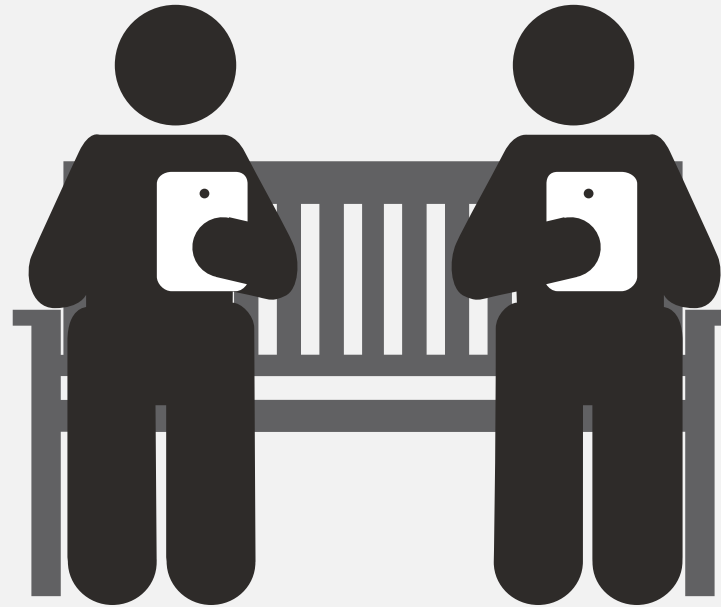# wiseTech ed

Technology Education and Support
For Families, Schools and Communities

How we got here

*Multi-screen devices have transformed our society.*

Seemingly unimaginable new abilities to communicate in real time have reshaped the way we view content as well as navigate our worlds, both online and offline. These devices drastically improve many of our societal systems.

However, with any new technology offering a tremendous upside, there is often "unintended consequences" requiring our attention.

The creators of our current screen technologies did not intend to incite cyberbullying, screen addiction, family infighting, social media depression and the viewing of mature content by young children. They might not have envisioned such consequences, nevertheless, we, as a society, must address such issues before any future negative consequences become even more rampant.
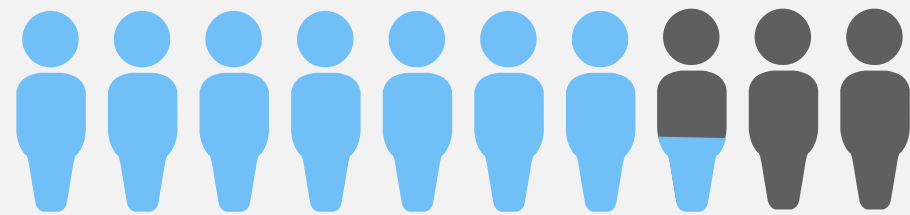
Since the advent of smartphone devices in 1994

an estimated 73% *of teenagers have access*

*to a smartphone.*[1]
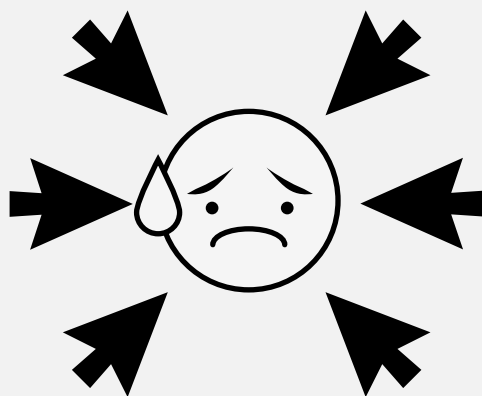
52% *of young people*

report being cyberbullied.[2]

11% *of adolescents and teens*

report embarrassing or damaging photographs have been taken

of them without their knowledge or consent.[2]

"what goes
online
stays online."

