

Technology and Our Children

Thank you to all of you who have taken time to be here tonight and I hope that you will find it worth your while.

(PRAY)

Tonight what we would like to do is to talk a little bit about the impact of technology, the internet and social media on our children's lives and on our families. We would like to highlight some of the real challenges we face, try and point out some of the pitfalls and dangers, look at our responsibility as parents and then finish off this evening with some practical tools to help protect our children.

Let's warm up with a little clip which I love because it kind of depicts how technology has invaded our homes over the years.

Why have we put this seminar together? Last term we had a meeting with a counsellor from one of the other CHISZ schools. She told us of a few incidents that strongly indicated that this is a topic we need to be far more proactive in addressing. Last year at her school a number of grade 7's formed a whatsapp group, this group grew quickly to well over 60 members in a matter of days and included pupils from other schools. The topic of conversation turned to; "Who are you going to sleep with." When brought to the attention of the counsellor, they were able to help the pupils remove themselves from the group, but led to the school conducting a survey and addressing the parents on the issue of Internet and social media. We have conducted a similar survey and will share some of the results shortly, but before we do, I would like to try and paint a picture of how big the challenge is that we as parents are facing!

Firstly, the internet. **(Picture of town.)** Would you send your grade 5, 6, 7 child to post a letter in this environment without alerting them to and training them in how to navigate and avoid the pitfalls? Yet in some ways this is what we are doing with the internet when we allow our children to access the internet without the guidance they require. In fact the city would look more like this!! **(second picture of city)**. This challenge becomes even greater when we realise the responsibility we have as parents to guide our children through this jungle when they are more streetwise when it comes to technology than we are!

So let's look at how technology affects different age groups, (work out where you fit in the scale!)

Different Generations

- Digital Immigrants (Baby Boomers)
 - Digital Adapters (Gen X – 1966 to 1976 younger parents)
 - Digital Natives (Gens Y 1977 to 1994 and Z 1995 to current – students)
- (Generation Z as described by The Social Librarian - This highly diverse environment will make the grade schools of the next generation the most diverse ever. Higher levels of technology will make significant inroads in academics allowing for customized instruction, data mining of student histories to enable pinpoint diagnostics and remediation or accelerated achievement opportunities. Gen Z kids will grow up with a highly sophisticated

media and computer environment and will be more Internet savvy and expert than their Gen Y forerunners.

I wonder where you fit. I seem to have slipped in between two categories, that of immigrant and adaptor, I would imagine most of you as parents will fit into the adaptor category and a fair number into the native Generation Y category, but all of the pupils in this school fit into the Generation Z.

Let us take a quick look at some of the survey results we have compiled.

GRADE ONE AND TWO TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

GRADE ONE:

The Grade One teachers asked the children if they use technology at home.

1 Blue – class of 28. Nineteen children have access to parents I-pads/phones.

1 Green – class of 28. Twenty children have access to I-pads/Tablets or parents phones.

1 Red – class of 28. One child has a phone and goes on whatsapp. Another child goes on facebook. Only one child doesn't have access to technology.

GRADE TWO:-

Asked the following:

- a. They have their own phone/I-pad/laptop etc. or what family technology they are allowed to use.
- b. I asked their favourite games.
- c. I asked if they are allowed to go on the internet and download.

Grade 2 Blue –class of 27. Five children have smart phones. Every child has access to technology. Five children are allowed to go on the internet.

Grade 2 Orange – class of 26. Nine children have their own phones. Only one child does not have access to technology at home. Eight children are allowed on the internet.

Grade 2 Yellow – class of 28. Three children have smart phone. Every child has access to technology. Ten children are allowed to go on the internet.

GRADE 3 MEDIA SURVEY Term 1 2015

(Verbal questions not written)

3 YELLOW (25 children)

PHONES

7 children have their own phone

6 share a phone with siblings or parents

5 use Whatsapp

5 have parents checking their phones

iPAD / TABLET

19 have access to use some form of tablet or iPad

GAMES CONSOLE

12 have access to a games console

Favourite games include:-

Temple Run, Dumb Ways to Die, Angry Birds, Injustice guards among us, Turboburst 1, Subway surf and most disturbing one of all.... **CALL OF DUTY**

INTERNET

All children have internet at home

1 child has no home computer but I think that same child has an iPad

8 can go onto the internet at any time with or without supervision

Only 8 children have a home computer in a public place

The remaining children have computers in rooms like bedrooms, office etc.

