine issues of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletters have been sent home with your child or to your home. How many of these newsletters did you receive?
 - 0
 - 1-3
 - 4-6
 - 7-9

2. How much of the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series did you read?
 - None of the issues
 - Skim and read over the content in a few issues
 - Most of the content in most issues
 - All the content in all nine of the issues

3. If you did not read the newsletter, why not?

4. What do you usually do with the newsletters?
 - Share them with someone
 - Throw them away
 - Keep them and file for later use
 - Give them to someone

5. Does anyone else read your copy of the newsletter?
 - Yes
 - No

6. If yes, who? (Check all that apply)
 - Spouse or partner
 - Child's grandparent
 - Another friend or relative
 - Other parents
 - Co-worker
 - Other _____

For me, the <i>Tech Savvy Families</i> newsletters were:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. About the right length				
8. Positive as an information source				
9. Easy to read and understand				
10. Interesting to read and informative				
11. Useful in my everyday parenting				

12. How would you improve the newsletter?

Parents get information on parenting and family life from many sources. Please rate how useful each of the sources has been for you. Circle the appropriate number.

Source	Does Not Apply	Not at all Useful	Some-what Useful	Very Useful		
13. Your parents, relatives, in-laws	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Spouse	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. Friends or other parents	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. Physician, nurse, care provider	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. Books, magazines, newspapers	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. Parent education or discussion group	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. The Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. <i>Tech Savvy Families</i> newsletter	0	1	2	3	4	5

21. What did you like or find helpful about the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletters as a parent?

22. Has reading the newsletters led you to do anything differently with your child? If so, what? Can you share this briefly?

Please rate the following issues of *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter using this scale:
1=Not at all Useful to 5=Very Useful

<i>Tech Savvy Families</i> Topic:	Does Not Apply	Not at all Useful	2	Some-what Useful	4	Very Useful
23. Parenting in the Digital Age	0	1	2	3	4	5
24. Cell Phone: Connecting to Family and Friends Safely	0	1	2	3	4	5
25. Cyberspace: Surfing Safely Online	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. Cyberbullying	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. Media Influences	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. Social Networking: Socialize Safely Online	0	1	2	3	4	5
29. Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles	0	1	2	3	4	5
30. Media Violence	0	1	2	3	4	5
31. Healthy Technology Habits	0	1	2	3	4	5

32. Has the *Tech Savvy Families* newsletter series influenced you parenting? If so, how?

33. How many hours per week are the following technologies utilized?

Technology	Average Hours per Week Used	This Technology is Not Used in Our Home
Cell Phones		
Computer/Internet		
Television		
Video Games		
DVDs/Movies		

Demographic Information

The following personal information is important to this survey. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please respond sincerely.

1. Age _____

2. Gender

- Male
- Female

3. Racial or Ethnic Background

- Caucasian
 - Native American or Alaskan Native
 - African-American
 - Asian
 - Hispanic
 - Other
- _____

4. Family Status

- Single (never married)
- Married
- Separated/divorced
- Live with partner
- Remarried
- Widowed

5. Employment Status

- Employed full time (40+ hours a week)
 - Employed 26 to 39 hours a week
 - Employed less than 25 hours per week
 - Seeking employment
 - Not seeking outside employment (full time student, homemaker, retired)
 - Other
- _____

6. Education

- Some high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- Two-year degree
- Four-year degree
- Master's degree or higher