Preadolescents and adolescents lacking an awareness of privacy issues often post

inappropriate messages, pictures, and videos without understanding that

"what goes online stays online."[3]
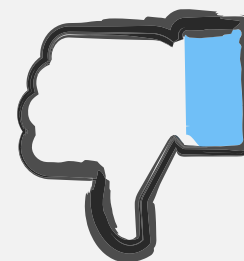
Researchers propose a new phenomenon called

"Facebook depression,"

defined as depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a great

deal of time on social media sites and begin to exhibit classic symptoms of

depression due to comparison of their lives to others.[4]

Beyond the Stats

Anecdote 1:
A group of high school students are caught distributing a Fantasy Slut League in the East Bay that treats fellow female classmates as sexual objects.
The information goes viral at one of the most prestigious school districts in the state of California, and the perpetrators are expelled.
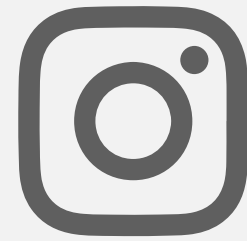
Anecdote 2:
A group of middle school youth are caught distributing a photo of a female classmate on Instagram with a photoshopped penis placed over her. Parents are outraged and threat to sue.

Anecdote 3:
A young girl who is depressed by perceived 'happiness' of her friends on social media cannot help but compare that world to her life. She begins to cut herself and must be admitted to a treatment center.
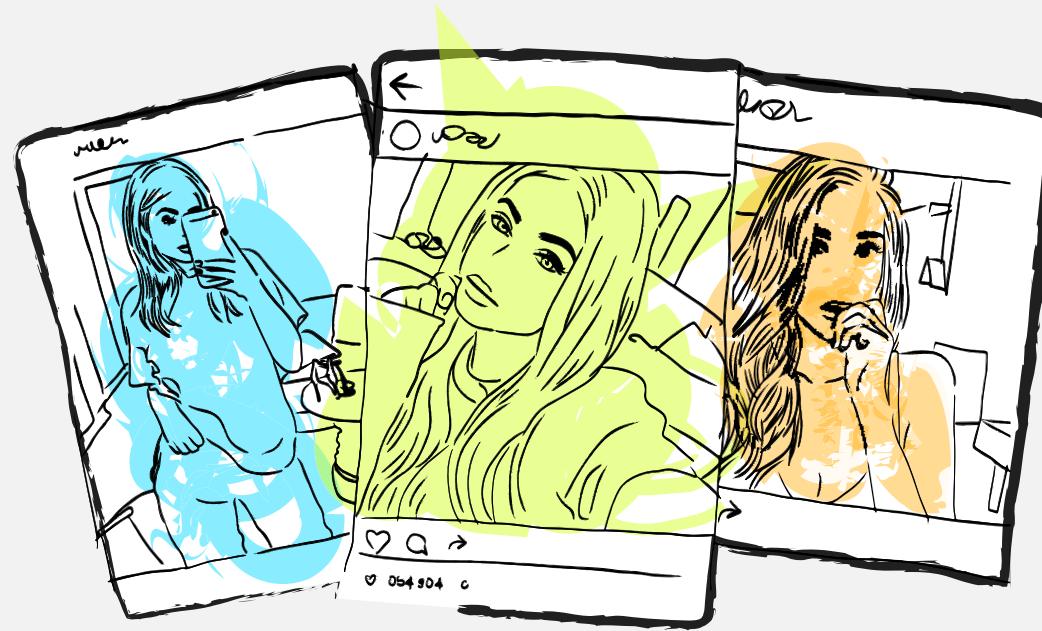
The response to date has been anything but clear. Amidst the shock, outrage and threats of lawsuits, no one is there to comfort the victims of each of these ever increasing examples of **'cyberbullying'**. Too often, the perpetrators languish under an antiquated system of punishment unprepared for such technological advances. Out of touch authorities do little to rectify the community relationship or seek restorative measures.

Within the realms of **"social media depression"** and increased rates of attention deficit disorder[1], new research is underway to diagnose new forms of illness resulting from inappropriate or misguided technology usage.

