



DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Parents,

As we conclude the school year and look forward to the summer, I wanted to share a resource that may be helpful for your family. Last month, we had a wonderful parent information night featuring Dr. Lisa Strohman. She spoke to a large number of our middle school students and later to our parents about the dangers of social media, cell phone use, and other technology-related topics.

This important discussion was in response to many questions we've received from parents about how to navigate parenting in such a fast-moving, technological age. As you are the primary educators of your children, we recognize the difficult task ahead of you when corporations, society, and bad actors often do not have the best interests of your family in mind. They target your children through algorithms, ads, games, videos, and messages, making your role even more challenging.

We hope this [parent presentation recording](#) provides some helpful tips and insights for your family. Please note that parts of the parent presentation are graphic and not suitable for children. Additionally, we have attached questions asked by parents along with Dr. Strohman's responses, which may be helpful as you create your own family's technology contract or guidelines on how and when cell phones, computers, and the internet will be used in your home.

This parent evening was just one of many that we hope to expand to other parts of the diocese. We encourage schools and parishes to host guest speakers like Dr. Strohman as we continue to work together—you as the primary educators of your children, and us as partners in that mission.

Thank you for continuing to entrust your children to us in this ever-important mission of forming saintly scholars. We are grateful for your trust and support and wish you a wonderful final few weeks of school and a refreshing summer break filled with family time.

We are praying for you all and kindly ask that you keep all of us in your prayers as we welcome our new bishop and prepare to close another great school year.

In Christ,

Gregory P. Monroe, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Diocese of Charlotte Catholic Schools



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**Questions & Answers From Parent Information Night
“Parenting in a Tech World”**

On April 9, 2024, the MACS Cabinet hosted “An Evening Discussion: Parenting in a Tech World with Dr. Lisa Strohman.” Following this informative session, parents were able to send additional questions to be answered. Here are the questions and answers from Dr. Strohman.

Q: You mentioned having a “Tech Policy.” Can you share what a “Tech Policy” may look like?

Dr. Strohman: There are home and school-based tech policies that I typically review. For the home, we have included this in the Unplug family program whereby we take the families through the best practices and then build out the cell phone policy for their kids. I have attached one of the sample contracts I have used in the past. School Tech policy review focuses more on whether the school is protected legally as well as making best practices in terms of how to support teachers within the classrooms and families outside of that. Our DCA partner schools have a parent portal that allows parents direct access to our DCA team to have these questions answered directly.

Q: Are there some simple, best practices that parents might implement as a means to promote healthy online habits? i.e. No technology in bedrooms only used in open spaces, No technology after a certain hour. We have experienced first-hand our 10 year old daughter going to a classmates sleepover party and discovering later that 10 year old girls were up to 3am making Tik Tok videos and surfing online at all hours of the night. We will now ask if there is a “house tech policy”.

Dr. Strohman: That is very frustrating and common unfortunately. I think I mentioned in my talk that I ask about the gun policy of a family and the tech policy as I find them equally dangerous. I am attaching a sheet that I use as a home recommendation. Of course, every family is uniquely built.

Q: What are some things you recommend looking at and for when checking our children's devices (e.g., texts, social media, etc. and what specifically should we look for and how best do we do this)? When we're checking their texts and apps, what are the best steps to take? There's a lot of volume there, teens can delete things - even permanently, so we spot-check. Any other advice?

Dr. Strohman: I recommend the following:

Regular Device Checks: Establish a routine for checking your children's devices. This might be once a week or more frequently, depending on your child's age, activity level, and previous experiences.

