

Christmas is just around the corner and wish lists are being made that include iPads, iPhones, iPods, ieverything! Many tech wizards, executives and engineers tend to shield their kids from technology, going so far as to send their children to non-tech schools (where computers can't be found) that focus on hands-on learning. Hmm. I wonder if these tech leaders know something the average American doesn't understand?

Once you become a parent or a teacher, you begin to look at life differently. This includes examining the long-term effects of social trends. Chris Anderson, CEO of 3D Robotics and a father of five, has seen what drives those who work in the technology field to guard their kids from too much technology.

Pause and reflect for a moment. When you examine your own deficits and baggage, doesn't it move you to want to guide this younger generation away from those negatives? If our current addictions to our iPhones or other devices are any indication, we may be setting our children up for incomplete, handicapped lives—devoid of imagination, creativity and wonder—when we allow them unlimited access to screens. As adults, we were the last generation to regularly play outside, precisely because we didn't have smart phones, tablets and laptops. We learned from running, jumping, and hands-on interaction, and we consumed information via books and socialization with other humans, not Google. So how do we recover from this?

Start with Three Steps: Obviously, technology is not going away, and most of us don't want it to, either. So leading young people is a balancing act. We must find ways to lead our students proactively, in order to build well-rounded people. What characteristics do we want our children to possess as they begin their adult life, their marriages, and their careers? My guess is that you want them to be savvy with a computer, but you want so much more than that, right? So let's look at three steps to lead them well:

1) Begin with the end in mind. -- Jot down a list of the qualities you'd like your students to possess as they enter adulthood. These could be soft skills like good communication, listening skills, the ability to see beyond their own interests, an optimistic outlook, etc.

2) Talk through these goals with students. -- One of the wisest decisions made as a trainer and a parent is to inform your kids on the list of outcomes they'd need as emerging adults. When this topic became a mutual goal, you will be able to collaborate on a plan to develop these qualities in them.

3) Implement the Big IDEA. -- If students are to learn something, adults must practice: **I – Instruction** – They need verbal explanation and conversation. (**Hear it**); **D – Demonstration** – They need observation and examination. (**See it**); **E – Experience** – They need participation and practice. (**Do it**); **A – Assessment** – They need to evaluate and measure growth. (**Debrief it**).

Provide them with a place to practice social skills. Make sure you balance tech-time with touch-time, insuring that each hour on a screen was matched with equal time face-to-face with people. Travel and expose them to unfamiliar cultures that require work to understand and communicate with locals. Introduce them to mentors, where they learn to ask questions and glean from older generations. Take them to homeless shelters and soup kitchens so they learn to serve others and appreciate the blessings they enjoy at home.

Teachers—you're not just teaching a subject, you're training future leaders. Parents—you're not just raising kids, you're raising future adults. Employers—you're not hiring cheap, young workers, you're preparing managers. Coaches—you're not just helping them win games, you're teaching life lessons. Youth workers—you're not just entertaining kids, you're equipping world changers. Believe it or not, our culture today is full of landmines. Let's prepare our youth to navigate their way through them successfully.

So, Invest in YOUR Child's Future and get them enrolled in our Twin Creeks District 4-H program. We are excited about the opportunities that our 2021-22 year will offer! Please contact Twin Creeks District 4-H Youth Development Agent, Patsy Maddy, at pmaddy@ksu.edu or 785-877-5755 for interest in joining 4-H in either Norton, Decatur, Sheridan or Graham counties. We will be awaiting your email or phone call!

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Article Header

“The Battle of Our Youth”

“Chasing Clovers”

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