Put simply, parents are shocked and outraged when **"tech-trauma"** happens to their child. Similarly, schools are under-equipped to handle these situations, and the community as a whole has few supportive outlets to create dynamic plans required to address these issues and ultimately heal from such traumatic experiences.

WiseTech Ed's goal is to **create an educational experience engaging all stakeholders in a community effort to create a shared framework for what 'smart' technology use looks like,** including how to respond when best practices are not followed. WiseTech Ed promotes emotionally intelligent protocols, such as shame avoidance regarding technology use. We believe in embracing a model to celebrate our amazing devices providing awareness as to their unintended consequences.

Wise technology use is not as simple as saying "here's a hammer: be careful." During adolescence (roughly between the ages of 12-18), the brain possesses its largest capacity for thought, yet its lowest threshold of risk-management. The prefrontal cortex is not yet formed and unable to to make rational decisions based on perceived long-term consequences.[1]

It takes just a second to send a damning text or inappropriate photo but it may take a lifetime to heal from the experience. We simply must be proactive as a society to get ahead of these challenges.

integrative approach

- Engaged parents
- Homes
- Community
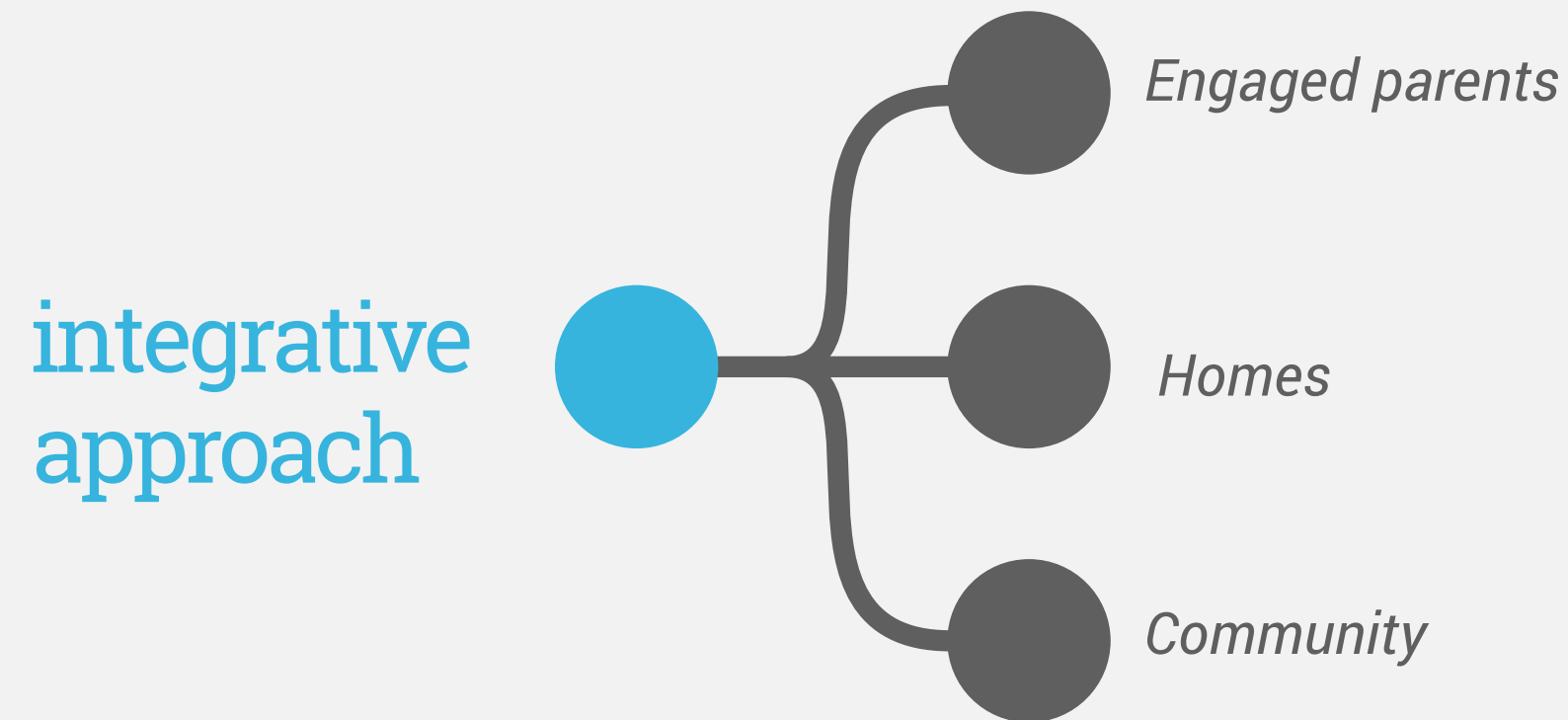
We all could benefit from learning how to use technology wisely, even adults. We generally worry most about our kids because of their developing brains and at times questionable decision making. We also worry because we know how choices made at this crucial time of life can have far-reaching consequences.
Wise technology use, therefore, needs to be grouped into a social and emotional learning curriculum occurring in school alongside health and wellness, drug and sex education, etc.

