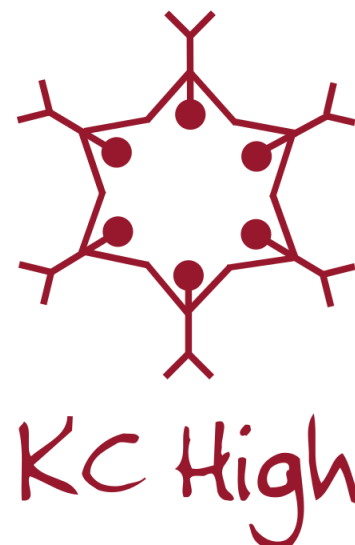


Online Safety and the Use of Digital Devices

2020 Guideline for Parents

This document is intended for the parents of KC High students in Grades VI - Grade XII, aged 11 - 18. The document is not a policy statement or a set of rules, but it is a set of guidelines for parents who would like the help of experienced educators. At KC High, we know that every family is different. The rules and boundaries that are set in the household must be set by the parents themselves. We do not tell parents how to raise their children. However, we are professional educators who read, discuss, and study the opinions of experts. Also, we have guided many pre-teens and teenagers through their school years. The following guidelines are constructed from our professional judgement and years of experience.



Definition: "Screen Time" the amount of time that students spend looking at electronic screens, such as TVs, game consoles, computers, tablets, smartphones, etc.

Talk to your Children about Internet Usage

All experts agree that the single most important recommendation for parents is to talk to your children about how they use the internet and digital devices. Please talk to them when everyone is calm and you can have a reasonable conversation away from these devices. Set a time in advance and make it a pleasant environment -- perhaps you want to take them out to dinner. Do not set rules or argue with them when you are annoyed because they are spending too much time online. Negotiate fair rules with your children.

Limit Screen Time

Parents should limit the number of hours of screen time for their children: a maximum of one hour per night seems sensible. The Mayo Clinic and the American Association of Pediatricians link excessive Screen Time to obesity, irregular sleep, impaired academic performance, and behavioural problems.¹

Homework is not an Excuse

Parents should not accept the excuse that students need to use their computers for 4 or 5 hours at a time, or that they need to stay up past midnight, to complete their homework. If a KC High student practices sensible time management, he or she should be able to complete all homework assignments in two hours or less per night. If your child is spending excessive hours on homework, the parents have every right to first contact the teacher(s), and then possibly the coordinator.²

Set a Bedtime

All experts agree that parents should set a bedtime. Negotiate this bedtime with your child and come to an agreement, and then stick to it.

¹ "Children's Health." *Children and TV: Limiting Your Child's Screen Time*. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2015. Web. 21 Feb. 2015.

² "KC High Policy Manual."

Use the Student Handbook

A few students are organized enough so that they can keep track of all their assignments and deadlines electronically, but most students are not. Therefore, we recommend that all Secondary students keep a Homework Diary which is free for every student. Writing down homework assignments is always a good habit.

Avoid Multitasking

Many pre-teens and teenagers say they are doing homework, but they are actually multitasking, listening to music, watching a video, chatting with their friends, and “doing homework” all at the same time. Talk to your children about the problems with multitasking: there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that multitasking leads to mistakes and poor performance. We also believe that focus, the opposite of multitasking, is an important component of success.

Screens Off an Hour Before Bedtime

It is advisable that children do not look at electronic screens for the hour before bedtime. When the brain is staring at bright, shiny rectangles, it is bombarded by photons which trick the brain into thinking it is daytime, and this makes sleep difficult.

Model Expected Behaviour

It is difficult to justify or enforce sensible guidelines about digital devices unless the parents themselves are modeling good behaviour. If we want our children to limit the amount of time they spend staring at electronic screens, then we ourselves must also respect those limits.

Phones Off at night

We want parents to enforce this rule because late-night messaging and chatting is causing a distraction to many students who are then tired in the daytime. We want our students to be fresh and alert in the mornings, so that they can learn productively. We realize that this rule will be difficult for some parents to enforce, but we greatly appreciate your efforts to help us.

Plan Alternate Activities

Be sure that you plan alternatives to digital devices for children. Family activities, indoor or outdoor, such as a family dinner, or a walk in the park, are recommended.

Don't Use “Anonymous Apps”

“Anonymous Apps”, such as Sararah, ask.fm, Secret, or Whisper, target teenagers and they disregard internet safety and deliberately provoke cyberbullying and trolling, etc. to increase controversy and media attention. Please talk to your children about the dangers of these apps, and tell them to avoid using them.