

## SMARTPHONE USAGE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

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### Introduction

Parents of elementary school age children are faced with a myriad of decisions. How much television should they let their kids watch? When are they old enough to watch grownup movies? When do we let them stay home alone? When can they cross the street by themselves?

And there are so many factors to take into account, not least of which, the child's own temperament and maturity level. Differences in kids will show us that some kids can be put in front of a table full of candy with an understanding that they'll know when to stop, while others kids' ... well, let's just say they may require parents to take a more active role. Do we really parent these kids the same way?

As parents we trudge along, using our best judgement to figure out if we will allow candy in the house, if we will allow a 7 year old to watch the Harry Potter movie, or if nine o'clock is a reasonable bedtime for a 10 year old. But nowhere are these parenting dilemmas more complicated and confusing than in the world of smart phones, because smart phones belong in a social context, and are subject to societal norms and pressures.

Parent whose values guide them to limit, for example computer time or candy intake, may deal with pressure in the form of: "it's not fair! All the others kids get to play Minecraft!", but this is far different than the pressure exerted on parents whose child may not have a smartphone, when others do. Because being that "minority child" without a smartphone may mean that he/she is out of the loop in terms of socialization, communication and friends. **Smartphones are not just treats or luxuries, but have become part of the social context of being a child in our "new western virtual" society.**

This paper will examine some of the issues and concerns regarding smartphone usage and children, and then offer an overview of a New Authority approach to navigating this new reality.

But before we proceed, let's understand what we are dealing with. There is no doubt that the introduction of mobile phones offer incredible conveniences. No more do we give kids some spare change or a token, and hope they have access to a working public phone. They can call us and text us, let us know that they are running late, or ask permission to go to a friends' house. The necessary parent-child communication has just become that much easier. But smart phones are more than phones. More than those communication devices that we, the parents, associate with the word "phone". They are computers.

**Mobile computers.** They allow access to the internet, games, social media and social communication networks. There are lots of advantages to these mini-computers, and like them or not, they are here to stay.

Studies show that kids are getting access to smartphones from a younger and younger age, most of the time without much thought being given to the meaning and impact of these devices. It is our contention that we, as professionals, need to start examining the impact and offer guidelines to parents and communities living in this new reality.

This paper will focus on smart phones and elementary school aged children for the following reasons : a) these are the years that most kids are first introduced to smart phones<sup>1</sup> , b) this is the period where children are still very much developing and c) are still, for the most part, dependent on their parents. While children of all ages still require adult supervision, at the older ages it becomes harder for parents to guide their children. During the ages of 6-12, there is increasing independence and separation from the home. Just as we evaluate the child's age and maturity level before we allow them to independently manage the outside world, and just as we prepare them beforehand with supervised and gradually increasing challenges, so too does smartphone usage require an adult's guiding hand.

The first step, as always, in building (new) authority is to initiate – whether it's initiating support, initiating care or initiating resistance. So before we give our kids a smartphone allowing them to text, tweet, snap and post like crazy, let take a moment to figure out what kind of parental presence is needed regarding smartphone usage.

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<sup>1</sup> By some estimate the average age for a child in the USA for getting their first smart phone is 10, and it is estimated that 25% of children between the ages of 2-5 have smartphones.

## Smart Phones and Childhood Psychology and Development

In this section, I would like to highlight some of the issues or concerns regarding smartphone usage in childhood. Most parents are aware of the grave dangers lurking in the virtual world - bullying, verbal violence, shaming, exposure to inappropriate content, and while these are without a doubt the biggest and most overt dangers in smartphone usage, they are not the only concern. It is not in the scope of this paper to address the extreme, but all too common abuse of social media and messaging apps, rather I will now like to draw attention to the more subtle and indirect risks lurking in the use of smartphones.

### **1) New Social Arena - where a virtual “smart-space” becomes reality**

Navigating the pressures and hurts of the social world is hardly a new phenomenon, but due to advancements in technology children are able to hurt each other in new and often confusing ways. The extreme cases of bullying and shaming have increasingly come into our awareness, instances where children are harmed by mean, embarrassing, false and hurtful messages sent in a public or group context, or instances where sexual content and images are sent to shame. But group chats in social media carry far more subtle pressures, hurts and risks that require a high level of maturity to navigate. Chat groups add an additional level of complication to an already complex social dynamic. **In the "real world" it isn't easy being a child trying to figure out friends, enemies, popularity and social hierarchies, but the virtual world has added a few more landmines with less adult presence.**

The reasons are:

- Chat groups are by nature based on inclusion and exclusion. While these elements have always existed, virtual groups have their own specific power in that in a moment groups can be formed, followed by sub-groups, or certain members removed and others added. The social world of inclusion and exclusion has become particularly precarious.

