

Superintendent Letter (long)

Dear Superintendent [NAME],

We are writing to you to express our deepest concern regarding the overreliance of our public schools on screen-based learning.

Our children are already spending an enormous amount of time on screens outside of school – averaging nine hours per day for high school students, according to [one study](#). Excessive screen time has been associated with many maladies, including anxiety and depression, executive function disorders, eye disorders, and screen addiction. While screens in schools are not the only source of these problems, our schools share a responsibility to make sure they do not exacerbate such issues.

The drive to continually increase students' technology use is understandable, as our district endeavors to prepare our children for the 21st century economy. Unfortunately, computer-based learning has no demonstrable advantage over low-tech methods. Indeed, we believe that many screen-based activities in school actually result in greater distraction and decreased focus on the part of students. Plus, students are already having difficulties in these areas because of the hyper-stimulating effects of interactive media used at home. Furthermore, much of the technology that students are being introduced to in school will certainly not be in use by the time our students enter the workforce. And software designers are making it ever easier to get up to speed on their platforms, so teaching children how to use their tools is hardly necessary.

There are several steps that we recommend the district take immediately to decrease the danger posed by the excessive use of screens by children, including:

- Following the device manufacturer's guidelines for the safe use of digital devices, including all ergonomic and eye protection measures.
- Eliminating the use of online textbooks. Students dislike them and e-books require them to be on screens often late into the night. The blue light from screens suppresses melatonin production, contributing to sleep deprivation.
- Eliminating computer-based homework, which results in students spending more time on distracting, non-school activities at night (another contributor to sleep deprivation) and which makes parent monitoring of their child's screen time difficult.
- Allowing children to opt out of computer-based activities if requested by a parent or recommended by a child's ophthalmologist, pediatrician, or mental health professional.
- Requiring students to put away all smart phones during the school day.
- Collecting data (anonymously) from students and teachers about school-related time spent on digital devices – both in-class and at-home – and making the data available to parents by class and by grade.



- Conducting regular educational and professional development activities to inform teachers, students, and families about the proper use of digital devices, the ways to safeguard student privacy, and the dangers of excessive screen use.

We would be very happy to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these concerns. We can also provide you with references to scientific studies that support the concerns we have expressed.

On behalf of our children, we implore you to take this issue seriously.

Signed,