The integrative approach mustn't end in the classroom, but **extend into homes, engaging parents**.

Community members need to be involved.

Finally, along with education, input, and wisdom gained from adults and professionals, the students themselves must be the final actuators of change.

WiseTech Ed's 3-Tiered Strategy

Our children require a new message. From home, to school, and into the greater community, students must hear about both the benefits of technology and its unintended consequences. Awareness is needed. For instance, we have age limits involving alcohol, smoking and gambling, and yet no restrictions on social media usage when we know it affects the brain in a similarly addictive way, acting upon the same dopamine neuro receptors.[1]

We have to start talking to our kids now before they learn painful lessons the hard way.

WiseTech Ed's 3-Tiered Strategy

WISE
TECHNOLOGY
USE
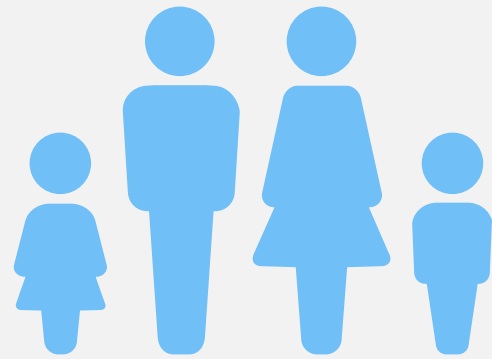
Tier 1: Engage Families by educating and informing on ways technology use can be monitored and modeled in the home environment.
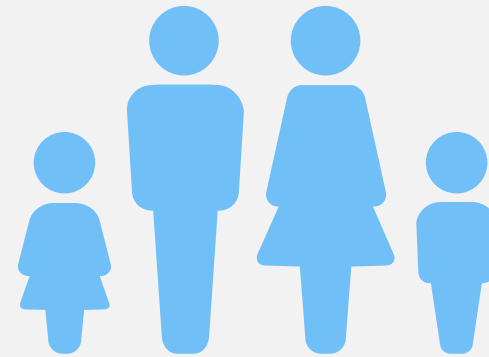
Tier 2: Engage Schools in assemblies and in-class lessons on the importance of wise technology use in relationship to the healthy development and function of the adolescent human brain.
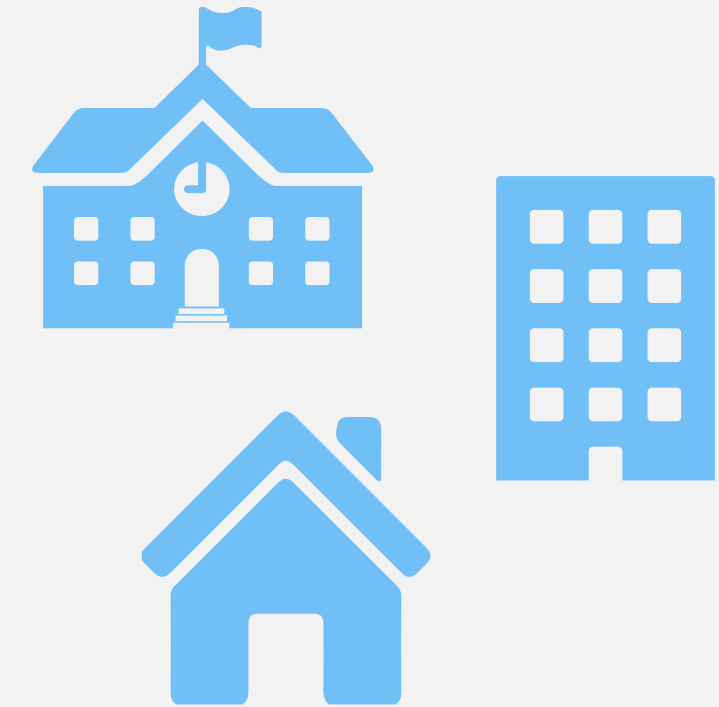
Tier 3: Engage Communities with business partnerships, one-on-one youth mentoring and creation of resource restorative groups to help other kids who have had trauma around technology use.

