

NEWSLETTER



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Education 斯程教育

In this issue

Parenting in the
Metaverse Age
(元宇宙)

Another
Successful
IPDC!

Parenting in the Metaverse Age (元宇宙)

“Facebook changes its name to Meta in major rebrand”.¹

Even if you missed this news headline in October 2021, you probably noticed the new corporate logo when using one of the company’s platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp or Instagram. In announcing the change, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg spoke of it as reflecting the company’s commitment to remain at the forefront of human connectivity in the future, through alignment with the **metaverse** concept.

Not only Meta, but all tech giants - Apple, Amazon, Google – agree that the future is the **metaverse**. They see it as the successor of mobile internet (smartphones) and the obvious next step in mainstream technological development.

But what exactly is the **metaverse** and why is it important to us as parents and educators? Is it just a buzzword in the tech world and in media, or will it impact the way our children interact and socialize online? How can we ensure they are safe online in this new virtual space?

Origins of the Metaverse

From the genre of science fiction and derived from the Greek words 'meta' and 'verse', **metaverse** literally means 'beyond the universe'. In his dystopian novel *Snow Crash* (1992)², author Neal Stephenson describes the **metaverse** as a kind of virtual reality that is full of **avatars** (虛擬化身). However, instead to being confined to their virtual world, the avatars' interactions can have a direct impact of what happens in real life. The Steven Spielberg directed movie *Ready Player One* (2018)³, based on Ernest Cline's book of the same name, explores this concept in greater depth.

The defining quality of the **metaverse** is, as Zuckerberg said, "a feeling of presence - like you are right there with another person or in another place." Based on the idea of **virtual reality** (虛擬實境) combining with other technologies, it is envisaged that **metaverse** will allow people to fully interact in real-time with a 3D environment online, rather than just watching it on a screen. Through virtual and **augmented reality** (擴增實境) devices, they will experience illusionary online worlds where they will meet other people and do all that they do in the real world. Whether it is playing game or attending events, studying, working, or shopping, it will be possible to live out all social interactions, "almost anything you can imagine", in the **metaverse**, in real time.

We do not know what exact form the **metaverse** will take in the future but strategies for its development are well in place. The pandemic has provided additional stimulus, as it forces people to seek new ways of interacting and communicating. Social gaming platforms such as Fortnite and Roblox use a form of **metaverse** prototype: through their avatars, users can create their own their own online experiences and explore far-flung worlds.



1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-59083601>

2 <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/40651883-snow-crash>

3 <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/ready-player-one>

metaverse (元宇宙) :
a virtual reality world where users can interact, game and experience things as they would in the real world

avatar (虛擬化身) :
a small picture that represents a computer user in a game, on the Internet, etc.

virtual reality (虛擬實境) :
a computer-generated environment - perceived through a device known as a virtual reality headset or helmet - with scenes and objects that appear to be real, making the user feel they are immersed in their surroundings

augmented reality (擴增實境) :
an interactive experience of a real-world environment where the objects that reside in the real world are enhanced by computer-generated perceptual information, sometimes across multiple sensory modalities



Keeping Children Safe in the Metaverse

While the **metaverse** in its true form may not yet exist, we already have a glimpse of the plethora of safety and security issues it is likely to raise. As developers prioritize growth over user safety, and regulations fail to keep pace with that rapid technological advancement, increasingly dangerous incidents are being reported in the **metaverse**⁴: from accidents, misinformation, and phishing scams, to bullying, sexual harassment, molestation, assault and online hate, with cases involving racism, abusive language, adult content, and virtual sex parties⁵ - all particularly harmful to any children engaged in such inappropriate environments. As Jesse Fox, Associate Professor at Ohio State University observes:

“sexual harassment ... never (has) to be a physical thing. It can be verbal, and yes, it can be a virtual experience as well.”

Progress is impossible to stop, especially when it comes to new technologies, but we must be aware of what impact it could have on our children's online safety as they grow up in and inhabit this new virtual world.

And we must do all we can to safeguard our children as best we can.

Know Some Tech

Tech isn't just for whizzes and nerds and neither is tech-savviness only in young genes. Now is the time for us all to learn. Making an effort to keep up with the changing digital landscape means we are forewarned and forearmed with some knowledge of the latest technologies - apps, games and platforms - our children may be using.

4 <https://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2022/02/metaverse-prioritizing-growth-over.html>

5 <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-60314572>

How See Change Education Can Help

See Change's aim is to teach children to be safe and responsible digital citizens, giving them the skills they need to thrive online. Our children will grow up in a world where the **metaverse** is part of daily life and so it is essential that staying safe online becomes part of their everyday life too.

See Change does this through its innovative Digital Life Skills program, available to families and schools. Children learn key skills through a series of interactive lessons and apply them through solving online dilemmas and creating digital projects that reflect real world scenarios.

Click [here](#) to find out more about our Digital Life Skills program or [here](#) to receive a complimentary copy of our digital safety guide with more advice on how to support your children online and a list of useful apps for monitoring virtual activity.