ACCESS

16 children are allowed onto some form of gadget anytime

3 children – weekends only

4 children – after homework

3 children – only in the holidays

3 RED (26 children)

PHONES

10 children have their own cell-phones

6 of them are smartphones

1 child got it at age 5 years, 4 children at age 6 years, 5 at age 7 years

7 children use Whatsapp

7 have parental checking of their phones

iPAD / TABLET

22 have access to some form of tablet

GAMES CONSOLE

16 have access to some form of games console

Favourite games include:-

Temple Run, Plants vs. Zombies, Subway surf, candy crush, Most Wanted, Mario, soccer, and most disturbing one of all.... **GRAND THEFT AUTO**

INTERNET

2 have no computer at home

2 have computers in their own bedroom

2 children have a computer that is in a public place

13 children have computers in rooms where the door can be closed

15 have mobile computers (i.e. laptops)

ACCESS

11 children are allowed on at any time

10 children can play any game they desire
10 children have to wait until after their homework for access

3 BLUE (11 children)

PHONES

3 children have their own cell-phones
3 of them are smartphones
1 child got it at age 4 years, 1 children at age 5 years, 1 at age 6 years
2 children use Whatsapp
1 child has a parent checking videos on phone
2 children have no parental checking of their phones

iPAD / TABLET

8 have access to some form of tablet

GAMES CONSOLE

? all children have access to some form of games console

Favourite games include:-

Temple Run, Clash of Clans, candy crush, Angry Birds, Minecraft, racing game, and spiderman

INTERNET

6 children allowed on internet whenever they want to
7 children are allowed to download any games they want to
Most children have laptops at home so their places move from room to room

ACCESS

7 children are allowed on computer any day
4 children can play after homework
1 child only allowed playing at weekends

I think there was some misunderstanding amongst these children about using a computer and using the internet.... they are quite little and the two things are so intertwined in their minds.

GRADE 6 TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

Smart phone:

42– Have a smart phone.
32 – No smart phone.
12 – Share.

Whatsapp:

55 – Use Whatsapp
31 – Don't use Whatsapp

48 – Parents have access to the phone.

38 – Parents do not have access to the phone. (NB – most of those without access were those with no phones)

iPad or Tablet:

36 – Have an iPad or Tablet.

34 – Don't have an iPad or Tablet.

16 – Share an iPad or Tablet.

5 – Use for facebook

8 – Use for snapchat

7 – Use for Instagram

9 – Use for twitter

45 – Use for youtube

57 – Use for Music

7 – Use for skype

8 – Use for games

10 – Use for google

Gaming:

66 – Have a game consol.

20 – Don't have a game consol.

Fifa 15 and Subway surfers are the most popular games.

Internet:

48 – Are allowed on whenever they want.

38 – Not allowed on whenever they want.

66 – Are allowed to download games.

20 – Are not allowed to download games.

54 – Are restricted on what games they can download.

32 – Are not restricted on what games they can download.

26 – Have the computer in public place.

42 – Have the computer in a study or bedroom and of these 17 have it in their own bedroom.

28 – Are allowed on devices anytime.

22 – Are allowed on devices only on weekends or holidays.

26 – Are allowed on devices after homework is done.

1 – Is allowed on devices when they ask.

GRADE 7 TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

Smart phone:

58 – Have a smart phone.

22 – No smart phone.

5 – Share.

Whatsapp:

41 – Use Whatsapp

26 – Don't use Whatsapp

53 – Parents have access to the phone

28 – Parents do not have access to the phone. (NB – most of those without access were those with no phones)

iPad or Tablet:

34 – Have an iPad or tablet.

42 – Don't have an iPad or Tablet.

9 – Share an iPad or Tablet.

3 – Use for fb

7 – Use for snapchat

17 – Use for Instagram

20 – Use for twitter

38 – Use for youtube

50 – Use for Music

Gaming:

53 – Have a game consol.

44 – Don't have a game consol.

Temple Run the most popular

Fifa – Subway surfer

Internet:

40 – Are allowed on whenever they want.