- There is a difference between the written word and the spoken word. A snide comment said in passing, has less impact than the perhaps sarcastic or mean comment which is written. Text "meanness" as opposed to oral "meanness" doesn't necessarily go away. It's not as transient and may even get passed around. In addition, the written word is a limited and often problematic mode of expression. Young children are just beginning to learn the subtleties of social interaction. Have you ever heard an 8 year old calling a friend's house to see if he wants to come over? Until he is taught social codes it may sound at best humorously impolite, at worst offensive. So too, does communicating via the written word need to be taught. There are no tones, intonations and facial clues that allow us to interpret ambiguous remarks. It is very hard to detect emotions via text and emoticons and exclamation points only do so much. The written word allows for greater misunderstanding. Was a comment meant teasingly? Sarcastically? Sincerely? Naively? Children may hurt or confused by messages that would be easily understood if only done face to face.
- It is public: Virtual media may make the negative comment, from that mild to the severe, that much more painful or humiliating by the fact that it is being witnessed "virtually" by peers.
- Less opportunity for reflection: Impulsivity is nothing new; a word or insult said aloud in anger, only to regret it later. A mean joke said only to get attention, followed by the twinge of guilt when you realize that you crossed a line and someone got hurt. Children are developing the skills to regulate emotional responses and inhibit impulsivity. But the virtual world is fast and it takes a split second to press send, leaving little space for reflection and regret. The opportunity to regret is often a product of direct face to face interaction. Young children are just noticing that there is particular thrill in a biting or cutting remark, but the tears or hurt expression on their peers' face allows for the development of empathy. **Virtual sarcasm or meanness allows for the thrill but without the space for regret or shame that face to face interactions provide.**<sup>2</sup>
- More complicated social clues and codes: Now children have to try to navigate a social arena which includes number of responses, emojis or likes to posts. Certain children will lead in a group chat garnering reactions and feedback, while other

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<sup>2</sup> MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle is one of the leading researchers looking into the effects of texting on interpersonal development. She describes what the differences between texting and face to face conversation when it comes to interpersonal development. <http://techland.time.com/2012/08/16/we-never-talk-anymore-the-problem-with-text-messaging/>

children's posts will hang in virtual space ignored or belittled. We see kids whose mood plummets because they know that their text was read, but had yet to receive a reply. When are they old enough to understand that a friend's lack of response may occur for 10 different reasons, none of which have to do with lack of friendship?

- Lastly, this virtual social arena is new in that it is accessible 24 hours a day. It used to be that the home was a safe haven from the pressures of social dynamics. But with the smartphone, social dynamics and dramas have penetrated the home. There is no refuge from the sometimes stressful, sometimes overwhelming and sometimes painful world of children's new social life.

## **2) Cognitive Impact - creativity and boredom as an example:**

While research on smartphone use and its impact is still in its beginning stages, theorists and researchers are concerned that heavy device use during young childhood could interfere with development of creativity, sensorimotor and visual motor skills, memory capability, language development, attention and problem solving skills. There is concern that screen time may adversely affect the areas in children's brains and psyche's that are typically obtained by exploring, unstructured play and interacting with peers.

Part of the problem, however, isn't the devices themselves, but rather the heavy use of them. In other words, while there is still a debate whether the word "addictive" can be used, it does seem clear that once introduced they are, for many children, the preferred mode of spending time. The feeling for many parents today is that their children spend time with their smartphones more than any other activity in their lives. While parents and researchers alike are concerned with how this is affecting children, parents, in the meantime, want to know how to act now. An interesting example of the dilemmas concerning developmental and cognitive issues are presented in what we might call the boredom-creativity paradox.

