



Family
Online Safety
Institute

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Panel Summary: How do we Parent in the Digital Age?

Moderator: Denise Lisi DeRosa, Family Online Safety Institute

Panelists: Robbye Fox, Parent Encouragement Program; Gboyinde Onijala, Montgomery County, MD, Cybercivility Forum and Task Force; Devorah Heitner, Raising Digital Natives; Andrea Goertz, TELUS

This panel addressed a number of different issues pertaining to parenting in the digital age. Throughout, it was evident that constant communication between parents, children, schools and members of industry is necessary in order to minimize the potential harms of the online world.

Robbye Fox from the Parent Encouragement Program began the discussion by highlighting top challenges for parents today. Rapid change in technology makes it difficult to find where it fits into the family and the family's values. Fox advocated for creative ways to limit screen time, such as electronic-free areas and times of day where family interactions should be given their full attention.

Devorah Heitner from Raising Digital Natives emphasized the developmental concerns and the way new social technologies can cause anxiety in children. Using the available technologies in a manner that would provide the highest positive impact for a child's specific skillset should be stressed by parents and schools. Kids can also be very helpful in teaching adults about the new technology, including its pitfalls.

For a perspective from schools, Gboyinde Onijala from Montgomery County, MD, Cybercivility Forum and Task Force stated that schools try to limit their reach into a student's tech use. Principals only become involved when tech use disrupts the instructional day. Schools must also consider what they can do to provide resources. It is important to provide public school workshops for parents on tech who are clueless about what their children are doing online. Schools must work with parents to empower students to make the right choices online.

Lastly, Andrea Goertz from TELUS provided insights from how industry views parenting in the digital age. As a provider of this resource that can be so beneficial but undoubtedly comes with harms, Andrea told how TELUS believes it is responsible to educate and inform its customers. By partnering with school as well as providing their own resources, such as TELUS Wise, businesses can positively impact and educate parents on what is out there online and how to be safe in the digital age.