48 – Not allowed on whenever they want.

63 – Are allowed to download games.

20 – Are not allowed to download games.

50 – Are restricted on what games they can download.

32 – Are not restricted on what games they can download.

27 – Have the computer in a public place.

45 – Have the computer in a study or bedroom and of these 10 have it in their own bedroom.

19 – Are allowed on devices anytime.

84 – Are allowed on devices only on weekends or holidays.

42 – Are allowed on devices after homework is done.

2 – Are allowed on devices when they ask. (about 5 indicated they are on the internet with a parent).

So now I have painted a little bit of a picture of the challenge we face as parents, perhaps it would be good to encourage you a little and then we will get a little more specific in terms of the dangers we need to address.

Trying to bring a Biblical view on the issue of technology and so much of what technology brings to our lives is new finding a Biblical point of departure is a challenge in itself. So let's start with Ecclesiastes Where King Solomon brings a little perspective – Eccl 1:1-5, 8-10

“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. 3What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? 4A generation comes, but the earth remains forever. 5The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.... 8All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. 9What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. 10Is there a thing of which it is said, ‘See, this is new’? It has been already in the ages before us.”

Solomon explores all sorts of things seeking fulfilment and concludes in Chapter 12 vs 1 “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’.” Perhaps this should be our point of departure this evening – God is not taken by surprise when it comes to technology, we have been created in God’s image and as such we have the ability to create, design, dream and advance technology. Yet as with anything else in life, when we leave our creator out, it all becomes completely meaningless and just vanity. (Hebel: Mist or vapour – something that is fleeting or elusive).

Another verse I would like us to look at is 1 Corinthians 6:12 “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.”

As Edward R. Murrow, an American broadcasting journalist famously said:

“This instrument, television, can entertain, it can inform, yes, and it can even inspire. But it all depends on the will of the humans who operate it. Otherwise it is just lights and wires in a box.”

We live in a culture saturated by technology. The information, promotions, opportunities and noise it creates seem to fill in the cracks of our already-busy lives so that every waking moment is occupied.

Some stats about technology taken from a study conducted by Amanda Lenhart for Pew Internets—a great summary about how plugged in teenagers are today:

- 93% of teenagers 12-17 are online—the largest percentage of any age group.
- Only 8% of families with teens have no computer, and only 4% of homes with computers don’t have access to Internet.
- 80% of teens 12-17 own a game console.
- 75% of all teens have a cell phone.
- A typical teen sends about 50 texts per day.
- Most teen cell phone users make 1-5 calls per day.
- 31% of teens who take their phones to school send text messages every day during class time.
- 73% of teens are on social Internet sites (like Facebook).
- Only 8% of teens use Twitter (compared to 37% of 18-24 year-olds—the largest percentage of any age group).
- 14% of teens now blog, compared to 28% in 2006.

As thorough as Amanda’s report was, it didn’t deal with the amount of time kids spend watching TV, or in front of the computer, or listening to music.

That is an American survey, so let’s look at Zim 2013!

So what can we do?

Children in a Digital World

1. **Know the dangers** (1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” 2 Corinthians 2:11 “So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”
 - a) **Pornography** - Sometimes it's hard to fully understand the threats that lie beyond the click of a mouse. According to the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, the largest group of viewers of Internet porn is children between ages 12 and 17. **NB – SEX etc God First!**
 - b) **Online predators**. Research shows that one in five children is sexually solicited online, that 70 percent of inappropriate solicitations of children occur while a child is using a home computer. Yet only 25 percent of children receiving a sexual solicitation told a parent. Many of us aren't careful enough when giving out information about ourselves online. (fb – lifeskills). (Grade 6 at Chisi exposed to homosexual pornography, took two years for it to come out).
 - c) **Cyber-bullying** (Amanda Todd Clip)
 - d) **Misinformation** (fb – Lifeskills).
 - e) **Violence**.
 - f) **Games**. Although the American Medical Association doesn't classify it as a formal disorder, more than 20 percent of kids in the United States are considered addicted to computer and video games, which produce physiological reactions in the brain similar to those associated with substance abuse. Research shows that the chemicals triggered by about 30 minutes of play rival an amphetamine high. Eventually, a process called "habituation" takes over — rewiring the brain and creating a physiological dependence similar to cocaine addiction. In fact, the first detox centre for video-game addicts opened in the Netherlands recently.
 - g) **Loss of connection with the real world**.
- (NB – not an exclusive list but enough to start with).