- **Review Text Messages:** Look for signs of bullying, inappropriate language, secretive behavior, or contact with strangers. Pay attention to group chats and shared media (images, videos, links).
- **Examine Social Media Activity:** Review their posts, likes, comments, and direct messages (DMs) on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat. Be on the lookout for signs of cyberbullying, inappropriate content, or interactions with people you don't know.
- **Check for Secret or Secondary Accounts:** Teens often create alternate accounts to hide their activity from parents. Check for multiple accounts on the same platform and any apps designed to conceal activity.
- **Review App Usage:** Look at the apps installed on the device. Be cautious of apps designed to hide content, such as vault apps, or those associated with risky behavior (e.g., anonymous messaging apps).
- **Monitor Screen Time:** Analyze which apps are being used most frequently and for how long. Excessive time on certain apps could indicate addictive behavior or high-risk activity.
- **Set Alerts for High-Risk Activity:** Some monitoring apps, like Verizon Smart Family and Circle, allow you to set alerts for keywords or risky behavior. Configure these alerts to stay informed about concerning activity.
- **Educate About Online Safety:** Teach your children about online dangers, such as cyberbullying, stranger danger, and phishing scams. Help them understand the importance of protecting personal information and setting boundaries.
- **Respect Privacy but Prioritize Safety:** While it's essential to respect your child's privacy, safety comes first. Explain to them why spot-checking is necessary and that you're doing it to keep them safe, not to invade their privacy.

Q: Are there Apps parents can use to reduce technology and monitor their utilization?

Dr. Strohman: There are several apps designed to help parents monitor and manage their children's technology use. These apps offer features like screen time tracking, website and app filtering, location tracking, and more. Here are three top apps that parents can use to reduce technology use and monitor their children's utilization:

- **Qustodio:** Qustodio is a comprehensive parental control app that allows parents to monitor screen time, set usage limits, block inappropriate websites, and track online activity. It also offers location tracking and real-time alerts for specific keywords or risky behavior. Qustodio is compatible with multiple platforms, including Android, iOS, Windows, Mac, and Kindle.

- [OurPact](#): OurPact provides parents with robust control over their children's devices. It lets you set schedules for app use, block specific apps, create screen-free periods, and track location. The app's "Family Locator" feature allows parents to see where their children are in real-time. OurPact works with both iOS and Android devices, offering an easy-to-use interface.
- [FamilyTime](#): FamilyTime offers a variety of parental control features, including app blocking, screen time scheduling, location tracking, and geo-fencing (setting virtual boundaries for your children's movement). It also has a feature to monitor text messages and call history, which can help parents identify potential issues or risks. FamilyTime is available on iOS and Android platforms.

Q: What is a resource or one-stop-spot for how to look up how many social media accounts your kid has?

Dr. Strohman:

- [Device App Inventory](#): Examine your child's devices to identify installed social media apps. Be aware of secondary or hidden accounts, which can be concealed through vault apps or app disguises.
- [Social Media Usernames](#): If you know your child's common usernames or email addresses, search social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook for accounts associated with those identifiers. You can also use a search engine to look for usernames or handles to see where they appear online.
- [Online Username Search Tools](#): Use online tools that can search for usernames across multiple platforms. Websites like KnowEm or Namechk allow you to enter a username and check its availability across various platforms, giving you a clue about where your child might have accounts.
- [Social Media Platform Settings](#): Check your child's phone settings for linked social media accounts. On iOS, go to "Settings" > "Privacy" > "Tracking" to see which apps are tracking your child's data. On Android, check "Settings" > "Google" > "Connected Apps."

Dr. Lisa Strohman is a nationally-recognized clinical psychologist, author, public speaker, and the founder and director of Digital Citizen Academy, an organization that proactively prevents and educates students, educators, and parents on the issues resulting from technology use and misuse. Dr. Strohman was also a Visiting Scholar for the FBI working on homicidal pedophilia when Columbine occurred giving her the opportunity to be on the front lines of how technology impacts our youth. She has continued to work with law enforcement and the FBI on safety and cybercrimes involving adolescents, while also lending her knowledge and guidance to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Here are 15 suggested rules for a household tech policy:

