Parents Council

OF WASHINGTON

CONNECTING SCHOOLS • SHARING IDEAS • ENGAGING PARENTS

2024 Lower and Middle School Forum:
"Digital Citizenship and Technology in the Classroom"
with Member School Panel
~ *EVENT SUMMARY* ~

December 3, 2024

2024-2025 PCW Programming Theme: "Welcome to the Future"

- Fall Speaker Series: "AI in Education 101" with Amanda Bickerstaff, CEO of AI for Education - October 29, 2024, 7-8:30 PM, *Virtual* *(see online Event Summary)*

- ***Lower and Middle School Forum: "Digital Citizenship and Technology in the Classroom" with Member School Panel - December 3, 2024, 7-8:30 PM, Washington Waldorf School***

- Movie Screening: *Screenagers III: Under the Influence* - February 5, 2025, 10 AM - 12 PM, *The Avalon Theatre*

- Spring Speaker Series: "Digital Well-being: How can we help kids navigate a world where everything is shared and compared?" with Dr. Devorah Heitner, Author of *Growing Up in Public* - April 30, 2025, 7-8:30 PM, *Virtual*

PCW will host the annual Upper School Student Leader Breakfast on April 3, Middle School Student Leader Breakfast on April 9, and Upper School Deans' Breakfast on May 1.

Event Panelists

Mr. Nate Green

Academic Technology Coordinator, Sidwell Friends School and *Common Sense Media* and *Slate* Contributor

Ms. Sarah Heirman

Middle School Math Teacher, Washington Waldorf School

Ms. Susanne Rusan

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, National Presbyterian School

Event Summary: Classroom Technology and Project-Based Learning

- There is a **wide age range for when technology is introduced in classrooms**; some schools introduce technology in Lower School whereas others wait until Upper School; **those who delay say the learning curve is short** since students are exposed to technology outside of school and students are quick learners

- Benefits to schools introducing technology early include more **customized, immediate learning and feedback, developing skills and boundaries for navigating a technological world, providing an additional tool for collaboration, and supporting accessibility and alternative learning needs** (e.g., using "speech to text" or supporting audio vs. visual learners); advantages to introducing technology later include **emphasis on student-teacher and peer-to-peer relationships, heavier engagement with the physical environment, and driving creativity**

- **Technology can expand learning for students ready to go beyond an assignment and advance their skills** (e.g., creating a website or completing more professional projects on applications such GarageBand, Canva, and Keynote), as well as help provide more individualized instruction and allow students to communicate and collaborate with students, educators and experts in other cities, states or countries

Event Summary: Classroom Technology and Project-Based Learning (continued)

- **Technology is not always as sedentary a pursuit for students as it is for adults; students are often physically "up and moving" with technology vs. hunched over their keyboards staring at a screen for hours on end**

- **Mastery of subject matter is sometimes better achieved without relying on technology** (e.g.,, students may have better information recall when taking notes by hand vs. on their computers)

- **It's really up to teachers to know when, how and why students should use technology in the classroom to expand and deepen their learning**

Event Summary: Digital Citizenship, Health, and Wellness

- "Digital Citizenship" *(in an increasingly digitized world, we should reference "Citizenship," since behaviors transcend technology and skills taught will support students both online and offline)* involves **responsibly using technology including developing media literacy, staving off cyberbullying, and protecting online privacy**; best practices include **leveraging a school's value system and asking students to sign an "Acceptable Use Policy"**

- **There is a benefit to learning about digital spaces & digital dilemmas in a classroom with peers and teachers; it not only helps build awareness and understanding, but also facilitates the creation of agreed-upon processes and procedures to follow when new dilemmas arise**

- **Digital dilemmas will manifest - "not an 'if' but a 'when';" teach good habits so students can identify and manage; "if you did not pay for it, you are the product,"** meaning students need to be careful about actions/access since behaviors are monitored and information is collected, with at times non-altruistic intentions from companies.

- Embracing "Digital Health and Wellness" *(in an increasingly digitized world, we should reference "Health and Wellness," since behaviors transcend technology)*:
  - Schools are **concerned about screen time and distraction; most schools are "phone/smartwatch-free"** (some give pouches to brick devices; others require devices to be turned in daily); even though social apps can be disabled, students find workarounds so **teachers constantly refine distraction prevention**
  - At home, when students take too long to complete assignments, they are likely multitasking, social media, texting, videos/music, etc.; **parents should talk to students about focusing and creating distraction-free environments.**

Event Summary: Future Technologies and Advice to Parents

- **Artificial Intelligence's (AI) capabilities in schools are not as strong presently, but it will quickly develop into an even more powerful, ubiquitous tool**; while schools are opposed to using AI to complete assignments that should be conducted fully by students, schools **increasingly teach students how to use AI as a tool for research, and problem-solving** (e.g., using AI for grammar and vocabulary support or to check work, but not to produce it)

- **Parents should use technology with children – make it a family activity**; industry is evolving quickly so **embrace failure**; we all will get it wrong so it is important to learn from our mistakes (true for parents and children)

- **Parents should model good technology behavior for children**, e.g., prevent technology from impacting sleep, in-person connections, or other interactive/physical/outdoor activities; **implement device-free time and zones (e.g., dinner table), a family charging station, device contracts, screen time limits, age-appropriate apps, and WiFi controls (there are many programs parents can use to put limits on their children's devices)**; instead of a phone per child, a tip is to have a shared phone that rotates between family members; there is also now a market for devices that are not "smart" but give parents the functionality that they need (such as the ability to reach a child by phone at all times and vice-versa)

- <u>**Parents know their children best**</u>, e.g., what they are ready for and what is not healthy; **parents should talk to children about technology and social media use,** at home and school; **parents and schools must partner on these issues** to mutually support each other and students, such as by hosting "Parent Tech Talks" to help parents learn about rapidly changing and emerging technologies, as well as equip them with the vocabulary and understanding to know what they should discuss with their children

Panelists' Recommended Reading and Research

- "Parent Tech Talks" led by Nate

- *Schools Really Messed Up With Social Media. Now, We Have a Second Chance.*, *Slate* article by Nate

- *A Collective Approach to Digital Dilemmas*, *Common Sense Media* article by Nate

- Janell Burley Hofmann's *Top 10 Parent Tech Tips* (a recommendation from Susanne on how to introduce kids to technology at home and generate a family contract)

- *The Age of Social Media is Over, Welcome to Parasocial Media* by Nate (and Jack Besser)

Upcoming Events

Be on the lookout in <u>your school's newsletter</u> for <u>registration links</u>:

PCW 2025 Movie Screening

Screenagers III: Under the Influence

Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm
IN-PERSON - The Avalon Theatre

PCW Spring 2025 Speaker Series

"Digital Well-being: How can we help kids navigate a world where everything is shared and compared?"
with Dr. Devorah Heitner, Author of *Growing Up in Public*

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 7:00-8:30pm
VIRTUAL

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