
Tech & Kids Today

— Navigating the evolving
digital landscape —

Presented by Lindsay Unger,
PTACHC Technology Committee Chair

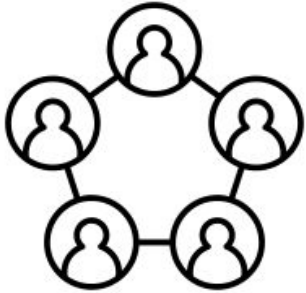
Agenda

- Understanding Today's Digital Landscape
- Building Your Tech Strategy
- Technology Use in Schools

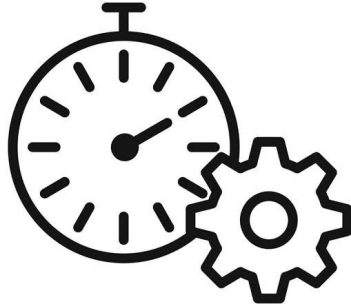
Understanding Today's Digital Landscape

- Benefits & risks
- The evolving landscape
- Drivers of change

Benefits



Long Distance
Connection



Information
and Efficiency



Robust
Entertainment



Accessibility
Tools

Risks

- Developmental delays
- Reduced attention control
- Emotional regulation challenges
- Online harms
- Problematic/compulsive use



Technology has evolved

Then...

- Defined ending
- Forced waiting periods
- Mild intensity
- Little/no data collection



Now...

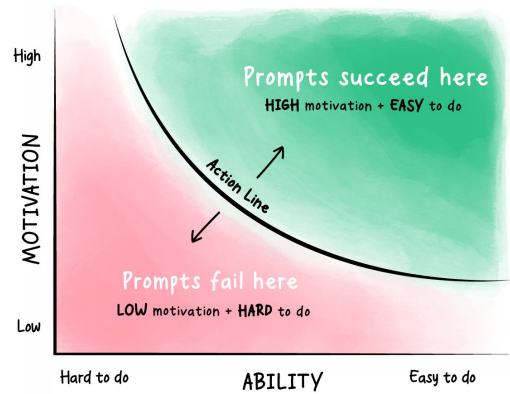
- Touch screen
- Auto-play
- On-demand access
- Unlimited content
- Connectivity to people
- Algorithmic personalization



Key drivers of change

Persuasive Design

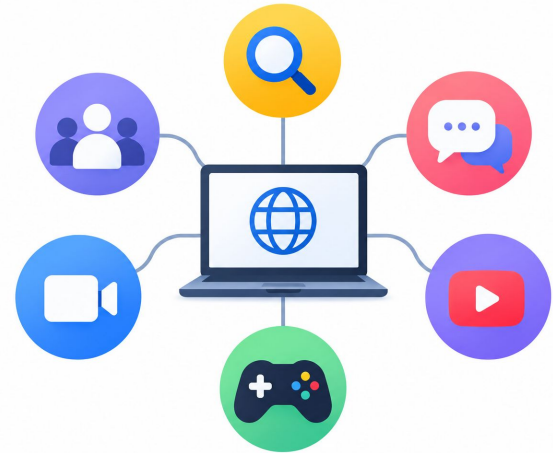
Fogg Behavior Model



Resource: BehaviorModel.org

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World Wide Web

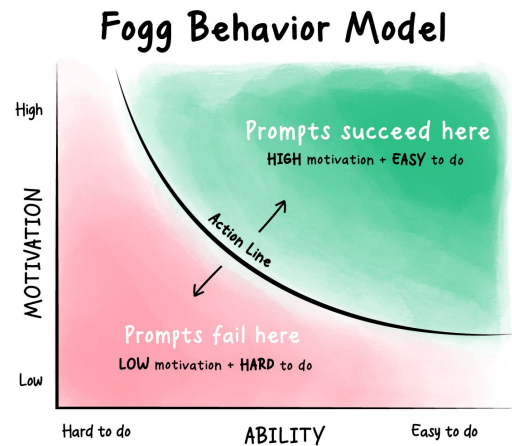


Dopamine triggers



Key drivers of change

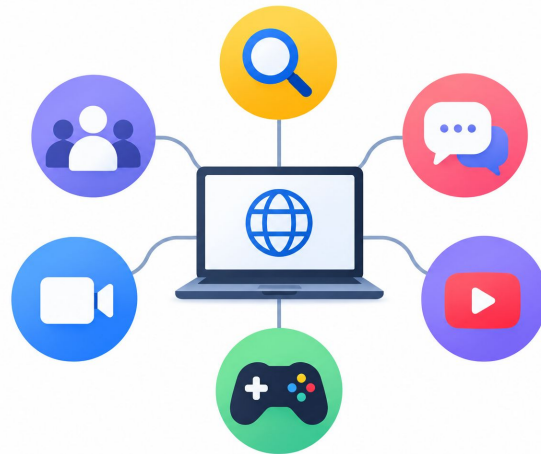
Persuasive Design



Resource: BehaviorModel.org

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World Wide Web



Online risks at a glance

60%

of child-directed
YouTube channels
studied included
age-inappropriate
ads

(Yeo et al. 2021)

1 in 6

9–12yos reported
experiencing an
online sexual
interaction, such as
being asked for a
nude image or
receiving an intimate
message.