### **Creativity and Lack of Boredom**

The reason that smartphones are often our preferred way of spending time, is that they are such a quick fix to man's (and child's) greatest enemy - boredom. Boredom is

immediately alleviated by access to a smart phone. Boredom isn't a fun feeling, and we often have a hard time sustaining it. Boredom, however, is the impetus to so much positive developments. Play, imagination, creativity, connecting with others, and physical activity are often stimulated as a way to escape boredom. Boredom pushes us to explore and try something new. Long car rides, as an example, will often lead to staring at the clouds and daydreaming; our minds way of alleviating boredom by providing rich internal entertainment. But the problem with these acts is that they require effort and often are neither quick nor a guaranteed solution, and as such they don't stand a chance in comparison to playing with a smartphone (internet, apps, social media) which provides an immediate and effort free relief of boredom. It's a great solution, but it has little positive impact on a child's emotional, internal, or cognitive development. Children no longer turn inward to seek a solution for their quest to find entertainment and activity, and a crucial part of their internal world never gets the chance to develop. More and more research is pointing to the notion that boredom leads to increased creativity and a search for meaning. And beyond the positive impact, it's quite possible that it just might be healthy for emotional wellbeing to take a break from all that stimulus bombardment.

### **3) Emotional Impact - FoMO as an example**

The ability to move quickly from link to link, from stimulus to stimulus, readily available information and games, and endless bombardment of posts and tweets, scanning countless images and videos, catching up with latest blogs and events; we are only beginning to understand its effects on our psyche. The research is just beginning and for the most part has been done on adult and teens, but there does seem to be concern that heavy use may have an adverse effect on self-image, anxiety and overall mental health.

Imagine the all too common scenario, a 10 year old finishes up her ballet lesson, goes to her bag and turns on her smartphone. She finds 300 texts or posts waiting for her, tweets, videos, photos, comments or just a classmate asking questions regarding that day's homework. As adults we may handle this attack on our time and psych with ease, interest, amusement and even indifference, or on the other hand we may feel overwhelmed, stressed and besieged. Sometimes all of the above. It's time we ask ourselves at what age does a child have the skills to cope with this and what can adults do to equip them for this reality?

There are all kinds of impacts connected with internet/ smartphone usage, some of which are so subtle that they hardly enter our awareness. Research is looking at social media usage and its negative effects on happiness, well-being, self-esteem, body-image. Some have claimed that social media make children more likely to develop symptoms of anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders.<sup>3</sup>

There is increasing data that shows that adults report better self esteem after positive social-media feedback, and develop a real need for it. And if this is the trend we notice with adults, can we imagine what it would be for a child? Parents and adults who work with children are noticing this effect of social media on self-esteem. We see the child or teen who constantly checks the number of "likes" or comments their post or picture receives, and that their mood is dependent on that.

### FoMo as an example

Imagine an 11 year old, 20 years ago, sitting at home on the weekend, wondering for a moment what his friends are doing. He knows that the next day at school he'll probably find out. Today that 11 year old feels the "itch" to know and immediately glances at his phone and sees updates or pictures of trips, outings, food and big smiles, some from people he doesn't even know that well. He doesn't know why, but all of a sudden he's in a bad mood.

So what is this famous "FoMO"? It has been defined as “the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you’re missing out – that your peers are doing, in the know about, or in possession of more or something better than you”. **That little acronym can lead to poor sleep quality, anxiety and depression.**

In other words, you start to stress that some important event or happening will take place and if you don't "check in" regularly, you won't know about it. In addition, the more hours you spend looking at posts about others' vacations, parties, dining experiences, boyfriends or girlfriends, you are more likely to feel that something is missing in your life. As adults we can remind ourselves that before the perfect picture was taken, reality was perhaps messier or more complex and we have experienced enough of life to realize the falseness

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201306/do-facebook-and-other-social-media-encourage-narcissism>

behind the image. But when do children have enough maturity and experience to view this world with a critical eye? When do they have the ability to understand that that "itch" to find out what's happening and what they are missing, is based on an illusion.

#### Last thoughts on smartphones and children

So after all these issues and concerns regarding smartphones, there are a few more things to mention. One is that for most kids connecting with their peers via their smartphone is a normal part of modern day childhood. Secondly, not all kids are the same. Some kids are more sensitive to the goings on in social media and messaging, while others are playing with their friends or reading their books, happily oblivious to the dramas taking place in their back pocket. Some kids may spend hours messaging their friends but it does not negatively impact the time spent outdoors, being creative, doing physical activity, nor does it replace real connectivity. **We often hear parents lamenting that their child is constantly on their smartphone but upon further examination we understand that that same child is a good student, a youth counselor, with a rich social life. Do we still have cause for concern?**

Parents cannot wait until research gives us conclusive answers as to the impact of smartphones on children. Parents need to know how to act and professionals working with children and parents need to provide a compass on how to take an active part in raising children in this new reality. Just like we teach children basic street safety years before they begin to cross the street by themselves, so too does smartphone safety require both parent and schools to take an active part in guiding children onto the information highway. Let's see what we can do...



