

# THE SMART ZONE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## FROM OUR FOUNDERS

In a bold display of leadership, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has launched the Smart Families Shaping Souls campaign in 18 schools in the fall of 2023. Our program coordinators will be working directly with parents and staff to create communities that value and protect the God given human dignity of every child. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your school community. We are blessed to be able to share this program with you and your family.

## THE SMART FAMILIES MISSION

It is the mission of Smart Families to help parents and schools create a safer, healthier, and happier life for our children and families by creating a community where it's easy to live without smartphones. We provide world class education on neuroscience and physiology to both parents and children to help them navigate the dangers surrounding all forms of manipulative uses of information technology. We empower families with the practical advice and the leadership required to change the status quo.



### UNIFIED COMMUNITY

We help schools and families create a unified community with consistent expectations to make lives easier for parents and children.

### LEADERSHIP

We provide the professional leadership to execute on a proven plan that has worked at other schools. We work with busy parents and staff at schools, but we have the time and subject matter expertise it takes to challenge the status quo.

### AFFIRMATION

We affirm what parents already know in their heart, that smartphones are bad for our children and parents have a moral obligation to protect their children from these dangers and addictions.

I hope to delay this with my girls as long as possible, but I can already see it creeping in among their peers. I'm glad that so many parents at our school are committed to this.

*Smart Families Parent*



## OUTLINE FOR THE YEAR

Smart Families Shaping Souls provides a unique, integrated approach to parent education. Based on a prevention and treatment model, this yearly, rolling curriculum will draw upon the latest neuroscience research to inform parents, educators, and students on the dangers of information technology and early smartphone use. Whilst existing programs have relied on parents seeking out information on their own, we will effectively bring everything you need to know directly to you and create a unified community that understands how we are being manipulated and what we can do to minimize the damage. The first half of the year will focus on parent education, and explore topics such as social media addiction, how a developing brain differs from an adult brain, the myths and facts about screens, and the science behind peer pressure. From January, we switch to our parent empowerment series and provide monthly support on ways to nurture closeness and connectedness in your family away from technology traps.

## THE WHY - KEY FACTS AND STATISTICS

A great paradox of our hyper-connected digital age is that we seem to be drifting apart. Increasingly, however, research confirms our deepest intuition: Human connection lies at the heart of human well-being. Today we find our nation's young people facing an unprecedented mental health crisis, with smartphone use being a major contributor to the increasing numbers of anxious, depressed, and even suicidal children in the US and worldwide.

More than 40 percent of teenagers state that they struggle with persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and more than half of parents and caregivers express concern over their children's mental well-being.

### WHAT THIS WILL LOOK LIKE AT YOUR SCHOOL:

- *Regular newsletters*
- *Monthly family discussion prompts*
- *School based speaker events*
- *Focus groups*
- *Dedicated Lead Parents coordinating the campaign on campus*
- *Continued support from the Smart Families team*



### 5 REASONS PARENTS GIVE FOR THEIR CHILD A SMARTPHONE BEFORE 9TH GRADE:

- *I need to have access to my child.*
- *My child is responsible enough to own their own smartphone.*
- *My child needs to stay connected to their friends.*
- *All of their friends have smartphones, and I don't want them to be made fun of or feel left out.*
- *It is convenient.*

# WE KNOW THE TRADEOFFS. THE CONSEQUENCES ARE KNOWN AND PREDICTABLE.

EARLY SMARTPHONE USE PUTS A CHILD AT RISK OF:

Cyberbullying	Experimenting with drugs	Addiction	Sextortion	Low self esteem	Poor social skills
Depression	Anxiety	Eating disorders	Self Harm	Stress	Pornography
	Trafficking	Suicide Ideation	Disrupted Sleep	Poor focus and attention	

## THE SMART PLEDGE

By taking the Smart Families pledge to delay giving your child a smartphone until after 8th grade, you are making a commitment to safeguarding your child's brain development, preserving the innocence of their childhood, and ensuring their mental and emotional wellbeing. You also give strength to parents around you to join our unified community.



## BUT WHAT IF MY CHILD ALREADY HAS A SMARTPHONE?

Smart Families is committed to helping those families whose child already has a smartphone. We will provide discussion questions and scripts so you can understand how your child is using the phone and get them to talk openly. We will support you by teaching about alternative options. There are many out there! Through education, open and honest dialogue with your child, plus our support, we believe parents can be empowered to reclaim the important and meaningful family relationships that have been displaced by smartphones. It is never too late to make the switch to an appropriate smartphone alternative.

Want to get more involved with your school? Email Dean Kovacs: [Dean.Kovacs@Smart-Families.org](mailto:Dean.Kovacs@Smart-Families.org)