Welcome!

Health and Wellness Symposium

Association of Independent Schools in New England
How can I bring greater focus to this trait within my work in my school?

**Positive Emotion:** Reflecting on experiences that go well.

**Engagement:** Leverage our best strengths toward our challenges.

**Relationships:** Prioritize creating time and space to build relationships.

**Meaning:** A connection to something you believe is bigger than yourself.

**Accomplishment:** Working at the edge of one’s abilities.
AISNE Health and Wellness Planning Committee

- Jennifer Hamilton, Noble & Greenough School
- Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, The Park School
- Liz LaRocque, Belmont Day School
- Tina Fox, Belmont Day School
- Veronica Jutras, The Gordon School
Welcome!

Health and Wellness Symposium
A Digital Coming of Age: Childhood & Adolescence in the Social Media Era

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Presentation Outline

- Media diets of kids/teens
  - Emphasis on opportunities and challenges in each space
    - Gaming
    - Online Viewing
    - Social Media*

- How can we help them maximize the positive and minimize the negative effects?
  - Macro conversations: school-wide initiatives
    - Curricula
  - Micro conversations: advisors, coaches, deans
A few caveats

- My research is rooted in the idea that technology is neither good nor bad; it is how we use it
  - Good use and bad use
    - On the same platform
    - By the same kid

- 21st-century kids have different media ideologies than we do
  - Not asking you to accept theirs, asking you to recognize the disconnect
    - Privacy; friends; hang out space; what “good” conversation looks like; offline vs. online dichotomy
      - Core challenge we face in our communication with kids about their tech use.

- My research populations identify as cisgender; I don’t have data (nor do we have good research) on transgender/gender fluid experiences
Technology and the educators’ challenge

• We can’t teach them social media
  • We won’t/can’t know more than them
    • Even if we could, it isn’t our lived experience of adolescence
      • In this case when they say “you don’t understand anything,” they are right
  • Uncomfortable for us  avoid it until we have to address it

• Suggest a reframe: the challenges, at their core, are all connected to things we can teach them (social pressures, making good choices, creating healthy boundaries).
  • Different, amplified context
Media Diets

- 13-18 year olds: 9 hours a day engaging with media*
  - 24% are on their mobile device “almost constantly”
- 8-12 year olds: 6 hours a day
- Often multitasking (YouTube and Algebra)
- National average age for first iPhone is 10.3 years
  - SES/regional differences

Common Sense Media; Pew Research Center
What are they doing there?

- TV, movies, online videos, gaming, social media, Internet, music, *reading (maybe)

- Media diets
  - Differ by age and interest—in general it is safe to assume that it is reaching younger populations each year (2nd grade)
  - Online Viewer
  - Mobile gamers
  - Social networkers
  - All of these can be passive or active consumption
Online Viewers

- YouTube
  - 300 hrs. of content are uploaded to YouTube every hour; 4 billion videos watched/day.
  - Viewership largely male (62%)
  - 74% of 14-18 year olds watch YouTube every day

- Early initiation to digital space
  - Gaming advice “Lets Play” videos (90% of gamers)
    - esp. via Minecraft videos-Stampy; BajanCanadian
    - PewDiePie (54 m subscribers)—calls fans his “Bro Army”
  - Pranks/”roasters”(Smosh)—content can turn explicit quickly without warning
    - Ricegum
  - Mostly passive consumption (at least to start)
Mobile Gamers

- 29% of all U.S. gamers are under 18
- Mostly the domain of boys*
  - Gender differences in games played and amount of time spent gaming

- Opportunities for socialization: talk to gamers
  - 83% play in the same room as other gamers
  - 75% play online: friends they know (89%); gaming friends (54%)
  - Games: ARK: Survival; Destiny; Overwatch

- Strategize, but lots of trash talking (each forum has different feel)
  - Negative talk esp. for girls/younger gamers; muting/blocking on games
Social Media Landscape

- **Apps**: Good and bad on same platform
  - **Visual**: Emphasis on what you look like/who you are with
    - Instagram
  - **Temporary**: Think it disappears → less discretion
    - Snapchat (Snapstory)
  - **Anonymous**: Hiding behind the screen
    - Yik Yak

- **Hide**: Allows you to hide any apps you select from your device
  - Calculator%; Audio Manager (Hide it Pro), Poof

The popular apps change so fast (and they can hide them anyway) that it is unproductive to focus on the specific apps.

