Parents' Guide:
Questions to ask about school technology

General In-School Usage

- Where can a parent find a copy of the school's tech policy?

- What evidence-based research did the school use to determine that using a tablet/laptop for this class is a) developmentally-appropriate and b) better than non-digital learning methods?

- Which classes will the kids be using [tablet/laptop/ other] and how exactly will they be used (e.g., IXL, research, tests, note-taking).

- Where are the devices stored when not being actively used in class (e.g., are they still sitting on kids' desks or in their pockets or are they stored away in the back of the classroom)?

- During school hours, are children allowed to use personal devices outside the classroom (e.g., lunch, free time, recess)? Who monitors their use?

- What filters (if any) does the school install on the kids' devices to limit adult content?

- What limits, if any, are on the web browsers? App store?

- What protocols are in place to prevent children from accessing the Internet, where there is an array of obscene content (including pornography, R and X-rated films, drug sales, and pro-suicide and pro-eating disorder web pages). Are any particular sites blocked?

- Does the school have wifi? If so, are there any time limits?

- If I do not want my child to have any device usage beyond what is required during class, how can that be communicated and enforced by the teachers? (e.g., I don't want my child to be allowed to play on an iPad or laptop during free time or if they finish a test early)

Out-of-School Usage

- The school is providing this device to my child, but the U.S. Surgeon General has warned that excessive time on social media is linked directly to greater risk of mental health problems. What is the school doing to ensure my child's access to social media is limited?

- Where/how can parents see how much time their child spends on a school-issued device?

- What controls have been installed on the device to ensure my child won't have access to dangerous content?

- It is natural for children to be curious. Will the school take responsibility for monitoring every url visited by my child and reporting this information to parents?

- Most web browsers come with an "incognito" option that allows for untracked browsing. Has the school disabled this feature to prevent children from illicitly using school devices?

- Do the kids need to bring their devices home or can they be left at school? If the kids do need to bring the devices home, what will they be using them for and how will the school ensure they are not used for other purposes, like watching YouTube?

Personal Smart Device* Usage During School

- What is the school's policy regarding personal smart devices during school?

- What are the consequences if the policy is violated?

- How are teachers, administrators and other school staff trained on the policy to ensure consistent enforcement?

*Phones and watches

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