Tips for Parents Concerning Technology & Children
Doug Fodeman, Director of Technology, Brookwood School

Children's Most Common Misconceptions and Mistakes
1. Most of the Internet is private
2. Making friends through the Internet is like making friends in real life
3. I saw it (read it) so it must be true (Studies have found that most teens are fooled by fake news)
4. Because I can, I will
5. I am safe and in control (The bad things that happen to others won't happen to me)
6. My parents gave me a __ so I can do what I want with it
7. People are who they say they are on the Internet
8. Friending strangers and allowing strangers to follow me can't hurt me
9. There is no such thing as "too much" use of technology
10. I am not addicted to my social media, phone, electronic/internet games, etc.

Engage Your Children Often...
- Keep the lines of communication open and emotionally safe for your child to talk about Internet life
- Try not to overreact; consider offering your child opportunities to speak freely without interruption, judgment or even a response from you for a period of time. Just listen
- Listen with compassion first, work on strategies second
- Work with your school, teachers and administration to resolve conflicts and issues
- Make conversations about life online and social media routine topics. Ask lots of questions (and talk to other parents too!)

Internet Rules for Parents to Consider for Their Children
It is much easier to set stricter rules around your child's use of technology when they are younger, than when they are older. Also, the negative impact of excessive technology use is greater if children start using it at younger ages.
1. Parents have child's password to **all** online accounts; parents will *use them* to periodically explore their child's digital lives, including texts
2. Children will not use social networking sites/apps until 7th/8th grade; children should *never* be allowed to use sites/apps that enable anonymous communication
3. Parents will monitor a child's technology use and use software to assist monitoring on *all their devices*
4. Don't allow texting or chatting until 7th/8th grade
5. Set limits to time & activities using technology
6. No friending or responding to strangers including via email, text and posts; especially true for Instagram!
7. Never give out personal information online or post things via text, online, in social media that should never appear in public! ("over-the-shoulder" viewing and unintended viewing of messages is common)
8. You are **always** expected to be kind & respectful online; mean, hurtful or vulgar communication is never acceptable
9. Parent's passwords should not be known by children
10. Parents **will** take cell phones, game controllers, or other i-devices at night, at dinner table, at family time, during sleepovers, etc...
11. Don't give your younger-than-grade 7 child a smartphone; give them a ***parent-phone*** Eg. Kajeet / Children younger than 7th grade should *not* be given smartphones!
12. Children should never post photos/videos of themselves or other children without your permission or permission from the parents of the other child. (Set very clear expectations about posting photos and videos and the use of YouTube.)
13. Children should expect parents to check a child's text messages or any other form of virtual communication. Clearly state that deleted messages *will* result in consequences.
14. Children should never sign up for online accounts, or install new apps/software without parents' permission.
15. Never forward scare-mail, group texts or simply because someone tells you to.
16. There are technology-free zones and times. They are...
17. Consider using a smartphone contract with your child... Search: smartphone contract for kids or visit Brookwood's links (see below.)
18. Don't allow your child to use social media, including Instagram & Snapchat, until 7th or 8th grade.

Mistakes Commonly Made by Parents That Increase Children's Risks
1. ***Give their child a smartphone before 7th grade***
2. Give their child *unfiltered, unmonitored* Internet access
3. Allow their child to have Internet access 24/7; access from behind closed bedroom doors
4. Give their child the ability to text via cell phone, iPad or iPod Touch before 7th grade
5. *Don't set limits!* E.g. time on screen or use of app/site
6. Don't ask for a child's password OR ask but don't use it to log into their child's accounts
7. Give/allow technology because they don't want their child to be "left out" or lose social "currency"
8. Allow their children to play online games with chat enabled, including Minecraft. Or allow their children to play video games rated for much older, more mature ages.
9. Don't make expectations clear or consistent for their children; don't engage in conversations with their children about their digital lives
10. If you feel that your child is using technology (ie. Smartphone) too much, then he or she is. *Do something* about it!

How Can Parents Send the Right Messages to Their Children
- Have non-negotiable expectations for their children's use of technology
- Technology use should be severely limited and only with direct hands-on supervision for children under 14. Never use technology as a "babysitter"
- Teenagers still need limits, boundaries and to hear parent expectations; talk about the tough subjects like sexting, cyberbullying, and the bad behavior routinely associated with anonymous communication
- Only allow Internet access in a public location; not behind bedroom doors
- Remove all phones & gaming devices at night, during sleepovers. Insist on non-digital playtime.
- Explain that the word "delete" doesn't exist online; *nothing* is private online (including Snapchat and texting!)
- Teach a child that the only chance to avoid mistakes online is BEFORE he/she clicks, posts or sends.
- Their emotional & developmental health is more important than their "fun time" using powerful technologies
- Create Technology-free zones/times e.g. Dinner-time, sporting events, performances, family fun time (Parents should respect these tech-free zones/times as well!)
- Collect all iPads/tablets, iPod Touches and cell phones at the door when friends come over –especially for a sleep-over!
- When you are upset with someone, hurt or angry *never* use technology (chat/text/post) to try to resolve the conflict or hurt; call the person (voice/video chat) or even better… speak to him/her in person
- Model good technology behavior for your children; your smartphone is for ADULT use only and never given to young children to play with
- Require your child to use strong passwords of at least 10 characters for accounts and have a phone passcode that is <u>never</u> shared with his or her friends

Understated Risks For Children Using Technology
1. Younger children are often given smartphones. These greatly increase their risks in many different ways. E.g Smartphones can decrease a child's emotional well-being and safety
2. Children are increasingly spending more time in front of screens and less time in creative, abstract play, or engaging in face-to-face interactions that build skills related to socio-emotional intelligence.
3. New research shows that children are effectively re-wiring their brains to have a negative impact on their attention span; reducing their ability to sustain focus on a task such as reading substantive material for 30 minutes or longer.
4. Research shows that children do not develop empathy or socio-emotional intelligence through online socializing. The opposite can be true through the impact of disinhibition and anonymity.
5. Excessive use of technology leads to increasing distractability in children.

Resources to Further Your Understanding of the Issues:
1. **Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hijacking Our Kids – and How to Break the Trance** by Dr. Nicholas Kardaras
2. **The Big Disconnect** by Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair
3. **Vitamin N** and **Last Child in the Woods** by Richard Louv
4. **CNN's Being Thirteen:** http://www.cnn.com/specials/us/being13 (video)
5. **Screenagers:** http://www.screenagersmovie.com/ (Hosted video; $)
6. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/technology-addiction
7. **Up-to-date resources & recommendations on Brookwood School's website**: http://www.brookwood.edu/guidelines-parents-regarding-technology-and-children ←**Updated often!**