

ChildrenOnline

Devoted to the safety of children and teens online

Phone: 413-214-1225

A Division of Web Safe Consulting

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Related News:

In a recent article in the Boston Parade magazine Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse speaks about the addictive characteristics of texting. She says "when you get an unexpected text, the dopamine cells in the brain fire up." Dopamine plays a role in many addictive behaviors and is a neurotransmitter associated with feelings of pleasure, the Parade article goes on to say. ([Read the full Parade article.](#))

Related Resources:

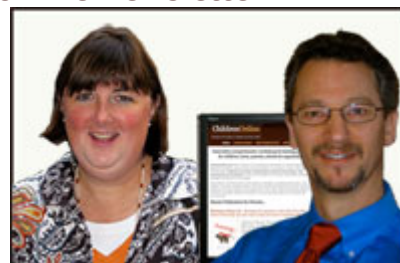
1. [Does Life Online Give You Popcorn Brain?](#) --reported on CNN. (By Elizabeth Cohen. June, 2011.) New research is

Issue: #53

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53rd Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

We first wrote about cell phones and kids in 2007 and again in September, 2008. Cell phone usage by children has skyrocketed since then. Phones are smarter, more powerful today and in the hands of younger and younger children. It is time we revisit the topic.



As always we welcome your comments and suggestions. Best wishes,
Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

ChildrenOnline.org is accepting workshop dates for the 2011-2012 academic year. If you are interested in having us conduct student, parent or faculty workshops, please contact us via email or phone (413-214-1225).

Cell Phones and Kids - revisited

Twenty years ago, the first wireless phones came out. They were big, clunky and incredibly cool. My first cell phone was attached to a board and weighed about 10 pounds. I don't remember ever using the phone, but I loved having one. Today, I am never without my iPhone. I no longer have a land line and use my cell phone as an iPod, alarm clock, address book, calendar, gaming device, camera, mobile Internet connection and of course to place the occasional call.

Today, parents across the country are wrestling with the question of when to give a cell phone to their children. According to our research among school aged children 25% state they have a cell phone in 4th grade, 73% have a cell phone in 6th grade and by the time kids are in 8th grade,

beginning to reveal new concerns about the impact of technology, including cell phones, on behavior and brain function

2. [Attached to Technology and Paying a Price](#) -- article in the N.Y.Times about technology, including cell phones, and the brain. (By Matt Richtel. June, 2010.)

3. A sampling of Parental Control Software for smart phones:

- a) [Phone Sheriff](#)
- b) [MobiStealth](#)
- c) [StealthGenie](#)
- d) [Mobile Nanny](#)

4. Parental Controls offered by major cell phone providers:

- a) [Verizon](#)
- b) [AT&T 1](#) and [AT&T 2](#)
- c) [Sprint](#)
- d) [T-Mobile](#)

--[A review of the major parental control features](#) from the cell phone providers

5. [The Online Mom's article](#) on parental controls for cell phones.

6. [Kajeet](#) - a safe cell phone designed for kids

93% have a cell phone and nearly all of these 8th graders have texting ability. Ask an adult the reasons for their child's phone and most often you hear safety as the primary answer. Ask a child or teen and you hear the ability to connect to friends, text, play games, access Facebook, view media or take pictures.

With safety on the mind, cell phones seem to be a good idea in today's increasingly challenging world. The idea of immediate connection with a child is very comforting. However, the average cell phone, in the hand of children as young 8 is, in fact, much more than a safe connection to a parent. It is a powerful mini-computer with the ability to perform many functions including texting, gaming, surfing the web, or taking pictures or videos and then sending them to the web (YouTube) or to other phones. Many of those functions may be very risky for children with the possibility of jeopardizing their safety.

Some of our 2010-2011 research illustrates these risks:

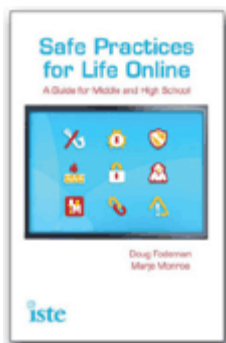
- 10.7% of all student cell phone owners (N=2111*) admit to receiving "offensive or inappropriate photos or videos." The terms "offensive or inappropriate" were not defined and students were left to evaluate these terms for themselves.
- Of those students who's phones could receive texts, 14.8% (N=2111*) reported receiving "offensive, harassing or hurtful text messages".
- 49.7% of all students reported receiving ads on their cell phones. (N=2111*) The reason for the question is because some companies fraudulently target cell phone users with scam ads that result in charges to cell phone bills. (This fraudulent practice is called "cramming.")

The PEW Internet Study of 2010 illustrates similar risks:

- 26% of teens admit to being bullied or harassed through texting
- 15% of teens admit to sending or receiving pictures or videos through texting. (Sexting)

INTERNET SAFETY CURRICULUM

Safe Practices for Life Online



Children Online has a curriculum on Internet Safety that includes nearly 100 student exercises and lots of information on many topics including social networks, instant messaging, cyberbullying, online marketing, scams directed at kids, protecting privacy online, avoiding identity theft and impersonation, creating strong passwords and more.

There is also a student edition which includes cartoons and "Did you know" sections of interesting facts for students.

To learn more or place an order visit our [publications page at ChildrenOnline.org](#) or go directly to our publisher's pages:

[Teacher's Edition at ISTE](#)
[Student Edition at Lulu.com](#)

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- 64% of teens claim to text during class
- 30% of teens admit to texting at least 100 times daily
- 34% of driving age teens admit to texting while driving

Our recommendations for cell phones are to provide "safe cell phones only" for young children. A safe phone is one that is not listed as a "Smart Phone" and does not have an Internet connection, texting ability or camera features. Cell phone companies do offer these phones. When possible, we recommend waiting for a safe cell until age 12 and waiting to allow a "Smart Phone" until age 15. In today's high tech world, that is tough. Especially when up to 90% of high school students have Smart Phones. However, the research on texting and Facebook, make this a very legitimate argument.

Other options for parents include purchasing parental control software for cell phones that provide parents with some control over texting. Limiting the amount of texts sent or limiting time spent texting can be a good way to negotiate with a teen begging for texting. In addition, cell phone carriers can turn off texting or Internet access from Smart Phones. Ask your carrier for all your options. We recommend taking all Smart Phones at night to limit children and teens from using texting and the Internet connections during the night. The options for parental control software for smart phones are far fewer than for computers.

One of our primary jobs as parents is to keep our kids safe. A phone can be an important tool in pursuit of safety. A Smart Phone, however, may not be the "safe choice" for our children.

*N = sample population size of students. [For a complete report of our 2010-2011 research visit our website.](#)

About Children Online

Children Online offers innovative and comprehensive workshops on Internet safety and online education to students, parents, faculty and administrators. Our approach, unique in the field of

Internet safety, combines a thorough understanding of Internet technologies, child development and counseling, to focus on the impact of the internet on the social, emotional and language development of young people.

Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe, experts in technology, counseling and education, work together to provide invaluable research and tools for parents and schools with practical real-life solutions to the issues faced by young people online. Since 1997, Marje and Doug have spoken to thousands of students, teachers and parents. They have several publications in the area of Internet safety and offer a free online newsletter. More detailed information can be found at ChildrenOnline.org.

