Hello Horace Mann Families!

The topic of social media has been on my mind frequently in the last few weeks. I have had some students who have been upset about some things they encountered on the screen.   Our children's connection to media is everywhere, coming from more sources and more screens than we probably remember when we were kids: TV, movies, video games, computers, cell phones, I-pads, I-pods, etc. There are many wonderful uses for media that provide conveniences and education for us and our families. There can also be dangers in media and we can protect our children by following some simple guidelines.
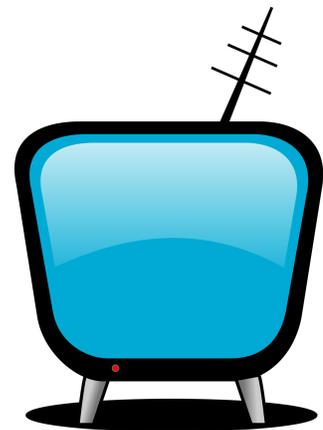
 It's important to remember that children's brains are not fully developed, specifically the part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) responsible for critical thinking, judgement, problem-solving, and impulse control. When a child or adolescent views media showing violence, sexual content, or harmful stereotypes, their own ideas, feelings, and behaviors are impacted. Without some guidance, repeated exposure to these kinds of media may lead to an increase in aggression and a decrease in empathy.

Quick tips for setting media guidelines:

 • Limit the amount of screen time to 1-2 hours a day (or less if you notice it is negatively impacting your child).
 • Model screen-free times/activities (like dinner time, for example). • Keep children's bedrooms free of screen media (no TV, game systems, laptops, Ipads, cell phones, etc).
 • Preview media that your child is interested in before you allow them to view/play it.
 • Co-view media (if appropriate) with your child and discuss the content - this will help them develop critical thinking skills.
 • Do your research about social media websites (like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and closely monitor their usage. Remember, these sites are typically for ages 13 and up.
 • Stick to rating recommendations. They exist for a reason. • Use your parental judgement. Your children are counting on you to set their limits!

Mrs. Roxie