



# Teachers Talk Tech: What Parents Need to Know This School Year

As the school year begins, technology will play a big role in how kids learn, connect, and explore. To help families start strong, we asked teachers from different grade levels and subjects to share their best advice for healthy, safe, and productive tech use. In this guide, you'll hear from educators about classroom challenges, the tools students use most, and ways parents can help kids balance screen time, build smart habits, and stay safe online.

## 1. What's one thing you wish every parent understood about their child's relationship with technology this school year?

"Technology is an essential part of our students' lives and learning, and it offers incredible tools for growth, creativity, and connection. However, it's just as important to help students develop into well-rounded individuals—critical thinkers who can problem-solve, communicate effectively, and engage with the world beyond a screen. Encouraging healthy boundaries and purposeful use of technology at home and in school supports not just academic success but also emotional, social, and cognitive development."

—Susan Providence, Special Education Teacher, Grades 1–8

## 2. What tech-related behaviors are causing the biggest challenges in classrooms right now?

"Students slipping into social media or other online distractions during lessons is the biggest hurdle right now. Even a short glance away from schoolwork makes it harder to get back into the flow, and when several students do this, it slows down learning for the entire class. These constant interruptions not only break concentration but also limit kids' ability to practice the kind of focus they'll need for bigger projects and real-world problem-solving. Parents can help by setting consistent routines at home that show kids when it's time to be off tech and be present."

—Jo Ann Vroustouris, Elementary Education, Grades 1–6

### **3. What apps, platforms, or tools are students using most right now for both school and for socializing?**

“Students in high school use Instagram and TikTok most of the time as connections to their friends and for entertainment or news around the world. However, students do use videos from YouTube for learning, especially “how to do” projects or things that may not be familiar to them. Most teachers in my school assign work on Google Classroom and on Castle Learning for Science so students may use these platforms at home to complete assignments.”

—Bibi Ramjan, ENL/ELA, Civics Leadership, Grades 10–12

### **4. How do kids handle the pressure to be constantly connected, and how can parents help them disconnect in healthy ways?**

“Students feel real pressure to be constantly connected because it’s how many of their friendships and social lives operate today. This can make it hard for them to step away, even when they need a break. Parents can help by encouraging regular activities that don’t involve screens (like sports, hobbies, or family time) and by modeling balance themselves. Showing kids that it’s okay to unplug gives them permission to do the same.”

—Grace Pacylowski, Grade 4

### **5. What habits or routines at home help students build healthy tech habits that carry over into the school day?**

“Parents should keep an eye on screen time, especially before bed. Using phones, tablets, or TVs too close to bedtime can make it harder for kids to fall asleep. A well-rested student is more likely to focus, learn, and interact positively in the classroom.”

—Jo Ann Vroustouris, Elementary Education, Grades 1–6

## 6. How are students using AI tools like ChatGPT and what should parents understand about its impact on learning?

“Many students are using AI tools like ChatGPT to get help starting assignments, checking their work, or quickly answering questions they’re stuck on. It can be a useful support, but the downside is some kids lean on it too much instead of doing the thinking themselves. Overuse can cause integrity issues which may lead to consequences from our school leaders. Parents don’t need to be afraid of AI, but it’s important to remind kids that it should add to their learning, not replace their own effort or voice. Parents should also check with their school district’s policy on the use of AI, as guidelines always differ.”

—Regina Brown, High School Counselor, Grades 9-12

## 7. When it comes to digital safety and privacy, what conversations should parents be having with their kids right now?

“Parents should talk to their children about which websites and apps are safe to use and which ones to avoid. It’s also important to teach kids how to recognize unsafe interactions online—such as strangers trying to communicate or share personal information—and to encourage them to speak up if something doesn’t feel right...

...Digital citizenship isn’t just a school responsibility—it’s a shared effort between school and home. Parents who are informed and involved play a powerful role in reinforcing safe, respectful, and responsible online behavior.”

—Susan Providence, Special Education Teacher, Grades 1–8

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These educator insights highlight the importance of extending digital guidance beyond the classroom. To support your family’s digital skills, explore FOSI’s free tools: [\*\*7 Steps to Good Digital Parenting\*\*](#), [\*\*Safety Agreements for Teens\*\*](#), and the [\*\*Digital Reputation Checklist\*\*](#). Each offers practical ways to set guidelines, spark conversations, and encourage safe, positive use of technology throughout the school year.



# Meet Our Teacher Contributors

The perspectives in this guide come directly from educators who work with students every day and see how technology affects learning, social interactions, and personal growth. Each contributor brings a different background and set of experiences, offering parents a well-rounded view of how kids are engaging with technology in school.

Thank you to each teacher who shared their time and expertise to make this resource possible.



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