

Big Ridge Elementary School

School of Excellence

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Big Ridge Parents,

I don't know the correct age for giving a child a phone or tablet, but I do know that many children are being exposed to content beyond their maturity level. A phone/tablet isn't just a tool to call someone with (or now zoom with), it's a tool to access the WORLD with. A world of content that could be good and educational, but also a world of content that could be questionable and/or harmful!

In my world, the counseling world, it's the questionable/harmful content that I worry the most about. The comparative nature of social media platforms can diminish a child's worth. Also, we are continuing to hear about the enormous amount of time students are spending in front of a device gaming or watching sites like YouTube or TikTok. Remember, uninterrupted and unmonitored screen time can be worrisome time!

With that said, continue to be mindful of the amount of time students spend in front of a screen...which is only increasing given today's situation (COVID and Virtual Learning). It's unrealistic to have a world without screens, but that doesn't mean boundaries and parental controls can't be set.

According to the Mayo Clinic too much or poor quality screen time has been linked to:

- Irregular sleep schedules
- Behavioral problems
- Loss of social skills
- Obesity
- Violence
- Less time for play

On that note, here are some good tips from the Mayo Clinic:

- Prioritize unplugged, unstructured playtime (i.e. free play, physical activity, clubs, sports)
- Create tech-free zones or times, such as during mealtime or night time
- Discourage use of media entertainment during homework
- Set and enforce daily or weekly screen time limits and curfews, such as no exposure to devices or screens one hour before bedtime
- Consider using apps that control the length of time a child can use a device
- Require your children to charge their devices outside of their bedrooms at night. Devices could also be stored in a neutral location (i.e. kitchen, office)
- Limit your own screen time (i.e. personal boundaries and avoid normalizing use of screens)

When we give a child a bike we also give them a helmet. Let's make a commitment to better equipping our children (and ourselves) in this tech-driven world.

- ***Mr. Rocco, School Counselor (and Parent), Big Ridge Elementary School***