Sets up a faulty dichotomy of good vs. bad apps or programs

*It's not the apps, but how they are used*
Behaviors/Experiences of Concern

- Sexting
- Engaging in risk behaviors to have the pictures (i.e. the Solo Cup pics)
- Links to depression
  - Links to poor psycho-social outcomes in all areas except friendship
  - Girls report more symptoms
- Brain development: strong emotional reactions (amygdala) and weak executive function, contextualization, and emotional regulation.

O'Keefe and Pearson 2011; McDool et al. 2016
More pervasive concerns

- Effects on sleep
- Multitasking misnomer
- Emotional contagion
  - Stress and negative emotions* (esp. for girls)
- Social comparisons
  - Body image, friendships, and conspicuous consumption
- The screenshot as a social weapon
- Persistent use of homophobic slurs (fag; nohomo)
Their Social Media Experiences

- Described as “stressful” and “helpful” at the same time.
  - How can it be both?

- Stressful: normal teen stressors that are now visually documented
  - Need to be up to date constantly; respond immediately
  - Have visual images that confirm social status
  - Follow unspoken social media rules
  - The power of the like (strategies to “up my likes”)
  - Fear of getting into trouble (parents, school, friends)
How is it helpful?

- Using this space to answers the key questions of adolescent psychosocial development
  - Where do I fit in? (esp. 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> grades)
  - Who am I? (esp. 11<sup>th</sup> grade – college)

- These questions are not new
  - Challenge is that in 2017 this work takes place on social media
    - Visual depictions of the self
  - Helps them create their personal fable

Erikson (1967)
But why online...

- Because their friends are there
  - Social media offers them a space to be with each other that increasingly doesn’t exist offline (boyd 2006).
    - The culture of over-scheduling
    - “I don’t hang out with my friends in person. No one has time.”
  - Activities
  - Cultural shifts in parenting and perceptions of risks

- Because of the many things that draw us to it
  - Emphasis on the visual; novel stimuli
  - Mood management
Two ways to answer these questions

- Guided by the architecture
  - Architecture influences audience

- Instagram, Facebook: “Highlights reel” answers
  - Edited, curated, thoughtful presentations
    - Ex: photo shoots for girls, pictures with “hot girls” for boys

- Snapchat, Finstas, WhatsApp: “Real me” answers
  - Less guarded, thoughtful, or posed
    - Ex: goofy/unflattering pictures, rants, sexts
The "real me": Where do I fit in?
The good and the bad

- Highlights answers: really thoughtful presentations of the self
  - The good:
    - “Documenting us being awesome”
    - The pictures we (aka old people) put in albums
    - “The real me”; feel authentic

- The bad:
  - Emphasis on appearance, status, friend groups
  - Hard to remember it is the highlights
  - Everyone sees your mistakes and/or rejection
The good and the bad

- Snapchat/Finsta presentations
  - The good:
    - Small, chosen audience → less pressure to present the best moments
      - Less editing, less focus on appearance, less see and be seen
    - Can serve as way to check in with friends ("thinking of you")
  - The bad:
    - Inherently these are things they don’t want everyone to see
    - Perception of privacy isn’t always accurate
      - Sexts, screenshots
What they wish you knew

- #1: It isn’t as bad as you think it is and it can be fun
  - That it is important (communication)

- They are terrified to make a mistake: one mistake can “ruin everything”

- They don’t get it either

- They don’t talk to their friends about it as much as you think.

