Resources for Families

Autism Conference

January 25 – 27, 2017
There will be a three day event hosted by Children's Autism Services of Edmonton.

The conference will feature guest speakers: Deepak Chopra, who will discuss "the Future of Wellbeing"; Carol Gray, known for the development of 'Social Stories' – an evidence-based practice used worldwide with people of autism of all ages, and Michael McCreary, a self-labelled "AspieComic".

For more information visit: *www.childrensautism.ca*

Teaching critical thinking skills

Online research is one of the most important ways students gather facts and resources for homework and school projects. Students and schools use digital tools the same way we all do: to access libraries of information anytime, anywhere and for any purpose.

Having this information at our fingertips is useful and has reshaped education in many ways. The problem is when questionable, non-credible sources are cited as fact.

It is critical that students learn how to distinguish good Internet sources from bad – or unreliable – ones. But that is not always something students understand how to do.

Preparation for your child's future

Alberta Education has "critical thinking" and "managing information" as two of its eight core competencies.
https://education.alberta.ca/competencies/competencies-overview/.

Managing information, means in part "evaluating authenticity, reliability or validity to appropriately interpret or use information." Also, as students

develop critical thinking skills it is expected that they will learn to "[question] and [analyze] evidence, assertions or assumptions."

These skills are important in today's world, and important for your child's success in it.

How parents can help with critical thinking skills

There are many helpful educator guides and resources for classroom critical thinking lessons. Parents can reinforce these lessons at home by using many of the same tips.

Learning to think

Microsoft's Educator Network provides free tools for teachers, including a Critical Thinking Teaching Guide that has video guides for younger students.

These guides start with a simple reminder for students. To be good at thinking, you have to:

1. Decide to be a good thinker. Ask questions, be clear, think for yourself.

2. Practice thinking every day. Critical thinkers look for problems in their thinking.

According to the site, "These materials can help you teach students how to ask the right questions, to think for themselves, to research subjects more effectively, and ascertain the validity and reliability of information skills that will be critical to their future success in the connected 21st century digital world."
https://education.microsoft.com

Think critically to determine reliability online

Reading critically is a necessary skill for both digital and printed sources; however, research suggests that the problem is more pronounced with online sources.

"Reading online is not like a textbook, where you know the information has already been vetted,"

says Elena Forzani, University of Connecticut research.
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2015/04/online_reading_science_study_results.html

Use the CRAP test (Currency, Reliability, Authority, Purpose/Point of View)

Pardon this slang term, but the acronym may help you remember the four content tests for determining good online sources:

- **Currency:** How recent is the information? How recently has the website been updated? Is it current enough for your topic?

- **Reliability:** What kind of information is included in the resource? Is content of the resource primarily opinion? Is it balanced? Does the creator provide references or sources for data or quotations?

- **Authority:** Who is the creator or author? What are the credentials? Who is the publisher or sponsor? Are they reputable? What is the publisher's interest (if any) in this information? Are there advertisements on the website?

- **Purpose/Point of View:** Is this fact or opinion? Is it biased? Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?
  http://bit.ly/1tLPoXs

Resources for parents

There are many websites that offer tips to parents who want to help their children improve their ability to think critically.

See these sites for more information:

Enhancing Critical-Thinking Skills in Children: Tips for Parents
http://tip.duke.edu/node/822

Teaching critical thinking: An evidence-based guide
www.parentingscience.com/teaching-critical-thinking.html

Critical Thinking: Basic Questions and Answers
www.criticalthinking.org/pages/critical-thinking-basic-questions-amp-answers/409

Think About It: Critical Thinking
www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/thinking-skills-learning-styles/think-about-it-critical-thinking