**Hands-On Technology**

Sunday, 3:55 p.m.:

"It's in their DNA to look at screens," he asserts. And he offers another analogy to explain his approach: "Frankenstein is in the room and I don't want to be Mr. Diesel, by contrast, does not think technology is behind the problems of Vishal and his schoolmates — in fact, he thinks it is the key to connecting with them, and..."

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In the back of the room, Mr. Reilly watches, thrilled. He introduced the audio course last year and enough students signed up to fill four classes. (He could barely pull together the class last year.)

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Sean's favorite medium is video games; he plays for four hours after school and twice that on weekends. He was playing more but found his habit pulling his grade point average down. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Crocker, are not the type to involve themselves in their children's social lives, but they have talked to Sean about it. "If you're not on top of technology, you're not going to be on top of the world," said John McMullen, 56, a retired criminal investigator whose son, Sean, is one of five children at the Crocker house. His mother, Norma, is a manager at the San Francisco airport, build her own Web site.

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At Woodside, as elsewhere, students' use of technology is not uniform. Mr. Reilly, the principal, says their choices tend to reflect their personalities. Social butterflies are using the Internet, watching TV or using some other form of media either "most" (31 percent) or "some" (25 percent) of the time that they are doing homework.

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"I'm going to the pool and I get a text message. And I say 'come tomorrow after school,'" said Allison Miller, 14, a student at Woodside High School. She yearns to cut down on it, but her mother, Alison Miller, 43, who teaches math at Woodside, insists that there is no problem. "There have always been distractions," she says. "Then it was records and then it was video games and then it was the Internet."

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"If you've grown up processing multiple media, that's exactly the mode you're going to fall into when put in that environment — you develop a need for that stimulation," he said.

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"If someone tells you about a drama going on with someone," Allison says. "You find yourself in the hallway, you start engaging with people and you are really doing the wrong things at school."

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"When you look at vocabulary and look at huge stimulus after that, your brain has to decide which information to store," he said. "Your brain might favor the..."

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This captivating image appears on Vishal's computer screen. On this Thursday afternoon in late September, he is engrossed in scenes he shot the previous weekend for a video project.

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"This is the year," she says she told him. "This is your senior year and you can't afford not to focus."

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"I think it's fair to say that kids today have a lot of distractions," said Dr. Rich, director of the division of behavioral pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco. He once worked on the Lure of Distraction, a program that studied the impact of electronic media on children.

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For some, the amplification is intense. Allison Miller, 14, a student at Woodside High School, is using her phone seven to eight times an hour. She taps the device to check her grades, send a text, check Facebook, listen to music, check her messages, see if there is a new voicemail, and check her Web site. She has 43 Facebook friends, special interest groups and a few seasonal friends. She has been able to make headway by applying himself, but also by cutting back his workload. Unlike last year, he is not taking advanced placement classes, and he has chosen "easy" courses, such as European history and US history. He occasionally sends a text message or checks Facebook, but he is focused in a way he rarely is when doing homework. He says the chief difference is that filmmaking..."

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Growing Up With Gadgets. When he was 3, Vishal moved with his parents and older brother to their current home, a three-bedroom house in the working-class section of Redwood City, a suburb in Silicon Valley that is more diverse than some of its elite neighbors. Thin and quiet with a shy smile, Vishal passed the admissions test for a prestigious public elementary and middle school. ‘I’ll be reading a book for homework and I’ll get a text message and pause my reading and put down the book, pick up the phone to reply to the text message, and then 20 minutes later realize, “Oh, I forgot to do my homework.” Some shyer students do not socialize through technology; they recede into it.