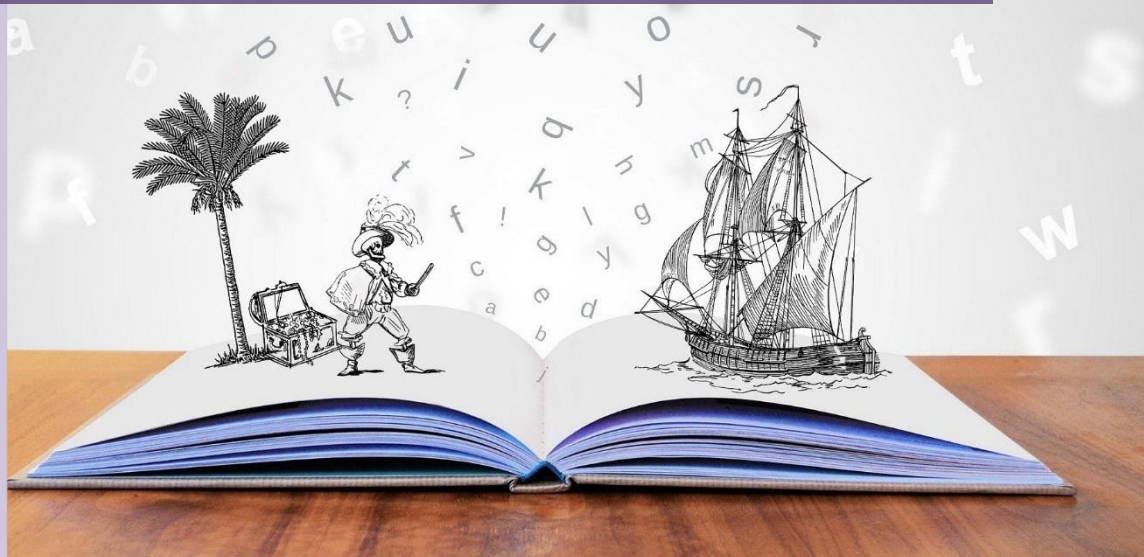![apricot for parents]

Project APRICOT:

Attentive parental education for wise being and co-being in changing times

APRICOT Collection of Stories

Story: „Parental Control Settings"

apricot

Planeta Ciencias
El placer de descubrir

FRAUEN COMPUTER SCHULE

ŠIUOLAIKINIŲ DIDAKTIKŲ CENTRAS
THE MODERN DIDACTICS CENTER

This intellectual output has been conceived and developed by the Strategic Partnership in APRICOT project under the coordination and responsibility of Šiuolaikinių didaktikų centras/ Modern Didactics Centre (LT).

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Parental Control Settings

Themes: Parental Controls, Screen Time, The importance of parent-child conversations

Q: What devices do your children use and in what way?

A: My son (13) uses his laptop a lot for schoolwork and his phone to chat to school friends. My daughter (9) loves to watch YouTube videos. They both use the iPad.

Q: Do you know about parental control settings and do you use them?

A: I am aware that there are things you can use on the kids devices and we have tried some of them out. I must admit we are not very good at it, at the moment we are relying on the fact that we are mostly in the room with them. I do need to have a closer look at what the settings are. We tried something that would limit their screen time – and we set it so they couldn't use them after a certain time in the evening, or before school – but we didn't get on with it well.

Q: What is your experience of using the parental control settings?

A: Our biggest issue at the moment is trying to allow the kids to use their devices more independently whilst keeping an eye on how much time they spend on them and what they are looking at. The problem we have is when we use controls to limit the amount of time they spend on something or what they can access, if it is a shared device, it means that we have to change the settings depending on who uses them, it's not impossible but it can feel really complicated and we often don't bother and just try to keep an eye on what they are doing and how long for ourselves, but it's not ideal. They do often end up spending more time on their devices than I want them to, but it can be hard to figure out how to use the parental controls in the best way and in a way that works for everyone. We tried to have certain times of the day when they are not allowed on screens, but that changes too depending on how much homework they have or just what kind of day we are having!

