Online Protection in a digital age

Imagine that your home network and online devices were an amusement park such as Dreamworld. Would you let your children walk around and participate on all that it has to offer without any sort of guidance or supervision? It is a scary thought, given the world we live in.

Our children have grown up with the internet readily available, in fact, they use it on a day to day basis, whether or not it is watching a show on Netflix, to watching Minecraft videos on YouTube. With the internet providing so many possibilities in relation to education, learning and entertainment purposes, the amount of inappropriate content is overwhelming. There are several ways to attempt to curb these threats online, and listed below are some options that are easily implemented.

Having said that, there is no substitute for supervision of the use of devices, and education of what lies on the internet that would prove to be a threat for our young people. Open communication is key, whether or not that is in relation to someone posing to be a friend on social media, or inappropriate pop ups or content being displayed on devices. The more comfortable that our young people are with sharing what they are doing online, and what seems to be an issue for them, the more likely they are to communicate if something occurs. Another key is to limit the use of screen time, devices not being allowed in bedrooms etc. unless used between certain periods of time, e.g. homework.

SOPHOS HOME

You may have heard from your children from their experience at school that they might not have been able to browse to a website due to Sophos blocking it. We have several layers of protection at the school which tries to ensure the online safety of the students when they are online. In 2019 we have increased our protection with the Antivirus (Sophos) also providing online protection, so wherever the devices are used, they are protected as much as possible from online threats.

Sophos has developed a home product, which is linked below. You are able to sign up free for Sophos Home, and deploy the software to 3 devices per account. It is able to be installed on Windows and Mac devices.

There is also a premium version available which is paid for, and it offers all the free version does plus additional protections. You can read more about the differences on their website.

Not only does Sophos home give you Antivirus protection, but also the ability to block categories of websites and get alerts if those categories are attempted to be accessed.

https://home.sophos.com/en-us.aspx

QUSTODIO

Qustodio is a paid piece of software which can be installed on most devices, which will give you protection and visibility of your children's activity online.

"Qustodio provides powerful monitoring tools and parental controls for things like screen time, adult content and games."

https://www.qustodio.com/en/family/how-it-works/

APPLE IOS 12 CONTENT AND PRIVACY RESTRICTIONS

Apple with their latest update, have provided controls relating to screen time and restrictions which can be applied to devices.

https://support.apple.com/en-au/HT201304

OPEN DNS FAMILY SHIELD

OpenDNS is a cloud provider which provides a holistic approach to your network at home to prevent potential inappropriate content on the web. I would suggest that this method is implemented, regardless of what is done on the individual devices.

It is a bit more complex to implement, however once setup, it will just work. The best implementation scenario is to use this on your modem/router and then any internet traffic will be filtered by the categories which you have set to block. That way, no matter what device is accessing the internet on your network, it will be governed by the filters you have setup.

I would recommend this is implemented in conjunction with one of the others listed, or any other that you may find on the internet, as there are multiple options to provide similar protections. https://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email me at raoulb@jcs.tas.edu.au