St. Aloysius Counseling Department
Summer Screen Time

With summer approaching and no tests in sight, your children will want to spend more time in the digital world. According to The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) parents should limit their child's screen time to no more than two hours per day, whether that time is spent in front of a television, tablet computer, video game, laptop, or mobile phone. Zero screen time is recommended for kids under the age of two. AAP warns that any screen in a child's bedroom at night can have negative effects on sleep and development. You play an important role in teaching your child(ren) healthy technology habits.

1) Screen time should not replace family time:
o Summer is a great time to make memories and strengthen family relationships.
o Media should support family values, not replace treasured activities.
o Outdoor play, exercise, face to face interactions, board games, and unplugged down time promote learning and healthy development.

2) Set limits and restrictions on online interactions:
o Get to know your children's friends both online and offline.
o Know what apps, programs, and social media sites they are using.
o Have a conversation about what your limits and expectations are on these platforms.
o Know their password and log-in information for all apps.
o Have a designated time and place for technology usage.
o Increased screen time is associated with decrease in; cognitive and language development, academic success in math and reading, and short term memory.

3) Monitor online interactions, but also take an active role:
o Co-engage with your children when they are using screens, it encourages social interactions and learning opportunities about your perspective.
o You can demonstrate good sportsmanship and gaming etiquette.
o Watching a show with them creates opportunities to share family values.
o Remember you are their role model as a digital citizen.

4) Resist the temptation to use technology as a babysitter:
o Although media can assist kids to remain calm and quiet, children need to know how to identify and handle strong emotions.
o Decide on activities to manage boredom and discuss problem solving.
o Creativity is stimulated through unstructured play.
o Screen time before bed is associated with; difficulty falling asleep, nightmares, and daytime fatigue.

5) Public and permanent:
o Explain that once content is shared, it cannot ever be completely removed.
o Educate your child on privacy settings and limitations.
o Remind your child that their device is a privilege and should be treated as such.
o These devices are ultimately owned by you the parents.

6) Media mistakes:
o Online activity is part of adolescent development.
o Be aware of your child's actions in both the real and online worlds.
o Kids will make mistakes using media, use these as teachable moments.
o Some indiscretions need to be carefully monitored, and if needed pursue professional help.

Digital devices offer many social and educational benefits. They are a necessary part of society today. However, research shows that face-to-face interactions with family and friends, serves as an even more important role in children's learning and growth.

Resources:
www.AAP.org
www.HealthyChildren.org
www.iRoc2.org