## **New Authority Guidelines for introducing smartphones to kids**

### **Introduction**

Just like in all important aspects of child rearing, the introduction and use of smartphones needs to come for a proactive authority stance and not a reactive one. Three points are important to emphasize when parents, caregivers and schools wish to start and set guidelines for smartphone's use with children.

1. A Smartphone is not a luxury toy for kids and it's definitely not just a 'mobile' telephone – It is a powerful communication tool rooted deeply in the social context of children nowadays and it brings with it an emotional load for any child who starts using it.

2. Giving a smartphone for your child creates, in many cases, mixed feeling of hope and dread in parents. Hope for being able to be in constant contact with your child, even when s/he is not near and dread, like with all new technological advances, that you can never be sure about their impact on your child. One thing is sure - parents can't wait until research will give us 'clear cut' decisions. They need to know how to act now. We believe that it's our duty as clinicians and professionals to set clear guidelines for parents even though the circumstances aren't as clear as we would like them to be.

3. Our team's approach to the concept of building (new) authority for caregivers has always been twofold. On the one hand, we focus on the relationship between the caregiver and the child and on the other hand, we never underestimate the impact of societal norms that dramatically influence the way caregivers are able to act with children in our western culture. That is why our guidelines will start with the parent-child relationship and then will focus on trying to set different societal norms concerning smartphones in "villages" that wish to act together according to the New Authority concept.

### **Guidelines for parents**

#### **At what age should a child have his/her first smartphone?**

The first question parents ask themselves is at what age should a child have a smartphone? Should we delay the use of smartphone as much as possible? And for how long can we delay that use?

We can imagine an assertive father working as a safety engineer in a high-tech company, concerned with the effects of electromagnetic radiation on the workers. When his 9 year old boy asks for a smartphone he refuses. "Too young" he thinks. When the child is 11 he again asks his father for a smartphone and the father explains to his son about the dangers and downsides of smartphone usage. When the child asks his father why he uses a smartphone, the father, who is a firm authority figure, answers - "it's for work – I have no choice". His son notes that all kids in his class have smartphones and they are all in WhatsApp groups so..."Dad, if I want to be "in", I need a smartphone too, you see, I don't have a choice either". The father is consistent in his refusal. When the boy turns 14 he

saves some money and buys his first smartphone. What is the father's role now? Should he take the smartphone away? Should he try to limit its usage? What can he do?

Smartphones take the issue of parental control to the extreme, and can often leave caregivers feeling helpless or at a loss. However, if we keep in mind the concept of PRESENCE, a key idea in NA, we might have a place to start taking a stand. In short, giving your child a smartphone at an age where as a parent you can help guide him/her in this virtual world while supervising its usage has many advantages. Creating a space of time where authority figures can be part of the introduction to smartphones allows the child the necessary period of wading into the virtual waters with his/her parent overseeing from the sidelines. This as opposed to an older age where children may jump into the deep end of the virtual pool without the necessary guidance by their caregivers. With elementary school age children, parents have the opportunity for increasing their presence, an opportunity which becomes significantly harder with older children.

The exact age often depends on the social and cultural context of where the family lives. Smartphones are, as previously stated, part of a child's social context and insisting on delaying smartphone usage may lead to a child paying a social price of being out of the "loop." Taking that into consideration we recommend that the first smartphone given to a child will be between the ages of 10-12, the latter is better, but depends on the societal norms of the community (see also next chapter about it).

### **What should I say to my child when I give her/him the first smartphone? What kind of contract should we have? Or what should be my limitations to my child concerning the use of it?**

The traditional way of thinking is that parents should look at smartphone as a privilege the child is receiving, and not a right and that gaining this privilege, comes with expectations and responsibilities. These responsibilities are often detailed in a kind of a contract. There are plenty of examples of these contracts online ([see here](#) an example), but contracts are by definition two-sided, and as new authority figures, we prefer to put the emphasis on the authority figures and not the child. In other words, not what we expect from the child (which may or may not occur) but rather, announcing our intentions, our behavior and our values! In addition, while contracts should be "precise" and "detailed" an Announcement is short, clear and fits more to younger children's ability to understand the caregivers' message. Here is an example of an Announcement followed by the rationale:

