



Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

Has your child gone Pokémon wild?

Pokémon Go! What a craze!

Beats just about any fad I've seen including yo yo's, swap cards and the original Pokémon Gameboy way back in the old days – remember the 90s?

While Pokémon Go is geared toward adults and teenagers it's taken off among primary-aged children – even some pre school kids – as well. Both genders are playing the game, but a rough count among colleagues and friends indicates that it's boys more than girls that are hooked on the game.

Pokémon Go has plenty of psychological hooks to make boys love it. The roam and search nature of the game appeals to the hunter-gatherer that exists in most boys. There are plenty of things to collect which appeals to a boy's fundamental need to put order and control in his world.

And the competitive element embedded in the game makes it almost irresistible to many boys who love nothing better than to better someone else.

How can we approach this craze?

Many parents have asked me how they should approach the Pokémon Go craze, particularly when their children are besotted by it.

Start by accepting that Pokémon Go, like all fads, has captured your child's interest. It's hard to fight against or even stop your child from being involved in games that 'everyone is playing'.

That leads to two parenting requirements. First, find out all you can about the game so you know what you are up against. Ask your child to explain what it's all about. Figure out which parts of the game are age-appropriate and which parts are going to present you with headaches. Once kids are old enough to have their own phones and transportation, they're certainly old enough to play the game without help. Pokémon Go gives users plenty of chances to spend real money, so you probably will want to limit in-game purchases.

Lures, an aspect of the game, can present tricky situations for parents. A player can set out a lure to attract pokémon, but because these lures can be seen by any nearby player, you're not sure who they are attracting. Revisit those Stranger Danger lessons with your kids.

Second, you need to meld your existing family technology rules with the expectations and opportunities that Pokémon Go presents. These include, how much time children are allowed to spend on technology; consider what activities Pokémon Go takes kids away from (including homework); and be aware that's is not healthy for your child to be hooked on one activity at the expense of everything else.

Keep your Pokémon Go player safe

Pokémon Go gets kids outside roaming and exploring their neighbourhoods, which on the surface, is a good thing. However as one mum

told me her son's Pokémon Go experience was leading them to a local quarry, which had some obvious risks attached. So if your kids are old enough to wander unsupervised some quick reminders of safety rules maybe in order, such as crossing a street with a phone in their pocket and only playing the game with kids their own age.

If you join in the craze then be prepared to drive your players around as many Pokémon stops are in interesting places such as parks, historical markers and other gathering spots. Different places have different Pokémon things to collect.....yes, it can get complicated, which is the intrinsic value of the craze.

So my advice for parents is to approach Pokémon Go positively and intelligently. Discover about it as much as your time, your current circumstances and your kids will allow. Join them if possible. Remember, it's a lot of fun; it does get kids exercising more than their thumbs and there are some great learnings (maths, nature and even history) built in to the game. On the other hand, ensure that kids keep a balance in their activities so that a fun craze doesn't become an absolute, all or nothing obsession – which can so easily happen with boys.

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Interested in finding out more about raising boys? If so, you'll love my Raising Mighty Boys online course that starts on 19th August. Register now at parentingideas.com.au. You'll be so glad you did.