(Thorn 2026)

67%

of children
ages 9-17
have reported
using an AI
chatbot as a
companion

(Thorn 2026)

~2 in 3

minors reported
that an
online-only
contact had asked
them to move
from a public
conversation to a
private one on
another platform

(Thorn 2022)

Yeo, S. L., et al. (2021). *Frequency and Duration of Advertising on Popular Child-Directed Channels on a Video-Sharing Platform*. JAMA Network Open.

Thorn. (2026). *Youth Perspectives on Online Safety*, 2025.

Thorn. (2026). *As AI Becomes Part of Kids' Response to Online Harm, New Thorn Research Finds Children Turning to Chatbots for Guidance After Online Sexual Interactions*.

Thorn. (2022). *Online Grooming: Examining Risky Encounters Amid Everyday Digital Socialization*.

Building Your Tech Strategy

- Conduct a device inventory
- Determine your protection
- Define appropriate use
- Plan for future technology needs and requests

What is your current device landscape?

Which devices
have
browsers?
Other apps?

Personal Devices



Gaming Devices



Streaming & Entertainment Devices



What type of
access does
your child
have to these
devices?

Which devices
have parental
controls?

Wearables



Smart Home Devices



Audio & Media Players



Where is each
device
currently
stored and
used?

How many layers of protection have you implemented?

Sample Resources

WiFi Routers:

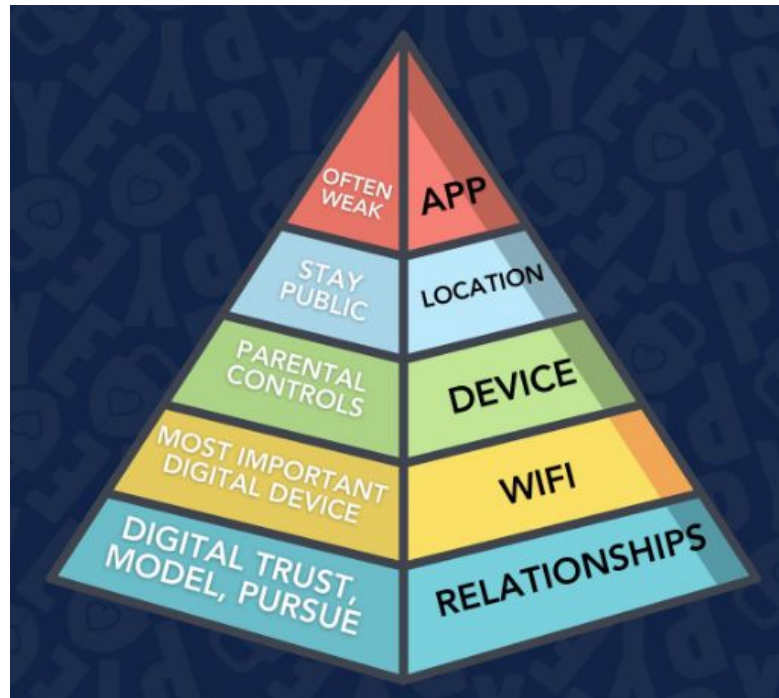
- Gryphon
- Firewalla
- Bark monitoring

Parental Control Guides:

- Family IT Guy
- Protect Young Eyes

Safety Apps:

- SafeVision
- GameSafe



protectyouneyes.com: 5 layers of protection

Where and when is device use ok?

- Tech-free/Tech-permitted zones
 - Private vs. public spaces
 - Homework zones
- Tech-free/Tech-permitted periods of the day/week
 - Meal times
 - School nights
 - After homework/chores are completed
 - During playdates



Tip: Don't just remove screen time - replace it

How do you vet new apps for your kids?

Try the 7 Day Rule*

- Download the app with a similar profile to your child
- Fully explore all features as a child would for 7 days and then decide
- Consider:
 - Is there anything separating kids from adults in the app (ex. birthday)?
 - What is the privacy and data collection policy?
 - Is there a chat? Can it be disabled?
 - Are there ads? Can you remove them?
 - Are there parental controls? Can you lock them?
 - Are there in-app purchase? Can you block them?
 - Is location shared?

What is your stance on communication devices and location tracking?



"Landline"



BoT Talk



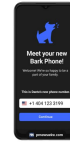
Flip Phone (w/o browser)



Kids Smart Watch



Apple Watch



Kids Smart Phone



Adult Smartphone

Key Considerations:

- What is currently not working without a device? What is working well?
- Which features are absolutely necessary for this phase of your child's life: gps tracking, texting, voice messages, calling, taking pictures, accessing certain apps, games, music, full internet access.
- Where and when will your child need the device?
- What monitoring capabilities and parental controls do you want?
- What risks come along with each option?

Tip: Don't gift devices - just lend them

How and when will your child gain access to AI and social media?

