

Technology Can Equal Success

Helping Children Make the Most of Their Digital World

Today's children and young adults have never known a world without the internet and technology, and they are comfortable using it. Parents and teachers who didn't grow up with technology as an integral part of their life often confuse that comfort level with mastery of technology.

Recent studies tell a different story. Despite their comfort with technology, children are not necessarily adept at using it. They know what tools to use, but not how to use them properly or evaluate the information for accuracy once they find it. Schools and parents can work together to guide and mentor children to truly become masters of technology.

How Students Use Technology to Find Information

When using the internet to search for information, children and teens

- have trouble forming a strategy for searching for information.
- don't always understand what information they are looking for.
- use natural, everyday language rather than words that might be more effective.
- will give up rather than try to figure out a more appropriate way to ask for the information if they don't easily find an answer to their search.
- Once they find the information, they are often confused about how to evaluate the long list of possible websites to choose the most relevant ones.
- will often print information without verifying accuracy.

- like to cut and paste information directly from websites, often without really reading the information.

What Parents and Teachers Can Do

- Educate yourself on the best ways to search for information. Some very good tutorials are available at Internet Tutorials (www.internettutorials.net).
- Use games and classroom activities to teach them the skills they need.
- Help young children develop a search strategy. Brainstorm some key words to use to search for information. Suggest alternative terms and synonyms.
- Review the information on the websites with them, and teach them how to evaluate it for accuracy. Teach them to ask the following questions:
 - Does the information come from a reliable source?
 - Is it current?
 - Is it confirmed by other trusted sources?
- Explain that cutting and pasting is cheating and plagiarism. Show them how to read information and interpret it by asking them to teach you about what they've read.

Useful websites:

<http://websearch.about.com/od/referencesearch/a/evaluatesource.htm>

<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/researchandreference/a/internet.htm>

www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/pages/bones/lesson7.shtml

www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources

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