Engage parents to educate and inform on ways technology use can be monitored and modeled in the home environment.

Organize sponsored **potlucks** at schools, community centers and within homes.

Facilitate **parent workshops** to discuss challenges and create best practices on how to model technology use and engage kids around technology.

Invite families to be present at **round table discussions**, presentations and community events.

Create **tool kits** and parent norms around technology use including setting age appropriate standards around content and setting 'screen free' time at home and school.[1]

Engage schools in assemblies, teacher trainings and in-class curriculum on the importance of wise technology use in relationship to the healthy development and function of the adolescent human brain.

WISE TECHNOLOGY USE

Create **amazing visual aids** combined with first hand stories to connect deeply with students vs. talking down to them.

Run **school wide contests** and campaigns engaging students to solve the challenge of "wise tech use" that is facing the current generation in a way previous generations never had to deal with.

Enroll students for **leadership opportunities** to work with tech brands and community orgs to solve these challenges in an inspiring and creative way.

Provide lessons and action plans to teachers on how to **engage youth in healthy ways** around technology in the classroom.

Tier 3: Community

Engage communities with resources, response plans and mentor programs to help kids, families and schools who have been negatively impacted by technology use.

Organize **in-school groups** of kids to serve as a task force to help victims of cyberbullying, including building restorative relationships and working through trauma.

Development of **community response plan** to work with social media depression, aid victims of cyberbullying and engage youth overall around technology use.

Engage **local business/orgs** to give incentives to those who participate in the program (free wifi as a safe zone for social media and technology use, create incentives for phone free family outings, etc..).

Defining successes
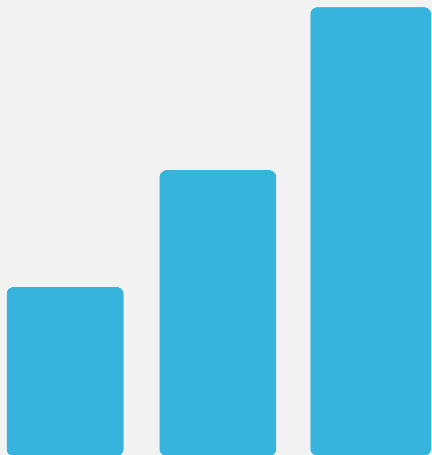
Reduction of student discipline rates at school regarding cyberbullying

Decrease rates of truancy, detention, suspension and expulsion

Increase of student engagement and academic performance

Public service campaigns created by students for students on social media

Wise technology guidelines created from community feedback

Unforeseen changes in how **technology can positively affect** the lives of youth worldwide

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Zach is the founder and community programs director of Roots to Branches, an organization dedicated to empowering youth with Social and Emotional Learning lessons, Project Based learning and Brain and At-Risk prevention education. He has over 12 years experience working with youth, conducting corporate and teacher trainings, and has worked on several million-dollar education and sustainability strategies.