- That sometimes it hurts their feelings and/or “it ain’t easy”
  - Cultural norms around gossiping/”telling on me for anything”

- That they have no break (from school or social media); everything follows them everywhere

- “I wish they knew that if they had phones when they were young they would have done the same stuff.”
Before you begin: acceptance and empathy

- Accept the fact that virtual communication is a social accomplishment and we should not minimize it.
  - They are communicating more often and with more people than we can even imagine.
    - It is not a total waste of time.
    - Just because it isn’t face to face, doesn’t mean it isn’t “real”.
    - ***It is the work of adolescence.

- We have taken away their other spaces; networked publics are their sacred spaces.
  - We shouldn’t chase them; toothpaste tube effect
The Right to be Forgotten

- We allow them to right to document everything, but not the right to be forgotten when they make a mistake.

- Currently they get a device with some discussion like “don’t screw it up” or “colleges can see what you post” and that is it.
  - They are 100% going to make a mistake; that too is the work of adolescence. How do we make sure they can come back from it?
    - Adults have set them up to fail by not talking and working with them.
      - We talk about failing forward, resilience, etc., but not in the context of social media.
School-wide conversations

- Visual media literacy—every opportunity
  - Images can mean different things to different people
    - Examples from media, picture books, own pictures, older students talking though their pictures
    - Understanding of this starts around 17/18.

- Remove the temptation during the day?
  - Brain development research

- Have them think through their online reputation as part of the leadership/character discussions you have.
  - Be really specific about what it would look like when they graduate. How do they want to handle situations that will come up?
School-wide conversations

- Create space for small groups of kids to gather and talk through aspects of social media
  - Different configurations (grade; gender; other)
  - "I didn’t know all of you thought the same thing"
  - "This is like a therapy session"

- Be really clear about your social media policy
  - Most kids cannot articulate their schools’ policies
    - In direct contrast to plagiarism, parties, bullying
    - Punishment feels *very* arbitrary to them
      - Based on people involved
Micro-level conversations to encourage with faculty

- Working in advisor groups, personal development classes, etc.
  - Talk about healthy boundaries
    - Moment app
    - Label the boundaries and boundary challenges in your lives
    - Multitasking

- Ask them why social media matters
  - Come from a place of curiosity, with no agenda
    - What do you think this means?
    - Why is this important to you?
      - Get them talking to each other
Help them (through language, time, thoughtful discussions) to develop strategies for how to deal with tricky things. They will get request for “noodz” (“Kik me”), mean screenshots, questionable videos that they are supposed to forward to others.

- They should have a strategy ready to go for all scenarios so they don’t have to think it through each time.
- Has to be authentic for the student
Examples
Ultimately, with some help, the kids will be alright

- We need to address it (working in tandem with parents). Thinking about it only when there is a disaster is a disservice to your students.
  - Be really clear about what your policy is
    - Policy needs to allow for *some* online privacy

- You are better equipped than you realize to handle this brave new world
  - Don’t get caught up in the apps, lingo, etc.
    - Ask them questions
  - Focus on creating a safe space for students to talk
    - Teach where you can (social slights, how to have a confrontation, what you can say to a group vs. a friend)
A word about forwarders

- People who screenshot and forward are the cause of a great deal of drama on social media
  - Currently kids don’t place most of the blame with them
  - Play a huge role
  - We need to talk with them about this behavior

- Delete don’t repeat is the key mantra
  - Questionable images, forwards, etc.
“Threatening specter of the faggot”

- “Two biggest fags in the school.”
  - “That was our best friend joking around.”
  - “But you don’t call anyone else a faggot. You don’t say that.”

- You don’t say it to gay people

- “Affirm to themselves and others that they are straight” (Pascoe 2007)
The Evolving Self in early Adolescence

“I don’t know it just shows like your feminine side. I mean the girls who are really like, really, really feminine, um don’t need this but I mean I, in particular, I’m like really, really centered around um sports, too.”

“HAhahaha.. Im so weird”
The Evolving Self in Late Adolescence

“...so like to be able to see that, it’s part of me, like I’m not just molded into that Pierce School kid. Like that stereotype of a Pierce School [kid]. Like I’m more than that, I have something else, so I try to show that as well.”