Dear David,

We are happy and proud to give you today your first smartphone! Your phone will give us the ability to be in close contact with you even when you're far from us, it will let you be in contact with your friends, and connect you to a virtual world full of action, games, and interests. But as you know, the virtual world has its dangers and risks and we, your parents, want you to know that it's our duty to keep you safe. There are 3 (or 4\*) things that are important to us concerning your use of this smartphone:

1. In the living room we will have a "charging station" where every evening at 19.00, you will turn off your phone and place it there to be recharged for the next day.
2. It is important to us that you'll always give us any passwords you may have and 3 times a week we will go over with you the texts and posts in your groups to see that everything is fine.
3. If we see any inappropriate use of the smartphone, we'll have a 'smartphone timeout' for a few days in order to find better ways of understanding and resolving what is happening.

(\*4.) Parents can address their own specific concerns by including statements like: If you have a phone, you need to be available and accessible to us. That means always answering our calls or returning them as soon as possible. Or: Any new App download requires our permission. Or: Every morning we will sit together and look over last night's texts so you can start the day calmly.

David, we may, in the future, have disagreements about the smartphone, but it's important to us to let you know that we give you this smartphone now because we trust you and believe that we can overcome all difficulties by having an open dialogue. We are sure that you will enjoy your new smartphone, so let's open it now and make it work!

With Love,

Your parents

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As you can clearly see with this announcement, we don't use any kind of explanations or specification concerning the dangers in smartphone's use (such as inappropriate content, porn, bullying, etc...) and we don't ask the child to commit to such issues at this point. We believe that a child will sign anything in this moment just to get his/her phone. On the other hand, we give 3 very concrete points: the specific hour when the smartphone is placed at the "charging station"; the parents' obligation to go over the child's smartphone content on a regular base and their commitment to set a 'smartphone timeout' when needed. The importance of these statements is that they set concrete procedures and actions for the most important thing in smartphone usage – Parental Presence.

Regardless of all the stuff written about smartphone, at the end of the day, its technology. Parenting, however, is a relationship, and our emphasis is about guiding caregivers to having the presence and ability to support kids, as well as resist their negative behaviors. Vigilant Care, requires that parents supervise and are present in accordance to their child's needs. For example, some parents may discover that after a few months of going over their child's usage that they have no cause for concern and may choose to take a step back, and just sit with their child once a week to see what he or she is "up to". Others may find that their specific child's virtual environment and his/her ability to navigate it properly require a higher level of vigilant care, and thus may come in "closer" to see what their child is "up to".

The last point mentioned in the announcement which allows for parents to add an element according to their specific child or family needs. Some parents may feel it is important for a child to be accessible to their calls, while for others it may not be a concern. For a socially sensitive child it would be best to allocate 10 minutes in the morning with the child to look over content that was posted during the night. This is a great opportunity to discuss issues like how important were the posts? Did you feel you missed out on it by seeing it 10 hours later? These 10 minutes in the morning might help "vaccinate" a child against "FoMO" by providing an adult's gentle guidance and perspective in the choppy waters of social pressures.

### **Guidelines for a New Authority "village" or – acting together is always better...**

The relationship between child and parent belongs also in a social context. Just as the new authority is based on a net, a network of adults, supporting and reinforcing messages, when it comes to guidelines concerning smartphone usage, social norms can either weaken our authority or strengthen it. If we go back to the example of the assertive father working as a safety engineer, let's offer a different scenario for when his 11 year old boy asks for a smartphone again. In this new scenario, the father explains to his child the dangers or risks with a smartphone and also tells his boy – "I'm going to talk with other parents in your classroom and we'll decide together what to do about it." What will be the other parents' response to the father? From this imaginary father, we would like to go to a real father, one who did exactly that. As this father told us, when his boy was in second grade he sent an email to all the parents in the class suggesting that they make a parental commitment that they not give their children smartphones before the six grade. The first reply was from the teacher; she informed him that about 4 children in their class already had smartphones. A second reply came from a mother who wrote that it sounded to her like a dictatorial decision and that every parent should decide for his/her own kid. Other parents replied that they have no intention of giving their children a smartphone, not even at the six grade. Some parents voiced support for his suggestion. In the end, the father told us, by the beginning of the 4th grade 90% of the kids had smartphones. "I don't want

my boy to have a smartphone”, told us this father, “but I truly feel that I’m denying him something he really needs now in his relationship with his friends – what should I do now?”

