

Parents Matter

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Technology: Helping or Hindering Student Communication Skills?

There is no denying that technology has and will continue to change the way the world communicates. Social networking sites have helped launch revolutions in the Middle East, global teams work together never making face to face contact, and companies tweet daily promotions. Just the other day I heard of a young woman in charge of corporate marketing, whom in response to criticism of her generation spending too much time on Facebook, hung a large sign in her office proclaiming, Facebook IS my job!

According to research done by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, many employers cite communication as one of the most important skills needed, yet lacking, in young employees. As we prepare our students to enter the workforce, we can't forget the basics of communication, regardless of the growing importance of technology.

In today's technologically hyped up world, it's critical that our children learn:

- **When to write a letter or e-mail as opposed to sending a text.** This includes understanding how to properly use grammar, punctuation and spelling. While texting may be the communication mode of choice among their peers, in the working world your children will need to know how to correspond with people from older generations and those who expect more formal and professional communication.
- **How to make a phone call.** Several recent studies show that students have a difficult time crafting a phone conversation - knowing how to introduce themselves and make polite small talk, move to the important points of the conversation, and effectively wrap up the discussion. It's easy to hide behind a text message or e-mail. But certain situations are best served with a phone call (or in person!). Encouraging your child to pick up the phone and make calls to arrange social events, carpools and the like, will help them build this necessary skill.
- **Skills for face to face meetings.** Research claims that 90% of messages are conveyed through non-verbal cues. Learning how to shake a hand with confidence, make eye contact when talking, read facial expressions, and interpret gestures are all skills critical for success in the workplace. Too much time behind screens and dependence on electronic communication inhibits students' ability to master these skills.
- **How to write thank you notes.** One of the most important and often over-looked communication skills is how to show appreciation, acknowledge something that's been done, or to give thanks. Helping your child develop the habit of communicating their appreciation will go a long way. Nothing makes an impression like a handwritten thank you note in today's busy world.

So as we arm our students with technology to compete in the global world, we can't forget that our children need basic communication skills - the skills we rely on as parents, the same skills that our parents and their parents relied on and these must be taught and developed.

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Another Parent Tip From...

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