- **Reason** - what does my child gain and what does it replace or “crowd out”?
- **Risk** - Who and what could my child encounter and what choices could they be faced with?
- **Readiness** - Is my child developmentally ready to recognize inaccurate, inappropriate, or unsafe content and am I prepared to provide the monitoring and support needed?



Technology Use in Schools

- A call for change
- Recent developments at HCPSS
- Ways to learn more

Sample Calls for Change by School Level

Elementary

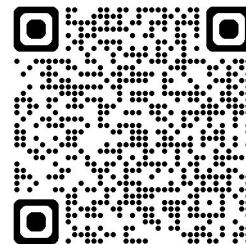
- Swapping digital “brain breaks” for non-digital
- Removing screen-based rewards
- Prioritizing hand written assignment completion and human-centered instruction for deeper learning and better feedback
- Bringing back cursive instruction
- Removing Smartboards from classrooms

Middle and High

- Using a laptop “cart model” instead of 1:1
- Unbundling YouTube from Google Additional Services (HCPSS-specific)
- Bringing back physical textbooks and novels instead of digital texts
- Prohibiting non-academic device usage
- Tightening AI guidelines and use
- Prioritizing hand written assignment completion and human-centered instruction for deeper learning and better feedback

Student Technology Use at HCPSS

- PTACHC conducted Student Technology Use at HCPSS Survey in Spring 2026
- PTACHC Technology Advocacy Priorities:
 - Reducing screen time in school
 - Strengthening guidelines around use of AI
 - Ensuring access to non-digital learning tools in school and at home
- HCPSS formally responded and has partnered with PTACHC in their development of their new *Technology with Purpose* Campaign
 - Focus on professional learning to better discern when to use digital over non-digital tools
 - No individual device use after assignments are complete
 - Middle School cart model roll out
 - AI Policy creation (required by law)



https://bit.ly/PTACHC_Tech

www.ptachc.org>Technology Initiatives

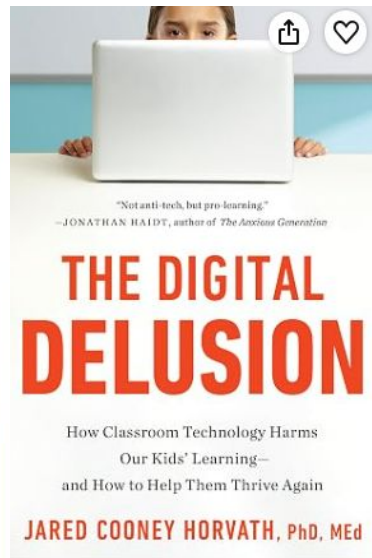
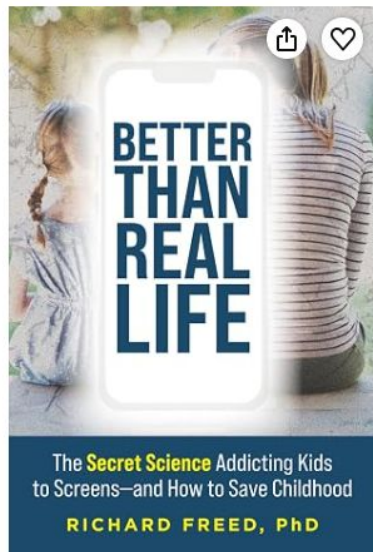
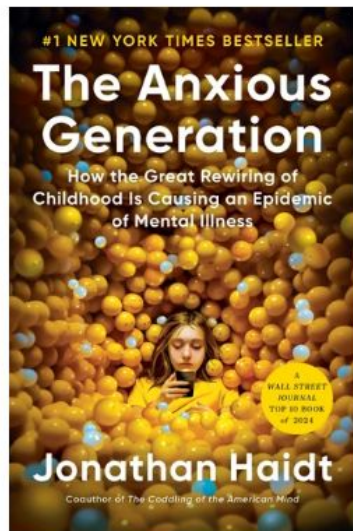
How to stay in the loop

- Monitor your child's Lightspeed account and ask your kids!
- Review the list of digital tools associated with each of your child's subjects in Canvas - "supplemental" tools can be opted out of
- Familiarize yourself with HCPSS' Technology policies and resources: www.hcpss.org/technology
- Connect with PTACHC at technology@ptachc.org
- For resources and updates from our committee, visit www.ptachc.org>Technology Initiatives

Wrap Up

- Resources
- Feedback

Digital Education Resources



More
Resources...



LINK: <https://t.ly/mUsj4>

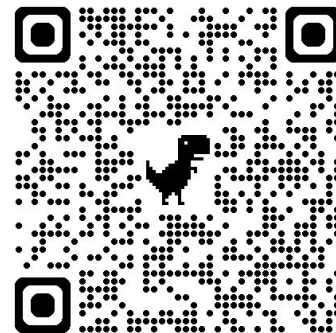
Feedback & Questions

Share your feedback on this presentation as well as any ideas you'd like us to consider:

How likely are you to recommend this presentation to another Elementary School/PTA? 0-10

Note an questions in the form.

Link to the slide is available after submitting the form.



LINK: t.ly/9HJbZ

Contact: technology@ptachc.org