If we look at it this situation from a community perspective, maybe there is something we can do. When authority figures work together to strengthen their messages and values, it become easier to influence and guide our children.

When the school's Parent-Teacher association decides to put a spending limit on birthday presents or to limit sweets at school functions, it does not mean everyone has to adhere to this policy, it just means that there is a critical mass of parents that agree. And when there is that consensus, even if it's a partial consensus, parent will feel supported when they bring fruit instead of cake to a function. It is the same rationale for working together to create a norm or consensus for smartphone usage in elementary school, a norm that is dependent on community values.

We recommend that schools and parents work together to decide before hand, long before a child holds his/her first Smartphone, what their stance regarding Smartphone usage is. Thus when then that child enters the virtual reality, it is in a very different context. This initiative means that already in the first grade<sup>4</sup>, parents and schools needs to discuss their attitudes and views and come up with a basic consensus.

The community can decide what the norm is for giving a smartphone, and allow a transition period of "practicing", by creating a space where chats and chat groups are supervised. Adults can give the guidelines as to the content, the time limits, and the language. The policy needs to take into account, one of the biggest issues involved in smartphone usage, which is social groups, i.e. WhatsApp groups. These groups are a new arena for young children, where inclusion and exclusion and the power of the written word, take on a whole new power. We suggest parents and school work together to come up with a policy which considers these issues.

A few month ago our New Authority Center team from Israel was asked to do a workshop regarding NA in schools in the Netherlands for [Alberdingk Thijm Scholem](#) primary schools. During the workshop day the issue of smartphones and difficulties concerning ‘virtual relationships’ between parents and teachers were raised and discussed. As a result of the dialogue we worked out a policy concerning use of smartphones and put it as a kind of Announcement to the parents and teachers:

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<sup>4</sup> Just like road safety education which begin way before a child crosses his/her first street by himself, smartphone usage also requires thought and action before a child is given his/her first Smartphone.

We, the teachers and parents, have decided that:

We will allow kids in our community to have smartphone only after year 5.

The first year of smartphone usage will be heavily supervised by both teachers and parents.

There will be only one formal WhatsApp group for the class. This group will always have one adult present in the group (from the parent-teacher association) to supervise the children's activities.

This group will operate based on the guidelines decided upon by us, the school and parents. These guidelines include the kind language and content<sup>5</sup> allowed in the group. The adult supervision of the group will also remind the children that communication in the WhatsApp group is limited from 8:00-20:00.<sup>6</sup>

Each child is an administrator in the group and no one is allowed to include or exclude anyone else from the group.

With the understanding that it is near impossible to disallow "sub-groups", we ask each parent to sit down with his/her child every 2-3 days and go over their posts and messaging to make sure that no hurtful or negative communication is taking place. Parental Presence is the key to a safe future on the virtual highway!

In Year six we will allow for added WhatsApp groups with the understanding that each parent is responsible for going over the content of their own child's communication and adheres to basic agreed upon limitations in terms of content and language.

If a parent becomes aware of hurtful content between children, the school counselor<sup>7</sup> will be made aware of this.

This is of course just an example of guidelines that may be changed and expanded upon for each school. It is again important to emphasize that this is by no means "enforceable", and of course it is quite possible that a group of kids will create their own group, etc.. What matters is that parents and school work together to initiate guidelines and social norms that take into account this changing reality of 'smart-spaces' where our kids spend their time with their smartphones.

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<sup>5</sup> This can include guidelines like no pictures or videos of a personal nature will be shared in the group, don't make fun of anyone, and so forth.

<sup>6</sup> This is an example which reflects parents' concerns that children are too involved in groups late at night or before school.

<sup>7</sup> It can be counselor or a teacher or even a parent-teacher committee charged with dealing with these issue.

## **Conclusion**

When the iPhone was introduced by Steve Jobs in 2007, he proclaimed that the “iPhone is not just a communication tool but a way of life”. If so, and indeed it does seem so, children need help to grow and develop in and into this new way of life. They need adults who observe their children's maturity level and emotional needs and oversee their development. It is our duty as (new) authority figures in our society to help them steer through the possible landmines' of this complex world unscathed and find the best (or at least – less harmful) ways to deal with this new virtual “smart-space” created by the smartphones. We do this as we do all things according to the New Authority concept - by initiating care, increasing our presence, recruiting support and when needed resist violence with NVR.