2. Share their World: (Jesus – Zaccheus)

Communication is key! (Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10 “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”)

As we wrestle with technology, it does not have to be a frightful menace, it can be rich and rewarding. However, we can find trying to cope alone scary. We need to talk to parents, to peers, ask questions. Parents need to at least try to keep up with today's technology and you guys can help us and in so doing work it out together with them.

We need to engage with our children, let them teach you how to use technology, know what they are looking at, what they are using, what apps are on their phones! We will do some practical work on this at the end, but a few apps that they may be involved in that you can look out for:

Snapchat:

This app provides users with a false sense of security by sending messages which self-destruct once they are seen. Messages are photos or short videos. Snapchat has become a way for teens to send sexually explicit images to each other without realizing that it does not take much for the recipient to capture and store photographs which should not have been taken in the first place. (counsellor at Arundel).

Kik:

Kik messenger is a smartphone application which will allow teens to send as many texts, photos or videos as they would like, without worrying about going over on your cell phone plan's text limits. The Kik app is a preferred alternative to standard text messaging in that it uses a more kid-friendly format. The problem with Kik is that users don't need to ask permission before sending messages. Children with the Kik app are vulnerable to being searched by strangers or harassed by peers.

Afterschool, Yik Yak, Ask.fm or Whisper

These apps allow for more anonymous postings, including pictures. Users share pictures and texts much like writing on a bathroom wall. These apps become a virtual playground for cyberbullying and rumours and should be avoided by children.

Chatroulette, YouNow or Omegle

These apps allow users to connect to other users all over the world, at random, for as long as both parties agree. Once one party decides the conversation is over, the app cycles new connections in. Communications are done with video, and the apps become a way for children to allow strangers into their bedrooms. These apps can become a risk for the entire family if not taken seriously.

Tinder, Plenty of Fish or Meet Me

These are dating apps which are meant for adults. These apps include games to make the matchmaking experience unique to each of these apps. The apps allow for users to post photographs, broadcast general location data and browse for other users to 'rate' or engage in conversations. The app designers put safety measures in place, but children find a way to bypass those and create their accounts. These apps are adult oriented and should not be on a child's smartphone or tablet.

Keepsafe, App Lock or Poof

These are apps which teens use to hide other apps and files on their smartphone. The applications may look like a calculator, or a note pad or some other app, but with a secret passcode, children are able to enter a virtual "vault" to hide and retrieve files that they do not want others to see.

Parents need to be aware of what their children are using smart devices for. The applications on their children's devices may not be as harmless as they seem. With every harmful app that gets discovered, a new one will take its place. It is important for parents to be aware of what types of app features could be dangerous, and review the apps on their children's devices to see if any of those apps fall into that category.

Parental control software such as Mobile Spy or [PhoneSheriff](#) will allow parents to log in from any computer and see which apps are being used on their children's smartphone at any time. If a name is not familiar, parents can search for the name of the app and will find a general idea of what the app is used for. Parents are then able to set the parental control software to block their children's access to dangerous applications by disabling the applications they see as risky.

3. Real Life:

This is an area I really want to zero in on.

Play Prince Ea Clip

It's funny: Our techno-gadgetry allows us to stay in contact with so many different friends that we're often guilty of ignoring the people in the room with us in favour of those we're talking to online or on the cell phone. Furthermore, we sometimes interact long-distance in ways that we wouldn't up close, and intimacy is lost. It takes some intentionality to ensure that real, high-touch bonds get maintained in an age of cyber-communication. (Life Skills classes fb communication easier and yet shallower.

4. Some practical thoughts on Computer phone and Internet Usage:

- a) Accountability! Put the computer in a public location, give access to others, keep each other accountable.
- b) Set basic rules for Internet usage. (Proverbs 25:28 "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.") These rules can include when and how often you go online, how much time you spend whatsapping/texting/communicating electronically. (Even fast from technology!)
- c) Be discerning and lean on the Holy Spirit! (Car dashboard). (John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth..." Philippians 1:9-10 "And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him." 1 Corinthians 11:12 – 13 "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.")