



# DEVELOPING IN DIGITAL WORLDS

Findings from parents with children in  
Manaiakalani schools

Phase One  
2015-2017

## Project Overview

- Developing in Digital Worlds is a four-year project conducted by the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education and Social Work and funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- This is the first study in the world to identify links between teaching, family participation and game-based learning in order to promote educational outcomes and equity
- The project focuses on children aged 4-17 years to test how to promote cognitive and social development in the '21st Century' digital world

## Study Aims

- How does participation in the digital world influence children's cognitive and social development?
- What skills, knowledge and capabilities do children need to manage, engage, and benefit from participating in the digital world?
- How can family, educators, and society effectively support children's involvement in the digital world?



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# PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE



- 48** parents participated
- 7** different schools
- 27** parents had children in years 3-4
- 21** parents had children in years 5-10

## Skills Needed to Use Digital Devices



- About one third of all parents reported they were unsure what thinking and social skills children need

- Parents of younger children were more likely to hold the view that a good upbringing would adequately equip them for online contexts



## Support That Parents Can Give

- If parents provided guidance, monitoring and discussions were the most common approach, followed by strategies and doing alongside



- In older children, direct monitoring and discussion gave way to general advice and checking emails or posts



- Learning conversations were more common with younger children, while discussions with older children centered around undesirable online activity and being mindful of others

- Only a couple of parents described purposeful planned discussions about online issues such as "trolling" and content access



- In both age groups, parents were less likely to be online with their children which suggests they are less likely to be commenting on student blogs as a means of connecting with school and developing knowledge of student learning

## How Often Children Need Support

Perspectives on how often children need support were variable but indicated an underestimation of need by parents. As the two graphs below show, nearly half of parents weren't sure whether their child needed support or thought that they "hardly ever" need support.

Years 3-4



Years 5-10



## Need for Parents to Develop Their Own Expertise

There was considerable evidence that parents of both age groups felt they could be better supported with their child's online social and cognitive development:

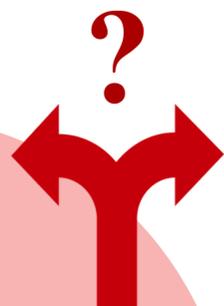


- The preferred method of support was more frequent interaction through the teacher and becoming more informed about behaviours, "acceptable communication", and age-appropriate apps
- Parents want to align their practices with the school
- Parents would like written guidelines and training opportunities

- Parents of younger children emphasized understanding of virtuality (that there are real people on the other end of a keyboard), while parents of older children focused on security, managing a digital footprint, and undesirable content



- Some parents were not concerned about the critical thinking skills required online as they felt decision making about what to believe was comparable to offline contexts



Thank you to all  
those who contributed  
to this research.

## More Information

If you have any queries, you are most welcome to contact the project manager, Angela McNicholl, at [a.mcnicholl@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:a.mcnicholl@auckland.ac.nz) or 09 923 8978, or email the principal investigator Professor Stuart McNaughton on [s.mcnaughton@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:s.mcnaughton@auckland.ac.nz)

Visit the Developing in Digital Worlds website to find out more:

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