 Nothing that we do is full proof in terms of setting controls – they either limit us in a way that can be really inconvenient – when the whole family uses one device – or they let too much through. We really need to take a closer look at the settings on things like You Tube and Google. At the moment we don't have any settings on them so our kids could actually be exposed to something we didn't want them to be. We just try to make sure we are with them, we don't always manage it. To be honest, I don't really know what settings there are for You Tube or Google, and I don't really know where to start with it all….trying to make them useable for things like homework or fun things, but not let explicit stuff through or stuff we don't want them to see.

Q Have you used any online tools aimed specifically at children and young people?

A: We tried Google Safe Search because the school use it but it's no good, the kids don't like it because it's not as slick as Google, and I don't like it because there are actually loads of adverts on it – OK, you know that the search results will be safe, but I don't like the way my child is targeted with adverts that you have to scroll through to get to your search results….and once you have been used to using normal Google, then it can feel quite poor in comparison. We found the same thing with the special You Tube for kids, they didn't like it, and we ended up not using it and going back to the normal version.

Q: Are there other things you do to keep your children safe online?

A: The thing is, it's horrible to think about, but I know that my children are going to see something nasty online at some point. There is going to be a time when they see explicit content, because nothing we can do seems full proof and we can't always be in control when they are not under our roof. I think we need to be ahead of the game, it has to be

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about talking to your kids, they have to be able to ask us questions, tell us if something has upset them. I feel like we have to be on high alert with it all the time, because it's so easy for slip-ups to happen or for something innocent to turn into something upsetting….the other day our daughter told us that someone had said a swear word in school, it was a sexually explicit one, and she didn't know what it meant but she knew that it was rude because of the context it was said in. She said "oh, it's OK I will just google it"….thank God she had come to us first, because that is exactly the sort of situation that can happen so easily…We had to have a conversation about how googling some words could take her to things that she would find really upsetting, that it's not all good things online. And the thing is, we say it all the time ourselves "Oh, I will google it"…and it's great to be able to do, but that was a red flag to me, when I realized that actually, because we don't have any settings on google yet she could have just looked it up and it could have been awful.

Our son uses Whatsapp and we have some firm rules about it – he can only chat to close friends, and he has to know everybody who is on a whatsapp group or he has to leave it…that sort of thing. That's hard though, because kids will talk when they get into school of course, and if one kid is not in the Whatsapp group they get left out of the conversation… they might get a hard time because they are not part of that group. He also knows that I can look at his phone – and I do – but there is a large element of trust that comes in to it, I guess it would be possible for him to hide things if he wanted to. It's been a while since I checked his phone. The school have banned Whatsapp now, because they have had so many issues with it, but our son enjoys using it and I think clear rules and lots of conversations have helped with it, and so far we haven't had any problems, but it is something I worry about – another thing I think I should be keeping a closer eye on.

Other comments on Parental Controls:

A: "There are just so many potential situations, with so many different forms of communication and apps and media. All on different devices. Every app or device has something different you have to do. Honestly, it can all seem very overwhelming and exhausting! It's tempting to just ban it all instead of worrying about getting all the settings right! Especially when you are not very tech-savvy, I don't really use a lot of stuff myself… like social media. I just want to bury my head in the sand sometimes! But obviously, I know I can't – even if you did manage to stop internet use in your house, it's in school, its round other people's houses….and I don't want our kids to be the only kids that are not allowed, that it becomes this big deal and we create more of an issue by not allowing it….then eventually they will get to an age where they access it and they are totally unprepared, and they feel like they can't talk to us about it…..I think we have to face the fact that they are going to use these things, and that we can't always be looking over their shoulder….I wish someone could just come in a put all the right settings on everything for me….I don't know where to start"

A: "….things have definitely been exacerbated by COVID….the Lockdowns have meant the kids are bored and lonely and we have all relied on the internet so much. Saying no to screen time doesn't seem fair when it's the only way they can talk to friends, and when they aren't allowed to do all of their other activities….it really has changed things, we have allowed much more time on devices, and have probably put things on their tablets like Whatsapp or Zoom that we would never had done if it wasn't for COVID, not yet anyway….and because of that, they have ended up with things on their phones that I didn't research as much as I might have done, or that I am not as strict with….and now they are used to using it. Taking it away now would be hard"