Know Who Our Children Are Connecting With

Many of our children are already using digital spaces to connect and interact with their friends and playing games online.

Whether now, or in the future **metaverse**, these digital spaces also them into contact with strangers all over the world. And whenever our children connect with people in this way, the potential for danger is very real.

Keep Track of Virtual Time

Virtual reality experiences are generally more intense than those real life, and experts recommend a minimum age of 12 years for most virtual reality technology. As with looking at any screen for extended period, too much time on virtual reality devices causes tiredness and eye strain. It can also lead to motion sickness in children who are susceptible to this in the real world. In addition to the physical effects, virtual reality experiences can trigger emotions such as anxiety and fear similar to those felt in the real world, and can be overwhelming for younger or more sensitive users.

So, as with any other on-screen time or off-screen, time our children spend in the virtual world is best monitored.

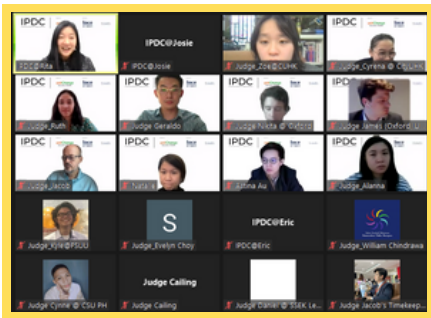
Set Boundaries and Ground Rules

The same rules about online safety and parental controls (e.g., limiting chat features) apply to any interactions that take place in the **metaverse**. Talking openly to children about what is appropriate helps them feel included in the process of boundaries-setting, more likely to respect these, and more likely to let you know if they – or any of their friends – face difficulty or uncomfortable situations.

References

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- <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/30/technology/metaverse-harassment-assaults.html>
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Another Successful IPDC!



Debating Online via Zoom.

February 19 – 20 was a supercharged and spirited weekend as participants contested their way to the finals of the 3rd International Parliamentary Debate Competition hosted by See Change Education.

Some debates were lively, some were heated, but every one was keen as the participants showed their enormous abilities to research, reason, argue and counter. In return they gained from the personal feedback given by the panel of judges and other observers: all lawyers who enriched the competition with their expert practitioner perspectives.

Congratulations to our Champions!

Upper Primary (Novelist) Jion Choi, Summer Lee (South Korea)
Upper Primary (Advanced) Gemma Yeung, Kobe Wong (Hong Kong)

Middle School (Novelist) Irene Park, Yechan Jeon (South Korea)
Middle School (Advanced) Harry Tam, Gabriel Choy (Hong Kong)

High School (Novelist) Christina Kim, Eddie Choi (South Korea)
High School (Advanced) Francine Ty, Uel Cawaon (The Philippines)

3rd IPDC (Winter 2022)

Divisions: 6
Schools: 40+
Countries/Regions: 8
Hong Kong, China, Macau, Taiwan, South Korea, The Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam

What did the participants debate?

- THO the idea that love is about sacrifice.
- THW ban buffets.
- TH, as the IOC, would create a new division in the Winter Olympics for countries without snow.
- THR the rise of citizen journalism.
- THBT NFTs harm the arts.
- THW ban aquariums.
- THW replace teachers with [robots] .
- THB social media sites should be held responsible for fake news.
- THBT games should not have in-game purchases.

Congratulations to all the school award winners!

School Award - Highest Average Speaker Score:

- The ISF Academy
- MGC New Life Christian Academy

Spirit Award:

- Aldrich Bay Government Primary School
- Yaumati Kaifong Association School
- The ISF Academy
- YCK Memorial College No.2

INCE

Victoria Yeung

- Senior Associate of INCE
- Member of The Law Society of Hong Kong

Alfred Lau

- Partner of INCE
- Commercial litigation and dispute resolution expert

Anderson Siu

- Senior Associate of INCE
- Master of Corporate Law degree, University of Cambridge

Temple Chambers

Val Chow

- Barrister of Temple Chambers
- LLB (First Class Honours) & PCLL, HKU

Natalie So

- Barrister of Temple Chambers
- PCLL (Distinction), HKU
- BCL (Distinction), University of Oxford

Astina Au

- Barrister of Temple Chambers
- LL.M., Harvard Law School
- PCLL (Distinction), HKU

Deacons

Annie Tsoi

- Partner of Deacons
- Legal 500's leading individual fo IP

Gary Lui

- Partner of Deacons
- PCLL, HKU

Judges from INCE, Deacons and Temple Chambers.

Sincere thanks to our panel of judges from INCE, Deacons, and Temple Chamber; our sponsors INCE and Clyde & Co.; and supporting units Deacons, Deacons Cares and Temple Chamber. The success of the 3rd IPDC is owed as much to them as it is to the enthusiasm and caliber of the participants.

10% of the net proceeds from the 3rd IPDC will be donated to Lifewire to help provide critical support for children suffering from rare illnesses. To learn more about Lifewire, visit <https://www.lifewire.hk>.

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IPDC | Age 5 - 18

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