1. **No Technology in Bedrooms:** Keep technology use in common areas like the living room or kitchen. This encourages more family interaction and helps monitor usage.
2. **No Technology After a Certain Hour:** Set a technology curfew (e.g., 9 pm) to promote better sleep habits and reduce late-night tech usage.
3. **Device-Free Meal Times:** Keep all devices away from the dining table during meals to foster conversation and family bonding.
4. **Parental Controls and Filters:** Use parental controls on devices to restrict access to inappropriate content and set screen time limits.
5. **Daily Screen Time Limits:** Establish a maximum amount of screen time per day for each child, taking into account schoolwork and other responsibilities.
6. **Tech-Free Zones:** Designate certain areas in the house, like the dining room or family room, as tech-free zones.
7. **Regular Device Checks:** Parents should have access to and periodically check their children's devices to ensure they are used appropriately.
8. **No Technology During Homework Time:** Devices can only be used for homework purposes during study hours. Personal usage is off-limits until homework is completed.
9. **Use Technology for Learning and Creativity:** Encourage the use of technology for educational and creative purposes, like reading, learning new skills, or creating art, instead of only entertainment.
10. **Mandatory Tech Breaks:** Encourage regular breaks from technology throughout the day to engage in physical activities, reading, or other non-digital hobbies.
11. **No Technology During Social Activities:** When guests are over or during family gatherings, keep technology aside to encourage real-life interaction.
12. **Respect for Privacy:** Teach children about online privacy, responsible sharing, and the importance of not sharing personal information online.
13. **Shared Family Accounts and Apps:** Use shared accounts for entertainment platforms to monitor usage and ensure age-appropriate content.
14. **Discuss Online Safety:** Regularly discuss online safety, including cyberbullying, stranger danger, and phishing scams, to help children understand risks and how to stay safe.
15. **Device Charging Stations in Common Areas:** Set up a central charging station for all devices to keep them out of bedrooms overnight and reduce temptation for late-night usage.

These rules can be adapted to suit your family's specific needs and preferences, promoting a healthy technology balance in your home.

Here is a SAMPLE Parent-Child Phone Contract:

1. The phone belongs to the parental unit(s). I/we allow you to use it, provided that you abide the terms below. If you do not do so, I/we will take the phone away and you will have to earn it back.
2. I will always know the password for this phone and any app. I will monitor your phone regularly, including text messages, videos and apps. If there's an issue, we will discuss it together.
3. Always answer calls from your parents. If you miss a call/text from them, return it immediately.
4. Give the phone to a parent at ___ p.m. every school night and every weekend night at ___ p.m.
5. Don't call or text people if you can talk to them in person. Live in the moment, not on your phone.
6. Follow school rules about cell phones.
7. If something happens to your phone, you are responsible for the replacement costs or repairs. If anything happens to it in your possession, you are responsible. The same is true if a friend does something to it. May I recommend starting an emergency fund just in case?
8. I permit you to use this phone because I trust you and believe you are a good person capable of making good choices. Do not use this technology to speak ill of another human being. Any form of bullying or rude behavior will result in loss of the phone. Be kind always: online, on your phone, in person. Also, be honest.
9. Do not text, email, or say anything to someone that you would not say out loud to them or their parents. If there's ever any doubt, do not send/post/share it.
10. Keep your private parts private. Don't search/view/share anything you wouldn't share at the dinner table.
11. Do not take a photo or video of someone else and post without their permission.
12. Do not use your phone at mealtimes or while speaking with someone. Be polite and respectful.
13. If you exceed the allotted minutes and messages, you are responsible for the charges.
14. Remember that the Internet is forever. You will be tempted to do something questionable or risky. Know that what you do on the Internet can impact your life today and well into the future. Don't do it. If you don't want to explain it to your oldest relative or future boss, don't do it.
15. Do not be disruptive in your cell phone use. If any adult asks you to stop talking or texting, you will.
16. If you have a question about anything, ask a parental unit.

Other areas to address:

17. Curfew
18. Answer Protocol
19. GPS tracking on
20. Nightly Turn in
21. Replacement rules
22. Etiquette
23. No bullying, fighting, or hurtful exchanges
24. No pornography – no sending/receiving naked images
25. No phone during dining/eating
26. Access to texting history
27. No posting pictures of others without permission