Opting Out of EdTech

Parents may not be able to change their school district's policy on EdTech, but they very likely can have a say in their own child's exposure to it.

! What's bad about EdTech?

- According to the EdTech industry's own estimate, the average school district **uses 2,739 applications** throughout the year.
- An astounding **96% of applications used in schools** sell children's data to third parties. This includes usage statistics and personally identifiable information (PII), like birthdates, behavior records, test scores, and user behavior.
- Software Development Kits (SDKs) are present in **75% of applications used in schools**. SDKs track and send user geo-location data, PII, and more, exposing the platform to external monitoring by third parties (without parental consent or knowledge).
- In a sampling of **25 mandatory school apps**, the independent organization Internet Safety Lab scored 56% as "Do Not Use," and scored an additional 20% as "High Risk."

Educational reasons to opt out of EdTech

Isn't EdTech beneficial to learning? According to a recent **UNESCO report**: "There is little robust evidence on digital technology's added value in education" and a lot of the evidence that does exist "comes from those trying to sell it."

Too much **screen time** is linked to emotional dysregulation. It negatively impacts literacy and mathematics in school-aged children. Opting a child out of excessive EdTech can benefit the child's learning experience.

Drawbacks to opting out of EdTech

There are a few things to consider:

- Most schools consider EdTech an all-or-nothing proposition and aren't prepared to offer parents a middle-ground alternative.
- Not all teachers are able to easily accommodate parent requests to opt out of EdTech and may resent the extra work they will most likely be asked to shoulder.
- Peer dynamics can be tricky, and your child will be asked why they are doing something different from the rest of the class.

Resources

- **The Screentime Consultant's UnPlug EdTech Toolkit**
- **Dr. Dunckley's Opt Out Letter**
- **EdTech Law Center**
- **Internet Safety Labs**
- **UNESCO report Technology in Education**
- **ACLU Digital Dystopia Report**

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Take Action!

Opting Out of EdTech
10 questions to ask before opting out

It's critical to have a thorough understanding of how technology is integrated into your child's daily activity; how much of the burden will fall on teachers to accommodate your request; and how much risk the school's general attitude toward EdTech will impact your child's experience.

10 QUESTIONS

1. How does our school use screen-based technologies for teaching and learning?
2. Does our school have a 1:1 program? Do devices come home or stay at school?
3. Does our school teach typing skills before handing out devices?
4. Are students required to sign a User Agreement or Technology Use Contract?
5. What types of filters, monitoring software, firewalls, or controls are used at our school on school-issued or school-owned devices?
6. What is the school's privacy policy around student data? Who retains that data?
7. Does the school use social media platforms to communicate with parents, coaches, students, or staff?
8. How are students taught about topics such as safe Internet searching, identifying mis- or dis-information, validating sources, plagiarism, digital citizenship, cyberbullying, and problem-solving when inappropriate content or behaviors occur?
9. Is technology used as a reward, such as during free time or for certain behavior?
10. For families who choose to opt out of some or all school screen-based technology, what alternatives are available?

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

You'll need to choose what's best for your family, and that's not easy! If you decide that opting out is the best course of action, we recommend sending an email to request opting your child out of 1:1 device programs and limiting the exposure your child has to EdTech applications. You can find an opt-out letter template **here**.

When you opt out, prepare your child to respond to peer questions about why. Some responses:
- *"I find I learn things better with paper and pencil."*
- *"My family is making a different choice right now."*
- *"I'm way less distracted when I don't use a computer for school."*

If you receive pushback or retaliation from the school, you may need additional support. For more information on understanding your rights and potential litigation options, visit **EdTech.Law**.

Visit **bit.ly/screensandlearning** for the full Screens & Learning Action Kit!
References for the Action Kit: **bit.ly/screensandlearningreferences**

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